Although Spain had been excluded from the intellectual itinerary endorsed by the *Grand Tour*, by the end of the XVIII c. it was incorporated as a unique European destination, whose fewer visitations increased as travellers became eager to explore new places where they might gather original information. This circumstance, which did not make Spain one of the seaports of the prestigious *tour* turned Madrid into a singular destination, particularly during the last quarter of the century. It was the place where travellers could observe and register the reformations introduced by the reign of Charles III throughout his vast dominions and which this capital seemed to assay magnificently. The demand for reports on behalf of readers and the propagandised tone of Bourbon politics adorned the Spanish Monarchy with an attractive halo that refined the achievements of the regal policies as news spread the reformations that had been accomplished. This state of affairs was revealed not only in the travel stories of the day but also in the foundation of some monarchic institutions of the new shaft, namely, the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural.

It is well known that the Spanish Monarchy was characterized, on the one hand, by the heterogeneity and the vastness of its territories and, on the other, by the fact that in its configuration European and non-European territories whose signs of coexistence emerged at different levels. For instance, Madrid was for John Talbot Dillon a “capital” as well as the “centre” (“centro”) of some dominions. It was a city that was no longer the “filthiest” (“asqueroso”) place because it had become “on a part cleanliness” (“más limpias”) with many cities of Europe. Some new dispositions had come from this city, renewing and extending the commercial bonds with its colonies through the Pragmática de libre comercio (Pragmatics of free trade) of 1778. Consequently, as a result of this

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4 It would be advisable not to disregard the rather static representations of Spain given by French travellers. Specially, the period between 1750 and 1795 would reveal the validity of this state of affairs – the persistence of an indifferent and narrow view of Spain, ignoring its regional shades – prevailed until the arrival of travellers such as Chantreau, Bourgoing and Laborde. See Jean-René Aymes: “Los viajeros franceses y el mundo cultural del Mediterráneo (1789 – 1808)”, in Antonio Morales Moya (Coord): 1802. *España entre dos siglos. Sociedad y cultura*. Madrid, Sociedad estatal de conmemoraciones culturales. 2003.
twofold vision that appears in the eyes of the English, Madrid became the substance of the regal reformations by virtue of which the foreign traveller could grasp and interpret some jurisdictional and governmental changes as well as some distant and strange lands. The constant information throughout travel logs would become the evidence which, shaped in the light of the travellers’ introspection, turned the changes of the city, as well as the inference of the colonial bonds that came together in Madrid, into topics that established its condition of European capital and centre of the Spanish Monarchy. In fact, it may be stated that both dimensions came together as the collection of information that the Crown could offer travellers. Both levels supported each other and allowed other territories to be understood from Madrid. The existence of these territories depended, at least in the eye of the foreigner, upon the endorsement of these bonds, as well as upon the capacity of the centre to display them to the travellers.

Hence, the awareness of the transformations undergone by the monarchy in the extension of its territories were reinforced, disseminated and consumed by means of the representations of the reformations, which illustrated the intrinsic quality of the Spanish Monarchy and praised its capacity of regeneration. As some authors have pointed out, the reformist measures carried out on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean – that is “the liberalization of commerce, the introduction of intendancies, the creation of consulates and the extension of scientific expeditions” (“la liberalización del comercio, la implantación de las intendencias, la creación de consulados y la extensión de las expediciones científicas”) – constituted not only the substance of the political program motivated by them, but also the very purpose of monarchic propaganda. The pair monarchy-propaganda was conceived and represented repeatedly, and it was included in the travel stories of the period. This would be proof of at least one of the attractions that guided the deviation of the travellers who visited Madrid during the last quarter of the XVIII c. Similarly, the Crown created places of “curious” (“curiosa”) sociability to display these dimensions, which in turn became tangible by virtue of the exhibition of the “rarities” (“raralezas”) of American nature.

In this context, some of those new metropolitan institutions hoarded the very substance of the reformation, that is to say, they joined the will of political-

5 The travel stories used throughout this paper, except the one by John Talbot Dillon, correspond to the translation and compilation by J. García Mercadal: Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal. Tomos IV, V y VI. España, Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Educación y Cultura. 1999. Henceforward cited by the name of the author of the travel log.

6 “The town of Madrid is now become the capital of the monarchs of Spain, situated in the center of their dominions, and from one of the filthiest places imaginable, is at present on a part cleanliness with several principal cities of Europe, being likewise well paved and lighted, but in respect to population, it is far inferior to London, Paris, or Naples […].

[…] I shall not particularize the various improvements that have taken place of late years; however the new regulations and extension of commerce with their American colonies, are worthy of notice, particularly the open and free trade with each other granted in 1764, to the provinces of Peru, New Spain, Guatemala, and Kingdom of Granada […]. To extend this advantage further to the southward, six boats were appointed in 1767, to sail from Coruña to the river of Plate, and city of Buenos Ayres, from whence six expresses were to proceed annually with the letters for Peru and Chili […].” John Talbot Dillon: Travels through Spain: With a view to illustrate the natural history and physical geography of that Kingdom, in a series of letters. Interspersed with historical anecdotes; adorned with copper-plates and a new map of Spain; writer in the course of a late through that kingdom by John Talbot Dillon. London, Birmingham, Printed for R. Baldwin and Pearson and Rollason. 1782. p. 67, 74 y 75.

administrative intervention with intellectual-propagandist imposition. The innovations introduced by the Crown thus became one of the phenomena observed by the travellers, inspiring their travel records as well as the circulation of the reformatory. That is why, when travellers observed, they recorded and pondered upon the urban and academic news of Madrid. This may have pervaded their representation of attributes of urbanity and political entity of the Urbs Regia. Therefore, the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural exhibited, in its natural objects, not only a collection of "rarities" ("rarezas") intended to amuse locals and foreigners, but also the colonial bonds between the Spanish king and his distant territories. The Real Gabinete revealed the political capacity of the Crown to appropriate American nature and hence to operate a conciliation, implied by the public representation of its "curiosities" ("curiosidades"), gathering and exhibiting in a single locus a dissonant amalgamation of minerals, "quadrupeds" ("quadrupedos"), birds, fossils, etc.

In his Discurso sobre el gusto actual de los españoles en la literatura, Juan Sempere y Guarinos depicted, from a historical and philosophical perspective, the events that, in his view, had contributed to the modelling of the "taste" ("gusto") of the Spanish during the XVIII c. In his text, a sort of epic chronology threaded with kings, queens, regal decrees, institutions, disciplines, erudite practices, objects, territories and "some particular men [...] guided by their genius" ("algunos hombres particulares [...] guiados de su genio"), and an explanation about the entity of the "taste" ("gusto"), are outlined indirectly; on the other hand, he directly summarizes an exposition about the political mechanisms by means of which the Crown enforced the concept of "gusto".

During the eighteenth century, the notion of taste was established as an essential element of aesthetic thought. Although at first the concept was linked to the judgement of artistic and literary works, the wider scope of its usage to define other dimensions made its conceptual texture more complex. Anyway, to speak of "gusto" in the XVIII c. was to make reference to the question of appraising and judging the beauty of natural or artistic things, which entailed an act in which understanding and sensibility coexisted. As it was, in fact, an activity linked to knowledge, fluctuating between individual and collective actions, the social, cultural and political consequences involved in the act became an issue privileged by illustrated discussions.

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8 The Discurso... is an additional text to the Spanish translation that Sampere y Guarinos made of the work by Muratori, Reflexiones sobre el buen gusto en las ciencias y en las artes. In both texts the ideas of the translator emerge visibly. While in the translation Sampere y Guarinos obliterates the initial meaning of Muratori’s work, in his Discurso... his own ideas are emphasized noticeably when he directly approaches the case of Spain. Ludovico Antonio Muratori: Reflexiones sobre el buen gusto en las ciencias, y en las artes / con un Discurso sobre el gusto actual de los españoles en la Literatura, by Dn. Juan Sempere y Guarinos. Madrid, en la Impronta de don Antonio de Sancha. 1782. Henceforward, Antonio Muratori will be cited indistinctly with reference either to Reflexiones... or to Discurso...


10 “Últimamente, considerando que en España se carece de la Historia Literaria del tiempo corriente, por no haver Diarios, ni las demás obras periódicas con que en otras Naciones se informa al público de los adelantamientos de la Literatura; he creído que sería muy del caso, si tratándose en la Obra principal de los médios de formar el Buen Gasto, daba alguna noticia de los que se han practicado en España para elevarlo al estado en que ahora se encuentra. Para lo qual he escrito el adjunto Discurso sobre el Gusto actual de los Españoles en la Literatura [...] Solamente me he propuesto el hacer concebir alguna idea de los establecimientos y obras que mas han influido en el gusto actual de los Españoles [...].” Ludovico Antonio Muratori: Op. Cit. p. 196.


This was the concern approached in Sampere y Guarinos’s work. Throughout his text, he strived to reflect upon and to change a state of affairs that had to do with the degree of *politesse* of the Spanish in particular. That is why the author arranged the apparently unfathomable collection of events into a network of equivalences constituted by the weft of the reformist policies that the Bourbon Crown had developed. The foundation of academies, gardens, cabinets, the edition of books and dictionaries, the translation of works approved by the “*gusto*” as objects of refinement and intelligence, the urban repairs carried out in Madrid or the changes introduced in the means of communication with the American colonies, etc, made up the substance that endorsed Sampere y Guarinos’s assertions. These assertions revealed the framework of the establishment and distribution of the Crown’s fondness for science and technology. Consequently, academies, botanical gardens or cabinets of curiosities, etc. were accepted by society and scholars alike, as places of cordiality where natural phenomena were consumed not only for their educational value but also for their condition of a spectacle.
As a matter of fact, for some time now, a historiographic consent has grown regarding the sociological dimensions that may have been involved in the construction, diffusion and consolidation of the *philosophia natural* during the centuries of the early modern age in Europe. Special attention has been given to the kind of “science” carried out in England in the XVII and XVIII centuries. Perhaps the most outstanding feature of this introspection is the inquiry into the bases and mechanisms used by *practitioners* to develop factual knowledge of nature. This perspective has revealed the participation of several agents, the increase in the number of places dedicated to the production of knowledge, the variety of registers and the sources of documents referred to as well as the diversity of rhetorical devices deployed to explain and exhibit the secrets of nature. Therefore, on the one hand, the courtly and masculine character of “science” has been elucidated, and on the other, the different degrees of socio-cultural and political appropriation of its contents have been explained. This has enabled advancement between both insights towards the foundations of sociological and cultural variables involved in the production of knowledge.

It is interesting to point out that this historiographic inflexion has enabled the understanding of the remarkable changes that took place throughout the XVIII c. in connection with the consumption and cultural-political appropriation of science and technology. Both became objects of collective enjoyment. The proliferation of places destined to exhibition became a solid piece of evidence of the new European urban reality. Botanical gardens, cabinets or art galleries were established in the towns, existing accordingly under regal protection, and they became another urban attraction. For instance, besides being a court with the main institutions of the royal government, Madrid turned into a “Sitio Real” (Royal Place) where demonstrations, experiments and spectacles generated in the light of the “science” of the century were considered proper. These expressions had a definite space in the urban and institutional life of laymen and courtiers alike. However, they were unstable in character since they were a scholarly experiment and a spectacle at the same time; they instructed and amused as they brought together “pleasure” (“placer”) and “usefulness” (“utilidad”). The common feature that linked them and made them participate in a unique political logic was their capacity to...

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20 The inverted commas are my own.


23 In this respect it can be stated that the degree of autonomy of these places varied in each country according to the consistency of the public circle created by newspapers, coffee-houses, etc. and the capacity of the monarchic authority to participate in the process implied by the emergence of those places. See the cited works by John Brewer in addition to Patrick O’Brien: “Reflections and mediations on Antwerp, Amsterdam and London in their golden ages” and Larry Stewart: “Philosophers in the counting-houses: commerce, coffee-houses and experiment in early modern London” both in Patrick O’Brien, Derek Kene, Marjolein’t Hart, Herman van der Wee (eds.): *Urban achievements in early modern Europe. Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2001.

evince the force of the jurisdictional power that had established them. In this sense, and according to what can be inferred from Sampere y Guarinos, the yearning for the enlightenment of the “gusto” had its corollary in the process that led to its establishment and that was expressed in the foundation of the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural, among many other administrative acts of the kind. The achievement of this academic status would imply a sort of corroboration of the cultural politics that the Crown deployed before the eyes of locals and foreigners. These institutions were proof of the exertion of monarchic power that could dictate and establish the norms of “gusto” for natural History as well as create places of sociability and bring together the “exquisite things” (“cosas exquisitas”) that “America” and the “kingdom” (“reyno”) cherished within their territories for the instruction and enjoyment of all those who visited the Urbs Regia.

25 “Este gusto se fue radicando, y estendiéndose mas con el estudio de la Física Experimental, y el de las matemáticas. Fernando VI havia hecho traer una exquisita colección de máquinas, que S.M. tuvo la satisfacción de manejar por sí mismo en varias ocasiones con mucho acierto. Pasadas estas al Real Seminario de Nobles, huyó muchos caballeros de grandeza, que se aficionaron à su manejo, è inteligencia, y se dio al público un ensayo de su aplicación en unas conclusiones dedicadas à la señora Reyna Doña Bárbara, à la que S. M. tuvo la complacencia de asistir. Estos ejemplos tan autorizados no podían menos de dar recomendación à una ciencia, que junta al atractivo del placer las ventajas de la utilidad. El P. Zacagnini, Maestro de ella en el Seminario, traduxo al español las Lecciones del célebre Abate Mollet, para la mas facil enseñanza de sus discípulos: y desde entonces se fue disminuyendo en España sensiblemente la pasion por los sistemas abstractos, y conviertiéndose à la observación de la naturaleza.

La Botánica, y la Chymica tuvieron yà entonces algunos apasionados, à cuya solicitud se debieron los primeros fundamentos del Real Jardín botánico, y el Gavinete de Historia Natural”. Antonio Muratori: Op. Cit. p. 279.

26 The creation as well as the use that the Crown made of the Real Jardín Botánico, and the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural can be considered in terms of the argumentation supported in this paper. The creation and the possession of the botanical garden was also a matter of “gusto”, insofar as this institution was an essential component of the urban environment that an “Enlightened King” (“Monarca Ilustrado”) should have near the end of the XVIII c. The Real Jardín Botánico realized the hereditary and jurisdictional power of the Crown since, on the one hand, it had the function of a scientific institution dedicated to studying American flora with the purpose of providing medical solutions for the royal family, and on the other, it became one of the scenes that embellished and magnified the city and its king: “Como el Jardín Botánico, y el Gavinete de Historia Natural son dos establecimientos muy considerables, y que llaman la atención de quantos hombres de gusto vienen à Madrid, será muy del caso dar alguna noticia de su utilidad. El P. Zacagnini, Maestro de ella en el Seminario, traduxo al español las Lecciones del célebre Abate Mollet, para la mas facil enseñanza de sus discípulos: y desde entonces se fue disminuyendo en España sensiblemente la pasion por los sistemas abstractos, y conviertiéndose à la observación de la naturaleza.


27 “[…] El Gavinete de Historia Natural ha tenido menores principios. Don Pedro Franco Dávila, rico Indiano Español, llevado de su gusto, y particular inclinación à este ramo de Literatura, se estableció en Paris, en donde por su gran inteligencia en el conocimiento de las cosas mas raras en los tres Reynos, animal, vegetable, y mineral, llegó à formar un Gavinete, que se hizo muy famoso en aquella Corte, y del qual imprimió el indice en tres tomos. Pasado algún tiempo, penso en hacer donación de él al rey nuestro Señor, y hecho presente en su pensamiento por medio del Excelentísimo Señor Marques de Grimaldi, S. M. Admitió benignamente aquel rasgo de generosidad de u vasallo, y dio orden para que se condujera à España el Gavinete del Señor Davila, à quien nombro por su Director […] y al mismo tiempo se mandaron pasar à el muchas cosas exquisitas que havia en la que llamaban casa de la Geografía, y otras que han venido de America, y de varias partes del reyno, por orden, è instrucción comunicada à todos
Although the Grand Tour is considered the best example of urban circulation during the early modern age in Europe, this historiographic assertion has lost intensity due to the greater historical complexity of mobility. Perhaps one of the assumptions of this new state of affairs emerged from the division in the way of understanding mobility, which implied a more precise historical definition regarding journeys as well as the particular shades between both realities. Another possible assumption would be the distinction between voyage and travel writing in that they are two dimensions which would not necessarily include one another, even though they do come together.

Thus, on inquiring upon the sociological outlines of this particular kind of apodemic experience, a more complex scene has emerged. The boundaries of urban circulation were widened and other agents, practices and geographic spaces were included in its realm. Firstly, it has been proved that young English nobles were accompanied by a wider spectrum of travellers: aristocrats, administrative officials, military, students, etc. who, under the guise of “visitors” (“visitantes”), took part in the mundane and urban peregrination of eighteenth century capitals beyond the limits of the Grand Tour. Like the grands touristes, the visitors probably combined their course with observation, writing, conversation, etc, though less strictly. Secondly, it has also been proved that new destinations proliferated as well since, as the century advanced, and particularly during the last quarter, the canonized route was enlarged with ports in Russia, Scandinavia, Greece and the Mediterranean Levant.


During the XVII and XVIII centuries the Grand Tour was established as a kind of journey of “initiation” with the purpose of instructing young English nobles in social, cultural and political practices of some continental nations. It can be defined as an institution that was developed rather rigidly in England since the mid-XVII century and became fashionable during the XVIII c. Its widest social scope included other agents – aristocrats, ladies, etc. – and other objectives, as is the case of the curiosity for sciences, arts and technology. Its initial version was characterized as a unique voyage – set apart for the youthful nobles who thus crowned their academic formation – with an itinerary that went from north to south and which canonized France, Italy, the German Nations and the Netherlands as its destinations. Pierre Chessex: « Grand Tour », in Michel Delon (dir.): Dictionnaire européen des Lumières. Paris, PUF. 1997. p. 518.

The contributions of postcolonial studies and cultural studies have special significance in this aspect. These studies have shown how voyages were nurtured by a wide range of practices – cultural, political, social, administrative, jurisdictional, etc. Thus travel writing has yielded it privileged position as a dimension of analysis in the light of a wider range of manners of documentation, for instance the mobilization of natural objects. So, the notion of travel writing, as well as the mark it left, lost strength and, far from abandoning the consideration of the norms of genre, there has been an advancement towards the consideration of other kinds of registers – administrative, intimate, etc. – in which the importance of the norms of literary genre has been imbued by the inclusion of other dimensions that correspond to other generic orders – e.g. the administrative genre – as well as other more informal ones. In this respect, see Steve, Clark (ed): Travel writing and Empire: Postcolonial theory in transit. London and New York, Zed Books. 1999; Cohn, Bernard: Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: The British in India. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1996; Brian Dolan: Exploring European frontiers: Eighteenth century travelers in the age of enlightenment. Basingstoke, Macmillan. 2000.

It must be borne in mind that the conviction of the pedagogic capacity of the voyage gave place to another form of urban circulation, the peregrinatio academica of university students. It was a practice that, far from being exclusively English, made up an educational space in which the students from Sweden, Poland, Holland, Russia and Spain also participated.

The transformation of the itinerary, caused by the outburst of the French Revolution and the rosary of Napoleonic wars staged upon the traditional territories of the Grand tour, constituted, according to some authors, a severe inflexion in the very essence of the prestigious voyage. Hence, the confrontation of different geographical, cultural and political realities, in which an acknowledged and experienced canon
Given the perspectives created by these historiographic changes, it can be stated that even though Spain was left out of the route determined by the *Grand Tour*, this circumstance would not imply the absence of other urban travellers, i.e. of “visitors”. They came mainly between the end of the Seven Years’ War and the last years of the reign of Charles III, that is, the decades of 1770 and 1780, approximately. According to some authors, this late concentration of travellers might explain the validity of an outdated corpus of information about Spain, even in such late years as 1744, considering that compilations of English voyages referred to works of 1673, 1685 and 1694. Perhaps because the illustrated circles, especially the French and English ones, presumed that the Spanish had no scientific or cultural prestige, the number of voyages to Spain was insignificant. Therefore the information shaped by the travel writings of the “visitors” to Madrid must have had the force of a novelty.

Madrid displayed a number of “things” (“cosas”) and “monuments” (“monumentos”) that nurtured the travellers’ “curiosity” (“curiosidad”). Not only did they find a refurbished urban structure in the palaces, gardens, academies, cabinets and walkways, but they found the signs of cultural and political-administrative ideas and practices that the century had established as the frame of urban *politesse* as well. For some travellers, Madrid was orderly, “precise” (“exactly”) in its arrangement; its streets were “wide” (“grandes”), “beautiful” (“bellas”) and “well-lit” (“iluminadas”). It had become “one of the most beautiful cities of Europe” (“una de las más bellas ciudades de Europa”). In spite of not having “great roads, nor woods or river” (“un gran camino, ni bosque, ni río”), it was “the centre of the Spanish monarchy” (“el centro de

civilité”) could not be confirmed any longer, introduced changes in the quality and profoundness of the travellers’ observation. Hence a more kaleidoscopic representation of Europe emerged upon the basis of the evidence of the heterogenic and “exotic” character of its territories and towns, and with this the traveller’s view was enriched with a deep ethnographic and antiquarian interest. See Brian Dolan: *Op. Cit.* in particular, p. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13.


34 However, perhaps this very same circumstance might explain the “professional”, rather than “philosophical” character of the English travellers who visited the peninsula in the last third of the XVIII c. These travellers were concerned about a number of political, economic, productive and administrative matters. They may have expected to find in Spain the necessary information to explain and contrast the profound changes suffered by insular economy. Consol Freixa: “Imágenes y percepción de la naturaleza en el viajero ilustrado”. *Scripta Nova. Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales*, Nº 42, 1999. pp. 1-15. p. 2 and 3. The travel writings by Italian travellers were few and indefinite concerning the objects they dealt with. Nevertheless, their main feature was the ambiguous feeling they reveal through the experience of observing and writing about a country they had been close to through strong bonds of political subordination and cultural exchange. See Jörg Garms: “Viajeros italianos en España en época de Carlos III”, in AAVV: *Carlos III. Alcalde de Madrid 1788-1988*. Madrid. 1988. p. 85 and 86.

35 “Todos tenemos una manera de ver que nos es propia, el mismo objeto se presenta al observador bajo cosas diversas [...] Los mismos monumentos, que desgraciadamente y a menudo sobre casi lo único que atraían la curiosidad de los viajeros, caen ruina; otros monumentos suceden a los antiguos, y la infatigable curiosidad encuentra siempre un nuevo alimento”. Juan Francisco Peyron: *Ensayos sobre España*. 1780.

36 “La ciudad está rodeada de muros con barreras en las diferentes salidas [...] algunas de sus calles, tales como las de Atocha [...] son grandes y bellas [...] están muy limpias, bien pavimentadas e iluminadas con faroles de cincuenta a sesenta varas de distancia.

La policía, modelada sobre la de París, es muy exacta [...]”. Sir Hew Whiterford Dalrymple: *Viaje por España y Portugal*. 1775. p. 181.


38 Anonymous: *Op. Cit.* p. 59. The same negative assertions about the less important features of Madrid compared to other capitals can be found in other voyagers who point out the simplicity of the city while they acknowledge the purport of the improvements. This is the case of Juan Francisco Peyron: “Nada os anuncia en las proximidades de Madrid que llegás a la capital de la monarquía española [...] No veis ni
la monarquía española”). It was the place where the Crown wanted to display the fruits of its reformist action, in a more tangible way for the eyes of the “visitor”.

Those images actually represent a collection of information. However, their constant presence would be anchored in the observation of the traveller who transformed them by cutting out a piece of the observed reality, and, given his capacity to add or subtract new information about the images, turned them into variables which were useful to define, explain and communicate the existence of an object or phenomenon. Therefore, the images that the “visitors” created not only accounted for the attractions that caught the attention of an urban traveller of the XVIII c., but they were also the indications of mental processes by means of which the travellers defined the representation of urbanity of their day. The perceptions of Madrid that travellers synthesized brought both dimensions together. Since Madrid was a European capital and the centre of the Spanish Monarchy, they witnessed new developments of the buildings and the new forms of exerting jurisdictional power. These novelties were the attractions that the Urbs Regia offered the “visitor”, and they had to do with the courtly taste of the century, shown through the interest in palaces, gardens and public walkways, and on the other hand, with the signs of the renovated action of monarchic power expressed in the newly created scientific institutions, the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural, the Real Jardín Botánico and other metropolitan academies.

For instance, the palaces were just a few of the attractions a city could offer. Even though the final balance was positive, some palaces in Madrid, such as the Palacio Nuevo, were seen only as “a big square building, ridiculous on the outside” (“un gran edificio cuadrado, ridículo por fuera”) and according to “the knowledgeable [...] rather outdated” (“los entendidos [...] un poco pasado”). Worthy of the same aesthetic judgements, the Palacio de Buen Retiro was considered by others as “mediocre”, its sole virtue seemed to be that it had “a confortable situation, the only one of the villa donde hubiese árboles y el aire más puro y más sano”), even though its “vast” (“vasto”) park did not have “very noteworthy things, except for a beautiful equestrian statue of Philip IV and a great pond” (“cosas muy notables, de no ser una hermosa estatua ecuestre de Felip IV y un gran estanque [...].

jardines, ni castillos, ni casas de campo. El suelo parece árido, está despojado de árboles y de verdor [...]”; p. 345; or Barón de Bourgoing: “Por lo de más, hay en Madrid pocos edificios que merezcan la atención del viajero. Esta capital está generalmente despejada; sus calles, sin ser trazadas a cordel, son anchas y poco tortuosas. Por la escasez de lluvias y la cuidadosa vigilancia, es una de las ciudades más limpias de Europa. Pero, si exceptuamos el Prado y sus avenidas, no podemos citar ninguna barriada hermosa. La célebre Plaza Mayor no tiene nada que justifique el entusiasmo con que la elogian los españoles [...]” Barón de Bourgoing: Un paseo por España durante la Revolución Francesa. 1777-1795. p 482.

40 “En medio de esos áridos campos es donde está situado Madrid [...] La ciudad está bien cortada, las calles son anchas y están decoradas de fuentes; las casas, grandes y espaciosas, dan al mismo tiempo una idea de magnificencia y de miseria [...] El rey de hoy (Carlos III) es, realmente, un gran rey. Su gobierno es vigoroso [...] ha restablecido el orden en las distintas ramas de la administración, embellecido la capital, construido las más hermosas carreteras de Europa, establecido al militar en un pie respetable [...]”. Conde G. PH. Creutz: Carta a Marmontel. 1765. p. 108.

44 Ibid. P. 182.
47 Ibid. P. 182.
Furthermore, Aranjuez offered the “visitor” a scene in which, according to the Count G. PH. Creutz, “[...] the triumph of art and nature” (“el triunfo del arte y de la naturaleza“47) could be seen. By the same token, John Talbot Dillon states that this “triumph” (“triunfo”) made Aranjuez a place to enjoy rural simplicity and the magnificence of its avenues48. Nevertheless, other travellers considered that its gardens were old-fashioned. The schematic disposition eventually exposed a criticism towards the aesthetic canons of gardening because it did not offer the observer a harmonic assemblage of trees, water courses and buildings in ruins – like the English gardens canonized by the century as one of the expressions of “gusto” for the representation and contemplation of nature. According to Major W. Dalrymple, it was a matter of “gusto” that was not made up for by the magnificence that flowed from the wholeness of Aranjuez49, or similarly, according to Juan Francisco Peyron, by the “many pleasant situations” (“varias situaciones agradables”) that were conferred by the gardens of Buen Retiro50.

This collection of images made up a kind of “factual information” which was anchored in the direct observation of the “visitor” and in the second-hand readings that he may have made. Like the chorographies or maps of the cities, travel stories were an instrument by means of which information was conveyed while it was shaped to be used

47 “El Tajo es llevado bajo las ventanas del palacio, donde forma la más bella cascada que haya en el mundo. Los árboles de la avenida de la Reina, que sigue al Tajo en una extensión de una legua, fueron plantados en tiempos de Carlos V. En la India no se ven tan grandes. Se pierden en las nubes y forman con su sombra bóvedas impenetrables a los ardores del sol [...]. Un millón de paseos diversos ofrecen las más pintorescas perspectivas y el mismo frescor. Es una cosa voluptuosa en un país en que los calores son tan desesperantes”. Op. Cit. p. 109.

48 “The royal seat of Aranjuez, seven leagues distant from Madrid, and to which a most noble road has lately been made, is delightfully situated at the conflux of the rivers Tagus and Jarama; which run through the gardens, and add new beauty to this charming spot, where art and nature seem to go hand in hand with the most pleasing and rural simplicity. On one side, fine avenues of stately oaks and lofty elms, convey the truest ideas of magnificence, while they afford the most reviving shade; on the other, the sudden transitions to lawns and wilderness, the cascades of water breaking through the thickets, the tuneful songs of numberless birds, sheltered in these cool recesses, the occasional appearance and passage of the monarch, attended by the grandees of this kingdom; all these objects united, and concentred in one point, sill the imagination with pleasing ideas, and impress the mind of a traveler with a thousand agreeable sensations, particularly in the spring, when every things is in high bloom and perfection, and engage him to look at Aranjuez as one of the most beautiful places in Europe”. Op. Cit. p. 81 y 82.

49 “Aranjuez. Es un castillo real donde reside la corte [...] está situado en un llano; el palacio, construido de ladrillos, con algunas pilastras de piedra, en el orden toscano [...]. Felipe II ha envuelto los jardines por el curso del tajo y ha construido dos cascadas que distribuyen allí mucho fresco y agrado; esos jardines están compuestos de gran número de avenidas de olmos hervosísimos; la principal podría tener aproximadamente des seiscentas a setecientas varas de larga [...] cercada a cada lado por altos setos [...] hay salas formadas en cuadro [...] con estanques y surtidores de diferentes figuras [...] Hay [...] partes en donde han ejecutado ridiculas miserias en bordados de mirto; son flores de lis [...] Esos jardines se encuentran todavía hoy tal como fueron construídos al principio; aún no han adquirido en este país el verdadero gusto de los jardines; el fresco de esas aguas y de esas vasta umbriás de olmos es la sola belleza que los hace recomendables; la vista está constantemente cerrada por la estrecha prisión de esos altos setos, lo que da una idea de molestias y violencias; la monótoma uniformidad de esas grandes avenidas, siempre rectas, fatiga pronto y, al fin, resulta fastidiosa”. Op. Cit. P. 180

50 “ [...] Esos jardines tienen casi una legua de extensión; encierran una hermosa fábrica de porcelana [...] y varias ermitas que allí estaban cuando Felipe IV compró ese terreno [...]. Al dejar el jardín que tiene el palacio [...] se avanza en el parque y, al cabo de algunos cientos de pasos se encuentra uno en el jardín llamado jardín de San Pablo [...]. Hay en los jardines del Buen retiro algunos estanques, varias fuentes y una especie de lago [...] Sería fácil, con poco gasto, y con gusto, hacer de él una residencia muy agradable”. Op. Cit. P. 355 y 356.
by other “visitors”.51 The travel story certified a state of affairs and in a way anticipated it through written transmission. These writings gave way to a wide range of appropriations. Towards the end of the XVIII c. travellers, philosophers and scholars in general, had synthesized a collection of generic norms that ensured that the travel stories would be on the verge of verisimilitude.52 The documentary power of writing in general, and of travel writing in particular, were the grounds of the informative register that endorsed the attractions that Madrid hoarded and that could be shared with other readers or travellers.53 Its palaces, walkways and gardens as well as the natural objects within them were the “amusements” (“diversiones”) that the “visitor” could encounter. A “distraction” (“distracción”) could be found in El Prado, as well as animals and plants arranged in Aranjuez to amuse those attracted by their exoticness.55

Similarly, other objects were moved by means of these “distractions” (“distracciones”). If, as we state in this paper, Madrid was the very substance of the monarchic reformation in the eyes of the travellers, whoever consumed those “diversions” (“diversiones”) likewise assumed the presence of power that had established them and whose evidence was granted by the rosary of reflections that endorsed the enjoyment and the description expressed by the “visitor”. This propagandistic function displayed by the Crown, and transmitted by travellers and their writings by virtue of the appropriation of those “distractions” (“distracciones”), enabled them to encounter material support for the spreading of their ideas and reformatons.56

52 Eighteenth century debates about the generic norms of travel writing approached many issues. For instance, the necessary limitations that had to be established between the description and the reflection of the traveller, because it was generally believed that travel literature should be to amuse and instruct. Similarly, the imperative of verisimilitude caused the emergence of several writing devices that ensured that the travel story had the status of an administrative document, that is, a “memory of state” (“memoria de estado”). Anyway, these mutilations influenced the traveller, granting him the condition of witness instead of impostor. In this respect, see Charles Batten Jr.: Pleasurable instruction: Form and convention in 18th century travel literature. Berkeley, London, University of California Press. 1978. p. 2, 5, 8, 14, 82, and 91; Manuel Lucena Girald: “El reformismo borbónico y la publicación de noticias sobre el nuevo mundo”, in García Castañeda, Salvador (Ed): Literatura de viajes. El viejo y el nuevo mundo. Madrid. 1999; Juan Pimentel: “Impostores y testigos: Verosimilitud y relaciones de viaje”, in Pimentel, Juan: Testigos del mundo. Ciencia, literatura y viajes en la ilustración. Madrid, Marcial Pons. 2003.
53 Some authors may consider this capacity of travel writings to create a representation of a place or object as one of the tensions proper of the Grand Tour, since the many viewpoints create as many images of the observed as there are observers. However, this fluctuating force bestowed on the literature generated by voyages an attractive tone, reflecting its sociological and historical density. See Daniel Roche: Op. Cit. p. 686 and 687.
55 “[…] At one moment the sturdy buffalo moves before you, drawing his heavy burthen; soon after, the slow camel with his ponderous load; while the swift Zebra with his striped garment frisks over the plains. If you approach the farm, every object of convenience is consulted, and in the dairy every degree of neatness. The Ducht cow enjoys a luxuriant pasture, the brood mares greatly enliven the landscape, and the stables are filled with the most excellent horses. An immense nursery furnishes all manner of trees and plants, a cedar of Libanus, which [P. 82] about twenty years ago was only a twig […] The Judas tree, which the Spaniards call Arbol de Amor, being happily dispersed there […] The fine avenue which also serves for a public walk, called Calle de la Reyna has nothing equal to it at Versailles The extensive flower garden on one side, renders the walk extremely pleasant […] A great many elms and oaks have been planted this year […] which must likewise include vines, olives, shrubs, &c. They have lately begun to cultivate pineapples, unknown in every other part of the kingdom”. John Talbot Dillon: Op. Cit. p. 83.
56 “Madrid no tiene en su interior más que un solo paseo, que es el Prado, tan famoso en casi todas las novelas españolas […] Las órdenes y el buen gusto del señor conde de Aranda la han hecho adornar, alisar y plantar varias avenidas de árboles, que, sin embargo, encuentran muchas dificultades para
That is how the Bourbon Crown created a representation that combined, perhaps in equal parts, the attributes of politesse with the attributes of jurisdictional power, which it considered itself worthy of in the context of the other European monarchies.

The cabinets of curiosities of the XVI and XVII centuries as well as the botanical gardens and the cabinets of natural History in the XVIII c. were established in a locus where a particular type of sociability connected with the possession and contemplation of the objects of nature came to life. This phenomenon was promoted by behaviours generated from scientific and amateur vocations. The circuit created by the “visitors” in the XVIII c. through their travel writings and their correspondence tended to shape what some authors call “aesthetics” of “rarities” and of “curiosity”. By virtue of the circulation of their texts, the visitation to the places that exhibited “curiosities” (“curiosidades”) was claimed as a significant urban distraction. This change was introduced with the century and it tended to distort the rather “formalist” contours of the Grand Tour, while it consolidated the more “playful” aspects of urban mobility in general.

Therefore, although the pleasure of contemplating “rarities” (“rarezas”) was maintained throughout the XVIII c., the changes related to the state of the objects and the dimension of the places for exhibition entailed a deep adjustment in the quality of the social and intellectual appropriation of nature. Academic and mundane approval of natural History together with the remarkable process of metropolization of science became the two perspectives that characterized scientific culture of the second half of the enlightened century in Europe in general and in Spain in particular. The change undergone by the “gusto” of experts and amateurs meant that their interest fluctuated from objects of heraldry – medals, coins, shields, etc. – to objects of nature – plants, animals, minerals, etc. Consequently, the frame of mind of the Crown and of the travellers changed. While in 1755 some “visitors” to Madrid expressed the mediocrity

prosperar, a pesar de todo el cuidado que en ello ponen. A él debe también la villa de Madrid la limpieza y la seguridad de que goza [...]


57 “El palacio del retiro está junto a un paseo famoso [...] el Prado [...] Carlos III lo allanó y puso faroles y árboles en sus avenidas; ha ordenado que lo rieguen y lo adornen con estatuas y fuentes, algunas de las cuales, como la de Cibeles [...] son de bastantes buen estilo. Con todo esto lo ha convertido en un paseo espléndido que se puede frecuentar con agrado y seguridad [...] algunas de las mejores calles de esta villa desembocan en este paseo, entre ellas las de Alcalá, una de las más anchas de Europa, que lo cruza para terminar [...] en la puerta de Alcalá, que, a pesar de su poco airesa traza, no deja de tener un aspecto monumental”.


of the “cabinet of curiosities” (“gabinete de curiosidades”) of the Palacio Real63, twenty five years later, in 1780, others praised the great changes introduced under the heading of “Academies” (“De las Academias”64) – in a specific paragraph that dealt with the four academies of Madrid –.

Thus, the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural, another component of the cultural strategy that the Crown had created to promote its scientific dignity internationally, became material proof of the urban renovation of Madrid65 together with the “urbanization of the prairies and the conception of the hill of science” (“urbanización de los prados y la concepción de la colina de las ciencias”66). Similarly, it was also established as an attraction for travellers who qualified it as “[...]one of the most complete collections of Europe in metals, minerals, marbles, precious stones, corals, madrepor and other marine productions” (“[...] una de las colecciones más completas de Europa en metales, minerales, mármoles, piedras preciosas, corales, madreporas y otras producciones marinas [...]”67. That is why its foundation brought together the “playful” appropriation of natural History, art and technology and other political and administrative contents and practices that endorsed cultural usage68. These assertions

63 “Vuelvo al gabinete. No es otra cosa que un cuartito pequeño, incluso se pudiera decir un armario de cosas preciosas en pinturas, esculturas, pedrerías y otras rarezas. Hay allí muchas reliquias, que, por respeto, pasare en silencio [...]”. Norberto Caimo: Viaje a España hecho en el año 1755. p. 809.
65 The first project to found a cabinet of natural History in Spain is due to a proposal presented to King Fernando VII by Antonio de Ulloa in 1752. Around 1753 Guillermo Bowles, Agustín de la Planche, Andrés Keterlin and his son, etc. were already in Madrid. On account of their expertise, they were to work as collectors, chemists, etc, in charge of building the estate of the future institution. Bowles, for instance, was commissioned to travel around Extremadura, Andalusia and Valencia, as well as some European capitals, to collect minerals and fossils that were suitable to be exhibited. However, in spite of the high financial expenses for the Crown, the period between 1755 – when the Director Antonio de Ulloa renounced – and 1767 – when the project was taken up again under the reign of Carlos II and the distinctive mark of the Campomans – was an uncertain stage during which many of the assets or objects had been dispersed from the estate of the cabinet to other institutions, such is the case of the books or calculus instruments passed on to the academies of Barcelona and Cadiz. Around 1767 an opportunity to purchase the private collection of curiosities of the Peruvian intellectual Pedro Franco Dávila rekindled the project to create a cabinet for the King, who resolved to purchase it only four years later in 1771. Hence, Pedro Franco Dávila was appointed Director and the “curiosidades” of the old repository were installed in the building of the Academy of Fine Arts. This stage ended at the close of 1785 when the most important mentor, Franco Dávila, died. During this period, it is worthy to point out the inauguration on 4 November 1776, the first exhibitions, the increase of the collections by virtue of the arrival of American and peninsular shipments, the publication of what some considered the first scientific fruit of the institution – volume I of the zoological work of Juan Bautista Bru Colección de animales y monstruos del Real Gabinete de Historia Natural de Madrid –, etc. In this respect, see Ma. Ángeles Calatayud: Pedro Franco Dávila y el Real Gabinete de Historia Natural. Madrid, CSIC, 1988; Ibid.: “Antecedentes y creación del Real Gabinete de Historia Natural de Madrid”, Arbor, Nº 482, Vol. CXXIII, 1986. pp. 9-33; Agustín Barreiro: El museo nacional de ciencias naturales (1771-1935). Madrid, Doce calles. 1992; Antonio González Bueno: “El Real Gabinete de Historia Natural”, en AAVV: Madrid, ciencia y corte. Madrid, Comunidad de Madrid, CSIC, Universidad de Alcalá, Real Jardín Botánico. 1999; Ángel Montero: La paleontología y sus colecciones desde el Real Gabinete de Historia Natural al Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales. Madrid, CSIC, Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales. 2003.
are supported by the repetitive character of the descriptions and reflections upon the Real Gabinete, the objects within or the features of sociability displayed which emerged in regal decrees and in the writings of “visitors”. In other words, the consumption of the objects of nature registered in travel writings was a kind of amusement that nurtured urban mobility of the XVIII c. and, secondly, the appropriation of the objects of American nature exhibited by the Crown in its cabinets and botanical gardens were one of the mechanisms chosen to spread a representation of politesse and jurisdictional power of the Spanish monarchy because of the social and erudite approval given to natural History. The representation of Madrid based upon the figure of a European capital and a metropolitan centre, symbolic of a vaster and more heterogeneous colonial conglomerate, depended on the cooperation of both dimensions which nurtured each other.

Like other institutions of its kind, the Real Gabinete was a place of sociability upon which the Crown tried to exert jurisdictional influence. Throughout the century European monarchies tried to reinforce their political legitimacy by creating spaces of aesthetic opinion in which there was an attempt to forge a shared cultural image concerning several branches of knowledge. Therefore, the creation and spreading of artistic or literary canons, the exhibition of artistic objects or the promotion of different intellectual and professional practices connected with the development of “gusto” became a matter of political intervention. This issue implied, on the one hand, the introduction of new cultural objects and practices and the shaping of the places destined to their consumption, while on the other hand it certified a multiplicity of other agents whose modes of cultural appropriation coexisted with the modes developed by the monarchical institutions.

This issue, related to what we know today as cultural politics, entailed a sort of expansion of regal jurisdiction. In fact, a substantial part of the Spanish Bourbon reformist intention was expressed in their endeavour to change social attitudes and conducts, from dressing to the collective manifestation of popular devotions. In this sense, the shaping of the Real Gabinete as a space of sociability sheltered the possibility of carrying out exemplary cultural politics in the eyes of locals and foreigners. This impression was expressed in a wide range of dispositions that covered from the preparation of the building for its use to the printing of “tickets” ("billetes") for the consumption of the objects of nature.

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70 Undoubtedly, the best documented historical case is the English one. The interest in the Royal Academy evidenced the political functions that the Hannovers conferred to it. According to some authors, proof of this would be the treatises that regulated the decorous conducts to be followed in cabinets or gardens which interrupted in England around 1760. In fact the broadening of social and thematic limits operated in the “Republic of taste”, due to the popularity of open air experiments, for instance, may have motivated a cultural political response. Therefore, the writings of Horace Walpole designed a kind of pictorial or landscape observation, which could be taken as a political strategy that joined the figure of the expert with the figure of the nobleman, making the other figure of amateur illegitimate, given that its poorly defined contour included other men and women of a different social condition. In this respect, see Peter De Bola: *The education of eye. Painting, landscape and architecture in eighteenth-century Britain*. California, Stanford University Press. 2003.

71 In the decrees related to the preparation of the Gabinete there are allusions to the construction of “shelves” ("estantes"), the delivery of “two tables made of the lava of the Vesuvio” ("dos mesas hechas de las lavas del Vesuvio"), collecting “coal” ("carbon") for the heating, the replacement of “other windows instead of the broken ones” ("otros cristales en lugar de los rotos"), etc.
opening day, going through the attire of the attendants, the security of the building, opening and closing hours, or the publicity in newspapers. The sociability generated in the Real Gabinete was controlled by specific norms of conduct which, beyond coexisting with other – more private – spaces of appropriation of curiosities, were articulated according to the parameters of courtly decorum. This could only be ensured by the Crown given the participation of “Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness and other Fine Infants” (“S.M. y S.A.R. y demás Serenísimos Infantes”), in addition to the dimensions of the scenes and the quality of the objects displayed. So, on creating the conditions for this intellectual and curious sociability the Crown instated and represented the polities reigning in Madrid. That is to say, it created the evidences upon which the “visitors” could acknowledge their urbanity.

72 “[...] Puede Vm. mandar acudir [...] por dos mil billetes que he hecho imprimir para la entrada de las gentes al Gabinete: y puede Vm. añadirles su rúbrica [...]”. Archives of the Nacional Museum of Natural Sciences of Madrid, henceforward AMNCN-M, 313, f.2. Note by Bernardo Iriarte. 1776, August 7 San Ildefonso [La Granja].

73 “[...] no se atreva nadie a entrar con cofia, gorro ni con otro traje indecente, omitiéndose la tontería del pelo atado pues en nuestros tiempos nadie anda con la melena rendida [...]”. AMNCN-M, 324, f.3. Carta de D. Bernardo Iriarte. 1776, August 25 San Ildefonso [La Granja].

74 “Amigo y Sr. Se procurará tengo Vm. los dos soldados [...]”. AMNCN-M, 316, f. 3. Notification from the Count of Pernía to D. Pedro Franco Dávila. 1776, August 9.

75 “Desde la semana próxima en adelante estará abierto el Real Gabinete de Historia Natural todos los lunes y jueves del año, excepto cuando algunos de ellos sean festivos, pues entonces se trasladará al día inmediato. Las horas serán siempre en los meses de octubre, noviembre [...] y mayo de las 9 a las 12 por la mañana; y de las 3 a las 5 por la tarde; y en los meses de junio [...] y septiembre a las mismas horas [...].” AMNCN-M, 368, f. 2. Letter from D. Bernardo Iriarte to be included in la Gaceta, concerning visiting days...1777, February 1 El Pardo.

76 The list of periodical publications included the “Gaceta”, the “Mercurio” and the “Guía de Forasteros”. AMNCN-M, 324 ff 1 and 2 Letter from D. Bernardo Iriarte...with reference to the inauguration of the Gabinete on November 4 ... to prepare everything...1776, August 25.

77 “Encontré al señor Clavijo, el vicedirector (del Real Gabinete) [...] un hombre de talento[...]” Habiéndome oído alabar las esmeraldas que había visto, me aconsejó hacerme introducir en un gabinete perteneciente al marqués de Sonora, ministro de Indias. Seguí su consejo [...] me vi singularmente sorprendido por la belleza de esas esmeraldas, superiores a todas aquellas que nunca había visto, por el brillo y el tamaño. Tenía también buenas muestras de oro y de plata, con pájaros artificiales en filigrana de las Indias Orientales. La vista de esos pájaros procura una satisfacción a todos los que pueden admirar los trabajos del arte. Esta colección es rica, pero el marqués no tiene, evidentemente, ningún gusto por la ciencia, y desearía no tanto adquirir conocimientos como aumentar tesoros”. Joseph Townsend: Viaje a España hecho en los años 1786 y 1787. Que contiene la descripción de las costumbres y usos de los pueblos de ese país; el cuadro de la agricultura, del comercio, de las manufacturas, de la población, de las tasas y rentas de esa comarca y de sus diversas instituciones. 1809. p. 64.

78 AMNCN-M, 278, f. 1. Letter from D. Cristóbal Vilella...congratulating him on the visit of Y. M. 1776, February 25, Palma de Mallorca. AMNCN-M, 324, f. 3 and 4.

79 “En lo demás Vm. hará lo que previese mas conveniente estableciendo las reglas y método interior que conceptuase oportuno, bien que cuidando de no exigir nimiedades que puedan ser reputadas de ridiculeces por las gentes. Con el público es menester un poco de tiento”. AMNCN-M, 386, f. 2. Letter from D. Bernardo Iriarte to be included in la Gaceta, concerning visiting days...1777, February 1 El Pardo.

80 “Para evitar todo desorden me parece conveniente regule Vm. el número de personas que puedan ver de una vez comodamente y sin confusión el Gabinete, y disponga que los soldados que piensa apostar al pie de la escalera no permitan subir mas gente que aquella”. AMNCN-M, 353, f. 2 and 3. Draft of the notice ... informing him of the flaws ... caused by the great deal of visitors...1776, November 21, Madrid.

81 “El gabinete de historia natural es accesible a todo el mundo; no es necesario enseñar billetes; pero en las horas señaladas toda persona decentemente vestida puede pasearse por todas las habitaciones y examinar lo que le place todo el tiempo que las puertas están abiertas”. Joseph Townsend: Op. Cit. p. 55.
Besides the Real Gabinete was a great repository on “whose shelves [...] the productions of half the world can fit” (“cuyos estantes [...] caben las producciones de medio mundo”). Visitors could encounter “a badger from America” (“un Texon de la América”), “another Armadillo called Quirquincho from Chile” (“otro Armadillo llamado Quirquincho, de Chile”), “a blue Guinea pig” (“un conejito de Indias azul”), “another rabbit from Spain” (“otro conejo de España”), “an Ant bear from buenos aires” (“un oso hormiguero de buenos ayres”), a “bird killed by the King” (“páxaro que ha muerto el Rey”), a bezoar “that was carried by an unfortunate man killed at twenty seven in Montevideo” (“que llevaba un desgraciado hombre muerto a los veintisiete años en Montevideo”), the “decoration of an ancient monument I found on the Island of Santa Catalina located on the coast of Brazil” (“decoración de un monumento antiguo hallado por mí en la Isla de Sta. Catalina situada en la costa del Brasil”), “a box of butterflies from several places of South America” (“una caja de mariposas de varios parages de América Meridional”), “two dresses made of feathers of the Brave Indians of the Province of buenos aires” (“dos vestidos de plumas de Indios Bravos del Partido de buenos ayres”), “large crystals from the sulphur mine in Conil, near Cadiz” (“grandes cristales de la mina de azufre de Conil, cerca de Cádiz”), among many other objects that amused and instructed.

Those objects can be considered the core around which the “curious” sociability fostered by the Crown rotated, together with its propagandistic efforts. The Real Gabinete, as well as other institutions of its kind, developed a compound of functions that involved the collection, preservation, exhibition, analysis and interpretation of material objects that had belonged to “others” who were in a distant time or space.

The old-fashioned quality of the epistemic logic on which the cabinet of Madrid was founded and which was expressed more in the hoarding of curious objects than in its systematization, calls for a reflection upon the existence of the objects that made up such a mixture. Above all, these objects fluctuated between the rank of merchandise, a scientific piece of information or a “rarity” (“extrañeza”). Perhaps the first noteworthy

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82 AMNCN-M, 244, f. 2. Note from D. Bernardo Iriarte...approving of the colours chosen for the shelves...1777, July.
83 AMNCN-M, 228. Record of the animals that are transported to calle Alcalá. 1775, April, Madrid.
84 AMNCN-M, 459, f. 1. Official letter...so that the bird killed by the King be stuffed and prepared. 1777, September 23, San Ildefonso.
86 AMNCN-M, 521, f. 1. Letter from D. Jerónimo Verde...ancient monument that ...Dn Pedro Cevallos discovered on the Island of Santa Catalina. 1778, August 21, Rota.
87 AMNCN-M, 731, f. 1. Official letter...butterflies from several locations of South America. 1783, September 22, San Ildefonso.
88 AMNCN-M, 783, f. 2. Letters from D. Antonio Barceló...has made a present of two dresses made of feathers from the brave Indians of Buenos Aires...1784, June 20, Palma de Mallorca.
93 Some authors consider that a “wonder” (“maravilla”) or “rarity” (“extrañeza”) has at least two dimensions: the dimension of object and the dimension related to the emotions it could elicit. The entity
characteristic may be the fact that the exhibited objects in the Real Gabinete had suffered a metamorphosis. In most cases, these objects came from the natural world and they were conferred with and entity that was not originally theirs, so their importance was the result of decontextualization. Therefore they became testimony of the capacity of the Crown to produce a change in the entity of the natural object for it placed them on exhibition in a new semantic horizon stripped of their natural condition of animal, mineral or merchandise, placing them in the situation of “preciosidades”.

The second characteristic is their mobile quality: these objects could be transported from one place to another. The recollection was a major aspect of the process of the cultural and governmental appropriation of American nature imposed by the Crown. The organization of scientific expeditions and the wording of instructions to guide the collection from afar was further evidence of the jurisdictional capacity of the Spanish Monarchy revealed by promoting the mobility of natural objects. In fact, the regal dispositions and the objects roamed in an administrative space in which

of these objects as well as the emotions they generated changed throughout the centuries of the European early modern age. The eighteenth century, for instance, tended to assimilate the wonderful quality of the objects to the popular and vulgar, whereas in the previous centuries it had founded intellectual-curious sociability. Therefore, the fluctuating quality of these objects was mostly the result of the influence of aesthetic criteria in constant variation. See the excellent work by Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park: Wonders and the order of nature. 1150 – 1750. New York. 1998.

95 “[...] remito [...] el ramo de flor y la canela enviada por el Governador de Filipinas que me ha sobrado de los experimentos que se me han mandado hacer, a fin de que se decida colocarlo en ese Real Gabinete [...]”. AMN CN-M, 835, f. 1. Letter about... the bouquet of flowers and cinnamon sent by the Governor of Philippines... 1785, February 14, Madrid. The entity of the exhibited objects was variable, since the same thing could be, even simultaneously, merchandise and a “curiosity” (“curiosidad”). The search for novelty and the expansion of lavish consumptions were joined to shape what some authors called the “aesthetics of mercantilism”, which was expressed in the desire to pull together strange and exotic objects. This expression of taste had a special preference for colonial products that could be arranged in a botanical garden or in a literary text. In general, this grouping ignored the actual history and context of the reunited objects, because the playful function assigned to the collection tended to ignore the original entity of the objects involved. See, in particular, James Bunn: “The aesthetics of British mercantilism”. NLH, 11:2, 1980. pp. 303-321 and, in general, Emma Rothschild: “Global commerce and the question of sovereignty in the eighteenth-century provinces”. Modern Intellectual History, Nº 1, 2004. pp. 3-25; Maxine Berg: “In pursuit of luxury: Global history and British consumer goods in the eighteenth century”, en Past & Present, Nº 182, 2004. pp. 85-142.

97 “Veo que es preciso empezar ya á escribir cartas circulares, no sólo á todos los corregidores y gobernadores del Reino, sino también á los de América, en cuyo supuesto convendrá me embie una nota de las cosas que se hayan de indicar o pedir nos remitan, ya que no porque Vm. del caso imprimir la instrucción que empezó á trabajar”. AMN CN-M, 247, f. 1. Letter from D. Bernardo Iriarte to D. Pedro Franco Dávila...suggesting that he send circulars to the kingdom and to America. 1775, August. In fact, the instructions referred to were Published in 1776 under the title of Instrucción para aumentar las colecciones del Gabinete de Historia Natural de Madrid. The draft was written by Pedro Franco Dávila, director of the Real Gabinete, and it had the signature of the universal minister of Indias, José Gálvez. The instructions, which for some authors are a “compendium” of natural History, can be considered as a governmental instrument that tried to control a limited portion of the natural and cultural reality of Spain and its colonies. See Lemoine Villicaña, E.: “Instrucción para aumentar las colecciones del gabinete de Historia Natural de Madrid, 1776”, Boletín del Archivo General de la nación, Nº 2, México, 1961, AGN. p.196.
99 Other dispositions that emerged from the scientific or administrative metropolitan institutions should also be placed in this context. In spite of carrying out different functions, they came together in the
loyalties were performed, as well as codes that were proper of the institutional procedures shared on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and which enabled the consummation of the political-administrative act in question. It can be stated, then, that this was perhaps the first possible condition for exotic nature to be exhibited in a metropolitan context. The other condition was the creation of a cultural code based upon the assumptions of specific knowledge, i.e. natural History, which the Bourbon Crown seized to establish its jurisdictional will and of which the cabinet in Madrid was just one of the resultants.

A third feature was that these objects did not have a practical value, but a value of change. Due to the process of decontextualization they had undergone, their value was in their capacity to signify what was intangible to the eye of the observer, in other words, they represented the territories they came from. This feature assayed their uniqueness while it made it possible to explain the function assigned to the objects within the “aparato de preciosidades”, the cabinet in Madrid. In this way, the exhibited object contributed to indirectly enlarge the authority of their owner, the King, since only he could collect them and exhibit them to locals and foreigners.

The fourth feature was linked to the political one explained above, since the diverse ways in which the exchange of objects was expressed – gift, recollection, etc. – caused the modification of their already unreachable value. In fact, the objects that the “visitor” enjoyed in the Real Gabinete had arrived there in different ways which had a specific value, given the uniqueness of the courses they had followed. In many cases the collection, transportation and conservation of the objects brought from America. As examples, the following can be cited: “Instrucción que deveran observar los capitanes de los buques que ban encargados de la conducción de los cajones de Plantas y Arboles para S.M.” or the “Memoria que debe enviarse a los Virreyes de Lima, México, y Nuevo Reyno de Granada, para que, arreglando a ella, hagan recozer toda suerte de Minerales, para formar el Gabinete Real de Historia natural de las minas, que se hallan en los Dominios de su Majestad en las dos Ámericas” signed by the Marquez of Ensenada. Both are in the Archivo General de Indias, AGI, Indiferente General 1550 and 1549 respectively.

100 “... recivi con mui particular gusto la apreciable carta de V.S. [...] junto con la nómina, y diseños que incluíe de las cosas raras contenidas en ella, para que se procuren aquí, en la China, y otras partes de la India [...] le aseguro que se practicarán las mas exactas diligencias à fin de conseguir las rarezas especificadas [...] y ojalá que resulten utiles al intento las cosas raras, que adquiera mi exactitud [...],” AMNCN-M, 269, f. 1. Letter from D. Simón de Anda to D. Pedro Franco Dávila...with the list and design of the necessary things included for the Real Gabinete..., 1775, December 31, Manila.


102 This would be the case of Instrucción sobre el modo más seguro de transportar plantas written by the director of the Real Jardín Botánico of Madrid, Casimiro Gómez Ortega. This was an instrument by means of which enlightenment and order were given at the same time. This was a characteristic that revealed the learned and legal scope of this kind of texts. For an revealing explanation of the uses of scientific instruments in the context of European voyages of the early modern age see Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, Christian Licoppe and O. Sibum (Ed): Instrument, travel and science. Itineraries of precision from the seventh to the twentieth century. London and New York, Routledge. 2002.


they were gifts from the King himself\[^{105}\] or some member of the royal family\[^{106}\] or else they were objects recollected in the colonies by royal disposition. Although in both cases the representation of the enlightened monarchy was endorsed, while the first refers to erudition and “gusto” of the King, the second revealed the dimensions of the governmental mechanisms of the Crown. Both lines tended to transform the exchanged object into the basis of politesse and the foundation of the jurisdictional power which exhibited it and which could even share it with other European centers of its kind\[^{107}\] by means of exchange and gift policies.

The value of these objects was also expressed in the fact that they were joined indivisibly with the territories that constituted them in more than one sense. These objects, by virtue of the indelible inclusion of the places they came from in their identifying names, as well as the fact that they referred to faraway and foreign places through their exoticness, they enabled the “visitor” to carry out a sort of virtual voyage, because through the mere observation of that specimen they could intuit the existence of those territories\[^{108}\]. So, the object made it possible for the “visitor” to bridge the gap between the space of observation and the space of the natural phenomenon. Hence the “visitor” could signify the distance and the connections between the Real Gabinete and American nature, between the metropolis and the colonies that contained these “preciosidades”\[^{109}\].

\[^{105}\] “El Rei ha resuelto que varias alhajas y Vasos de Àgata y de otras piedras raras que existen en este sitio y tocaron a S.M. por lo respectivo á la Herencia del Delfín [...] como también unos tableros que representan los principales sucesos de la Conquista de México, se entreguen [...] para que los coloque y guarde como en depósito entre las preciosidades del Gabinete de Historia al qual darán éstas mucho realce, pues darán á lo curioso lo exquisito y digno de la grandeza del glorioso fundador de un establecimiento tan útil para la instrucción pública”. AMNCN-M, 333, f. 1 y 2. Official letter from the Marquee of Grimaldi...notifying him of the disposition of the king concerning the jewellery... 1776, September 2, San Ildefonso.

\[^{106}\] This would be the case of the collection of woodwork that “[...] Príncipe N.S. embió á este Real Gabinete [...]”.AMNCN-M, 474, f. 1. Note ... where the collection woodwork that the prince sent comes from... 1777, December 12, Madrid.

\[^{107}\] “[...] remito a VM. [...] la colección de Cinabrios y azogue virgin de Almaden que han llegado a Madrid en 19 caxones [...] así tendrá VM. no sólo para el Gabinete, sino también para corresponder á los regalos de afuera, pues con este doble objeto se hizo el encargo al Sr. Arriaga”. AMNCN-M, 247, f. 1. Letter from D. Bernardo Iriarte to D. Pedro Franco Dávila...suggesting he send circulars to the kingdom and to America. 1775, August. The exchange and gift policies between museums and cabinets were a much extended practice. However, the political and propagandistic functions should not obliterate the cognitive function carried out as well. They were the circulation of scientific evidences whose existence did not necessarily imply that all the centres of study had them, due to the fact that these evidences were scarce or because the access to them was limited by jurisdictional restrictions on the territories where these objects could be found. In this sense the situation of the Spanish monarch was exceptional because, since he was the owner of vast territories all over the globe, he had under his jurisdiction the greatest quarry of natural evidences that a king of his time could dispose of. This circumstance was revealed in the interest of the other European Crowns in accessing American territories or else the objects hoarded in them. In this respect see Lafuente, Antonio: Los caballeros del punto fijo: ciencia, política y aventura en la expedición geodésica hispano-francesa al Virreinato del Perú en el S. XVIII. Barcelona, Serbal-CSIC. 1987; Raúl Rodríguez Nozal: “Las colecciones americanas generadas por las expediciones botánicas de la España Ilustrada: Un análisis de su dispersión”, Llull, Nº 17 (33). pp. 403-436.

\[^{108}\] Concerning the connections established between “exotic” animals and extra-European territories see George Wilma: “Sources and background to discoveries of new animals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries”, History of Science, Nº 18, 1980. pp. 79-104.

\[^{109}\] “The collection of bears and birds, at present is not large, but may be supposed to improve apace, if they take care to get the productions of their American colonies [...] The great Ant bear from Buenos Ayres, the Myrmecophaga Jubata of Linneus, called by the Spaniards Osa Palmera, was alive at Madrid in 1776, and is now stuffed and preserved in this cabinet. The people who brought it from Buenos Ayres,
The objects on exhibition were the centre of a network made up of the scopic rules deployed by the spectators, the political, governmental or technological practices involved in the recollection and conservation of these objects and the multiple manners of appropriation that these “rarities” (“rarezas”\(^{110}\)) were subject to. When the “visitors” described or reflected upon the wealth of the collection of the Real Gabinete, they registered and spread a representation of the entity of jurisdictional power displayed. In this sense, the succinct historical summary on the foundation of the cabinet\(^{111}\) and the allusion to the legal dispositions deployed for its improvement\(^{112}\) came together to confirm and spread the enlightened and ubiquitous nature of the Spanish King.

The display of politesse and jurisdictional power that the renewed urban environment of Madrid revealed to the eyes of the “visitors” intended to materialize the reformist task taken up by the Bourbon Crown during the eighteenth century. The urban reformations and the foundation of new academic institutions, as participants of a unique cultural and political endeavour of great dimensions, implied in more than one sense the materialization of some of the ideas, objects and practices that had been established as a breakthrough during that century.

Furthermore, the creation of sceneries in which “rarities” (“rarezas”) were exhibited and a certain type of sociability was shaped revealed the intention of appropriating cultural codes on part of the Spanish monarchy, endorsing natural History

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\(^{111}\) “ [...] las rarezas y las curiosidades en todo género que había reunido don Pedro de Ávila, americano de origen, han formado la base de ese gabinete. Había pasado su vida cultivando la historia natural y empleando su fortuna en recoger los objetos más interesantes que aquella puede proporcionar. Hizo en 1776 regalo de su colección al rey de España, que le nombró como director de su gabinete con sueldo considerable.

Este gabinete es tenido con tanto orden como cuidados, y es todos los días aumentado de tantos objetos de diferentes géneros que puede llegar a ser uno de los más ricos y de los más completos de Europa. El rey reinante se interesa mucho en su perfección, y ha dado órdenes precisas a todos los gobernadores y virreyes de las Indias, de enriquecerlo de todo lo que ellos puedan hallar de curioso.

Ese gabinete ha aprovechado singularmente de la protección franca que le concede el monarca [...]”.


\(^{112}\) “Los reyes de España han establecido en la calle de Alcalá el Museo de Historia Natural [...] La colección de pescados, las de aves y sobre todo de cuadrúpedos dejan mucho que desear, pero las medidas adoptadas por el Gobierno desde hace algunos años contribuyen, quizá un poco lentamente, a conseguir un museo lo más completo posible”.

as a source of knowledge and amusement for locals and foreigners. Hence, the detailed register that the “visitors” expressed in their writings about the attractions that Madrid offered, revealed not only the vicissitudes of urban mobility enlightened during the XVIII c., but also the consumption of certain cultural assets which conjoined at least two dimensions. A material one, constituted by the object itself, that is, that “preciosidad” that instructed and amused in the Real Gabinete, and another immaterial dimension, in connection with the monarchic power that exhibited it. Therefore the traveller not only consumed “amusements” (“diversions”) but also the indications of the jurisdictional power that had established them.

These circumstances simultaneously implied that before this representation, the expert eye of the traveller would discover the limitations and the imprecision of the cultural policies deployed by the Spanish King. In other words, observers would notice the lack of objects that represented the different natural kingdoms\(^{113}\), the absence of systematic criteria in the assessment of these samples\(^{114}\), the existence of conceptual errors in the organization of the collections or else the excessive number of some specimens and the absolute lack of others\(^{115}\).

Nevertheless, in spite of the accusations wielded towards the doubtful scientific quality of the collections in the cabinet of Madrid, the Crown found material support to represent the dimension of the monarchic power residing there as well as the colonial connections that came together in the metropolitan academies – considered by the “visitors” as a capital city and the political core of a vaster territorial network that transcended its European enclave – and in the natural objects exhibited in the Real Gabinete. This was the ultimate function the Crown reserved to natural History and to the American “rarities” (“rarezas”) since, although in the final balance instruction yielded to amusement, the rarities were kept as evidences referring to the promise of a process of enlightenment in movement\(^{116}\).

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\(^{113}\) “La colección de peces, de animales cuadrúpedos, de insectos (incluso mariposas), está aún en su infancia. Contiene, sin embargo, un elefante, un león, varios hormigueros, un perezoso, una foca, dos gacelas, renos, una cabra, etc. […] Faltan aún muchos objetos en la clase de serpientes, de los embriones, de las producciones monstruosas; pero es rico en conchas, en madréporas, en corales y otras plantas marinas”. Juan Francisco Peyron: Op. Cit. p. 369.

\(^{114}\) “La colección del rey de España es verdaderamente magnífica, pero está lejos de ser bien escogida o bien ordenada. En cuanto al valor intrínseco de la plata, del oro y de las piedras preciosas, no hay quizá un gabinete que iguale a ése. En cuanto a la ciencia, desearía más bien poseer las colecciones más humildes del señor Carlos Greville o del señor Derson. Entre las grandes masas de oro nativo, no he podido descubrir ningún cristal; y en cuanto a las de plata, parecen haber sido principalmente estimadas por su peso”. Joseph Townsend: Op. Cit. p. 63.

\(^{115}\) “[…] la mayor parte de las otras sustancias del reino mineral, están […] en demasiada abundancia […].”

La colección de estaño es muy incompleta, y observé allí dos errores sorprendentes, eran dos granates dodceaedros colocados entre cristales de estaño; tenían cada uno una etiqueta con el nombre de estaño; la una escrita de mano del señor Dávila y la otra del mercader a quien habían adquirido esa muestra. Los fósiles extranjeros son muy confusos y merecen ser purgados y bien ordenados”. Joseph Townsend: Op. Cit. p. 63.

\(^{116}\) “La ciencia de la historia natural es casi nueva en Europa. El señor Hans Sloane ha trazado su camino en Inglaterra, Bafón lo ha seguido, y Dávila ha venido a continuación. Tan sólo desde hace algunos años es cuando los soberanos de Europa han tomado a esa ciencia bajo su protección. Inglaterra ha comenzado y España ha seguido su ejemplo. Si Izquierdo, el director actual […] dirige su espíritu hacia la historia natural, puede aventurarse […] que dejará pronto a todos los que hay en Europa muy detrás de él; pero temo que los graves talentos de este hombre no se coloquen en una situación más elevada. La fuerza de su entendimiento, su sagacidad, su penetración, sus conocimientos universales y su aplicación invariable le designan para las finanzas, y temo que su ambición lo conduzca a ello […].”. Joseph Townsend: Op. Cit. p. 64.