4. Eighteenth-Century Travel Writing
Constructing Images of the Other

4.1 Travel Writing as a Form of Translation

Recently there has been a marked tendency to define travel writing in terms of translation (Bhabha 1994; Bassnett and Lefevere 1998; Polezzi 2001; Cronin 2000; J.Clifford 1992, 1997). This development has not been restricted to translation studies (on the contrary, it seems that the potential of this new perspective has still to be fully elaborated in this field), but is apparent also in other disciplines, such as literary and cultural studies, or anthropology. In most of these cases, however, the notion of translation has been used in an instrumental way, in the sense that translation has been generally deprived of its concrete, material grounds, becoming almost synonymous with generic transfer. Localism may turn into a 'restitutive' perspective in this case: it can be used as an aid to analyzing both travel and translation in their material (albeit always provisional, relative and contingent) specificity.

The way in which James Clifford, for example, establishes a fascinating notion of translation as a term of comparison (a mediatory discourse that negotiates those hybrid spaces between placement and displacement) by bringing together images of movement and stasis, 'dwelling and travelling', has already been introduced in Chapter 2. However, his deliberate insistence on a strategic use of the word translation may legitimately give rise to suspicions that those very real, hybrid spaces of translation (tentatively pinned down by a number of definitions, for example Pym's 'intercultures' (1998)) are not taken at face value, in the sense that they seem to have little specific link with reality. Yet, Clifford is otherwise very careful to foreground not only the discursive but also the experiential, material status of cultural frontiers or border sites, even unusual ones such as the hotel room, the museum, or the academic basis of the researcher.

Cronin (2000: 103) has consistently argued that Clifford uses translation as a metaphor, rather than a practice: Clifford does not seem to be interested in taking translation as a language phenomenon into serious consideration. I would like to add that the cultural, materialist side of translation is also lost and becomes only a strategic move in contemporary ethnographic thinking. The risk is precisely that which has been strongly voiced by those feminists interested in positing subjectivity as a discursive *and* materialist space of manoeuvre. Two opposing tendencies have to be overcome in order to foreground translation as a set of discourses *and* a cluster of cultural, linguistic, semiotic practices: first, that of essentializing translation, by grounding it solely in essentialist experience, and second, that of reducing its impact, rather than enhancing it, by exploiting merely its symbolic potential. Given the increasing sophistication of poststructuralist theories that use translation in a metaphoric sense, this second

risk may seem more apparent than real.

The question is one that goes to the core of translation, because it concerns its limits, that is, what can be considered as a translation today (D. Robinson: 2000). Would Toury's broad definition of translation (1995), as anything that is considered translation by a certain cultural community at a given time, be applicable to travel writing, for example? This is a difficult question to put to the scholarly community today, because arguably at least a minority would not hesitate to assent. The problem then would be whether to accept the opinion of such a minority as evidence of an innovative trend within the translation community, or if, on the other hand, it should be simply discarded.

Travel writing could be more productively included into Lefevere's wide category of rewriting, together with 'refracted' cultural products such as adaptations, anthologizing and criticism (1992), as Polezzi has recently argued:

> What all these activities have in common is the manipulation of some sort of 'original' according to (though not necessarily in accordance with) the literary and ideological constraints operating in the system in which they are going to take up a place; all of them, besides, produce 'refractions' whose impact and life-span may often surpass those of the 'original' itself (2001: 108, note 33).

Lefevere's impact in translation studies has been fundamental, particularly for historical research on translation. His notion of rewriting has enabled criticism to relativize the criteria at the basis of any definition of translation. Lefevere (1992: 7-8) stressed the importance of taking into account any cultural product that projects a 'slanted image' of its original, an image capable of 'functioning as reality' within the culture that receives it. Although the status of the foreign as the 'original' of travel writing is obviously debatable from the point of view of translation theory, the ethical commitment of the travel writer to find ways to reproduce an alterity, potentially perceived as incommensurable, is undoubtedly akin to the task of the translator. By arguing that translation is ultimately a wide-ranging, time-bound concept, theories such as Lefevere's help criticism to go beyond questions of taste and aesthetics, and reach out for wider poetic, historical or geopolitical issues (Tymoczko 2000). It is in this sense that Hermans has been able to affirm that "the study of translation becomes the study of cultural history" (1999: 118).

Another, lesser recognized insight that contemporary debates on translation owe to Lefevere has to do with the performative nature of translation. Not developed by Lefevere himself, this idea is nevertheless contained in his definition of rewriting as a phenomenon which 'functions as reality' within the target culture. Not only is the translation taken to represent the original once it has been transported within the boundaries of the receiving culture, it also takes on

a partially autonomous function. This is not to be equated with Benjamin's notion of the afterlife taken up by deconstruction, though. Rather, it could be better understood as the 'actualization' of potentially new meanings which go to enrich the target culture, but are often also projected back onto their source contexts.[1]

Tymoczko has recently affirmed that "a translation is not simply a text but an act". And yet it seems to me reductive – to a certain extent at least – to equate the performative quality of translation only to its "potential for political performance and action" (1999: 296). It would be misleading to consider the performative aspect of translation as a move towards a more or less indiscriminate appropriation of some characteristics of the original, with all the ethical implications that go with it. Far from usurping the authority of the original, translation derives its potential from it, as Hermans points out by referring to the 'citational nature' inherent in the term 'translation' itself: "When the label 'translation' attaches itself to certain texts, it amounts to more than a statement or a description of status. It constitutes a performative, implying the suggestion, the request or demand that the text be classified and treated in certain ways" (1999: 158). This means that translation must look behind itself in order to justify its existence as a textual practice. But its derivative nature is not only a 'debt' that has to be recognized: it is the very condition upon which the transformative power of translation is constituted.

By arguing that translation takes place within the boundaries of "an existing practice, reiterating and extending it"(ibid), Hermans endows it with a relative but fundamental autonomy, which is what shapes translation's power for concrete, material action (at a linguistic, cultural, political and historical level). Translation is transformative in and of itself, even (to a certain extent) irrespectively of the intentions of the translator or the other agents involved in the translation process, as Borges' story of Pierre Menard has ironically taught us.[2] Translation produces value and knowledge also when it is not attached to a specific translator's project (in the feminist sense of this expression), political goal or *skopos.* Rather than employing the powerful tools elaborated by psychoanalytic theories or deconstruction to investigate the nature of these processes, I would prefer to hold to the notion of localism, as put forward in Chapter 2. It is

[1] Polezzi (2001: 100) argues that translation studies should admit that translations are not facts of the target culture alone. Toury's well-known argument should be supplemented "to show how the images created by translation also talk (and act) back, informing and justifying practices and attitudes which directly and indirectly affect the source culture, in an often ominous return of the represented which may well also affect the self-image of the Other".

[2] A fictitious nineteenth-century writer called Pierre Menard sets himself the impossible task of rewriting Cervantes' *Quixote* in Spanish, by learning Spanish and living a life identical to that of Cervantes. Eventually he produces a few passages, which are an exact 'copy' of those of Cervantes, and yet are perceived as fundamentally different. The difference between an original written in Spanish in the seventeenth century and an intralingual 'copy' written in the same language by a Frenchman becomes exemplary for translation (cf Borges 1964).

my conviction that it is possible to analyze the effects of translation as actualized cultural practices, although it is clear that the partiality of this critical position, as it emerged in previous discussions, has to be taken into account.

It might appear to be pushing the argument too far to say that travel writing is endowed with a similar performative character as translation. Yet, in a certain sense, travel writing does function as reality within the boundaries of the target culture in a way that would be unthinkable for the great majority of literary genres. Bassnett has attempted to pin down the impression of authenticity created by travel writing by working on the notion of 'collusion', defined in the following way: "We could say that one of the bases upon which travel writing rests, is the collusion of writer and reader in a notion of authenticity, that is, the reader agrees to suspend disbelief and go along with the writer's pretence" (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 35). Cronin has similarly spoken of the reader's 'willing suspension of disbelief' in both travel writing and translation (2000: 108). The expectations of readers of travel writing are indeed very different from those of readers of fiction. In the first case readers believe (or pretend to believe, Bassnett would say) that the author will be grounding the narrative in 'reality', by drawing upon his or her own lived experiences in another country. Yet this may not get us very far from expectations endorsed by most autobiographical genres. What distinguishes travel writing from autobiographical genres (apart from the historical and cultural specificity of discourses and conventions, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs) is the former's commitment to reproduce the foreign. Travellers are constantly engaged in translating the foreign into discourse, according to Chard (1999): their task is that of finding appropriate strategies to translate topography into language. The element described as the 'foreign' or 'topography', which could be broadly defined as cross-cultural difference, is arguably different from both the diverse cultural materials which get woven into fiction and the lived-experience impression conjured up by autobiographical genres. Cross-cultural difference is one of the many names for the Other, and constitutes the 'original', or 'source text' that gets translated into travel writing; as such, it is endowed with a material, cultural and topographical specificity which does not seem to pertain to the other genres mentioned above.

Yet, it would be extremely problematic to define cross-cultural difference in purely essentialist terms: it is like focusing on only one side of the coin. Cronin has warned us against the risk of 'fetishizing' difference (2000: 91). Said has demonstrated in his seminal work how for example the term 'orientalism' was used both as a name for certain regions of the world (the sites of the foreign) and also to designate the activity of mapping out and defining their territories. He introduced the concept of 'imaginative geography' to indicate a practice which "legitimates a vocabulary, a universe of representative discourse" (1978: 71). By imposing an imaginary geography onto a certain territory, a set of representations of the foreign was also produced. The way in which the history

of spaces is intertwined with the history of powers has been influentially illustrated by Foucault (1980), and postcolonial studies are constantly alerting us to the pervasiveness of this phenomenon.

Travel writers, like translators, set themselves the task of translating the foreign into discourse. In her investigation of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British discourses of travel, Chard has convincingly argued that the real question was that of finding tropes and other language strategies adequate to this task. Travel writers had to work out ways to produce a foreign which could answer the internal "demand for some form of dramatic departure from the familiar" (1999: 2). The foreign was constructed so that it could be recognized as different from the familiar. The only way to make difference 'recognizable' to the home/target culture was obviously to employ domestic material and techniques to build the foreign into discourse. As the terms of comparison were imbued with the cultural specificity of eighteenth-century Britain, the foreign (the Grand Tour, in the cases illustrated by Chard) became a distinctively British construction.

What was happening in travel writing was essentially the same as what happened in translation in the eighteenth century: the widespread diffusion of strategies of naturalization has been discussed in Chapter 2. Foreign and domestic are inescapably linked to each other in the eighteenth century, but the extent to which this is just a historical conjecture, or is instead a universal condition, is a matter of debate.

As will be demonstrated in the following chapter in the analysis of Piozzi's travelogue, techniques such as comparison via the construction of binary oppositions, rhetorical excess and intensification were consistently employed to foreground a very familiar foreign in eighteenth-century British travel writing. In a similar way, a brief investigation of the generic and discursive conventions of travel will show that even the tension between a pervasive feeling of public distrust and travel writers' pretensions towards objectivity was usually resolved by applying to the force of specific conventions, in an obviously teleological fashion. The extent to which all this is applicable *in toto* to translation does not seem to require further explanation. To give just one example, the constraining and yet productive force of travel conventions corresponds to the enabling function of norms in translation.

Bassnett's notion of collusion (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998) can thus be taken to describe a general willingness to perceive and accept the foreign as foreign, even when it is visibly a product of domesticating strategies. Readers collude with travel writers and translators when they recognize the foreign as Other, and yet this fundamental fiction plays a central role in the processes of identity formation (at the level of language, culture, nation and poetics) that take place through cross-cultural encounters. While working on the identity of

the foreign, discourses of travel and translation also transform, or better, rewrite the identity of the familiar, often with unpredictable results. As Cronin has pointed out, unexpectedness is the misery and splendour of translation and travel (2000: 93). Collusion and transformation are therefore two poles on the same axis: by juxtaposing one to the other it becomes apparent that the performative power of translation is based on a fiction and yet it produces very concrete, and often uncontrollable, cultural changes. [3]

Venuti's adaptation of Lecercle's (1990) concept of the 'remainder' for translation purposes becomes particularly significant in this context (1998a, 2000a). It consists of elements created in the course of the translation process which, under certain circumstances, are capable of releasing linguistic variations into a target system invariably posited as homogeneous by Venuti. These phenomena "exceed communication of a univocal meaning and instead draw attention to the conditions of the communicative act", which are not just linguistic, "but ultimately embrace social and political factors" (2000a: 471). According to Venuti, the remainder should first and foremost hint at the foreign context which has shaped the original, by means of various foregnizing strategies. However, this primary aim is supplemented by the idea that the difference inscribed by a domestic reminder into the foreign text may also be used to draw attention to the distance existing among domestic social groups. The remainder opens up domestic communities by highlighting those areas in which difference is located.

Both translation and travel writing produce the remainder by evoking the foreign in a metonymical way. The small, partial clusters of meaning they create are evocative of a larger whole. By speaking out their incapacity of substituting the foreign, they set into motion an array of (equally plausible) solutions, each of them holding the possibility of a left-over meaning. Perfect equivalence, one-to-one correspondence is not the aim of a metonymical type of translation, which can be better described as an activity that creates provisional solutions.

In the past, as well as in the present, powerful voices have been raised against the inclusive definitions of translation produced by target-oriented theories. Eco, to take one example, concedes that research conducted within such paradigms "is undoubtedly interesting for studies in comparative literature as well as for studies on the evolution of a given national culture" (2001: 21), and yet it has "nothing to do with the study of the process from a source text to a target text" (ibid: 22). According to Eco, rewriting is an act of interpretation, and can be considered translation 'only in part'. But his definition of translation proper as a text capable of conveying the original's "guiding spirit (whatever

[3] Genzler's remark that "critics 'collude' with a culture that tends to have very distinct and separate concepts of original writing and translation" appears to effectively break down the distinction between travel writing and translation (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: xvi).

that means)" (ibid: 117) does not really offer more substance, as Pym has recently pointed out (2001a: 130). Yet, if Eco's words are taken as a warning against a pervasive poststructuralist tendency to deprive translation of its materialist grounding, it becomes difficult not to take them on board.

Recognizing translation's material involvement in the construction of languages, cultures and identities is an act of restitution, not only because the historical impact of translation has often been undervalued, but also because the full potential of the discipline of translation studies has still to be brought to the fore, according to many scholars. For example, Cronin has denounced the way in which critical theories that use translation in a highly metaphorical fashion very often do not acknowledge the existence of the discipline that houses translation. He mentions the case of ethnography (2000: 103), but there are many more examples: philosophy, history, literary studies to name a few. According to Cronin, translation studies itself is partially responsible for this state of affairs: it is a travelling, nomad theory, whose "disciplinary journeying from subject area to subject area" (ibid: 104) may be ultimately accountable for a certain lack of recognition in the academic world.

The interdisciplinary, or better, metadisciplinary vocation of translation studies is both its difficulty and promise. Ulrych and Bosinelli (1999) have attempted to define the distinctive nature of translation studies as 'osmotic'. The discipline does in fact display an

> osmotic capacity to absorb experience, theories and methodologies from various surrounding sources and adapt them to its specific needs. Translation has shaped its specificity and built up its own scientific domain to become an autonomous discipline by drawing on elements from neighbouring disciplines (ibid: 236).

The osmotic character that translation manifests at a disciplinary level appears to be of a similar nature to the transformative power of translation phenomena which has been discussed earlier in this section. As I have argued elsewhere (Agorni forth.), a definition of translation that pragmatically reflects on its polyidentity (a coherent identity made up of a series of different, 'local' threads) produces a double result. On the one hand, it does not preclude translation studies from acknowledging its debts to other disciplines, debts which have lent it theoretical or methodological tools. On the other hand, autonomy and unity in translation studies are guaranteed by the fact that the discipline as a whole would be greater than the sum of its local theoretical branches.[4] Such 'surplus value' is another effect of the transformative power of translation.

[4] Bowker and others ask the same question, when they write: "Is the interdisciplinary whole greater then the sum of the disciplinary parts or do we have juxtaposition without shape, colours without form?" (Bowker *et al* 1998: vi).

Translation studies would therefore be able to enter into a dialogic relationship with other neighbouring disciplines, and might as well return their favours by exporting their newly developed research models (cf. Bassnett and Lefevere 1998).

This perspective places translation firmly at the centre of the stage. A concept of translation theory as integrated, rather than fragmented, is obviously not new (Snell-Hornby 1988). What is arguably new is the emphasis on a form of coherence capable of bringing together unity and diversity, the local and the universal aspects of translation. This could perhaps be the answer to translation studies' quest for a unitary polyidentity, provided that such integration results in new, creative thinking. Cronin has argued that travel and translation work under the same paradigms in this respect: "Translation like the practice of travel does not posit the local and the universal as mutually exclusive terms but sees the pair as genuinely liberatory in their mutual interdependence" (2000: 97).

It is this new 'translative' focus on the local that makes visible the thread linking Carter's translation of Algarotti to women's travel accounts, particularly to Piozzi's travelogue, in the second half of the eighteenth century, as will be shown in the next chapter. Translation and travel writing were regulated by distinctive conventions in the eighteenth century (which however were more fluid than might be expected). Yet, they were united in the common purpose of moulding the foreign by creating new forms of correspondence. To do that they manipulated language and discourse, in both conscious and unconscious ways. In this study, I am interested in tracing the path of the relative (and relational, interdisciplinary-shaped) autonomy of translation *per se*, and not in following the traces of the translator's hidden self. This does not mean that translators and travel writers will be pushed out of the scene. On the contrary, a translative focus on the local is tentatively employed to analyze the effects of translation *and* travel writing as actualized cultural practices. This brings the subjects back into the picture, although their agency is necessarily seen as relative and relational. The unpredictable effects of the activities of travel and translation also find a space in this picture. These are the partially uncontrollable, but material, cultural changes brought about by translation processes. It is by depicting them that the study of translation may indeed become the study of cultural history.

4.2 Women and Travel Writing in the Eighteenth Century

Travel literature achieved 'an unparalleled popularity' in the eighteenth century, according to Batten (1978: 1). Both literature and philosophy used travel as a powerful metaphor to explore questions of identity. Travel was also a fundamental social practice in this historical period. The customary journey from Britain to the Continent known as the Grand Tour was subject to a process of systematization in the course of the century: it was provided with a fairly standardized itinerary while an increasing number of travel guides taught travellers

what they should see and how they ought to see it. At the same time, the Grand Tour was no longer considered the exclusive province of the upper classes. Although travel had not been transformed into the mass phenomenon of tourism yet, it began to attract an increasing portion of the British population, including women. The emerging, wealthy middle class which was identifying itself through the ideological figure of the feminized gentleman, was beginning to consider travel as an essential social accomplishment.

Italy was the principal destination of the Grand Tourist, who was especially interested in discovering traces of its classical past. Chard argues that travellers were attracted by the idea of finding in Italy the comfort of the relative familiarity offered by classical literature, paradoxically combined with the novelty of a foreign culture (1999: 82). Yet it is usually believed that the popularity of Italy in Britain diminished during the eighteenth century, to rise again only at the beginning of the following century with the advent of the Romantic Movement (Marshall 1934; Brand 1957). In this chapter such assumptions will be challenged by a critical perspective which is not restricted to the analysis of canonical literary texts, but also includes texts traditionally considered marginal. Travel accounts are a good example, especially if written by women.

Women did not begin to travel and to write their travelogues in the eighteenth century, but it is then that the phenomenon began to acquire a large-scale dimension and to attract the interest of a large readership, no longer invited merely by the lure of satire or misogynist polemics. The 'feminization' of travel might at first sight appear a paradox in a historical period which witnessed the gradual emergence of an ideology of femininity prescribing that a woman's proper place was in the home. Eighteenth-century women who wanted to write about travel had therefore to resort to the appropriation of literary traditions which had been developed by male writers. Such inevitable manipulation of the discourses of travel circulating at the time opened the way to potential subversions of the prevailing ideologies about women's place in society.

Women's travel accounts have usually been assimilated to autobiographical writing, as Mills has pointed out (1993). This assumption brings with it two main consequences, which concern respectively the evaluation of women's writing and the assessment of the 'feminist' content of their texts. On the one hand, traditional criticism has denied the specific literary value of travel writing by considering this genre a mere transcription of women's experience and emotions. On the other, women's retreat into the realm of the private has been approved enthusiastically by certain feminist approaches, which seem to consider women's private narratives as genuine expressions of a true and hidden female self. However, by taking the existence of a distinctive feminine character for granted, these feminist theories run the risk of supporting restrictive ideological definitions of women's nature. Yet it seems difficult to deny that travel writing offered women the opportunity to represent in some way the inescapable partiality of their experience, and consequently to exert a certain influence

on the cultural representations of their place in society.

A brief examination of the connections between eighteenth-century autobiography and travel narratives may be of help in understanding the specificity of women's travel writing. Diaries, journals, letters, memoirs and biographies held a special place in eighteenth-century culture. Prominent literary figures of the period, such as James Boswell, became famous by publishing in the genres both of letter and travel writing. Others, such as Richardson, brought the epistolary art to an unprecedented popularity in the hybrid form of the epistolary novel. The popularity of autobiographical genres answers to, and in turn creates, the strong interest in the self which characterizes late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century British philosophical thought. Most of the works of Locke, Hume, and Shaftesbury display a particular concern with questions of identity. It can be argued that the empirical modes of inquiry of the scientific revolution set in motion by Bacon in the early seventeenth century gave impulse to the distinctively subjective developments of later philosophers. McKeon has suggested that empirical science exhibited two opposed tendencies: on the one hand "an optimistic faith in the powers of the empirical method to discover natural essences", and on the other "a wary scepticism of the evidence of the senses" (1987: 68).

Locke's emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, which countered the notion of human beings' innate qualities, can be seen as the first step in the direction of a subjective view of experience. Furthermore, his definition of identity as consciousness, rather than substance, seems to be at odds with an epistemological tradition which is grounded in the centrality of the subject. In spite of this, Locke's destabilizing argument was taken up and brought to an extreme by David Hume, who defined identity as a mere fictional construct in his *Treatise of Human Nature* published in the years 1739-40. These new theories were readily taken up by eighteenth-century radical thinkers. Proto-feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, based their refutations of the natural inferiority of the female sex on Locke's theory of the *tabula rasa*. Furthermore, the new emphasis on the constructed nature of identity generated a diffuse interest in the investigation of human character. This interest was reflected in the practices of self-scrutiny which were at the basis of autobiographical genres, such as letter-writing and diary-keeping.

A sense of diffusion and seeming lack of coherence is one of the distinctive traits of eighteenth-century autobiographical writing, and sets it apart from the more introspective practices of the nineteenth century. Eighteenth-century narratives of the self seem to display two opposite tendencies. On the one hand, the obsessive recording of small details is evidence of the persistent influence of the empirical method; on the other, it betrays the anguish of the age at the progressive dismantling of human identity. As McKeon puts it, "writing 'reifies' memory" (ibid: 29): in the case of eighteenth-century autobiographical writing, it seems possible to say that writing reifies the self.

If it was becoming increasingly difficult for the universal male subject to adopt a coherent and unified persona in his narratives of the self, it was even more so for his female counterpart, whose unclear specificity contributed to undermine her efforts to produce a coherent narrative. According to Nussbaum, the redefinition of the discourses of femininity which was taking place in mid-century unsettled the category of identity as a whole. Yet, paradoxically, such a struggle over the definition of an essential female character seemed to open up a space for women to represent the partiality of their experience. As Nussbaum puts it:

> In mid- and late eighteenth-century England, the emergence of female difference allows for the production of a distinctively female voice, one that claims the uniqueness of its 'experience', the possession of the property of a female 'self', and the formation of a female collectivity (1989: 202).

In a similar way, travel writing appeared to enable women to experiment with subject positions which were not endorsed by the conventions of other literary genres. Lawrence points out that women were given the opportunity to exploit "the figure of movement to explore pressing issues of personal and historical agency, problems and opportunities for women's cultural placement and displacement" (1994: xi). What seems even more important, travel enabled women to develop a dialogic sense of the self, as a relational identity defined against contact with the foreign. As it challenged the traditional connection of femininity with the domestic realm, travel was experienced as a powerful destabilizing experience by women, allowing them to resist or confirm conventional definitions of their cultural positions. Women exploited the deep-seated instability of discourses of femininity to extend the boundaries of what was considered as acceptable female behaviour. For example, Chris Jones has convincingly demonstrated that Helen Maria Williams' adoption of the feminine discourse of sensibility in her account of her residence in France at the end of the century, allowed her to engage in the heated political debate of the French Revolution (Gilroy 2000). By narrating the Revolution as if it were a romance, Williams managed to secure a certain discursive authority over a subject-matter that was precluded to her sex.

The cultural prestige of eighteenth-century travel writing made it into a pseudo-literary genre: as such, it was regulated by specific conventions, which must be understood as historically – and culturally – shaped, and which set it clearly apart from the autobiographical genres.

4.3 Eighteenth-Century Discourses of Travel

The epistemological developments briefly described in the previous section had a crucial influence on both the form and content of travel writing. P. Hunter

(1990: 204) links the eighteenth-century obsession with the minute recording of everyday experience to Robert Boyle's new category of writing, the so-called meletetics. Boyle insisted on the close observation of particulars in everyday life for a better understanding of the world. This activity was understood to be instrumental in enlarging not only the rational faculty of observation of individuals, but also their imagination. Therefore, Boyle's empirical method had the ultimate effect of licensing all kinds of interpretations: the early seventeenth-century 'priesthood of observers and interpreters' led, paradoxically, to a subjective interpretation of events.

McKeon provides evidence of the early link between empirical methodology and travel writing by referring to the great interest in travel demonstrated by the Royal Society at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In spite of claiming that one of the Royal Society's main purposes was to reform prose style, McKeon argues that it was "only concerning the creation of one particular literary form, the travel narrative, that the Society descended to specific directives" (1987: 101-2). These regulations were printed in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, under the names of scientists such as Lawrence Rooke and Robert Boyle himself. According to these directives, a simple style, together with an unprecedented emphasis on personal experience, was interpreted as evidence of the author's sincerity. The way in which the traveller textualized his experience was therefore taken to represent its very authenticity.[5]

Batten (1978) emphasizes the significant changes in the formal characteristics of eighteenth-century non-fictional travel literature throughout the century. He singles out the principle of novelty as the most important convention regulating this kind of literature.[6] This convention is seen at work for example in Addison's influential work *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (1705), the account of a journey to the Continent made in the early years of the eighteenth century. Challenging the common view which sees this work as one of the most representative texts of neo-classical taste, Batten argues that the principle of novelty guided Addison in his choice to compare the Italy of his time with its classical, Roman past. In the preface of this work Addison wrote:

> As there are few men that have talents or opportunities for examining so copious a subject, one may observe, among those who have written on

[5] These directives were originally intended for a universal (specifically male) 'recorder'.

[6] Although Batten traces the origin of the novelty principle back to the romance in the Renaissance, he does not mention the persistent influence of the tradition of Wonder in the early eighteenth century. The celebration of the strange lived side by side with the rigorous analysis of facts, which was the agenda of the Royal Society's scientific programme. Hunter (P.Hunter 1990: 208-224) argues instead that empiricist epistemology generated a cultural need "to find phenomena and events that eluded rational explanation". The books of Wonder represented a challenge to the emerging sense of rational order that was taking ground in the seventeenth century.

> Italy, that different authors have succeeded best on different sorts of curiosities. [...] There are still several of these topics that are far from being exhausted, as there are many new subjects that a traveller may find to employ himself upon. For my own part, as I have taken notice of several Places and Antiquities that no body else has spoken of, so, I think, I have mentioned but few things in common with others, that are not either set in a new light, or accompanied with different reflections ([1705] 1914: 357-8).

Generic conventions were obviously modified under the pressure of new authors experimenting with several forms of 'novelty'. After having exploited the factual, informative modes of writing, travel writers shifted to a form that could partially accommodate the new interest in personal experience, which was developing around the mid-century. According to Batten, James Boswell's *Account of Corsica* (1768) was the first example of a new type of travel writing. Boswell divided his text into two distinctive sections, which dealt respectively with the description of the author's experience and the reflections generated by it. However, it would be misleading to consider the section devoted to reflections merely as a formal device for the accommodation of an autobiographical stance, which until that moment had been effectively forbidden to the traveller. Eighteenth-century travel writers' reflections were in fact of a philosophical, aesthetic, or moral kind.

The next step taken by the authors was that of describing the different ways of life they observed while travelling. Batten argues that it was the monotony created by the prescriptive itineraries of the Grand Tour that led an increasing number of authors to draw attention to the people inhabiting the places they visited (1978: 34). Therefore, the 1760s and 1770s saw the birth of the 'manners and customs' accounts, a type of narrative which was obviously related to the new cultural emphasis on sympathy produced by discourses of sensibility. Finally, at the end of the century the advent of the picturesque traveller, who focused her/his attention on the depiction of landscape, appears to exhaust the search for novelty characterizing eighteenth-century travel writing. After that, the highly introspective character of early nineteenth-century travel narratives influences, and is itself the product of a new Romantic awareness of the self.

The increasing appearance of autobiographical statements in travel writing as the century advanced, can be explained also by calling attention to eighteenth-century attitudes to the ways in which truth is represented in narrative, what McKeon has defined as 'questions of truth' (1987: 20). As has already been pointed out, a plain style was taken to represent the authenticity of travel accounts in the early years of the century. Other means had to be used as the century progressed, in order to prove that travel authors were reliable. Some writers resorted to long prefaces written by editors or publishers in support of their claims. However, these practices became increasingly obsolete and authors had to create more and more sophisticated means to prove their words. A

detailed record of one's itinerary, providing both minute geographical descriptions and narratives of personal experiences in the places mentioned, seemed to answer the need of travel writers anxious to validate their accounts. Hence, the necessity of authenticating travel accounts, rather than a transition from a Neoclassical to a Pre-Romantic aesthetics, appears to be at the basis of the increasing interest in autobiographical models.

Questions about the truth-value of travel accounts have been haunting authors, readers and critics since the origins of this genre (Adams 1962). Given the difficulty of distinguishing between truthful accounts and fiction on the basis of the internal evidence provided by authors, readers and critics had ultimately to rely on the power of conventions, which literally shaped the reception of travel accounts in this period. The epistemology of doubt had paradoxically to resort to a new form of tradition, represented by the observance of formal constraints.

Conventions literally created the worlds depicted in travel accounts. This means not only that literary discourses made it possible for authors to textualize their experience, but also that they produced the very perspective of the writers, by prescribing what they could see and write about. For example, the fact that early eighteenth-century writers did not write lengthy commentaries on the Alps does not mean that they were not interested in them. Current descriptive conventions did not help: they could hardly draw on previous models for depicting the majestic dimensions of the mountains. Towards the end of the century the discourses of aesthetics, especially the redefinition of the Sublime, enabled them to overcome this obstacle. Furthermore, the expressive techniques which were becoming increasingly common in the last decade of the century made it possible for travel writers to avoid the linguistic dilemma posed by attempts at a faithful description of natural landscape. They simply began to reproduce their own impressions of those sights. By so doing, they had to draw upon autobiographical techniques which would not have been acceptable only half a century before.

Recent studies on travel writing which have adopted a discourse perspective to analyze genre developments in terms of language have underlined the constraining and at the same time enabling function of discourses of travel in the historical period under consideration (Chard 1999; Gilroy 2000; Mills 1993). Such discourses did in fact determine what it was possible to write about the foreign, and yet they constantly made space for new solutions. Chard's detailed examination of the language of the Grand Tour allows her to identify a series of techniques almost systematically adopted by travel authors in order to foreground the difference between the foreign and the familiar. The first of these techniques is that of translating difference into a series of binary oppositions, such as North/South, civilized/wild, manly/effeminate etc., which were often associated with strategies of intensification. The foreign and the familiar were constantly put in opposition to each other, and the traveller was the judge in this competition,

although her or his faithfulness to the home country was taken for granted. Travellers' partiality was so fundamental element of discourses of travel in this historical period as to lead Chard to speak of a 'pleasure and guilt' tension registered in the language of the Grand Tour. The pleasure travellers experienced by approaching the foreign was rather artificially counterbalanced by expressions of censure. Chard points out that this development took place from the 1720s to the final decades of the century, when the pleasure of the foreign became definitely linked to a taste for the forbidden (1999: 30).

In the second half of the eighteenth century two rhetorical devices were often employed in order to avoid the pitfalls of the 'pleasure and guilt' pressures: irony and the theme of incomparability. Irony allowed travellers to distance themselves from their narratives and recognize the artificial nature of literary production – hence, in a way, they recognized the language of travel as a discursive formation. The theme of incomparability enabled them to maintain that no language device was appropriate to translate the intensity of certain aspects of the foreign. For example, Chard quotes Hester Piozzi's description of the way in which 'a thick cloud' at the summit of Vesuvius "charged heavily with electric matter, passing over, met the fiery explosion by mere chance, and went off in *such a manner as effectually baffles all verbal description*" (1999: 84; Piozzi 1967: 224). This is obviously a case in which untranslatability becomes apparent. Such a development was potentially very dangerous, as it ran against claims of verisimilitude, a fundamental premise in travel writing, as has been argued earlier. Any time the narrator/traveller freed herself of the customary pretence at accuracy, her authority as narrator was at stake.

Faithfulness was a particularly strict requirement in this historical period, and yet it was realized by narrative devices and rhetorical techniques, which were in fact less homogeneous than they seemed. Hence, faithfulness, or the accurate translation of the foreign into discourse, was a function of discourse itself, produced by contingent negotiations, in spite of the fact that its 'presence' was constantly applied at a meta-discursive level, in order to justify the very existence of travel writing.

Generic conventions and discursive formations are only some of the propelling forces behind travel writing. The translation studies approach adopted for the analysis of Piozzi's complex representation of Italy will further emphasize the negotiability of discourses and other socio-cultural constraints, which allows individuals to create a variety of representations that goes beyond those explicitly sanctioned by tradition. Here I would like to stress once again what is becoming apparent in the course of this study: cultural representations are not an equivalent for reality. On the contrary, they produce images of the world which are tailored to the needs of a certain targeted readership. Hence an analysis of these images, focusing on the aspects which set them apart from their originals, should provide a view of the needs of the culture in which they were produced. The eighteenth-century British tradition of the Grand Tour shaped a

peculiarly negative image of Italy, which appears to have been used instrumentally for the creation of the myth of British cultural prestige, modelled on the splendour of classical Rome.

4.4 Eighteenth-Century British Travellers Constructing Italy

It is possible to trace the history of the influence of Italy on English literature at least back to the time of Chaucer. It seemed to reach a climax in Elizabethan England, and began to decline in the early seventeenth century, when France replaced Italy as a powerful symbolic source for English culture. In his analysis of the origins of the Romantic interest in Italy, Marshall describes the years between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth in the following way:

> Italian literature [...] was given rather ponderous burial by Rymer, Dryden, and later, Shaftesbury, Addison and others. With one or two small exceptions in favour of Marino's *Strage degli innocenti*, Tasso's *Aminta*, and some prose romances, practically no translations from Italian literature appeared between 1642 and 1705 (1934: 10-11).

For most of the eighteenth century, Italy did not seem to play a significant role in the development of British literature, at least until the appropriation of Italian scenes and characters by the Gothic novels of Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe. However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Romantic interest in Italy appeared to equal, if not to surpass, the heights reached in Elizabethan times.

Traditional studies of the influence of Italy on British culture often seem to confine their attention to the analysis of literature, rather than adopting a broader view, which would enable them to take into account a wider range of cultural documents (Churchill 1980). Yet by adopting a wider perspective, which would encompass traditionally marginalized texts, such as translation or travel writing, a new area of research opens up to the critic. The same historical period which was witnessing an increasing disregard for symbols associated with Italy was also seeing an impressive expansion of the social phenomenon of the Grand Tour, whose most important destination was the Italian peninsula. Extensive production and consumption of the travel narratives originated by such activity is also one of the most characteristic traits of the time. A new emphasis on the centrality of travel in eighteenth-century British cultural production would enable critics to question the conventional view of a declining interest in Italy.

Contemporary critics draw a significant connection between the waning influence of Italian symbols on British culture and the strong anti-Italian flavour characterizing those travel accounts which were published at the beginning of the century. Poverty, corruption and an extremely underdeveloped intellectual

life appeared to be the reality encountered by British travellers in their Italian journeys. This was seen to form a sharp contrast with the images of classical splendour, which were the main source of attraction for the traveller. In the words of Churchill:

> The Grand Tourists followed each other over their well-trodden paths from year to year with a disappointing monotony and lack of inspiration. Recoiling from contact with contemporary Italian life, they condemned its apparent poverty and squalor as a pitiful contrast with the former greatness of Rome, a greatness to which they felt themselves, the British ruling classes, to be the rightful and magnificent heirs (ibid: 1).

Eighteenth-century travellers' pride in their own national identity does not seem to have been shaken by their encounter with the Italian Other. On the contrary, contemporary sources seem to indicate that one of the main advantages to be acquired through the experience of travel was precisely a better appreciation of one's own country. Addison is one of the best representatives of this mood, and one who was to exert a strong influence upon generations of travellers and readers. His *Letter from Italy*, written in 1701, is in the form of an occasional poem dedicated to Lord Halifax: this form seems to explain both its hyperbolic tone and a celebrative content. In the opening lines, the poet reminds his addressee of the glorious events that had taken place in Italy: every single feature of the landscape seems to be connected to classical images. But this celebrative tone gives way as soon as the contemporary political conditions of Italy are introduced. Then, even the beautiful landscape loses its enchanting lure over the traveller :

> But what avail her unexhausted stores,
> Her blooming mountains and her sunny shores,
> With all the gifts that heaven and earth impart,
> The smiles of nature, and the charms of art,
> While proud oppression in her valleys reigns,
> And tyranny usurps her happy plains? (ibid, I: 35)

Political freedom is the transcendental power, capable of transforming any unfavourable landscape or climate into a land of perfection. A political system designed to account for the needs of the subject, rather than serve as a cover for a power-hungry monarch, is what distinguished eighteenth-century Britain from the Italian states. Whig beliefs seem to pervade this poem, Addison's travel account and, by extension, many of the narratives which followed in his footsteps. A kind of 'anti-hereditary' stance, which is one of the most important traits of this ideology, is made explicit in the poem, when Britain, instead of Italy, is designated as the worthy successor of the glories (and power) of Rome.

Britain is called upon to exercise the role of arbitress of Europe, which once belonged to Imperial Rome. An early version of colonialist *Pax Britannica* is conjured up by the following verses:

> 'Tis Britain's care to watch o'er Europe's fate,
> And hold in balance each contending state,
> To threaten bold, presumptuous kings with war,
> And answer her afflicted neighbours' prayer.
> The Dane and Swede, roused up by fierce alarms,
> Bless the wise conduct of her pious arms:
> Soon as her fleet appear, their terrors cease,
> And all the northern world lies hushed in peace (ibid: 37).

Churchill (1980) points out that James Thomson took up exactly the same subject nearly forty years later, in his poem *Liberty* (1734-6). These poems suggest that one ought to question the assumption of a declining interest in Italy in eighteenth-century Britain. Marshall's map of the cultural products of this period reveals a landscape populated by a multitude of poets, translators, travel writers, novelists, historians and painters who continued to consider Italy a powerful symbolic source (1934).[7] The fact that an increasing number of negative images of Italy circulated in the eighteenth century cannot be taken as evidence of its declining cultural role. On the contrary, it can be argued that Italy became Britain's favourite representative of the Other, in a complex process of identity formation.

Canonical neo-classical writers, such as Dryden, Pope and Addison, seem to be engaged in creating a myth of British cultural prestige which was based on the economic and political power of contemporary Britain, but projected back onto the past. The literature produced by these writers often drew parallels between the highly civilized state reached by Britain in their time and the social and cultural splendour of classical Rome. The process through which such a myth was created is suggestive of the 'invented traditions', which have been defined by Hobsbawm and Ranger in the following way:

> insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of 'invented traditions' is that the continuity with it is largely factitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to

[7] William Huggins translated Ariosto in the mid-1750s and Dante's *Commedia* in the years 1758-60. Charles Burney probably translated Dante's *Inferno* in the 1760s. In the same years Philip Doyne translated Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* and John Hoole produced another version which was published in 1763. Hoole also translated some of the works of Metastasio in the late 1760s. These are just a few of the examples provided by Marshall as evidence of the British interest in Italian literature in the eighteenth century.

> old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition (1983: 2).

Hobsbawm points out that these traditions are usually produced to counterbalance the rapid process of change and innovation which is the main characteristic of the modern world. Traditions are an "attempt to structure at least some part of social life as unchanging and invariant" (ibid: 2). The eighteenth century seems to display an obsession with systems of classification, a characteristic which represents its efforts to fence off a threatening modernity.

The invented tradition of Britain's cultural heritage was not understood merely as a literary construction: on the contrary, its actual, 'experiential' dimension was the main source of attraction for eighteenth-century Grand Tourists to Italy. Contemporary Italy, in fact, played a fundamental role in this process of myth-creation. On the one hand it provided the concrete geographical location, in which traces of the past could be uncovered; on the other, it was the instrumental link in the chain linking Rome's cultural supremacy in the past to Britain's economic and political prosperity in the present.

Hobsbawm argues that the creation of the ideal of 'nation' is one of the fields in which the analysis of 'invented traditions' has a crucial importance. As he points out, nations "were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity, either by semi-fiction [...] or by forgery" (ibid: 7). The very notion of Italy was still a fiction in the eighteenth century. The geographical territory known as Italy was in fact divided into a multitude of small states with several forms of government. Some of them were independent republics, such as the ancient Republic of Venice, and Genoa or Lucca, and others were ruled in a more or less 'enlightened' way by foreign powers such as Spain or Austria. The long-standing dispute between Pope and Emperor, together with a conflictual perception of the temporal power of the Church, had always prevented the identification of the Pope's government with a force representing an ideal Italian nation. Language was also far from being standardized in this historical period.

According to De Seta (1982: 135), Italy, as a unified cultural entity, made more sense to the traveller who came from abroad than to the inhabitants of one of the many 'Italian' states, who were divided by inner political, economic and cultural forms of resentment. If Italy was merely a geographical expression for the people inhabiting its territory, it functioned as a metaphor from the vantage point of travellers, who conceived of it as a powerful symbolic source. Such different notions had a parallel but separated existence. Yet the complex literary and political image produced by travellers functioned as a kind of mirror, and made it possible for Italy to develop a certain initial awareness of itself.

The image of Italy depicted by British Grand Tourists displayed significant changes between the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. In the early years of the seventeenth century, British travellers conceived of Italy as a cluster of

small towns. Both the aesthetic principles and the economic system of the time were organized on the centrality of the urban space. Hence, the Grand Tour comprised a fairly standardized itinerary, which included the principal Italian towns, that is, Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples. Italy seemed a testing ground for political models: several forms of government appeared to confront each other within a limited territory. For example, the myth of the republic of Venice was particularly influential in the years of the Commonwealth, when the stability of the Venetian constitution was perceived as a powerful model for Britain.

At the turn of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, after Britain had reached a considerable degree of internal stability, the image of Italy underwent a significant change. The innovative character of the suggestions for travel writers published by the Royal Society has already been discussed. These recommendations introduced new criteria for the analysis of specific economic data. Commercial power, rather than cultural prestige, became the principal parameter used for the assessment of a country's degree of influence (Venturi 1973). The strategic importance of the geographical position of Italy, literally in the centre of the Mediterranean, together with its fundamental economic role – it was one of the main European exporters of raw materials and imported a large quantity of finished products – seem to be the motives behind such new economic vision. It is not surprising that the powerful Whig connection between arbitrary governments and poverty was made exactly at this historical moment.

The influence of the constraints regulating the production and reception of travel writing upon the construction of a negative image of Italy, based as it was on its supposed economic decline, cannot be undervalued. The spread of literacy among the middle classes in the eighteenth century meant that the interests of a predominantly aristocratic readership, characterized by a special concern with classical literature and with the political experiments undertaken in Italy, were increasingly laid aside in favour of those of the new mercantile classes.

Significantly, the economic decline described by most travel accounts seems to have been more fictitious than real. According to Franco Venturi, the blinding effect of the ideological shift in the perception of Italy, which occurred at the beginning of the eighteenth century is especially evident in Addison's *Remarks*. His image of a motionless and marginalized Italy was produced at the time of one of the major European conflicts, the war of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), which was to introduce radical changes to the political landscape of Italy (ibid: 1013).

In the meantime, the repetitive itinerary of the Grand Tour began to include new places of interest, such as Bologna, Genoa, Pisa and Leghorn. Therefore, by the mid-century travellers were beginning to map a larger Italy than the one perceived by those who had come before them. Moreover, the seventeenth-century emphasis on urban territory was giving way to a new interest in the landscape. At the same time, travellers were also starting to chart new territory in the south. With the discovery of Herculaneum in 1738 and Pompeii in 1748,

a new archaeological interest began to appear. Patrick Brydone's visit to Sicily, recorded in his successful travel account *Tour through Sicily and Malta* (1773), offered a view of the furthest Italian region in the South. In spite of the publication of a few travel accounts of Sicily before the end of the century, the territory south of Naples remained an uncharted land for most of the century. An inhospitable country, whose forests were populated by 'banditti', it seemed to represent the ultimate challenge for the traveller.

It is significant that traditional studies of the Grand Tour, as well as critical analysis of the role played by British travellers in the development of the image of Italy, do not mention travel texts written by women. Yet eighteenth-century women visited Italy and published their accounts. It would be almost tempting to assume that these critics judged their writing as distinct from the tradition of travel narratives produced by men.

Mills has convincingly argued that the mechanisms of text production and reception are responsible for the specific 'difference' of women's writing, at least to a certain extent. She maintains that several feminist critics, especially those belonging to the Anglo-American schools who are interested in tracing genealogies of female writers, run the risk of privileging "the shared elements within the texts by women in order to foreground their difference to men's writing" (1993: 28). Eighteenth-century travel narratives produced by women arguably participated in most of the same cultural currents which shaped contemporary men's accounts. Yet a few aspects of their images of Italy are suggestive of a specific attitude, i.e. a manipulation of the Other moulded by proto-feminist assumptions, which can be traced back at least to Carter's translation. The image of Italy produced by some female travel writers of this period seems to be used instrumentally to foreground the possibility that their egalitarian claims – forcibly voiced in such different fields as literature, education and politics – could be legitimized by the culture of their time.