HYBRIDITY AND TRAVEL WRITING IN ENGLISH:
THE GRAND TOUR AND THE IMPERIAL FRONTIER[1]

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Abstract

This paper brings a discussion of the genre "travel narratives" as being a record of the clash of historically, geographically and culturally apart people in what Pratt (1992) calls the "contact zone". It argues that this transnational encounter gives rise to "hybridity" (BHABHA, 1994) which, in turn, becomes its main narrative trope. However, as the traveler and writer tries to produce this far away culture for his people back home, he/she will domesticate their text to make it conform to their countries' political agenda, which acts as a "transcendental signified" (DERRIDA, 1981). It is, precisely, the counterpoint between both forces as articulated in travel writing that is addressed in this paper.

Keywords

travel writing; contact zone; hybridity; transcendental signified

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[1]   Uma versão modificada desse artigo foi publicada anteriormente com o título de "Travel Writing. A Hybrid Genre" nos Anais da ABRALIC: www.abralic.org/enc2007/anais/33/240pdf.

The Germ of the Genre

Travel writing in English is a genre that has been popular for several centuries now, and it has existed since the beginning of oral and written literature (ADAMS, 1983, p. 38). It started gaining force with the *Grand Tour* at the end of the eighteenth century, which is also the moment when the romance was developing into the novel, and reached its apex in the nineteenth century. This because England experienced a period of great economic development and expansion that allowed Englishmen to travel all over the world within and without the limits of the British Empire.

> James Buzard explains that travel writing might be considered as an outcome of philosophical empiricism, which was central in England already by the end of the seventeenth century. He points out that "John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [...] held that all knowledge is produced from the 'impressions' drawn in through the five senses. If knowledge is rooted in experience and nowhere else, travel instantly gains in importance and desirability". (BUZARD, 2002, p. 37).

These narratives that comprise both voyages and journeys, by sea and land respectively, and that had as their ultimate aim the acquisition and production of knowledge through actually seeing, have focused, then, on the experiences of travelers in many destinations that have had different status and signification in the European imagination, to the point that they have conditioned the way in which the travelers constructed, through their narratives, the places visited at the moment. Thus, America was associated with virgin, exuberant nature and the Orient with the fabulous and fantastic. In likewise fashion, at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries different regions of England were the ideal places for picturesque tours, while Italy was one of the favorite destinations of the *Grand Tour*.

Travel writing was a well-established genre by the turn of the eighteenth century and "like the epic, like history, like the novel, the literature of travel has evolved through the centuries" (ADAMS, 1983, p. 38). This evolution of travel writing has been directly related to the various interests of the traveler which, in turn, were conditioned by the historical moment at which he/she was traveling, and also by the gender of the traveler: men and not women were expected to travel to faraway places. However, already from the sixteenth century, names of women stand out as famous travelers.[2]

The reasons that motivated these trips were commercial, political, religious, geographic, scientific and led governments and businessmen to send

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[2]   One of the first women who became a traveler and writer was Afra Behn (1640-1689). Together with her family, she traveled to Suriname in the West Indies. As a result of her stay there, she published *Oronooko*, a narrative in which she reveals a deep interest in the life of the colonies (Montague Summers, *A Memoir of Mrs Behn*. The University of Adelaida Library. Electronic Texts Collection (1988).

their envoys all over the world. This comes to show that, although avidly consumed as entertainment by the so called "fireside travelers" who, through these accounts, could visit faraway places without ever leaving home, these trips had so much value for international trade and colonization that, as Adams (1983, p.42) highlights, in the eighteenth century the British Admiralty confiscated all journals written on the government-sponsored sailing expeditions and carefully edited an official version. In turn, the various motivations that led travelers to dislocate themselves to remote places were confronted and also shaped by the cultures of their different destinations. Though this influence played by the visited culture has only recently been acknowledged, thanks to post-colonial writers and critics, it is, precisely, the intercourse with the *Other* in their various destinations, that is one of the main forces that actually shapes travel narratives.

This clash between cultures which, because of their isolation, regarded themselves as "monolithic, stable and homogeneous" (SOUZA, 2004, p. 124) has been defined by Homi Bhabha (1994) as "hybridity", namely what he calls "the interstitial passage between fixed identifications [...] that should entertain difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (BHABHA, 1994, p.4). In turn, as it will be argued in this paper, hybridity becomes one of the main tropes of travel writing, since this genre is the outcome of the articulation of a transnational experience. As the traveler-cum-writer, through his narrative, tries to produce the rest of the world, to be consumed in Europe, his pre-conceived ideas of the visited place will enter in collision with his newly acquired experience, giving rise to new types of knowledge and, at a metaliterary level, producing a reformulation of the genre as these narratives will both affirm and deconstruct received notions of the destination and, by extension, of the genre.

However, as travel writing was an important part of colonial discourse and responded, consciously or unconsciously, on the part of the traveler, to the designs of Imperial England, this interplay between cultures was many times straitjacketed in these narratives, as they helped mark the power and territory of the British Empire. This because, as Souza (2004, p. 114) points out in his study of Bhabha, what was at stake was not a "narrative" but the way in which colonial identity was constructed through them. Therefore, the traveler tried to domesticate this new type of knowledge in order to make it conform to some "transcendental signified" (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 49),[3] in agreement with his/her country's political agenda. It is precisely this "play" (DERRIDA, 1978, p. 164) between the hybridity inherent to the colonial experience and, by extension, to travel writing (its genre *par excellence*), and the desire of the trave-

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[3] In *Positions* (1981, p. 49-50), Derrida explains that through the concept of the *transcendental signified* he wants to express his critique of the "authority of meaning" or, in other words, "history determined in the last analysis as the history of meaning, history in its logocentric, metaphysical, idealist representation…"

ler to make his/her experience conform to the expectations back home, that it is my intention to discuss in the present paper in order to see how it works as the shaping force of the genre.

Travel Narratives and Hybridity: The Contact Zone

Genres do not respond to some universal law of genre, but are the outcome of the context in which they are articulated. This has never been more evident than in the case of travel writing, which is the translation, through the letter, of the way in which different travelers re-create the visited cultures. As it is well known, each *récit de voyage* will be the result of the counterpoint that the traveler-cum-writer establishes with the *travelee*, i.e., the native, in what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) calls the "contact zone" and Bhabha (1994) calls "locus of enunciation" or "third space".

According to Pratt (1992), the contact zone is "...the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (p. 6).

Pratt goes on to say that unlike the term "colonial frontier", that implies "separation and division" and is "grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe)" (1992, p. 7), the term "contact zone" invokes "a spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect" (1992, p. 7). She thus rewrites the concept of "frontier" as she calls attention not to the separation but to the intercourse between cultures established in this new zone.

What differentiates Pratt's definition of the relationship between traveler and travelee is the fact that, though through an asymmetrical relationship of power, both parts actually constitute each other. In likewise fashion, Bhabha (1994, p. 36) calls this place of encounter "locus of enunciation" or "third space of enunciation", where the *I* and *you* are confronted in such a way that it helps "challenge our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force..." (1994, p. 37).

When considered from the perspective of travel writing, Pratt's definition of the contact zone and Bhabha's reflections on the context of enunciation foretell the characteristics of this genre whose main plot is based on the unprecedented and conflictive quality of the relationship between the traveler and the travelee, enacted in that newly created third space of hybridity that will defy the existing social order in both their cultures.

The term "hybridity" was introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). From a linguistic perspective he says that

> [Hybridization] is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a
> single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between

two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. (p. 358)

Both Pratt's and Bhabha's concepts of "contact zone" and "third space", respectively, are constructed around the concept of hybridity, in the sense that they imply the collusion of two different systems of beliefs.

Like Pratt (1992), Bhabha (1994) recreates Bakhtin's concept of hybridity in language in terms of the colonial encounter: "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" (p. 112). From the start, he marks its paradoxical quality; if, on the one hand, he points to the clash between the beliefs' systems of both colonizer and colonized as producing multiple meanings, on the other hand, he also refers to the colonizer's desire to fix and reinforce his own situation of power and superiority, since it is a way of justifying his/her presence in the contact zone and, in a broader sense, the colonial impulse. At a metaliterary level, it is a way of signaling the *authenticity* of his representation of the Other.

In his study of hybridity in Bhabha, Souza (2004, p.114) calls attention to the fact that when the Indian critic studied the way of representing the colonial subject both in the literature written by the colonizer and the *natives* (in their counterpoint of *authenticity*) he aimed at showing that what was at stake was not the language used, but the way in which *colonial identity* was constructed through it. Souza adds that what this study revealed is the fact that it is impossible to separate one from the other — language from identity — since this last one is constructed through language.

Travel writing, which is at the core of this semiology is, precisely, a materialization, through the word, of this process of cultural translation or hybridity because as it articulates the confrontation between geographically, culturally and historically separated people, it goes beyond the idea of aesthetics and engages with culture as "...an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, and produced in the act of social survival" (BHABHA, 1995, p. 48).

Hybridity and the Transcendental Signified

According to Sara Mills (1991, p. 80), the body of travel narratives, developed through time, helps establish certain characteristics that are common to most of these narratives and reveal their intertextual quality. First, because travel writers will borrow from the body of existing travel narratives (based on both real and fictional journeys). Second, because the motivations that led the traveler to a certain destination will make him resort to the existing narratives in different fields of knowledge: recording of every day life in a language akin to that of the novel; essay form for more scientific matters; the convention of the picturesque for the representation of landscape; narrative accounts of the political situation of the places visited, mainly, in terms of the relationship

with the motherland of the traveler-cum-writer. These different types of narratives overlap in a collage fashion, conferring to the *récit de voyage* its fragmented aspect.

At the same time, there is a desire on the part of the travel writer, to differentiate his/her texts from existing ones, as proof that they are a more authentic representation of their experience in their different destinations. This shows that more than attending to some prescriptive law of genre previously established, each travel narrative will also be partly unlike previous ones because, with each new trip, the genre will be open to a new rewriting, depending on the traveler's experience in the different *loci* of enunciation, as he/she tries to construct the contingent and asymmetrical relationships fledged between the traveler and the travelee. Taking into account these two dominant, each colonial relation, as Mills (1991, p.87) points out, develops narrative and descriptive techniques which, on the one hand, draw on a range of existing discursive practices but, on the other are "particular to their setting and history".

This comes to reveal the iterable and unstable nature of the genre; at a semantic level, because the way the destination was imagined before the trip will be turned into new forms of imagination once *in situ*; at a syntactic level, because there will be an indigenization of the rhetorical tropes employed. In turn, this quality of the genre, which stems from its explicit hybrid quality, shows that travel writers (like all writers) more than representing the places visited, according to some stable referent, actually construct them through their narratives, unmasking in the process the "...agreement between historicism and realism" (SOUZA, 2004, p. 119) that all narratives, no less travel narratives, try to pass as a given and not as a construct.

At the same time, the traveler is part of a larger cultural or colonial project and his/her writing will also depend on the designs of his/her country on the visited place and not only on "...some spontaneous or direct transcription of what he sees" (MILLS, 1991, p. 88). As an example, an English traveler's discourse in the nineteenth century will vary depending on whether he/she is inside or outside the realm of the British Empire. Such is the case of Sir Richard Francis Burton's *Goa and the Blue Mountains or Six Months of Sick Leave* (1851) in which after having entered Portuguese India, leaving behind English India, he can only criticize everything he comes across.

Souza (2004, p. 116) calls this characteristic of colonial discourse, through which a text dislocates or represses contradictions in the process of signification, "ideological closure". This ideological closure is seen as existing in the field of History and, therefore, located outside the text, in the relations of production to which the text belongs. He adds that at the same time that a text functions as a repression of discrepancies, hiding them, it also functions as a resolution of them: when trying to eliminate contradictions, it smoothes them over. He goes on to explain that Bhabha (1994) points out that these forced resolutions appear in the text in the form of "articulate silences" because the

marks they leave call attention to themselves and stand for those subversive fragments of the narrative that the traveler leaves out.

This has never been more true than in the case of travel narratives because, as Bhabha (1994, p. 112) explains, the visited culture acts as a kind of mirror that returns to the traveler-cum-writer his new image, product of the cultural clash in the contact zone, that he will try to hide due to his desire to secure "...the pure and original identity of authority". Like every writer, travelers have a very clear political agenda that works as a transcendental signified to which they are supposed to conform to, and which therefore acts as the force that cancels hybridity in the third space.

Ideological closure becomes evident in the treatment of some of the formal features of the *récit de voyage*. On the one hand, it is seen in the standardized language texture that many times makes these narratives sound very much alike. On the other hand, and much more evident, is the fact that they are preceded not only by Prefaces in which the travelers clearly spell the reasons that motivated their trips, but also by historical accounts of the places visited, authored not by native writers but by the traveler's compatriots. Such is the case of Maria Graham's *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil and Residence There, during part of the years 1821, 1822, 1823* in which she opens the narrative with an introduction to the history of Brazil based on the text by the English historian Robert Southey (1810-19).

Travel writing will then have as one of its main dominants the counterpoint between the hybridity, inherent to the contact zone, and the constraints imposed upon it by the colonial impulse, acting as a transcendental signified. Thus, the traveler will try to show that he/she has not "gone native", in order to attend to the requirements of the publishing houses that, in turn, will want to conform to the political designs of their countries on the destinations of the narratives.

This transcendental signified, very much dictated by the traveler's context of enunciation back home, becomes even more evident in the case of female authored texts, in particular in the Enlightened eighteenth century and in nineteenth century Victorian England when women were not supposed to travel freely and even less, to publish narratives about their experiences. This was so because in England there was a deep-rooted antagonism towards women being enlightened (DOLAN, 2002, p.4). When women traveled at all, it was as part of pilgrimages or to accompany their husbands to some faraway place in the British Empire.

As a result, in those trips women took advantage of the freedom from their physical and intellectual confinement offered by a journey to the Continent or the colonies to exercise their intellectual abilities. Though they might be accused of being French sympathizers, at the time when Napoleon was the biggest foe in Europe, these women longed to travel to the Continent, to escape English prejudices. Mary Wollstonecraft voiced women's situation in England in her *A Vindication of the Right of Women* (1792), pointing out that while in England

women were limited to the private life of the home, in France and Italy, they were far more independent.

However, in those contact zones, women travelers never forgot the strong code of respectability that they were expected to conform to. And this put them in a discursive double bind. While, on the one hand, many times they ran away from the constraining environment back home, on the other hand, their new locus of enunciation turned them into some of the most important spokespeople of the Empire, a role that was rarely openly acknowledged (MILLS, 1991).

The Narrative Strategies of the *Récit de Voyage*

In travel narratives the treatment of the chronotope[4] reveals the hybridity inherent to the genre, as well as the traveler's intention to domesticate it, since as the narrative articulates the clash between cultures, it will implicitly highlight how different conceptions of time and space enter into collision as well.

Time is articulated in travel narratives, depending on the traveler's conception of the place visited and on whether the Other encountered in the contact zone is regarded as being in the same historical and cultural level or not. While in Europe, for all the cultural differences that might exist among nations, the English felt that they were in the cradle of Modernity and, therefore, among equals. While in the Orient, Africa or America, though radically different from each other, the English felt that they were among cultures that were in a previous stage of development and, therefore, in a time dimension the English had already surpassed. This is why they made a point of showing in their narratives what they interpreted as a "time gap" between their own culture and that of the travelee.

As regards place, when the travelers crossed the frontiers of their native countries, they were crossing not only geographical but also cultural boundaries that led them to reflect on their own cultural beliefs on class, religion, gender, etc. These new places acted as mirrors in which the traveler, while observing the Other, could not help become observing himself/herself and, by extension, their own culture in perspective, most of the time reaffirming its superior quality.

In turn, the traveler's way of understanding the place visited was determined by both his/her own inclinations and his/her native country's relationship with it. So much so that, for some destinations, there were some guides that told the traveler what to expect or, even more than that, instructed him/her on what they should see and how it should be regarded, before even leaving home. Such is the case of the famous tourist's guidebooks for the *Grand Tour* of Europe developed by Fritz and Karl Baedeker in Germany and by John Murray

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[4]   According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, p.425), the chronotope is "a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented" in both a symmetrical and interdependent way.

III in England (BUZARD, 2002, p.48), or the many studies in Orientalism that became a *sine qua non* condition for the traveler who went to the Far East.

These different destinations very much determined the behavior of the traveler and shaped the form their narrative voices assumed in these texts. As Bruner (1986, p.113) points out, the self is divided by a desire for permanence, on the one hand, and a barometer to local culture, on the other. This desire for permanence is what makes the traveler cling to his/her culture's values, because there is always the permanent fear of "going native", losing the pure and superior quality of his/her cultural identity, and not being recognized as an equal in their countries of origin. At the same time, the mere presence in the contact zone and the interaction with the Other triggers the process of hybridity that, consciously or unconsciously, will bring about changes in both the traveler and the travelee. These two identifications of the traveler in the contact zone will be fledged in the text of the narrative through the different forms assumed by the textual function *narrator*.

Pratt (1985, p. 125) defines two types of narrator common to most travel narratives that I see associated with the process of hybridity. The first one is the "manners and customs narrator". It is more impersonal as information appears to emanate, not from the traveler but from some omniscient and ubiquitous voice that just reports what is being observed. This type of narrator is associated with colonial discourse and the image of the conqueror. This is a *sang froid* narrator that, no matter what happens, will always be in a masterly position as there is a clear desire to repress the influence from the travelee.

The second type of narrator defined by Pratt (1985) is the "sentimental narrator". Here the narrator is not hidden behind impersonal forms but foregrounds himself/herself. He/she is concerned with people as individuals and sees life as stemming from their own point of view, and not from some received notion. This is what confers authority to their narratives. Unlike the manners and custom narrator, the sentimental narrator to a certain point acknowledges gaining information through the contact with the *native*. Therefore, for all the control that the traveler might try to impose on the text, the process of hybridization is more overt.

These forms that the narrator assumes in the contact zone are very deeply connected with what has been defined as the process of "Othering" (PRATT, 1985, p. 120), that is to say, the way in which the traveler regards and recreates the travelee in his/her narrative. The *native* is thus presented either through a collective, homogeneous and nameless *they*, always in a primitive form, in some timeless dimension, or as a more particularized *he* that is identified by a "pre-given custom or trait" through which, the narrator both identifies him and marks the superiority of the English culture (PRATT, 1985, p.120).

In any case, the form of narrator adopted by the traveler will also very much depend on the final destination he/she embarked upon whether it is to the center of Western culture and civilization, as in the case of the *Grand Tour*, or to its frontier, as in the case of the Orient, Africa or America. Before leaving

home, as Mills (1991, p. 83) remarks, the place had already been categorized for the traveler. In order to illustrate how the contact zone actually shapes travel narratives, leading the traveler to actually give vent or repress hybridity in the contact with the Other (SOUZA, 2004, p. 123), I will refer to these two types of destinations.

The *Grand Tour*: Journey to the Center of Western Tradition

James Buzard (2002) says that "...the period between the Restoration of the British Monarchy in 1660 and the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 is marked by the emergence of [a] new paradigm of travel — that of the *Grand Tour*..." (2002, p. 38), a journey of some of the most important European countries and their cities: Boulogne and Paris in France, Venice, Florence and Rome in Italy, with excursions through Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The term was coined by Richard Lassels in 1670 in his *The Voyage to Italy.* (BOHLS & DUNCAN, 2005, p.3).

When the young English aristocrats embarked upon the *Grand Tour* they entered in contact with the ancient and refined culture of the Continent, a fact that helped them develop their historical and class consciousness and, by contrast, appreciate England's present greatness. Therefore, the chronotope of these narratives to the Continent, implies, as regards place, the visiting of sites which, in the English imagination, had almost the standing of sanctuaries because they sheltered Western tradition's most treasured works of art. As regards time, they are articulated on a double bind; while the monumental architectonic and artistic creations of the past evoked ages of grandeur, many times the English found the present day conditions of Italy and France in particular as "degraded" (BOLHS & DUNCAN, 2005, p.3), when compared to English standards.

Buzard (2002, p. 38) explains that after completing their studies at Cambridge or Oxford, these young men embarked upon this *Grand Tour* of the Continent which lasted from one to five years, always under the surveillance of a governor, who was supposed to instruct them on the beauty they were to encounter in their different destinations.

Dr Johnson summarizes the idea behind the *Grand Tour* in the following way: "A man who has not been in Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of traveling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean" (BOSWELL, 1976 in HANLEY, 2002, p. 74).

There were different motivations for the *Grand Tour.* The first one was to develop and refine the young Englishman's taste through the contact with Parisian sophisticated society and Italy's great works of art from the past. These elite men embarked upon the *Grand Tour* because, once back home, they would occupy positions of power and this trip to the continent offered them the possibility of mingling with the social and political European elite. It was

"...a 'horizontal' identification that linked the superior classes of Britain with their counterparts on the Continent and imposed upon the traveler a sense that he shared with these counterparts a common responsibility for the welfare of Europe as a whole" (BUZARD, 2002, p.41).

A second motivation for the *Grand Tour* was the fact that the contact with Rome led the English traveler to draw a comparison between their nation's present standing as a great overseas empire and the great Roman Empire of the past (BUZARD, 2002, p. 39). This implied a knowledge of the classics as well as of theories of aesthetics. In his *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, etc. in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703* (1705), Joseph Addison (1672-1719) tells about a journey from Rome to Naples saying that "The greatest pleasure I took in my journey from Rome to Naples was in seeing the fields, towns and rivers that have been described by so many classic authors, and have been the scenes of so many great actions" (p.7).

Nevertheless, what was simultaneously at the core of many of these travel narratives was a questioning of the educational value of the *Grand Tour* on the grounds that foreign customs and manners did not necessarily contribute to the moral improvement of the young Englishman. So much so that in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 7 August 1731 there is an article entitled "Of Travelling" in which the *Grand Tour* is acidly criticized on the grounds that while on the Continent "[Young travelers] are immersed in all manner of lewdness and debauchery, and their principles both religious and political, are corrupted by the intrigues of Irish Romish Priests, and other emissaries, who swarm in Roman Catholic countries" (p.13).

Such is also the case of Tobias Smollett's (1721-1771) *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766) in which the English writer actually deconstructs all previous accounts of the *Grand Tour* through his exacerbated, but highly amusing criticism of all he saw, to the point that it earned him the nickname of "learned Smelfungus" from the renowned Laurence Sterne, author of *Sentimental Journey* (1768) in turn, a deconstruction of the young aristocrat's *récit de voyage* and Smollett's ill tempered narrative account.

In his journal, which has the form of a series of letters written to a friend, Smollett creates a *narrative I* which reveals, on the part of the author, the intentionality of sticking to what Pratt (1985, p. 125) calls the "manners and customs narrator". However, as the narrative progresses, it becomes an angry version of the *sentimental narrator*, as Smollett cannot help comparing everything he saw to English standards, and voicing every inconvenience he encountered on his trip, so much so that his book was jocosely renamed "Quarrels through France and Italy" by Philip Thicknesse (FELSENSTEIN, 1992, p. xii).

In the very second letter of his journal, when he has just arrived in Boulogne and, therefore, at the outset of his journey, he categorically affirms about France that, he knows "...no country in which strangers are worse treated, with respect to their essential concerns" (p. 9). He then goes on to criticize the city of Paris for its "narrow streets" and "its high houses" (p. 46); French art becau-

se, in his opinion, "the state of the arts and sciences at Nice…is almost…a total blank" (p. 147); "the execrable auberges [inns]" for their "dirt and imposition" (p. 8); Catholic priests of the Capuchin order for being "uncouth and grotesque animals" (19); even the fruits are "more backward than in England" (p. 21); not even wine was good enough in France: "The French inhabitants drink no good wine; nor is there any to be had, unless you have recourse to the British wine-merchants here established…" (p. 23).

Smollett's text becomes an example of the close relationship between language and identity (SOUZA, 2004, p. 114) as his critique of the French was a way of reaffirming the superiority and soundness of British values, in particular in the case of France, since at the time he was traveling on the Continent, the "Seven Year War" between England and France had just finished.

More important, Smollett's narrative reveals how in constructing in his text the national identity of "our rivals and enemies" (p. 32), the French, as "vain and volatile" (p. 10), devoted to "prattling, tittering and laughing" (p. 27), he was indirectly praising the sound, austere and discreet British national identity. What was good for a Frenchman, was not so for an English subject: "Such a stile might perhaps be necessary in a native of France; but I did not think it was at all suitable to a subject of Great-Britain" (p. 11).

What Smollett's journal shows is that, as Brian Dolan (2001) remarks, when the English traveled to the Continent, it was to appreciate even better what they had left behind at home.

Likewise, Smollett's sharp but intelligent comments were directed to the "fatuous, rich and young Englishmen", traveling in Italy, who saw themselves as representatives of their own country, without realizing that they were being taken advantage of, precisely, because England was powerful and they were rich and, in consequence, mighty England was also being mocked:

> I have seen in different parts of Italy, a number of raw boys, whom Britain seemed to have poured forth on purpose to bring her national character into contempt: ignorant, petulant, rash, and profligate, without any knowledge or experience of their own, without any director to improve their understanding, or superintend their conduct (p. 241).

In spite of the neighborly disputes, these journeys implied a reaffirmation of Western values, a fact that ultimately acted as the transcendental signified of the narratives that recorded those experiences. Though grudgingly admitted, a trip to the Continent resulted in the greater refinement of the traveler who, when in Europe, was looking "into the world of reason and civility, the most natural state of mankind", as in his narrative Richard Hurd (1720-1808) makes the aesthete and defender of the *Grand Tour*, Lord Shaftesbury, tell the philosopher, John Locke (1775).

All these questions show that the destinations of the *Grand Tour* meant entering a space that was associated with a past of grandeur and, therefore, to be emulated in their Imperial present. Besides, the knowledge acquired

through the contact with the great cultural monuments of Western Civilization implied a personal growth and a contribution to making England a greater nation. Therefore, for all the differences that might exist between the English and the French and the Italian, the influence received on the Continent, as a contact zone, was a welcome one.

In this sense, the *Grand Tour* was not a journey away from Western values, but one that would help them enhance them. At a domestic level, it meant reaffirming the greatness of their own nation, and at a continental level, the superiority of *us*, the European. In this context, travel narratives of the *Grand Tour* were among the most outstanding narrative manifestations that contributed to the formation of European national identities.

The Imperial Frontier and Beyond

If when the English crossed the channel and then got on coaches to visit Germany, Italy and France as part of the *Grand Tour*, they were within the confines of Western culture and civilization, with the advent of the steam boat (MACHADO, 2005, p.6) they were ready to venture to the farthest end of the imperial frontier, be it in Asia, Africa or the Americas.

Their records of these faraway places very much depended on whether they were on this or the other side of the English imperial frontier — the geographical and the economic empire respectively — or "the official and unofficial empire" (BRIDGES, 2002, p. 53). By extension, the dominant of these narratives were the economic and political interests that the English Crown might have in them. As a result, the type of relationship established between the traveler and the travelee in the different contact zones, the type of knowledge produced and the way in which it was articulated in travel narratives vary considerably.

Bridges (2002, p. 54) identifies three phases in this movement to the frontiers of the Empire and its encroachment, through trade, upon those areas that were beyond its political control. The first, ranging from the middle of the eighteenth century to the first decades of the nineteenth century, is associated with the "old mercantilist empire of plantations, slavery and Atlantic trade" (p. 54). He adds that during this phase, the movement was to the East and to Africa. The second, from 1830 to 1880, is the period of Victorian "non-annexationist global expansion, characterized by Britain's confidence about its place in the world. The third period goes from 1880 to 1914 and Bridges characterizes it as "a period of severe international competition and territorial annexation" (p. 54).

In particular, in the first two phases indicated by Bridges, the English were all over the globe, pursuing their imperial interests. The Orient, in the form of the Indian subcontinent, was one of the most trodden routes by the English since it was its most important colony, fact that earned it the name of the *jewel in the crown*.

This ancient country stood in the English imagination for what the Europeans understood as the Orient, thus confirming Said's (1978) already famous words that "The Orient was almost a European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (SAID, 1978, p.1). Therefore, when the English traveler went there he/she was after the Orient, "...as a kind of idea and unchanging abstraction" (SAID, 1978, p.7), constructed in the West i.e., a place they were very familiar with through the many texts produced by the Western Orientalists. At the same time, as Said (1978) goes on to say, the Orient was the most conspicuous "Other" that helped the European in general, and the English in particular, define their own national identity: "...the Orient has helped to define the Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1978, p. 1). For that, as already mentioned, they needed a pan European cultural identity that represented "us, the Europeans", as forever superior to "them", in the visited cultures.

This Orient did not exist merely as an abstract concept but as a *material* representation in the form of innumerous texts that make up what Said (1978), p.2) has called "orientalism".

It is from these varied discursive formations that many travel accounts take their shape and, in turn, it is among them that they belong, thus contributing to perpetuate the Orient in the European imagination.

There are many travel journals with the Orient as their main focus, that narrate it from different perspectives, social, historical, scientific, linguistic, anthropological. But one characteristic that seems to run through all of them is what Said (1978) calls the "...ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (p. 2). This distinction, that the Western travelers in the East tried to pass as unbridgeable in order to confirm their own superiority is the element that acts as the domesticating force of hybridity in travel narratives.

Because of that, when *in situ*, on the Indian subcontinent, the English travelers would use the texts of the Orientalists as some kind of guide that would tell them not only what to see but how to look at it and what conclusions to draw. As an example, in order to highlight the authority of her text, in the Preface to her *Journal of a Residence in India* (1812), the English traveler Maria Graham (1785-1842) says that the information the reader will find in her pages, as regards India, derives from "...many individuals distinguished for Oriental learning and research (p. v). She not only acknowledges the Orientalists as her sources, but also points out that they were the "only" source she could avail herself of since even Bramins, who belong to the caste of the learned, she "...found ignorant, even with regard to their own sciences" (p. 11). Besides, she ratifies the Orientalists's uncontested authority when she explains that her resorting to them had, as its final purpose, the desire "...of a correct description of the scenery of the country, and, as far as her powers and opportunities permitted, a faithful delineation of the manners of the inhabitants" (p. v). The fact

that she should include these decisive remarks in the Preface, most probably written after her trip and after the writing of her journal itself, is highly significant in the sense that it cancels ideologically (SOUZA, 2004, p. 116) whatever comment she might make on the Indians, through the so called "sentimental narrator", that does not belong among this discursive formation and, therefore, might reveal that after some time in the contact zone she too has gone native. In this sense, the texts of the Orientalists act as a transcendental signified.

This influence of the Orientalists's texts becomes evident in the treatment of the chronotope as well as in the construction of the narrative voice and the Indian Other. As an example of the relationship of place and time in these narratives, when Graham went to India, she expected to find "...those remnants of the age of gold — any of those combinations of innocence, benevolence and voluptuous simplicity, with which the imagination of some ingenious authors have peopled the cottages of the Hindoos" (p. vi). Evidently, the Indians she expected to encounter were the fibs of Western imagination, exotic beings that tread the pages of ancient legends of the East. It was there in their past that their grandeur resided.

With that idea of India as an object of aesthetic consumption in mind, when she first arrived on the subcontinent, through a narrative voice that very much resembles the "customs and manners narrator" (PRATT, 1985, p. 125), she likened the Indians she came across on the streets of Bombay to those received images from the Orientalists's texts: "A painter might have studied all the varieties of attitude and motion in the picturesque figures of the *koolies* employed in washing at their appropriate *tanks* or wells which are numerous on the esplanade..." (p. 2). However, when these "picturesque figures" acquire life and become present day flesh and blood people, she constructs them as some kind of primitive beings who were far from meeting her expectations: "My expectations of Hindoo innocence and virtue are fast giving away, and I fear that, even among the Pariahs, I shall not find any thing like St Pierre's Chaumiere Indienne. In fact, the Pariahs are outcasts so despicable, that a Bramin not only would refuse to instruct them, but would think himself contaminated by praying for them" (p. 15)

Her disappointment resides not in some quality of the Indians but, as Said (1978, p. 7) would say, in a series of "investments and projections" that had to do with her own romanticized vision of innocent Indians, living in the stylized huts of the Orientalists's texts.

When through what Pratt (1985, p. 125) calls "the sentimental narrator", concerned with people as individuals, Graham happens to express admiration for some native, she immediately checks her empathy by pointing out that as he can speak English, he evidently belongs among the so called *brown sahibs* trained by the English to act as interpreters of their own culture:

> We have spent our forenoon to-day very agreeably, in conversing with two
> well-informed natives, one a Hindoo, the other a Mussulman. They both spe-

ak English well, and are thoroughly informed in all that concerns the laws, religion, and customs of their own nation (p. 15-16).

Talking about her Hindoo informant, she adds that "[She finds] him of the greatest use in explaining the customs, prejudices and belief of his country-men" (p. 16). Her comment is thus in counterpoint with her statement in the Preface, that the Orientalists were the only source of information on India, and reads as an example of hybridity in the contact zone.

Graham's text thus seems to confirm Mills' (1991, p. 54) words that writing about another culture will always entail a heterogeneous discourse that will show its inconsistencies and gaps. Graham does waver between admiration and condemnation of the Indian Other. Nevertheless, what emerges as the dominant of her text is the fact that due to the poor condition of the Indians, even the most civilized ones like her informant, she cannot help endorsing the Englishman's civilizing mission on the subcontinent as she says that she expects that her text will not only afford "entertainment" but some "useful meditation" to the reader in general and to the English colonial government in particular "...in whose hands so much of [India's] destiny is placed" and who have the means of "...improving their moral and intellectual condition as well as securing them from political or civil injuries" (p. vii).

Graham's narrative reflects how Orientalism and colonialism determined the traveler's way of thinking on the Indian subcontinent because in likening what she saw to what she had read, Graham is actually, as Souza (2004, p. 25) would say, "solving through her text the contradictions that existed in the conditions of production of that same text".

Graham's representation of the Indian Other is obviously the result of her own context of enunciation. She was the daughter of an English seaman and the wife of a Captain of her Royal Majesty. Not only that but, as the prefaces and historical accounts of her travel journals attest, she belonged among a restricted but existing elite of English women who were interested in the acquisition of knowledge in order to extend the limits of their domestic existence.

Concluding Remarks

What I have tried to show in the present paper is how this play of differences and references, generated by hybridity in the third space is actually the main trope of travel writing. This genre thus becomes one of the most relevant instances of both colonial and post-colonial semiology since it reveals the counterpoint between what Bhabha (1995, p. 52) calls the "noun concept of language, culture and world" with its stress on the right to "name", and the "dynamic verb" that emphasizes the process of "creation and recreation rather than the process of repetition and affirmation".

At the same time, depending on his/her country's design on the destination, which acts as a transcendental signified, the traveler will actually give

vent or repress this hybridity in the text. This process will reveal how, at a formal level, travel narratives do not respond to some universal law of genre, and when they seem to do so, it is because political agendas act as a straitjacket, while at a cultural level these narratives show how this genre has contributed to the construction of national cultural identities.

As I see it, this comes to show the importance of understanding the policy of discourse behind travel writing because, as many times they are first hand accounts of political, social, economic and cultural events, they are very often used by historians as primary sources to make assessment on different places and historical periods. ⊠

FESTINO, C. G. O HIBRIDISMO E AS NARRATIVAS DE VIAGEM EM INGLÊS: O GRAND TOUR E A FRONTEIRA IMPERIAL

Resumo
Neste artigo temos como propósito considerar o gênero "narrativas de viagem" como sendo um registro do encontro de povos historicamente, geograficamente e culturalmente diferentes no que Pratt (1992) tem chamado de "zona de contato". Nosso maior argumento é que esse confronto gera o "hibridismo" (Bhabha, 1994), o qual torna-se o principal tropo narrativo das narrativas de viagem. Porém, como o viajante e escritor reproduz esses locais longínquos para a sua audiência na sua terra, tentará domesticar a sua narrativa para fazer responder à agenda política de seu país, a qual vai se tornar um "significado transcendental" (Derrida, 1981). É justamente esse contraponto entre essas forças, conforme articuladas nas narrativas de viagem, que serão consideradas neste trabalho.

Palavras-chave
narrativas de viagem; zona de contato; hibridismo; significado transcendental

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