Representations of Hosts in Travel Writing: *The Guardian* Travel Section

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In this paper, we examine representations of hosts to tourist destinations covered in journalistic travel reports published in the Travel Section of the Saturday edition of the British broadsheet newspaper *The Guardian* in 1997. Methodologically, the paper is anchored within the constructionist view of discourse, i.e. we assume that in the linguistic representation of people, places, or events, discursive choices not only describe the reality but also construct its ideologically preferred version. We demonstrate that in the travel reports examined here, local people tend to be represented in three principal categories: (1) homogeneous ethnic or social group; (2) observed bearers of the 'national' or 'community' characteristics; or (3) as 'featureless' helpers to the travellers. Arguing that these representations are constitutive of Foucauldian *regimes of truth* we propose that the reports are a means of constructing a known and tamed reality that is safe for the readers/prospective tourists to travel to.

Keywords: discourse, representation, social roles, travel writing, *The Guardian*

Aims and Assumptions

The notion of tourism is based on the break from the routine and a search for excitement in the 'new'. This stands in opposition to the travelling Self's 'non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work' (Urry, 2002: 2). The tourist's gaze views what can be taken in one way or another to be *extraordinary* (Urry, 2002: 20), something to write home about:

> Tourists expect … to see interesting sights, diversions different enough from those at home to the point of being amusing and providing things to write about on postcards and to tell about in stories. (O'Barr, 1994: 20)

The tourist is a 'visitor in a hurry', one who 'attempts to collect as many monuments as possible in his travels', his/her camera being the most emblematic instrument (Osborne, 2000; Sontag, 1979; Todorov, 1993: 344). Thus, looking or glancing at local people and their environment, taking snapshots, or to follow Urry's useful formulation – gazing, remain the dominant modes of 'interaction' between tourists and hosts.

Boorstin (1967: 106) points out that the tourist often looks for the 'caricature' of the visited place, projecting his/her own provincial, stereotyped expectations onto the 'authentic' product of the foreign culture. This applies to the

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material and cultural artefacts of the visited community as well as to its individual members. By seeking entertainment and diversion from the mundane, everyday and familiar, the local Other must appear 'different enough' to fulfil the tourist's out of the ordinary experience. It is no surprise, for example, that many package holiday tours offer their clients, who are otherwise ghettoised in large hotels or apartment compounds, 'contact' with the locals through stylised, folk-performances of traditional weddings, hunts or other ritualised events, with actors dressed up in folk costumes, inviting the tourists away from their dinner tables to join them in their dancing and other festivities. And, even if one accepts that, as argued by MacCannell (1976), that tourists are after authenticity, the authenticity that is sought must be readily and easily available and deconstructable in terms of novelty and difference from what one has 'at home'.

Furthermore, no matter how sporadic or superficial, or as Todorov might have it *tame and non-threatening*, such contacts may be for the tourist, he/she will inevitably construct a representation of hosts based on his/her (tourist's) dominant ideology (including his/her assumptions, beliefs and attitudes) and knowledge of prior accounts (popular or scientific) of hosts. Such representations are part of the sense-making procedure in dealing with the 'unknown', or simply in acting out one's role as 'tourist'.

There are many versions of enacting tourism, which are variously motivated by seeking relaxation, adventure, personal development, discovery of one's familial background, and so on. These lead to different types of 'contacts' between tourists and hosts, varying degrees of understanding, integration and reciprocity (symmetry) of relations between them. Although, as mentioned above, we believe that tourists' contact and experience of their hosts and destinations is primarily through the visual mode (Urry's 2002, tourist gaze), it has been pointed out by others that the other senses – hearing, smell, touch, taste – also play an important role in the shaping of tourist experience (Franklin & Crang, 2001). Face-to-face, verbal and non-verbal interaction between tourists and hosts must be accounted for then as one of the means for tourists to explore their destinations and to enact their own identity as 'tourists' (see, e.g. Jaworski *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b for two recent approaches to language and communication in tourism).

This article deals with the notion of tourist–host interaction through the examination of representation of people local to tourist destinations in a specific genre of tourism writing: the *Travel* sections of the Saturday edition of the British broadsheet newspaper *The Guardian* in 1997, collected in electronic form from *The Guardian*'s CD-ROMs. We deal with both representations of the local people as ethnic or social groups, as well as individuals encountered by the travelling journalists. The data upon which the paper is based come from journalists' narratives describing their experiences of trips to various locations around the world. The journalists travel as 'guests' of travel agencies or tour operators offering holidays in the area. Our analysis is based on a sample of 45 such texts available in 1997.

This paper does not claim to be representative of all travel writing's representations of hosts in tourist destinations. What we offer is a snapshot of just one source of travelogues, although we hope that our reflections on the

patterns of representations of the data analysed here and their social potential will be applicable to the interpretation of other such texts.

Methodologically, we situate the paper within critically oriented discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1989; Fowler *et al.*, 1979; Hodge & Kress, 1993; van Dijk, 1993b). Language, as a social phenomenon, is both a reflection and a means of (re-)production of society's ideology, or the tacit, common sense, and frequently normative values, beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people with regard to different aspects of social life (see Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998: 25). Thus, the construction of any message designed to represent some reality necessarily entails decisions as to which aspects of that reality to include, and then decisions as to how to arrange those aspects. Each of the selections made in the construction of a message carries its share of these ingrained values, so that the reality represented is simultaneously socially constructed (Hodge & Kress, 1993: 5).

Following work in social semiotics we assume that representation is a process subject to regimes of production and reception, which, in turn, are reflective of the ideological complexes present in society. Practices of representation, resting on more or less (un-)contested sets of classification of people and circumstances, are always part of a communicative situation, which is marked by, and indicative of, the power differentials between communicators as well as those who are the object of representation (see, e.g. Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

By the same token, descriptions and representations of the Other, be they academic, professional, entertaining or lay, are situated within the ideological framings (what Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998: 16, call the 'habitual frame of reference') of authors' and their readers' world view (ideology), including the power relations within and between the communities of the observer/representer and the observed/represented. Moreover, as Blommaert and Verschueren point out, the discussions about the Other are usually carried out without the Other's involvement, from the majority (non-Other) viewpoint. This is typically achieved by a constant recourse to the notion of 'culture', which 'is used to explain or justify images of or opinions on the "other" which are generated by factors outside the other's culture…' (Blommart & Verschueren, 1998: 16) (see also Said, 1978; Shohat & Stam, 1994).

Plan of the Paper

In our discussion we demonstrate that in the travel reports examined here, local people are represented in three principal categories: (1) a homogenised ethnic or social group – a 'clearly imagined community'; (2) observed individuals, who are more or less prototypical bearers of the 'national', 'ethnic' or other group characteristics – the 'community representatives'; and (3) relatively 'featureless' individuals, whose main task appears to aid the author – 'helpers' or 'servants'. These three categories exhaustively cover all the references to hosts found in our sample. It is likely that the examination of travel sections in other newspapers, or other genres of travel writing would result in different classifications. For example, in a study of host *roles* in British TV holiday programmes, we have found that most contact between the presenters and local people occurs in the latter's principal roles as either

'helpers'/'servants', 'experts', or as part of 'local scenery' (see Jaworski *et al.*, 2003b). As will also become apparent below, many of these categories are overlapping and can be seen as part of the interpretive universe of social representations of hosts in general.

We need to emphasise that our focus in this paper is not so much on the interpretation of the tourist experience *per se*, but on the instances of mediations of this type of experience through a set of discursive practices in mainstream media. Obviously, the significance of such mediations through language and the visual medium (most notably photography) for the creation and perpetuation of tourism mythologies has been pointed out by others (cf. Frow, 1977; MacCannell, 1992; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Selwyn, 1996), although, to the best of our knowledge, no study to date has engaged in a close, textual analysis of linguistic narratives of tourism as we attempt it here.

After the presentation of the principal categories of hosts' representations, we conclude by arguing that these representations construct and reinforce the relationship of power between the journalists (as representatives of the dominant group) and hosts construed as the local Others. As such they are constitutive of Foucauldian *regimes of truth* (Foucault, 1980: 131–133), perpetuating the ideology asymmetry underpinning them (see Conclusion below). We also propose that the reports are a means of constructing a known and tamed reality that is safe for the readers/prospective tourists to travel to, and situate this observation in a wider context of Self–Other representation practices.

Hosts in *The Guardian* Travel Writing

In the following three sections, we provide a taxonomy of host representation derived from the data. The travelogues we analyse construct the local Others in three ways: firstly, they are shown to live in communities which can be clearly and easily described. Secondly, local people are shown through their prototypical representatives. These two categories somewhat complement each other, in that both construct the local communities in an unproblematic way. There are no complications or contexts in which the communities or individuals living in them might be different from the descriptions offered. Put differently, the individuals encountered by the travelling journalists are constructed as offering no features that could challenge the construction of the community in general. As representatives they are perfectly 'transparent' in being token individuals standing for the community at large. The final group of people shown in our sample are 'helpers', individuals whose reason of existence in the narrated world is to serve the journalist.

Clearly imagined communities

Representations of the local Other frequently make use of fairly generalised terms of reference. They can be generic (e.g. 'locals'), point to the ethnic or regional background (e.g. 'Russians', 'Madeirans'), social group ('women', 'children'). They appear predominantly in the context of generic statements ascribing the groups some unequivocal characteristics. As can be seen from some examples below (especially [3] and [4]), it is not uncommon for the authors to refer to the community metonymically via the place name itself (e.g. 'Dubrovnik', 'the Dominican Republic'). Such labelling constructs the

groups as uniform and homogeneous, thus minimising the possibility of variation, individualisation or exception to the expected or projected stereotype. The group is then *clearly imagined* (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995) as a society or community endowed with a set of easily recognisable attributes:

Witness the following examples (in which all emphasis is added):

(1) [M]any of the *locals are stunningly beautiful*, their ancestors being multicultural before the word was invented. (9 August)

(2) That is no country for young men, certainly not for laddish British tourists who will find their needs better catered for in the Canaries, a few hundred miles further south. And the *Madeirans being a modest, undemonstrative, devoutly Catholic people*, it's elderly visitors who are most likely to be spotted in one another's arms, tottering around the dance floor in Reid's cocktail bar to the sound of Bye Bye Blackbird played on a synthesiser. (14 June)

(3) Sure, it's a microcosm which couldn't easily be replicated in other countries; but you can't dismiss *Dubrovnik* as a quaint survival. *Small, communal and caring* it might have been (though overshadowed even in its golden days by threats and rivalry from Venice and Turkey), it gives a hint of what *civic values mean at their simplest*. (5 July)

(4) Of the many aspects of life the Spanish bequeathed to their former colonies in Latin America – the people, the language, the late hour at which dinner is taken – the most stubbornly recalcitrant is the attitude summed up by the word 'maæana'. Nowhere can this be more true than *in the Dominican Republic*, the half of the island of Hispaniola that isn't Haiti; the place where Columbus first landed on his trips to the New World. Here, *nothing runs to plan, timetables merely mark the basis of negotiations, and it's reckoned best to do everything tomorrow*. When I arrived at my hotel, for instance, the swimming pool was empty. (26 July)

There is no attempt to introduce any modality (degrees of expressed 'knowing' and certainty) into the descriptions – the authors' stance towards the object of their exposition is never put into question. The sentences, whether generic or not, are devoid of any hesitation, or even introduction of the journalist's perspective. The clear 3rd-person descriptions are to render the statements as knowledge to be absorbed and not to be questioned (see Hodge & Kress, 1993). The journalists describe the world as it is, not as it seems to them. The only 'individualised' experience reported by the journalist comes in example (4) and as 'evidence' of the sweeping statements already made.

The representations of the local communities in these texts are reminiscent of Blommaert and Verschueren's (1998) claim that the representation of the Other typically denies or underestimates group flexibility and dynamics. The Other, always different and strange, exists timelessly and undisturbed, with their roots set firmly in one place, once and for all (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998: 17–18; see also Lutz & Collins, 1997). Bruner adds (1991: 239) that in opposition to the capacity for development on the part of the West, tourist

destinations in the developing world are usually presented in various tourism marketing materials as static, never changed by colonisation or economic development, or even tourism itself.

The above extracts draw on a number of formal features which reinforce the 'out-of this-world' timelessness and homogeneity of the local communities. For example, the dominant tense is 'generic present', e.g. 'locals are stunningly beautiful', 'nothing runs to plan, timetables merely mark the basis of negotiations, and it's reckoned best to do everything tomorrow'. The local communities are described in terms of probabilistic characterisations, e.g. 'it's a microcosm which couldn't easily be replicated in other countries', 'Nowhere can this be more true'. In contrast, the author/tourist stands out as highly individualised, leaving his/her mark on the text through endless witticisms and pointed observations of the foreign scene: e.g. 'their ancestors being multicultural before the word was invented', 'tottering around the dance floor in Reid's cocktail bar to the sound of Bye Bye Blackbird played on a synthesiser'.

Thus, travelogues introduce the local Other in unambiguous, unproblematic (or unproblematised) terms. The attributes mentioned in the extracts above could even be tabulated, as follows:

	Name of group	***Attributes***
1.	(many of the) locals	stunningly beautiful;
2.	Madeirans	modest, undemonstrative, devoutly Catholic;
3.	the Dubrovnik community	small, communal and caring;
4.	Dominicans	'mañana' people.

Furthermore, the travelogues analysed here usually make the representations of the local communities a part of the general characterisation of the country/region/island which the author has travelled to. The local people are nothing more than part of the 'landscape' of the target destination. In his study of travel agency marketing, Silver (1993: 305) goes as far as proposing that tourist representations not only reinforce stereotypes, but also propose a notion that natives exist predominantly for consumption of Western tourists (and even, just like nature, can be photographed without permission). Consider the following example:

(5) What I recall about Taranto is strolling among children, lovers and old people in the sunshine in the public gardens above the Mare Piccolo, the inland sea where the Italian naval ships are berthed, and then night in the dense crowd of the Via d'Aquino, gradually losing in the hubbub the angry voice of the young woman shouting … (27 September)

The author invokes several groups of locals, but they remain anonymous and undifferentiated. Moreover, they form part of a longer *list* of the elements making up the scenery of the author's stroll, in the same way as the 'sunshine', 'public gardens', 'inland sea' and the 'naval ships'. This visual setting is complemented by the acoustic landscape. The latter is often as exotic and incomprehensible as the rest of the foreign environment. Extract 5 juxtaposes anonymity

of 'the dense crowd' with such sound characterisation as the 'hubbub', 'angry voice', 'woman shouting', all suggesting a degree of deviance from orderly and rational talk.

In the next extract, a similar human landscape is presented by the author, who joins a few locals on the train in Kazakhstan.

(6) When Vova, his business partner, and Olya, a schoolteacher from some steppe town before Almaty, join us, the talk is all of children, families and chance infidelities. They open a bottle of sticky, sweet wine back in the compartment and Olya, temporary mistress of this 3-by-4 metre space, hands around chocolate biscuits. We could be anywhere from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific – a group of six strangers drinking on a train that still bears the hammer-and-sickle emblem of the Soviet Union. Outside, the lights of provincial stations slip by, carriage doors bang shut and the desert night hangs bright and cold, watched over by a heavy moon. Somewhere out on the steppe, herdsmen are shielding their children from its light, protecting them from the madness they believe moonlight brings. (8 November)

The first two sentences of the above extract seemingly falsify our earlier claim that hosts are represented in anonymous, non-individualised manner. After all, here, we have two (out of three) hosts' first names given (but not the surnames), their professions, and topics of conversations held between them and the tourist. However, these individuals turn out to be mere exponents of their community, as people like, their behaviour and conversations held with them are not unique in any way. They are not anchored in a specific place, as they could be held 'anywhere from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific – a group of six strangers drinking'. The reference to the group as 'strangers' reinforces the nature of the relationship, which is not anything more but a fleeting encounter of typical (or stereotypical) representatives of the post-Soviet community.

As in Extract 5, the individuals mentioned by the journalist are part of the 'landscape': together with the 'the hammer-and-sickle' bearing train carriage and the 'steppe', romanticised here in the act of intertextual play (Bakhtin, 1986; Fairclough, 1999 [1992]), in which the reportage genre is mixed with the genre of a poetic fairy tale. As in a fairly tale, the setting is remote, if at all real. It can't be identified by name, merely by 'type' ('provincial stations'). Nature is represented as an active agent ('desert night hangs', 'moonlight brings') and even personified ('watched over by a heavy moon'). Equally anonymous and remote ('somewhere out on the steppe') are the 'herdsmen' engaged in a somewhat irrational, fairy tale-like activity of 'shielding their children from [moon] light'.

This poetic and romanticised view of the hosts continues in the next part of the same story immediately following Extract (6), even though the genre changes to a realistic, almost naturalistic description of a market scene in the capital city: Almaty. The people are more 'real' in the physical sense, not invented like the 'herdsmen' above, but they are still only part of the colourful mosaic, a highly ornamental picture postcard of 'central Asia':

(7) Almaty, after the quiet heat of the steppe, is bathed in spring warmth,

> colour and noise: purple lilac blossom clashes with red tulips and roses planted in city squares shaded by horse chestnut and birch; in the market, karaoke machines blast out Europop and the fragrance of lilies of the valley sold by women in headscarves mingles with the sickly-sweet smell of blood from the skinned cows' heads that hang from hooks in silent, docile rows; ancient buses belch diesel and smoke; old men in homburgs catch the sun on park benches. This is central Asia tamed and urbanised. (8 November)

The writing Self engages many of her senses in the above description – touch (e.g. 'spring warmth'), sight (e.g. 'colour'), hearing (e.g. 'noise') and smell (e.g. 'fragrance of lilies'), testifying to the multisensory nature of the tourist experience (cf. Franklin & Crang, 2001), but the resulting effect is that of an unproblematic, highly polished and somewhat idealised view of the local people, not unlike that on the photographs in the *National Geographic*, of which Lutz and Collins (1997: 13) say that their tendency to idealise and exoticise goes hand in hand with the downplaying or erasing of evidence of poverty and violence.

Accordingly, the business of selling flowers, which, to the 'women in headscarves' is no doubt a mundane if not downright despised, low-grade, economically-driven activity, is romanticised by the author's invocation of the scent of the flowers (their most ephemeral and sensual aspect) in contrast to the somewhat shocking (but 'sweet', even if 'sickly-sweet') smell of blood of the slaughtered animals. Thus, the women selling the flowers, as the rest of the scene, gain a special kind of attractiveness (Lutz & Collins, 1997: 90), which is not available to us 'at home'. Of course, the attractiveness of the situation depends on our non-participation and non-identification with the locals. Our involvement in the scene, filtered through the writing Self's gaze and representation is temporary, detached and voyeuristic (see also Karim, 1997). It is, however, by virtue of the last sentence ('This is central Asia…) typical of what can be found there.

An analogy can be drawn here between our analysis and what Pratt (1982: 145) describes as 'the-monarch-of-all-I-survey scene'. Originating in the Victorian travel literature, it is a convention of representation of foreign places, that positions the author-beholder on the top of a mountain or a hotel balcony, thus enabling her/him to see the entire landscape, both in its physical and symbolic dimensions: 'This is central Asia tamed and urbanised'. The possibility of losing sight of some fine and individual detail in such an all-powerful view does not seem to matter to the travelogue writers or readers. Instead, as has been demonstrated in this section, homogenisation and stereotyping of communities, framing individuals as prototypical members of their communities (see also next section), their romanticisation and objectification for the tourist's personal gratification and sensual experience, all deem his/her environment available ('clearly imagined') in all its undifferentiated aspects.

Community representatives

Departing from the generic representation of hosts discussed in the previous section, another common strategy of portraying the target community is through an individualised, prototypical 'representative' (mentioned briefly in

the above section, cf. Extract 6) of the community which remains relatively homogeneous and clearly demarcated from that of the actual or potential visitor. This is particularly common in the travelogues from the regions which only recently appeared on the tourist map of the United Kingdom, such as Central and Eastern Europe, including the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The travelogues contain very little actual (reported) interaction between the locals and the writing Self. The selected Others are usually observed by the authors from a safe distance, without any direct involvement, yet experiencing the 'native' or 'local' reality with their 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 2002; Wood, 1998). The observed individuals are constructed as the objects of the tourist's semiotic activities, or the bearers of ethnic or regional characteristics that the tourist/traveller can decode and discover as the 'real' Russian, Kazakh or Chinese (cf. Culler, 1988).

For example, in the following extract, we are confronted with an image of a local man, a 'drunk', whose reported actions are only 'hypothetical'. The author describes what he (the drunk) might do, rather than what he is actually doing. Likewise, the 'thick-necked Russians' are imagined to be (or, wished for) members of the Russian Mafia:

(8) In some parts of central Asia, the people are rediscovering the way they lived before communism changed everything. It's Friday night in Almaty and I'm sitting in a bar sipping my margarita, hoping the drunk won't drag me up to dance. He's standing in the middle of the dance floor trying to persuade the cabaret singer to join him in the Macarena, egged on by a group of Pakistani businessmen. Some locals, thick-necked Russians I romantically assume to be minor mafia hoods, are whispering, heads down, over a corner table ... (8 November)

Crispin Thurlow (personal communication) observes that the expression 'thick-necked' should be read more as a characterisation of the men's class or social deviance rather than their nationality or ethnicity, however, the fact remains that the invented and romanticised image of hosts relegates actual encounters with hosts to the realm of fantasy and fiction. The voyeuristic access to these local people, mediated through the imagination and the narrative of the travelogue writer, allows the reader to fantasise the actions of the other and portray him/herself as dragged into some kind of unusual, though risk-free, adventure. The slightly amused tenor of the above extract allows us to see the local community as significantly different from Self. The community which is portrayed via the 'drunk' and the 'minor mafia hoods' is sufficiently different from the tacit understanding of those who constitute the intended readership of the travelogue. Even the author's drinking is clearly contrasted with that of the local people. Arguably, the phrase 'sipping my margarita' suggests moderation (as opposed to drunkenness), and the drink itself ('margarita' – not indigenous to Kazakhstan) exoticises the act of drinking, which turns it to a break from the routine, a permissible folly, even a basic requirement on a hard-earned holiday.

We must admit that *The Guardian* travel writing occasionally offers instances of deconstructing sweeping national stereotypes. In the next extract, for

example, the author tackles the issue of Polish anti-Semitism and questions its ubiquity based on an encounter with a Polish woman:

(9) In Poland, everyone tells you how many Poles actually helped Jews during the war, in the same manner as in France everyone was a member of the Resistance and barely a quorum could be got up to support Vichy. But as soon as I met the receptionist at the Polonia Hotel (government-run and attracting mainly business trade), I knew that if she had been born 50 years earlier than she was, this would have been the kind of person who would have aided rather than denounced her neighbour. No, there were no Jews left in Lomza [sic], she told me, and little enough left to suggest they had ever been here. When I showed her the photograph of the synagogue, her face lit up with interest, but she shook her head – it had been destroyed by the Germans. In the last century, the Jewish population of Lomza had been around 70 per cent … (5 April)

Although the above extract is framed by the author's reinforcement of the stereotype that, on the whole, Poles are anti-Semitic, by drawing an analogy to the 'well-known' fact that, despite their denials, many Frenchmen were Nazi collaborators during WW II, his account of the meeting with the hotel receptionist tends towards a less stereotyped representation of her as an individual. Despite the author's imagined (see Extract 8) and possibly ironic projection of the hotel receptionist's activities: 'I knew that if she had been born 50 years earlier than she was, this would have been the kind of person who would have aided rather than denounced her neighbour', he paints a rather sympathetic picture of a young (?) Polish woman who is aware and regretful of the fate of the Jews in her city.

What is somewhat disconcerting in this extract is that some parts of it (e.g. 'it [the synagogue] had been destroyed by the Germans', and 'little enough left to suggest they [Jews] had ever been here [in Łomża]') could be attributed either to the receptionist or the author. We blame the (possibly) inconsistent use of quotation marks by the author for this apparent ambiguity, although it is possible to interpret this vagueness as partly intentional in blurring the host's and author's points of view, especially when they appear to converge.

The issue of the 'point of view' seems to be central in understanding travel stories. Even though the travelling journalists are usually foreigners in the countries they travel to by virtue of the passports they carry, the travelogues are always written from their standpoint, which makes them 'normal', 'right' or 'knowledgeable'. This is the inevitable vantage point of all travel writing, and it is the Western, or more specifically, British perspective that is adopted in *The Guardian* travel reports. In other words, even though at the time of the narrated events the author is a 'foreigner' in a majority context, foreignness is invariably attributed to the hosts. It is reversed from the 'typical' understanding of a foreigner as an individual who is a newcomer to a community and thus is 'different' from the surrounding 'majority' (Kristeva, 1991). This foreignness-reversal allows the readers of *The Guardian* travelogues to project the image of foreignness onto the local Other through their identification with the journalists adopting a familiar, Western, British or self-centred perspective in their depiction of their travel destinations and their populations.

In Extract 10, for example, the writer describes different aspects of his behaviour which 'cause a stir' among the Chinese local people, although the underlying point is that he does not do anything extraordinary from 'our' point of view.

(10) An idle group of waiting passengers peer at my notes. 'Your writing is hard to read', says one, as if I were writing in Chinese. They comment, laughing, on my left-handedness. A beggar in cotton shoes, black felt hat and padded coat, approaches me. Suddenly, he pulls back his coat to reveal a right arm that is no more than a fingered flipper attached to the shoulder. Startled, I give him so much money that he, in turn, is surprised. Moving off before I become an object of general interest, I walk over to a magazine stall with rows of periodicals displayed behind glass. The practice is to ask for one, study it carefully, then either buy or toss it back with a casual buyao – 'don't want'. I cause a stir by buying a dozen different titles without reading them first. (28 June)

In the above extract the Chinese local people are represented as sufficiently different ('foreign') from the author (and, by extension, from the reader) by overtly and/or curiously reacting to the author's *normal* behaviour. For example, the phrase 'as if' not only underscores the 'normality' of writing in the Roman script but also the unlikelihood of the author's use of Chinese characters.

Writing in the Roman script, being left-handed, or buying magazines without reading them first, are all said to be met with surprise. The author self-presents as being perceived as atypical 'causing a stir' and becomes 'an object of general interest' for no apparent reason. In fact he acts 'rationally' ('buying a dozen different titles without reading them first') and being just who he is: a normal British person; it is those who think otherwise that are cast as odd.

In the next extract, the author describes himself as being the source of similar curiosity while performing an apparently very ordinary action (especially for a journalist) – taking a photograph:

(11) I take out my camera to photograph the line of buses: some are grimy beyond belief. Husbands, sisters and children are urged to look at the old foreigner taking a picture (old as in honourable, I must explain). (28 June)

As is clear from the above extract, the author uses the term 'foreigner' for self-reference, but interestingly, this label is used in a report of how the (Chinese) local people, allegedly, refer to him: 'Husbands, sisters and children are urged to look at the old foreigner taking a picture'. Thus, the label 'foreigner' is not really a self-attribution, but other-attribution. The author constructs his 'foreignness' not from his own perspective as a traveller abroad but finds it newsworthy to report that others find him as such.

In this and the previous section we have argued that in *The Guardian* travelogues hosts are typically portrayed as undifferentiated and typical members of their national and ethnic communities, and as *foreigners* to the British writers/readers. In the next section we examine seemingly more personalised representations of hosts, however, these characters seem to appear in the travel narratives for a specific reason, as tourists' helpers.

The helpers

As people travelling in foreign lands, the journalists get occasionally confused, lose their way or find themselves lacking in the knowledge of fine local customs. Again, in what can be seen as the reversal of foreignness, the admission of such problems construes the authors as similar enough to the reader, one of us, while the visited place is different, exotic or, simply, foreign. Yet, whenever the author encounters a significant problem, there appears a helping hand reaching out to the traveller.

The 'helper', as understood in this paper, is based on a similar notion developed by Propp (1968) in his *Morphology of the Folktale*. Helpers are people whose sole *raison d'être* in the narrative is to aid the hero of the story (here, the author–traveller), to ensure the success of his goal, journey or quest. Thus, helpers appear in the journalists' narratives at the moments of trouble or confusion, and they put the traveller out of their misery and back on track towards their final destination.

As in Propp's discussion of Russian fairy tales, in the travelogues, the helpers' function is purely ancillary to the main hero, who remains the unilateral beneficiary of the helper's actions. Most often, these are randomly encountered individuals who seem to play no other role in the stories other than aid the traveller in planning or executing various activities. In the fairy tales analysed by Propp, helpers depend on their wisdom or foresight; in *The Guardian* travelogues, helpers are sought for their skills, abilities and the knowledge of the local environment. The travelogue helpers are the ones who *know* how to fix leaking fuel tank (all these amateur mechanics appear in a *deus-ex-machina* manner), how to avoid scorpions, or what to do when one is confronted with a crocodile when taking a swim.

Incidentally, while obviously not being able to fortune-tell, as the helpers in Russian folktales, the helpers to the peregrinating journalists are vested with some powers to predict the future, warn them against any danger or, indeed, assure the traveller that they should fear nothing. For example, Extract 12 involves a quick exchange between a traveller to Australia and two individuals whose expertise on local matters results in a contradiction:

(12) As the children clambered to the edge of the upper deck, we all put on a jolly front – after all, a pristine beach stretched for 150 kilometres. 'Watch out for the scorpions', warned a builder with a bandaged foot. Recalling the brochure's incitement to swim amidst sea creatures, from dolphins to manta rays, I headed for the water: 'Is it safe?' 'Oh, sure'. Our driver was most adamant. (9 August)

One of the roles of the helper is to extend hospitality to the traveller. Indeed, in the travelogues, the host is always a very hospitable creature (cf. Jaworski *et al.*, 2003b, on the representation of hosts as 'friendly' in TV holiday programmes). The representation of locals as 'hospitable' can be seen as part of their romanticisation as kind, down-to-earth, unspoilt, unafraid (if somewhat suspicious) and naíve individuals, and as providing a safe environment for travel:

(13) Some visitors have unfortunate experiences in the south. Many northern

Italians view it with unease. I travelled alone and met nothing but courtesy and warmth, although I sometimes felt I was being scrutinised for signs of prejudice rather as an airport security screen scans your bag for explosives. I depart wanting to return. (27 September)

The above account of 'hospitable locals' is typical: no individualised hosts are mentioned, hence no obligation of returning the favours and friendship is necessitated. Instead, all the encountered individuals are treated as part of the landscape; the locals are exploited either as 'props' (adding colour to the place) or helpers (ensuring the traveller's well-being).

The helpers are also people who offer the travellers insight into the local 'realities'. This role puts the helper in the function of a 'culture broker' (Cohen, 1985; Cohen *et al.*, 1992), the intermediary between the traveller and the native reality, authenticating the touristic experience. Consider the following extract from the story from the Italian south (see also Extract 13 above):

(14) There was a bar in which a close group of farm workers were drinking, some to stupefaction, so I joined them. After an hour, one of them, Vincenzo, offered me a room in his house and we drove off through the rain to his home by the beach, where his wife, unperturbed by my arrival, provided some pasta and a bowlful of wild chicory, followed by fried fish. While we ate, they told me their story. He was 58, she was 42. … The following morning I parted from Vincenzo and his family, leaving him with 50,000 lire (about £19), which he added to a fat wad of notes in his wallet. (27 September)

The encounter reported above is curiously one-sided. There is not a hint of a reciprocal interaction between the journalist and Vincenzo or his family. For example, the two parties do not *swap* stories, only Vincenzo and 'his wife' tell their story. The journalist pays for the service (his meal, bed, entertainment-story) and leaves. There is no suggestion of the author's friendly attitude towards Vincenzo and his family. Eventually, the contextualisation of the payment which is made by the author suggests that there may have been other travellers like the author who had paid Vincenzo for his 'hospitality' (hence the 'fat wad of notes in his wallet'). Thus, in Vincenzo and his family we witness an extension of their role as 'helpers' to paid 'actors' (not unlike those in restaurants for package holiday tourists) enacting local scenes for the benefit of the tourist. The dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' – tourists and locals remains undisturbed.

The subservient character of the helpers is reinforced by one more element in their representations. They are regularly identified either by their sex (woman, lad) or occupation and relationship to the travelling journalist (e.g. driver, guide). Only occasionally are they referred to by their first name, and never by their full name unless in reference to a host from the 'first world' (see last section). Such minimal referring conventions in the identification of hosts allows authors to 'tease out' helpers from the crowd, rather than to describe them as 'full bodied' human beings with unique names and personalities.

What the journalists achieve through such referring practices is not merely the reinforcement of a difference between 'us', the readers of *The Guardian*,

and 'them' foreigners and/or helpers (servants); the achieved difference is also that of social distance and, possibly, value judgement (Todorov, 1982: 185). Just as we do not need to know the full names of the person who cleans our office, we do need to know those of our boss or colleagues. Such portrayal of the host as helper/servant in the travelogues fits in with Western literary tradition, in which 'servants have always performed the chore of representing "the people" – lower classes and different races' (Clifford, 1988: 4, Note 1; see also Morgan & Pritchard's 1998 report of a case study of the images of local adults in Long Haul Brochures, in which only 1% of local adults are presented as tourists' equals).

Conclusion: Taming the Local Reality

The travel reports we have analysed in this article are not geared towards an 'accurate' or 'true' representation of reality. As we suggested in our introductory section, no representation is. Instead, representations are vehicles of ideological 'work', or as is argued by Coupland:

> Representations are the totality of semiotic means by which items and categories, individuals and social groups, along with their attributes and values, are identified, thematised, focused, shaped and made intelligible. In this sense, representing a class of items or people is more than 'merely referring to' them. It is the generalised set of processes by which collectivities, including human identities and attributes, are symbolically forged, confirmed or challenged. (Coupland, 1999: 2)

Following Foucault's (1980) notion of the *regimes of truth*, we believe that the representations of hosts in the types of texts examined here, due to the powerful, elite status of *The Guardian* newspaper, together with its commercial sponsors (travel agencies), establish patterns of knowledge, which are constitutive of broader structures of power, dominance and control. Cameron *et al.* summarise Foucault's views by observing that:

> the citizens of modern democracies are controlled less by naked violence or the economic power of the boss and the landlord than by the pronouncements of expert discourse, organised in what [Foucault] calls 'regimes of truth' – sets of understandings which legitimate particular social attitudes and practices. Evidently, programmes of social scientific research on such subjects as 'criminality' or 'sexual deviance' or 'teenage motherhood' have contributed to 'regimes of truth'. In studying and presenting the 'facts' about these phenomena, they have both helped to construct particular people ('criminals', 'deviants', 'teenage mothers') as targets for social control and influence the form the control itself will take. (Cameron *et al.*, 1999: 141–142)

In a similar vein, travelling journalists create 'regimes of truth' about hosts in tourist destinations. Although not overtly racist, these representations are often informed by racist ideology, thus potentially perpetuating what van Dijk (1993a) has labelled 'elite racist discourse'. As van Dijk (1998) proposes, the discourse of elites does not need to be explicitly racist in order to penetrate the society at large as racist. The presentation of other communities as 'exotic',

homogeneous and undiversified is, in our view, quite sufficient to foster prejudice against them or, alternatively, our own superiority over them. So does, incidentally, the representation of the *hosts* of the locations that the travelling journalists *visit*.

Represented, for the most part, as undifferentiated, objectified (gazed at freely), subservient to the needs of the tourist, and in non-reciprocal relations with the writing Self, the host undergoes a thorough Othering in the travelogues analysed here. As defined by Coupland, Othering is:

> the process of representing an individual or a social group *to render them* distant, alien or deviant. Often, [...] to 'altercast' someone this way is to relegate them to a socially disadvantaged position. It is the construction of an outgroup ('outgrouping'), a process of social exclusion or marginalisation. But alternatively, we can conceive of distancing as conferring mystery, magical qualities and even reverence, as a process of 'totemising' or 'fetishising'. The othered group (which may be a group invoked to define an individual) will often be a minority group. But it need not be, since majority groups will often be cast as 'other' to minorities. Still, we could say that a group (or a group member) is commonly minoritised in the process of 'othering', and this process will usually be carried forward through patterns of linguistic/textual representation. (Coupland, 1999: 5)

What kind of purpose can Othering have in representing hosts in tourist destinations? Our answer lies in the interpretation of the overall tenor of the travelogues as arrogant, self-serving and self-gratifying. The authors cast themselves as heroes who have ventured into the great unknown, faced all possible dangers and came back triumphantly to tell the story (and cash the check). The *veni, vidi, vici* ideology permeating the travelogues, casts the local Other as an exotic, wild and unpredictable beast. But, the 'beast' can be dealt with, ignored, used, discarded, yet is indispensable in the construction of the 'tourist experience'. The effect of this ambivalence: representing the local Other as 'wild' yet 'tamed' is managed by combining, in the right proportions, of what is exotic/exciting (but not always quite believable) with friendly/hospitable and dull/mundane (but believable) (Riggins, 1997).

The representations of the local Other and the local communities, substantiated by the observations of their representatives, serve this general purpose of the travelogues by presenting the prospective tourist with relatively unproblematic, homogeneous groups of people (no need to find different ways of dealing with individuals' idiosyncrasies), odd but harmless, helpful but distant and subservient, so that coming into contact with the local Other will not add to the burden of exploring the unknown. On the contrary, the representation of the local communities is devoid of ambiguities, and thus cannot (should not) lead to anxiety (cf. Leach, 1976, 1982).

The reality of the travel destinations covered in *The Guardian* in 1997 is also tamed on the level of the individualised Other constructed as a 'generic person' and 'helper' who is always ready to assist the traveller in need. Interestingly, none of the travelogues reported on a trip to a country/region which

would have been described as 'dangerous' or 'risky'. In a separate article (2 August 1997) advising on where *not* to go, the people living in those dangerous regions are represented only as thieves, kidnappers or bandits.

We are not claiming here that the realities constructed in the analysed travelogues are uniform and the image of the potential holidays in, say, France, is exactly the same as those, say, in Kenya. The travelogues do distinguish between 'realities' (locations and touristic experiences) that are more and less exotic (or tame and 'tamer'). The Western perspective which we referred to earlier can also be observed insofar as the differences in the representations between the Western and non-Western countries are concerned. A tourist going to Sweden, for example, goes to a place that is already similar to that of the *The Guardian* readers, and does not need to be tamed in the same way as, for example, countries of Central Europe or Russia. The story of the trip to Sweden has, in its opening paragraphs, the following fragment:

(15) The Swedes tend to do what we Brits used to do when we were kids: they get a take-out – in their case from the local government-run bottle shop – and have only the odd drink in a club. (1 February)

Clear affinity is flagged up between 'us' Brits and the Swedes. Sweden is a place that is already known because it is similar to 'ours'. The journalist describing his Swedish experience decides also on including the full name of the ski instructor (the practice, as we said before, not found in reports from the more 'exotic' places). A trip to Sweden is almost like going 'round the corner' on a holiday to Blackpool or Morecambe on the British coast.

Just like the affinity between Brits and Swedes, also the 'geography' of those 'places like ours' is ideological, rather than physical or even political. It is not Europe or even the European Union countries that are described in such ways. Travelogues categorise countries and their inhabitants according to the ideological maps of tourism. Southern Italy, as we showed above, with all its connotations of the home of 'godfathers' does not in this context belong to the 'known' world.

As has been already mentioned, this paper is based on the data which are clearly set in Western culture and ideology. We cannot claim that the same or even similar Othering processes are likely to occur in other contexts, for example, that of Asian travel writers reporting on their trips to Europe, New Zealand or other Asian countries.

Certainly, we can also find examples of Othering the locals in articles dealing with British tourist spots. For example, in an article describing a walk alongside the Oxford Canal, the only person encountered during the walk ('There are more animals than people along this stretch of water') remains equally distant and anonymous:

(16) Then I see my first angler. Odd, considering we're well into fishing season. 'Any luck?' I shout. He shakes his head. 'Not a bite', he says. (11 October)

Indeed it would be interesting to examine in greater detail the Othering processes in the British press travel writing dealing with destinations within the UK. We can hypothesise that the main in- and out-group issues to be

found in such data would concentrate to a similar degree around the questions of class, ethnicity, gender and professional identity of the local Others. Even though such a project, alongside with that of comparing different types of sources for travel writing mentioned earlier, falls outside of the scope of this paper, we are tempted to close with some general claims about the genre of travel writing as a whole. Of course, these need further empirical challenging and modification.

Travelogues go beyond a mere service to the newspaper readers. Travelogue authors accomplish the 'ideologies of tourism', which are socially and politically congruent with the interests of their employers, newspaper editor, sponsors (travel agencies/tour operators) as well as target audience (readers). These ideologies, understood as social (general and abstract) representations shared by members of a group and used by them to accomplish everyday social practices of acting and communicating (e.g. Billig *et al.*, 1988; van Dijk, 1998) are organised into systems which are deployed by social classes and other groups 'in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works' (Hall, 1996: 26).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 6) propose that representation is guided, among other things, by the *interest* of the representer. Interest is a culturally, socially and psychologically conditioned process which involves the history of the sign-maker within the particular context of the representation. The sign-maker's interest guides her/him in the selection of the criterial attributes that are ascribed to the represented object (Other). We suggest therefore that the interest of the authors of travel reports must also be seen as fulfilling the role of a publicist for the travel agent/operator. In the same way as has been suggested of travel agents or tour operators, *The Guardian* travelogues take on the role of a 'surrogate parent' (Turner & Ash, 1975; Urry, 2002) for the tourists in that they relieve the tourist of the responsibility for knowing the tourist location or seeking out the ways in which to travel to it. Ultimately, the author gives publicity and provides enticement for its readership to follow him/her on the adventure trail. At a more general level, the travel section of a newspaper is situated within the intellectual ideologies (Billig *et al.*, 1988) upon which the travel industry is founded and thus must essentially offer safety, relaxation and entertainment.

By constructing foreignness as 'tame' and the local Other as predominantly in a serving position vis-á-vis the tourist (either as an object of observation or as helper), these narratives establish a relationship of power between the tourist and the 'native' and legitimise the tourist enterprise as mainly asymmetrical and unbalanced (Cohen *et al.*, 1992; Sutton, 1967), giving the tourist the *right* to go 'out there' and to enjoy the country not as a place where a society goes about its life, but, rather, as a tourist attraction.

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