# Romania Redefined in British Travel Narratives

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# ABSTRACT

Remaining in relative obscurity until the early nineteenth century, the Danube Principalities were persistently viewed as a region inhabited by citizens of the Ottoman Empire that epitomised all the negative qualities attached to Eastern Europe: having no direction connection to the Greek and Slavic cultures that bordered Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, Romanians were often subjected to the most severe scrutiny by British travellers who ventured into this part of the Balkan Peninsula.

The dominant role of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Romanian nation-building Latinity Myth, the ongoing rivalry between the Russian and the Ottoman empires, sparking debates on the resolution of the Eastern Question, inevitably impacted the creation of Romanian nationhood since the early nineteenth century.

In juxtaposition with other Balkan nations such as the Greeks and Serbians whose national struggle was met with the sympathy of European intellectuals, the Romanian-speaking populations were often demonised, persistently ignored, or systematically represented on the basis of their state of vassalage to the nearby empires. With the aim of forging a distinct identity, Romanian intellectuals intensified their efforts to gain their independence in conjunction with their rich folk tradition, the cultural link between Dacia and Rome as a means of distancing Romania from the alien cultural traits that had impregnated the nation throughout the centuries of foreign rule.

This volume pertains to the representations of Romania in ten British travelogues which approached Romanianness from different angles: triggering the image of the decadent Oriental Other, the Romanian political context was explored in tune with the interests of the British expansionist agenda and through the lens of the Anglo-Saxon racial discourse that occupied a prevalent position in Victorian imagination.

# INTRODUCTION

This book pertains to the construction of Romanian identity and the way in which it has been represented in travel narratives of British authors from the mid-1800s up to the late nineteenth century, in view of the peripheral status of Romania as a non-recognised nation well until the 1850s, when the Eastern Question came to the fore as an issue of paramount importance regarding the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of new nations from the Ottoman provinces.

Before embarking on the actual analysis of the travelogues included in this volume, it is worth reflecting upon the main reasons for which Romania did not qualify as a popular destination in the Balkans as opposed to Greece and Serbia whose wars of independence were systematically documented and touched upon by a significant number of British travellers. First of all, one should emphasise the peculiar state of Romania as a divided nation, scattered across three different principalities that fell under a different imperial yoke: on the one hand, Transylvania, which was subjugated to the Habsburg dynasty, and on the other hand, Wallachia and Moravia which were subject to the geopolitical games between the Russian and the Ottoman empires.

Discussing the peculiar status of the Danube Principalities in foreign travel literature, Daniela Busă refers to the period from the 1820s to late 1840s as one of paramount importance for the delineation of the Romanian nation in the eyes of the British travellers, contending that

> For the Danube Principalities the period 1822-1848 can be divided into three stages: that of the earthly reigns 1822-1828, then the Russian-Turkish war and the tsarist military occupation 1828-1834 finally, the last, of the regulatory reigns between 1834-1848, which ended once with the outbreak of the revolutions of 1848-1849. In each of these periods there were traveled through the Principality as well as in Transylvania, moreover, a series of animated travelers of specific interests and attentive to the realities encountered. (5)

The confusing image with which British travellers often impregnated their texts on the Danube Principalities was intimately linked to the territorial partition of Romania into three different regions, each being under the dominion of a different ruler, notwithstanding their cultural and

religious similarities. Considering the emergence of racial theories that sought to define European nations on the basis of the Herderian model that explored national language and literature as major nation-building components, from early nineteenth-century onwards, British travel texts are underpinned by an Anglo-Saxonist spirit that explored all cultures according to these criteria. As Reginald Horsman asserts,

> The emphasis on language as a basis of nationality and of the common past of a people, although not originally intended by Herder to promote racial divisiveness, was rapidly used in this manner by many of those who took up the theme of the historic greatness of the German tongue. The idealization of the German language and of the German past was of direct use to English Anglo-Saxonists. The German Volk were the ancestors of the English, and they shared a common heritage. (392)

Given this racial paradigm that tended to attribute inferior qualities to nations and cultures which were irrelevant to the rising Saxonism, the Romanian-speaking inhabitants of the Principalities were frequently scrutinised from a negative angle, as mere subjects of different empires who were not entitled to a distinct identity.

Since Romania did not adhere to the Anglo-Saxonist paradigm and was irrelevant to the racial discourse that emerged since the mid-1850s, one can deduce from such a loose connection with the nation-building agenda of the Britons that the Romanians would be cast as the "Other", a representation that would underlay their overall depiction as members of dystopian societies.

Regarding the issue of Otherness in travel literature on Romania, Busă purports that the demonisation of the Balkans as well as a surge of interest in Balkan politics shifted the focus on the newborn states that developed from the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and therefore, foreign travellers began to venture into South-Eastern Europe as a new locus of investigation:

> The pilgrims from the center of western Europe came into direct contact with a world, in many cases in dissonance with the one from which they came, which awakened their interest, curiosity, but also the desire to understand its realities, a fact that increased the veracity and accuracy of perception force on the image of the other. The interest of foreigners towards the South-Eastern European area grew as the manifestations of the Eastern question became more acute, the weakening of the Ottoman domination and the intensification of the struggle for the affirmation of the national being, for the freedom of the peoples of the Balkans, the broadening and diversification of relations between with the rest of the

continent, but of the rivalries between the European powers, whose interests in the area had become increasingly obvious and antagonistic. (6)

What is more, an additional reason for the negative representations of Romanianness in the British travel discourse was that the three principalities were gradually treated by the Britons as a threat to the status quo of Europe, giving rise to the Russian territorial expansion eastwards. As argued by Shawn Wooster, the Romanians in Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia were subject to the hostility of the Western traveller, given that they were associated with rival empires, regarded as antithetical to the enlightened aspect of the British Empire, even though the Romanian nationalist movement was manifest precisely because of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the major developments in the field of religion, where the Catholic and Orthodox Romanian Churches were united as a means of requiring more political freedom for the Romanian citizens of Transylvania and the Danube Principalities:

> The slow dissolution of the Ottoman Empire near the end of the seventeenth-century and its defeat at the hands of the Austrians in 1684 provided space for Romanians to advocate for both political legitimacy and to define Romanian identity. After the Ottoman's failed siege of Vienna, Transylvania fell under the domination of the Hapsburgs. Almost immediately the ideals of the Enlightenment began filtering into Transylvania via Romanian Uniate priests who, due to their new status as Hapsburg subjects, were granted the privilege to pursue university educations in both Transylvania and abroad. Under the Ottomans, Romanians had virtually no access to even the most rudimentary education, let alone one from a university. This changed under the Austrians as a result of the union of the Romanian Orthodox church with the Roman Catholic Church, which was the religion of the Austrian court. (84)

Furthermore, it should be noted that, owing to the close connection of Anglo-Saxonism with Protestantism, the dominant role of the Greek Orthodox Church in the spiritual life of the Romanians was met with significant hostility, because Orthodoxy was often deemed as a menace to British expansion across Europe and came to be synonymous with a backward, Orientalist world that was diametrically opposed to the enlightened and civilising aspect of the Protestant faith (Dimitrios Kassis 2). However, if Protestantism is persistently viewed as a nation-building tool by the Britons in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Romanian cultural identity is yoked to the Greek Orthodox faith at the time of its subjugation to foreign powers. As Wooster contends

The Orthodox Church had become the de facto representative of the Transylvanian Romanians simply because it was the only legitimate Romanian institution in Transylvania with some form of administrative structure, no matter how feeble it might have been. (84)

Based on the above argument, despite the persistent efforts of British travellers to ascribe a dystopian aspect to the impact of the Orthodox Church on the manners and mores of the Balkan peoples, it was the Orthodox faith that constituted a unifying factor in the struggle of the Romanian nation for emancipation against the Ottoman rule. Kenneth Allen Adams emphasises the instrumental role of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the national awakening of the Romanians at a time when Romania did not even exist as a geographical term:

Romania was unique among other Central European States (CSS) in that the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) served not only as a religious body, but more importantly as the driving force behind unifying the cultural nation with the political state through the common bonds of language and historic mythology which specifically identified Romanian ethnicity. The dominating presence of religious symbols in state institutions provided fertile ground for development of extremist movements and intolerance of religious political fortunes, the ROC has endured as a powerful force in preserving Romanian identity. (iv)

In addition, as Adams maintains, despite their fragmentation into provinces of different empires, the three principalities preserved their unique cultural characteristics that reinforced the idea of a separate Romanian nationhood:

Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania, the ancestral principalities of modern Romania, shared a common language, church affiliation (Orthodox), and a number of cultural mythologies associated with the Roman conquest of ancient Dacia to which mid-19th century, the three principalities resisted cultural assimilation and maintained an enduring Romanian national identity which finally found political expression in the formation of the modern state of Romania. (iv)

Aside from the complex historical context that impacted the representation of the principalities abroad, one should also make mention of the different backgrounds of the travel writers that ventured into Romania, holding different beliefs or expectations regarding the territories visited. As underlined by Georgeta Filitti, this diversity of the travellers who embark on a journey to the principalities in terms of educational or cultural background is also reflected on the representation of the Balkans

as a whole, formulating different opinions and conceptualisations of the target culture:

> The travelers who deal with the Romanian Principalities come from different societies and environments; hence the great diversity of impressions. As a common element remains, in these ways for such sources, subjectivism. If some authors write the texts out of professional duty (such as war chronicles, diplomatic reports, reports having a technical character, regarding the mines in Transylvania), others do it for pleasure (in the form of letters to delight friends) or out of a routine dry (such are the notes of several travelers who scrupulously bear the distances to the post office and the cost of transport, insensitive to the country they are crossing and concerned only with the avatars of the journey. (31)

In the case of the British travellers, their writings on the Romanian identity and culture has been subjected to strong criticism, because unlike their French and German counterparts, they tend to provide their readership with a superficial approach to the country visited, overlooking important details pertaining to the cultural context of the principalities and choosing to focus on more trivial, practical matters. As argued by Filitti, among the British travellers, a significant number filled their notes "hurriedly and preoccupied, first of all, with the avatars of the road, some impressions not without value" (35).

According to Ivana Živančević-Sekeruš, the persistent contemplation of the Danube Principalities as a bridge towards the Orient, connoting all the negative characteristics of the Eastern world as subaltern, ignorant and backward, can be defined as a process of Balkanisation (105). Within this framework, the discourse on Otherness comes to the fore, based on the premise that the Other is subject to the gaze of a superior citizen positing himself in an empowered state. Touching upon this powerful gaze of an imperial beholder, John Urry contends that

> Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered [...] constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as literature which construct and reinforce the gaze. (3)

The above consideration of Romania as culturally and racially affiliated to the Balkans posed a challenge to the self-image of Romanians during their stuggle for independence, considering that the connection with the other Balkan cultures undermined the exclusivity with which Romanian intellectuals sought to define Romanianness. According to Tom Gallagher,

there was a recurrent dilemma in Romanian nationalist texts of the nineteenth century regarding the country's inclusion in the Balkan category because it appeared "problematic, not in the least to the Romanians themselves, who have raised the question "to be or not to be Balkan" in their quest for self-definition" (20).

As regards the rise of Romanian Nationalism since the late eighteenth century, the majority of British travellers appear to either overlook the crucial events towards Romanian emancipation from Austria and the Ottoman Empire or fail to address them properly. Nevertheless, despite the partition of Romania into three principalities for centuries, with Wallachia and Moldavia in a semi-autonomous state, it is worth stressing that Romanian Nationalism was already manifest during the first half of the eighteenth century as an intellectual movement giving rise to literary activism combined with peasant revolts in the Romanian rural areas:

> The origin of Romanian nationalism can be placed firmly in the first half of the eighteenth-century and more specifically within the writings and activism of the Uniate Priest Ion Innochentie Klein. Combined with peasant revolts in the countryside, Klein's activism served to foster Romanian ethnic consciousness, the precursor to full-blown nationalism. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, the Transylvanian school made strides towards creating a coherent Romanian history, Latinizing and 'Romanianizing' the language, writing the first Romanian grammars, and expounding the first Romanian national myths. (Wooster 95)[1]

In collaboration with Micu-Klein, other influential intellectuals were Gheorghe Şincai, Petru Maior and Ion Budai-Deleanu who established the Transylvanian School (Şcoala Ardeleană) at the close of the eighteenth century (1791). This nationalist circle highlighted the Roman provenance of the Romanian culture at a linguistic and a cultural level in the memorandum *Supplex Libellus Valachorum Transsilvaniae* through which they demanded equal rights for the Romanian citizens of Transylvania (Marius Turda 352).

With reference to the popularisation of the Romanian cultural identity, Wooster purports that it was through the works of the Transylvanian School that the Latin identity was systematically addressed in the writings of the Romanian intellectuals, a fact which was of paramount importance

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[1] Ioan Inocenţiu Micu-Klein, also known as Ioan Micu (1692 –1768), was an intellectual and a Bishop of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church who contributed to the recognition of the national and religious rights of the Romanians in Transylvania under the Habsburg dynasty.

because it helped the nation distance itself culturally and historically from its Germanic, Slavic, Greek and Ottoman neighbours:

> The Transylvanian School attempted to define the geographical legitimacy of the Romanian national by elucidating the descent of the Romanians from the Daco-Romans. By doing so, they were locating Romanians on an 'island of Latinity in a Slav sea,' which called attention to the fact that Romanians had been subjected to foreign rule and oppression for centuries, hence the need to create a Romanian state that would protect them from future foreign invasion. The Romanian's historical experience with foreign domination played a key role in forming a nation based on the primacy of collectivism and exclusivity. (91)

Drawing upon the above national developments, it is also essential to touch upon the Daco-Roman hypothesis that came to define the Romanian nation since the early stages of its national awakening. According to George Calinescu, during the Romanian nation-building process, it is the Latinity myth that epitomised Romanianness, explaining that

> The Romanians hold dear the story of Trajan and Dochia, a symbol of the symbiosis between the Roman and the Dacian elements. The story of Trajan and Dochia embraces equally the Roman and Dacian contributions to the essence of Romanianness and has been found to be one of the most representative narratives in the national literature. (56)

On the one hand, Romania could set the focus on the pre-Roman properties of the Romanian culture, successfully positing the nation on the scale of the ancient cultures of Europe. On the other hand, the Latinity myth served as a means of combining the Dacian elements still present in the cultures of the principalities with the Latin language as an important vestige of the Roman occupation of the country.

Notwithstanding the unquestionable impact of the Daco-Roman cultural hypothesis on the amalgamation of Romanian nationhood, it also clashed with the emergent theories of racial purity that circulated after the first quarter of the nineteenth century, accentuating racial admixture as a detrimental effect on the superior qualities of allegedly supreme races such as the Anglo-Saxons. Explaining the differences between the various racial groups in Europe, Carlos C. Closson suggests that

> The Nordic race is distinguishable both physically and psychologically from the other races of Europe. From the Alpine race of the central and eastern parts of the continent it is physically distinguishable mainly by the prevailing form of the head. (80)

Given the importance of racial purity as a paramount criterion for the classification of different civilisations and ethnic groups, the Daco-Roman hypothesis distinguished Romanians from their Slavic, Greek and Ottoman neighbours. At the same time, it inevitably reinforced its representation as a mongrel nation, which could undermine its overall mapping in Europe. Elaborating on the racial discourse in the mid-nineteenth century on the advent of the pseudo-sciences, David McCrone refers to the racial rivalry that was manifest in the racial representations of cultures, resulting from power relations that sought to consolidate the different imperialist regimes using biological criteria:

> Whatever their specific form, content, and function, racial representations and classifications were generally mediated by power relations: they served to inform, interpret, and justify unfree and unequal social, economic, and political relations. (7)

As a result, the Daco-Roman racial mix did not accord with the nineteenth-century approach to the forging of a national identity due to the alleged hybridity of the Romanian nation. Therefore, as observed by Anamaria Dutceac-Segesten, it did not fit neatly into the conceptualisation of the Romanian racial origins:

> The idea of the original Daco-Roman mix has not always been accepted without contestation. Intellectuals from the 17th to the 19th centuries vied to demonstrate the purity of the Romanian blood either as exclusive children of the Roman conquerors who killed every survivor of the local population or descendants of the Dacians who managed miraculously to survive all other influences. (140)

In search of alternative ways of establishing Romanian nationhood, the Daco-Romanian hypothesis was gradually replaced by a more philological approach to the Romanian-Roman connection, when Romanian philologists conveniently highlighted the racial purity of the ancient Dacians, who were only linguistically Romanised by the Roman conquerors and, therefore, retained their original racial status as direct descendants of the Dacians:

> The establishment of the philological link between Latin and Romanian led to the excesses of the Latinist school, which proposed a pure Roman origin of folk and language. The moderate version of the Latin origin myth was considered more truthful and became the norm. The language connection implied, for the majority of the intellectuals involved in the creation of a national Romanian identity that the Romanians actually were the indigenous

inhabitants of Transylvania and the Romanian Principalities, directly descended from the Romanized Dacians. (Dutceac-Segesten 143)

As affirmed by Valentin Quintus Nicolescu, the Latinity myth appertains to the type of nation-building strategy that rests on the belief that a nation is the chosen one and whose origins are traced in the distant past, leading to the formation of a societal community:

> the nation is a product of the intelligentsia, aiming to create (for political reasons) a dominant discourse in the public sphere regarding the identity of the societal community (its history, language, culture, place in the world and so forth) as well as a social engineering project resulting in the creation of a national imagined community. (124)

Most importantly, Romanian Nationalism acquired a reactionary character against the foreign powers that attempted to incorporate the Romanian-speaking population into their own nationalist discourse, mainly through the recognition as an ethnic minority in Transylvania and the defiance of the Phanariot rule in Wallachia and Moldavia:

> The Romanian nationalist discourse took shape in two very different political and cultural environments, brought to a common ground by one specific characteristic: their reactionary character. Both in the Austrian Empire (in Transylvania) and in the Danubian Principalities (Walachia and Moldavia), the local national discourse appeared as a reaction to a certain political reality: the exclusion from the political community in Transylvania and from the Ottoman Phanariote rule in the Principalities. (Nicolescu 127)

If the Transylvanian School helped the Romanian subjects of the Habsburg dynasty to achieve a distinct cultural identity through the Unity between the Greek Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Churches, promoting at the same time the linguistic and cultural connection between Romania and the Roman world, the abrogation of the Phanariot regime after the Greek Revolution precipitated the reinstatement of the Romanian nobility and the deliverance from the despotic rule of the Greek Phanariots and the Ottomans:

> After the Revolution of 1821, which removed the Phanariot regime, and with the reinstatement of earthly rulers in the Principality, Vaillant found that the Spirit of life was reborn everywhere, it fecundated matter everywhere, everywhere it began to grow again peace reign, prosperity hope; the Moldavians, the Transylvanians, the mountaineers had recognized themselves as brothers, the poor had rebuilt their brothels, the rich had

built their palaces, the plowman quietly plowed the furrows, the merchant devoted himself to full of his trade, everything advances slowly but surely; everything announced progress, everything promised prosperity. (Filitti 26)

The overshadowing of the Romanian national identity both politically and spiritually by the Phanariot Regime is negatively commented by British travellers, who identify the presence of a foreign power as one of the main causes for the perpetuation of the protectorate status of the Danube principalities (Alex Drace-Francis 10). Lasting nearly two centuries (1669-1821) and coming to an end with the Greek War of Independence, the Phanariot Regime monopolised the political institutions of Wallachia and Moldavia, since it provided the Ottoman government with merchants, dragomans and church dignitaries whose excellent education consolidated the purposes of the Ottoman Empire (Konstantinos Paparigopoulos 123).

According to Wooster, the replacement of the Greek Phanariot politicians with members of the old Romanian nobility underlay Romanian Nationalism, as for the first time after many decades, Romanian internal affairs could be handled by natives instead of a foreign institution that was often subject to British travellers' sharp criticism as an alien power enforced upon the peoples of the Danube principalities:

> After the failed Greek uprising in 1821 the Phanariot princes were expelled from Moldavia and Wallachia and replaced with Romanian born princes by the Ottoman Porte. Russia restrained herself from interfering too obviously in Romanian internal affairs, but nevertheless awaited the chance to supplant Ottoman rule. This chance came in the mid-1820's as Great Britain's foreign policy focused less on supporting the Romanian-speaking lands as a buffer region between the Austrian and Ottoman Empires. (88)

One of the indisputable attractions of the Romanian culture that British travellers started to address in the mid-1850s was its peasant life that remained vibrant at a time when other nations were ravaged by war expeditions. This exaltation of the peasant life in Transylvania and the Principalities aesthetically complied with the Herderian approach to nationhood, relying on nation-forming components such as peasant life, folk culture, language and religion, that is, everything "contrasted markedly with modern industrial society, both in tempo of living, in the simplicity of its institutions, and minimal contact with the outside world" (Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, John Breuilly and Eric Hobsbawm 33).

If the Victorians showed their infatuation with peasant culture in off the beaten track locations, the same applied to the consolidating process of

Romanian Nationalism in the 1850s, during which Romanian intellectuals sought to construct Romanian national identity precisely on the distinct manners and mores of the Romanian rural population. As Nicolescu maintains

> A significant number of romantic revolutionary intellectuals, as in other countries all over Europe, set off on a quest for the holy grail of Romanian cultural essence in rural areas. This was the place where the promoters of a Romanian national identity hoped to find the quintessential Romanian peasant, the archetype that would best symbolise Romanian national exceptionalism. A tremendous work of gathering local stories, songs and poetry began, accompanied by a refined work of analysis and classification of major themes, myths and national symbols extracted from the organic, unaltered peasant communities, a work that continues to this day. One of the most relevant of these discoveries was the special relation that the Romanian peasants had with the environment they lived in. (131)

In the light of the above sociopolitical framework, the first chapter of this volume pertains to John Jackson's *Journey from India, towards England, in the Year 1797*, which typifies the late eighteenth-century travelogues on the Balkans, establishing a discourse on Otherness within which the Danube Principalities become synonymous with a late eighteenth-century dystopia.

With reference to the second chapter of the volume, it concentrates on Thomas Thornton's travel account *The present State of Turkey: a Description of the Political, Civil, and Religious Constitution, Government and Laws, of the Ottoman Empire*, which draws the reader's attention to the systematic deconstruction of the fundamental tenets of the Romanian Nationalism such as the Latinity hypothesis, providing an image of the Principalities as a savage zone, staunchly opposed to the Anglo-Saxon nation-building agenda.

Concerning the third chapter, Adam Neale's *Travels through some Parts of Germany, Poland, Moldavia, and Turkey* underscores the detrimental effect of the Phanariot Regime on the political life of the Principalities, along with remarks on the rise of the Russian Empire a few years prior to the outbreak of the Greek Revolution and the Russo-Turkish Wars.

With regard to the fourth chapter, William Wilkinson's *Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* revolves around the major developments of Romanian Nationalism, setting the focus on the Daco-Roman hypothesis and the linguistic condition in the Principalities, reflecting upon the racial origins of the Romanian-speaking peasantry, while producing a minute description of nineteenth-century Romanianness.

Regarding the fifth chapter, Charles Colville-Frankland's *Travels to and From Constantinople, in the Years 1827 and 1828* explores the dichotomy between the West and the European East in all cultural experiences that he acquires during his journey: religion, peasantry, architecture and hygiene constitute only some of the issues that render the Principalities a part of the Orient, tinged with all the negative qualities attached to the Balkans.

With respect to the sixth chapter, Michael Joseph Quinn's *A Steam Voyage down the Danube: with Sketches of Hungary, Wallachia, Servia and Turkey* is concerned with the Anglo-centric outlook on the Principalities as a potential field of territorial exploitation constituting a narrative of expansion and conquest that seeks to deconstruct the Romanian national identity.

As regards the seventh chapter, Charles Boileau-Elliott's *Travels in the three Great Empires of Austria, Russia, and Turkey* discusses the backward state of the Principalities in connection with Ottoman oppression, harbouring severe criticism on the hospodarship as an obsolete and degrading institution. Without departing from his loyalty to the Anglo-Saxon myth, the writer also focuses on the racialisation of the Romanian-speaking populations, giving an insight into the potential connection of contemporary Wallachians and Moldavians with the ancient Dacians.

In relation to the eighth chapter, Evan Turnbull's text *Austria: Social and Political Condition* sheds light on the sociopolitical conditions that underlay the Principalities on the advent of the Crimean Wars, bestowing attention on a potential collaboration of Britain with the Austrian Empire in order to eliminate Russian military presence in the East.

The ninth chapter centres on Laurence Oliphant's *The Russian Shores of the Black Sea in the Autumn of 1852 with a Voyage down the Volga.* Oliphant's travel narrative reproduces the British conventions on the Eastern Question, formulating the fundamental arguments of the British expansionist agenda.

The last chapter of this volume touches upon Henry Charles Barkley's *Between the Danube and Black Sea; or, Five Years in Bulgaria* which provides the reader with the view of a tourist, narrating his journey to the Romanian-speaking regions on the advent of the declaration of Romania as an independent nation. Apart from his stress on the Herderian notion of the *Volksgeist*, pointing to the pastoral qualities of peasant life, the writer also resorts to the binary opposition between the civilised Occident and the decadent Orient.

# CHAPTER ONE

## JOHN JACKSON

### JOURNEY FROM INDIA, TOWARDS ENGLAND, IN THE YEAR 1797; BY A ROUTE COMMONLY CALLED OVER-LAND, THROUGH COUNTRIES NOT MUCH FREQUENTED AND MANY OF THEM HITHERTO UNKNOWN TO EUROPEANS

John Jackson was a mid-eighteenth-century British wine merchant and travel writer who is mostly remembered for his travel account *Journey from India, towards England, in the year 1797; by a route commonly called over-land, through Countries not much frequented, and many of them hitherto unknown to Europeans (1*799) which includes a long narrative on India, Anatolia, Bulgaria and Wallachia. In 1803, he participated in excavations in the ruins of Carthage and Udena. In 1804, he became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. In the same year, he also published a treaty entitled *Reflections on the Commerce of the Mediterranean, deduced from actual experience during a residence on both Shore of the Mediterranean Sea* (1804). He died in 1807.

As an introductory chapter, I have selected Jackson's travel narrative *Journey from India, towards England, in the year 1797; by a route commonly called over-land, through Countries not much frequented, and many of them hitherto unknown to Europeans* which resulted from his long tour across Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

With reference to his status, Jackson belongs to the mid-eighteenth-century writers who did not travel for leisure but rather undertook a journey to the East of Europe as part of his trade activities. In that respect, Jackson falls into the category of travellers that ventured into unknown lands for professional reasons instead of sojourning in Wallachia and Moldavia. This trend of eighteenth-century voyages as diplomatic or trade missions constitutes a recurrent pattern in the travel canon prior to the

nineteenth century, when travel writers assumed the dual position of the traveller and the tourist without a clear-cut distinction between the two terms. Discussing the dichotomy of the tourist and the traveller, the former being an individual who adopts a materialistic outlook on the country visited, Elizabeth Hagglund contends that

> Over the last thirty years much academic attention has been devoted to an attempt to distinguish between travellers and tourists. The distinction is frequently value-laden. To be a 'traveller', according to many critics, is good; to be a 'tourist', bad. The negative connotation of the term tourist is not a new one. In the 1780s and 1790s, the term could still be used in the neutral sense of 'one who makes a tour'. (8)

Additionally, Jackson's capacity as a wine merchant for the Ottoman Empire and the colonial world (India) undoubtedly impacts his overall view of the lands that he traverses during his trip, as he is a member of an ascending class (bourgeoisie) and his professional capacity is intimately linked to the established political order. Regarding the rising wave of bourgeois travellers who started flocking into off the beaten track locations, Filitti claims that

> The variety of social origins and professions of travelers of the past century is great […] but the majority are recruited from the bourgeoisie that became all-powerful in the West, in the century of the rise of capitalism and liberal democratic appointments. (14)

While elaborating on the purpose of his travelling across terrae incognitae, Jackson stresses the novel character of his undertaking, presenting his voyage as a process beset with perils and challenges:

> enjoying a state of health, he was induced, when at Bombay, to embrace an opportunity which then offered of returning by shipping as far as Bussora, though at a season when the passage had perhaps never before attempted, being generally thought impracticable to Providence and his own exertions, and possessing that enterprising spirit which enables men to surmount difficulties and dangers that to more timid minds appear insuperable. (vii)

Considering the writer's reference to his journey as an impracticable undertaking, which needs an enterprising spirit so as to deal with the insurmountable difficulties and perils that may occur, one could stress the masculine dimension that he seeks to attribute to his own narrative position as an adventure hero.

What is more, his introductory statement coalesces with the tendency of the male travel discourse to compare journeys to heroic quests, where the male traveller "operates as an adventure hero, who embellishes his account with instances that reiterate the idea of masculinity in the country visited" (Carl Thompson 11).

Having assumed the narrative position of the adventure hero, the writer accords with the stereotypical view of the Balkans as a dangerous space, where the primitive and the grotesque underpin the traveller's interaction with the travel space (Živančević-Sekeruš 105).

After having touched upon his own travel persona and the countries visited, the writer moves on to intersperse his text with comments that introduce his readership to the idea of the Other. Admittedly, his idea of the Other as a subaltern, dangerous entity comes to the foreground, when he comments on the barbaric practices of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Wallachia, siding with the Ottoman rulers in the treatment of Eastern Orthodox tradition as backward and dangerous:

> I do not, indeed, wonder that the Turks should entertain such a prejudice against the Christian religion; for all the Christian countries bordering upon the Turkish empire (and even the Greeks and Armenians among the Turks) have their crucifixes and images which represent a kind of idol worship, to which all Mussulmen have a particular aversion; and that alone is sufficient to prevent them from making any inquiries into the real merits of Christianity. (164-5)

Based on the above fragment, Jackson raises two important points: on the one hand, the Ottoman aversion to Greek Orthodox Christianity is legitimised because of the supposed heathen nature of the Orthodox symbols. On the other hand, by overstressing the primitive aspect of Eastern Orthodox tradition, he essentially attacks the signs of Russian expansion that he associates with the existence of Orthodoxy in the Principalities. Undoubtedly, his anti-Orthodox comment undermines the struggle of Romanian nationalists to forge a new identity based on religion, especially when religion became synonymous with the establishment of a "strong sense of national pride in addition to religious and civic fealty" (Adams 45-6).

Moreover, the demonisation of the Eastern Orthodox tradition ensures the promotion of Protestantism as a key factor to the enlightenment of primitive nations. Clearly, Jackson's stock view of Orthodoxy as primitive and alien to the original nature of Christianity stems from his overall attempt to draw a clear-cut distinction between himself and the peripheral

Other. From that perspective, his attitude accords with Ayman S. Elbarbary's affirmation that

> The 'Other' or general notion of 'othering' occurs when the author distinguishes themselves and/or their culture from out groups (i.e., us vs. them) by way of highlighting perceived differences, usually to distance themselves from the flaws or strangeness of the "Other" under discussion. This results in the establishment of a false dichotomy—an "us" portrayed as exhibiting normative and familiar behaviors and beliefs in contrast to "them" essentialized by the unconventionality of their practices. (2)

Jackson's controversial remarks on the religious spirit of the Wallachians is made more explicit on another occasion, when he praises Christians in Bucharest for their frequent Church attendance, a fact which clashes with his previous comment on the grotesque Christian symbols used by the Eastern Orthodox Church:

> I believe there are few people in the world, particularly among those who call themselves Christians that make more professions of religion than these people and in reality have less. In some of the churches here they have prayers continually from morning till night, and there are chanted from morning till night. (260)

Based on the above excerpt, one can understand that, despite his antiquarian interests, Jackson is not well versed in the cultures of the peripheral regions of the Ottoman Empire. Hence his formulation of comments that rely on a sporadic and hasty observation of the manners and mores in the countries visited.

The fact that his remarks are based primarily on appearance and less on a meticulous study of the target culture becomes evident, when he endeavours to describe Romanian language in Wallachia, drawing a comparison between the language of the Principality and Greek: "their language is harmonious, something resembling the Greek, and indeed has several Greek characters in it" (260). Considering that, within the Romanian nationalist framework, language constituted "the cornerstone of their construction of a national community" (Dutceac-Segesten 149-50), once again Jackson addresses the distinct features of Wallachian culture with indifference, relying on unscientific criteria in the classification of Balkan cultures.

Contrary to Wallachia, which appears to contain Oriental elements in its culture and, therefore, immediately triggers a discourse on Otherness, the Transylvanian capital, with a significant German-speaking minority and an Austrian rule, is more positively mentioned by Jackson, who is

eager to stress all the typical characteristics that embellish a Western city, such as music, theatre, well-paved streets and a national costume that resembles the English notion of civilisation:

> Herrmanstadt is a tolerably well built city. The promenade is very pleasant, and they have also a very handsome theatre. Their music is excellent, having the advantage of some of the first German performers. The people are very polite, and observe much formality; for no person above the rank of a servant can walk in the streets without a sword by his side. They are also very particular in their dresses; and a native of the province wears a dress similar to what was worn in England upwards of a hundred years ago. (269-70)

Drawing upon this passage, what strikes the reader is the writer's tendency to throw a positive gaze upon everything that is related to his cultural experience, even remotely, as can be seen in his positive remarks on the Western aspect of the Transylvanian city. Nevertheless, what Jackson fails to record is the important nationalist developments in that precise region, where the Transylvanian School of Romanian Nationalists had already established a distinct ethnic identity for the Romanian citizens of the Austrian Empire. Therefore, Jackson tends to reflect upon Transylvania as a less distant Other, more pleasant in its outward appearance, a tendency that is often encountered in travel literature on Romanian prior to the Unity of the Principalities with Transylvania. Regarding this point, Wooster claims that

> Because Romanian Transylvanians were under the yoke of the Austrians, Hungarians and Saxons, there was little hatred directed towards 'the Other,' which would characterize Romanian nationalism in the late nineteenth-century. (85)

In conclusion, Jackson's travelogue on Wallachia and Transylvania is of major importance for a variety of reasons: first, he set the pace for other travellers in the Balkans, who sought to emulate his ideas on the position of the Ottoman peripheries at a cultural and political level. In addition, he establishes a discourse on Otherness, in which eighteenth-century Romania becomes synonymous with a dystopian world within the imperialist space. Third, Jackson's contradictory attitude towards the role of the Romanian Orthodox Church reveals his overall attempt to exalt the qualities of Protestantism as an indispensable nation-building tool of the Britons. To this end, his text is replete with all the travel conventions attached to the Balkan space.

# Chapter Two

# Thomas Thornton

## *THE PRESENT STATE OF TURKEY; A DESCRIPTION OF THE POLITICAL, CIVIL, AND RELIGIOUS CONSTITUTION, GOVERNMENT AND LAWS, OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE*

Thomas Thornton was a British merchant and author, born in 1762 in London. He was the eldest son of Thomas Thornton, a prosperous Freeman of the City of London[2]. In 1790 he became consul of the Levant Company and three years later, he worked at a British factory in Constantinople, spending fourteen years in Turkey and fifteen months at Odessa in the same capacity. During his long residence in Turkey, he produced the travelogue *The present State of Turkey; a Description of the political, civil, and religious Constitution, Government and Laws, of the Ottoman Empire* (1807). In 1813 he was appointed consul to the Levant Company but he died in Burnham a year later.

As regards the second chapter of this volume, it draws the reader's attention to Thornton's travel narrative *The present State of Turkey; a Description of the political, civil, and religious Constitution, Government and Laws, of the Ottoman Empire*, published in 1807. In his travel text, Thornton focuses upon all the issues that were crucial to the construction of Romanian identity, that is, the status of the Principalities as an unknown world, the vices of the local nobility and the dysfunctional role of the Phanariot Regime as well as the corruptive impact of Greek Orthodox Religion on the manners and mores of the inhabitants.

With respect to the representation of Wallachia and Moldavia as places off the beaten track, in the prefatory part of the travelogue Thornton raises a significant point, maintaining that the European peripheries of the Ottoman Empire are as remote and unknown to the average Victorian

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[2] A merchant who had freedom or right to trade in the City of London.

traveller as the most sequestered spots in Africa and America. At the same time, Thornton touches upon the lack of experience of most travellers in the Balkan peripheries of the Ottoman Empire, who are prone to misconceptions and lack scientific depth:

> The European provinces of Turkey, interesting as they are from their past celebrity and their actual importance, are, however, scarcely better known, except in the mere geographical outlines, than the forests of America or the deserts of Africa. The foreign traveller, unfamiliarized with the manners, and unacquainted with the language, of the people whom he studies, can have only a distant view, or a transient glance, even of the most prominent features of his subject: his descriptions are necessarily hasty and imperfect performances, and, when compared with the original model, resemble rather the dreams of a diseased brain, than the ideas treasured up in the memory from intelligent and minute investigation. (iii-iv)

Contrary to the alleged amateurish works of his predecessors, Thornton bestows great attention on his own narrative position as an omniscient traveller due to his fifteen years in Eastern Europe. As stressed by Thornton, his long residence in the region has allowed him to interact with members of the upper class of the Balkan societies, to familiarise himself with the native languages and to consolidate his erudition into political matters, a condition that distinguished him from previous authors:

> A residence of fourteen years in the British factory at Constantinople, and about fifteen months at Odessa on the coast of the Black Sea; occasional excursions to the provinces of Asia Minor, and the islands of the Archipelago; a familiar intimacy with the most respectable of the foreign ministers and their interpreters; a long and not unemployed leisure, and a knowledge of the languages of the country sufficient for the purposes of ordinary communication, must have furnished opportunities for original observation, and have enabled me to discriminate, with greater accuracy than the inexperienced reader, between the imaginary and the real in the relations of former writers. (iv-v)

The writer's emphasis on his omniscient status shows that he wishes to break away from the norms of the Romantic era, in which sentimentality and solitude constituted core elements of the travel experience, staunchly opposed to the travel pattern according to which

> Romantic travellers sought the fertility of unprogrammed, nonchalant itineraries; the suggestive magic of distance and wildness; the excitement of tactile engagement; the equation of strangeness with authenticity, otherness without foreknowledge, uncertainty and risk, authentic sensation,

premised on its being not only intense but also unique, always for the first time. (Hagglund 12)

Aside from his defiance of the quality of previous travelogues, and his positioning as a literary authority regarding the Balkan and Ottoman history, Thornton moves on to project himself as an unbiased traveller, who has sought to produce a text free from prejudice against other religions or Christian dogmas:

> In representing foreign manners I have divested myself of national prejudices; in describing foreign religions I have not confronted them with the opinions and practices of other sects or persuasions: I have endeavoured to avoid those expressions of malevolence which surely the pages of preceding Christian writers. I am not, however, conscious that I have glossed over any error, concealed any absurdity, or misrepresented any dogma, practice, or ceremony. (ix)

In juxtaposition with previous writers who penned travelogues on the Balkans and the Empire, Thornton dwells on the inaccurate and subjective representations of other nations, mainly because of their religious or cultural differences. In that sense, he attacks the process of Othering with which most British travellers of the previous century interspersed their texts. What is more, he subverts the dystopian characteristics attributed to the Balkans, and his attitude alludes to the dichotomy between the role of the traveller and the tourist, which was the result of the growing tourism in Europe. According to Carl Thompson,

> The burgeoning of touristic travel and travel writing prompted much hostile commentary. By the early nineteenth century, the tourist had come to seem emblematic of modernity, and of the more commercial and consumerist society brought into being by the Industrial Revolution. (49)

Opting for the narrative position of the omniscient traveller, whose impressions are based on factual data that derive from his personal experience, Thornton posits himself as a traveller according to Thompson's definition, juxtaposing his narrative with the low quality often found in the travel narratives of his contemporary writers:

> My personal acquaintance with several of the modern travellers has neither seduced me into undeserved praise, nor provoked me into bitterness. I have dismissed from my mind every consideration of private partiality or resentment, and having undertaken a work, whose only merit must be its intrinsic accuracy, I have sacrificed every inferior motive to the love of truth and justice. (xii)

Notwithstanding his introductory comments on the impartiality of his writings, Thornton touches upon the Christian and Jewish populations of the Empire as a thorny aspect of the Ottoman Empire, who are held responsible for the corruption of the administrative system and the atrocious reputation of the Ottoman Empire in the Western eyes:

> The Christian and Jewish subjects of the empire are an inexhaustible treasure to government and to individuals. From this source a tribe of extortioners, false witnesses, pleaders, and embroilers, all who are too idle to dig, and too proud to beg, draw, without the imputation of infamy, the means of subsistence. It is impossible to conceive an idea of the effrontery of the false witnesses, who are encouraged by impunity. The vizir alone can punish them: the other magistrates are compelled to pronounce according to their deposition, unless they can detect them in duplicity, or embarrass them by their questions. (151)

A closer look at the above passage suggests that Thornton, similarly to Jackson's narrative, intersperses his text with anti-Orthodox comments because his capacity as a wine merchant is intimately linked to the survival of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, contrary to his initial statement that he is unbiased towards every dogma and religion, he is prone to generalisations as regards the Jewish and Christian subjects of the Empire, thus placing them as the hostile Other.

Alluding to the subaltern and evil statues of religious minorities within the Ottoman Empire, and disputing their allegations on the injustice and oppression of the Ottoman Rule, Thornton adheres to the Othering of the religious communities of the Empire, resorting to what Elbarbary has described as a tendency to produce

> more negative and, above all, more generalized depictions of the "Other" without exploring the nuances that complicate a more complete and accurate representation of a given society. (2)

Elbarbary's argument on the British travellers' tendency to formulate ideas on the Other without delving into the culture or the political matters of the country visited neatly applies to Thornton's text, given that the British travel writer seeks to dispel all the allegations on the oppressive power of the Ottoman Empire exerted on its non-Muslim subjects. On another occasion, the writer questions the reproaches made on the cruelty of the Ottoman rule, legitimising the exercise of violence as an indispensable part of the war expeditions undertaken by the Empire:

War, in its mildest form, is a continual violation of justice and humanity: but the Turks have been reproached with systematic cruelty, and premeditated breach of faith. It is however untrue, that the Turkish laws of warfare condemn all the prisoners to death; for captives were always esteemed the most valuable part of the booty, and quarter was seldom refused to the submissive, unless danger was apprehended from the number of the prisoners, or the irruption of an enemy prevented their being carried off. All the riches of a city taken by storm are usually promised by the emperors to the soldiers, and they reserve to themselves only the buildings and the government. (209)

Drawing upon this excerpt, one can comprehend that Thornton is eager to attack everything that poses a threat to the status quo, represented here by the Ottoman Empire. Well aware of the geopolitical game that had already started at the close of the eighteenth century, Thornton corroborates Radu Cinpoes' claim that

At the beginning of the 18th century, the area comprising Transylvania and the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia was the locus for conflicts of interest between three empires: the Hapsburg, the Ottoman, and the Russian. (25)

Thornton's patronising outlook on the Principalities becomes obvious again, when he makes mention of the issue of religion in the Principalities. Similarly to Jackson, Thornton immediately assumes the role of the imperial beholder in his study of the religious matters in the regions that he visits, formulating the idea that the Orthodox clergy exerts a tyrannical influence on its flock, leading to the demoralisation of the natives:

The predominant religion in both principalities is that of the Greek Church. The inhabitants are indeed attached to its rites and ceremonies, and tremble at its denunciations; but it does not appear, perhaps because their priests tyrannize over them no less than their temporal superiors, that they feel for their religion the same ardour of affection which I have observed among the Greeks in Turkey. Religion, indeed, when administered, not by an equal or a fellow sufferer but by a master, has not the mild and beneficent character which endears it to its votaries. The ringing of bells, or beating with two wooden hammers on a long piece of wood suspended in the belfries, is the most troublesome expression of their devotion. (404)

Looking at the above fragment, it is evident that Thornton attacks the Eastern Orthodox Church, at a time when the Romanian clergy played a fundamental role in the construction of the nineteenth-century Romanian ethnic identity. Acknowledging the importance of the Romanian Church in