The Island of Sardinia from Travel Books to Travel Guides. The Evolution of a Genre

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Abstract
The tourist guide, a companion to a journey, exercises a sort of maternal function (Margarito 2000). However, it is also a device for the tourism industry to unambiguously control and lead the tourist towards specific destinations (Dann 1996). The present study will focus on the evolution of tourism texts from travel books to travel guides, from the detailed description of a destination with a thorough personal involvement of the writer to texts providing more accessible, practical and objective information. Tourist guides, mainly informative texts, ultimately promote a destination and persuade the traveller to undertake a certain journey.

After introducing the concepts of the travel guide as a genre and its birth and evolution from travel literature, the present paper will focus on the main characteristics of the semiotic patterns and linguistic strategies present in a corpus of 19th-century travel books and of travel guides on the island of Sardinia.

1. Introduction

The tourist guide is a companion to a journey, which by some has been considered as a metaphor for existential apprenticeship (Margarito 2000). Tourist guides are probably the least persuasive and the most univocal mode of representation of tourism discourse. Their discourse is, in fact, marked by the absence of immediate feedback. Moreover, they cannot be considered simply as an advertisement, as the reader has usually already made his/her choice. Tourist guides are a hybrid genre: they are descriptive but at the same time they present a combination of features from procedural discourse – e.g. recipes – and sign discourse – e.g. road maps.

After introducing the concepts of the travel guide as a genre, the present paper will highlight the main characteristics of tourism

discourse and the semiotic patterns present in the first travel guides and within travel books in general. For this purpose, it will focus on the birth and development of travel guides, in particular on the first 19th-century guidebooks, highlighting the influence that travel literature has had and still has on this tourist genre.

Linguistic strategies will be examined in order to observe how they actualise the text informative and promotional functions. Key elements will be stereotypes, seen as cross-cultural representations (Fodde and Denti 2005) and distinguished into quotations, comparisons and appellative *clichés*, respectively at the phrastic and textual level for the first two, and at the phrastic level for the latter text types, i.e. the combination of arguments, narratives, descriptions, explanations and instructions; pronouns and the writer's involvement; evaluative lexis.

The analysis will be carried out on a corpus of traditional guides and of travel literature about the island of Sardinia. This study is, in fact, part of a broader research project on the language of tourism based on a wider corpus of travel guides, advertisements, websites, brochures and other publications on Sardinia.

2. From travel books to travel guides

The forerunner to the travel guide was the travel book, where personal experience and emotions prevailed over today's objectiveness. Most travel books were linked to the experience of the Grand Tour. In the 17th century, Bacon wrote *Of Travel* (1625), suggesting what places to visit, where to stay, what language to speak and whether to hire local guides. Therefore, mostly practical information was provided. Another well-known guide of that period was Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (1705), which mainly focused on Rome's classic monuments, supplying cultural details. When, in the 18th century, the Grand Tour also started to be a bourgeois activity, travelling changed from being exclusively a "quest for knowledge" into becoming also a "quest for exploration, escape and pleasure" (Rojek and Urry 1997: 119). The approach to the guide with an inquiring attitude is still present in today's guides, as Margarito (2000) and Fodde and Denti (2005) point out.

The first tourist guidebooks appeared in the US in the 19th century: G. M. Davison's *The Fashionable Tour* (1822), T. Dwight's

The Northern Traveller (1826) and H. D. Gilpin (1825), *The Northern Tour*. In Europe, M. Starke's *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent* (1824) was the first guidebook for British travellers to France and Italy giving practical information rather than just detailed descriptions of the destinations together with a personal involvement typical of her previous handbook, *Letters from Italy* (1800). Moreover, in 1865 T. Cook started printing a tourist magazine (*Cook's Excursionist and Tour Advertiser*) containing information on dates and prices of tourist journeys.

The travel guide became a genre when the German K. Baedeker in 1835 and the British J. Murray III in 1836 published their first guides, giving priority to the objectiveness of information over emotions. As J. Buzard states, they were meant to be "a text that would be at once more accessible, more practical and more exhaustive than any previous one" (1993: 65). When translated into French and German, some years later, these guides were not simply converted but culturally adapted to the changing addressee.

Thanks to Baedeker and Murray, guides acquired a specific textual organisation and a smaller size compared to travel books. Nowadays, they borrow from different textual genres, such as historic and geographical texts, itineraries and road books, listing roads and places. They are a companion to the journey, with a maternal function (Margarito 2000: 17) toward the traveller, leading him/her "to the discovery of a different and novel reality, from where they will hopefully return enriched with something new and diverse" (Fodde and Denti 2005: 118).

After WWII, among the most important authors, E. Fodor, apart from writing travel articles, wrote guidebooks to continental Europe for an English-speaking reader, and A. Frommer wrote a guide for budget travellers in Europe. They introduced the genre of travel guides focusing on specific issues.

Today's travel guides have specialised along with the different niche forms of tourism that have emerged: e.g. cultural and heritage tourism, agritourism, culinary tourism, geotourism, medical tourism, poverty tourism, space tourism, wildlife tourism, sustainable and ecotourism. For example, the Insight Guide differentiates between Insight, City, Step by Step, Smart, Pocket, Compact, Selected Guides and Great Breaks, thus addressing diverse target readers.

2.1. Travel books on Sardinia in the 19th and 20th centuries

As highlighted elsewhere, "English literature has devoted much attention to tourism since the XIX century. The first type of tourist guides were indeed journey reports of sophisticated writers" (Fodde and Denti 2005: 117). The first examples of travel books on Sardinia date back to the 19th century, when foreigners began to arrive in Sardinia attracted by the richness of its resources and by its unexplored territories.

Travel books, aiming at giving an account of a journey, may acquire diverse features depending on the purpose of the trip: sometimes, authors focus on their personal opinions and experiences; at other times, they give detailed descriptions of the search and discovery of natural resources, combining narration, description and argumentation in different degrees. Sometimes, pictures, drawings, or maps of the landscape, cities, monuments and people accompany the text, to fix the image in the mind of the reader.

The oldest editions go back to 1800 – i.e. when Admiral Nelson wanted Sardinia to be an English naval basis. The first famous traveller to the island was A. La Marmora, who wrote his *Viaggio in Sardegna* (1826) in French. The book was a development of the former study on the island's fauna by F. Cetti.

Many Italian and foreign writers/explorers visited the island, describing Sardinian customs and landscapes in their travel books. The first travellers were astonished by the differences between Sardinia and Europe, because of the former's isolation and delay in its development. Sardinia was seen as a wild, unexplored, and mysterious land. Therefore, some authors visited the region several times, in order to study its people, language and economy. An example is offered by W. H. Smith, an expert cartographer of the British Navy who wrote *Sketch of the Present State of the Island of Sardinia* (1828), during his first trip to Sardinia in 1823. He compared the island's primitive and unknown nature to Borneo and Madagascar. He included general information about Sardinia and its resources, willing to improve his portrait later on. This book was the first about the island published in England, and Smith presented it as one of the possible stops of the Grand Tour after Rome and Florence. Despite these intentions, his work was conceived more as a description than a narration. Smith continued to draw his map, spending more than

a year in Sardinia, going from one coast to the other. He also visited cities and inner areas, in order to acquire economic and social information as well. In particular, he gave an account of Sardinia's history, products, resources, inhabitants, coasts, statistical data, weights, cost of living, Sardinian names for fishes, and in particular its customs and traditions. The result was a 300-page book written in an informal language and with very detailed descriptions.

An element often common to travel writers is the reading of other books in order to discover the real Sardinia, not its legends. This is the key element in J. W. W. Tyndale's *The Island of Sardinia* (1849). The British lawyer, who visited Sardinia in 1843 on a recovery trip, described Sardinia in a detailed and unromanticised way. After arriving in Alghero, Tyndale visited every village in Nurra, Gallura and Goceano. Then, he moved to Barbagia, the Gennargentu mountains, Ogliastra, and Oristano, on his way to Cagliari through Campidano. He was struck by the city, its monuments, churches, and towers. His astonishment persisted throughout the villages and the countryside, where he observed nuraghes, Sardinian megalithic edifices, as well as other historical, anthropological and archaeological evidence. Tyndale was fascinated by both Sardinian customs, and their mysterious origins, and by the people's warmth, hospitality, devotion, strength and pride. Unlike other travellers of the time, he did not criticise the island's underdevelopment. Instead, he tried to investigate and explain this condition.

A different perspective on the island was offered by M. Davey, the first and only woman to visit Sardinia in the 19th century. Her first journey dates back to 1848 and lasted two years. She reported her experience in *Ichnusa, Two Pleasant Years on the Island of Sardinia* (1861). Her love for the island originated a second book, *Sardinia* (1874), written more than ten years later. She visited the British people who had moved to the island and often referred to them, straightforwardly highlighting the cross-cultural differences between British and Sardinian people. The female perspective of an emancipated, sensitive woman is evident in her descriptions, enriched with personal opinions about Sardinian vitality, gossip and people. Her book was meant to be a short literary work giving a real portrait of Sardinia, the second-largest, least known and sunniest isle in the Mediterranean, still displaying the influence of Phoenician, Carthaginian, Roman, Spanish, Pisan and Genoese colonisations.

Catholic rituals were described with a certain irony, probably due to her Protestant background, yet highlighting the importance of faith and devotion revealing imagination and heart.

R. Tennant, in his *Sardinia and Its Resources*, introduced a different approach to travel book writing. He was sent to Sardinia in 1885 by his company, who were planning to invest in the island. Thus, his intent was to collect information and statistics, to establish close relationships with the local authorities, landowners and dealers. However, as he gradually became interested in Sardinian customs and villages, and in hunting, his book transpires feelings of amazement for the people who dance all night long, who are proud, devout, and strange to the foreign observer.

A clear opposition between positive and negative appraisals is present in C. Edwardes' 1889 *Sardinia and the Sardes*. For example, his journey became more difficult when he moved to the inland and its intricate roads, and tuna fishing initially enchanted him but then became nauseating and sad. He tried to convey the image of Sardinia as more than a tourist destination, emphasising its historic, cultural and traditional values.

In the 20th century, many writers, journalists and scholars continued to arrive in Sardinia, both to visit it and to publish their reports on the island. Among them, J. E. Crawford Flitch, D. Goldring and D. H. Lawrence, A. Grasselli Barni and M. L. Wagner. The development of political culture had emerged and become more popular thanks to the writings of such Sardinian personalities as E. Lussu and A. Gramsci.

The travel literature on Sardinia in this period is characterised by a greater presence of discursive strategies such as citations, comparisons and appellative *clichés*. In his *Mediterranean Moods* (1911), Crawford Flitch compared the Mediterranean isles of Majorca, Minorca, Ibiza and Sardinia. Undertaking a sort of 17th century Grand Tour of Mediterranean Europe to expand his culture, he devoted four chapters of his book to Sardinia. In his *Sardinia the Island of the Nuraghi*, Goldring mentioned and often quoted Edwardes, Lawrence and Crawford Flitch. In his travel book, Goldring started his journey in Nice, taking a boat to Corsica and from there to Sardinia. He reported that his Corsican host told him not to go to Sardinia because of fascism and because "They are horrible people down there. They'll rob you of everything

you possess." (1930: 23). Throughout the book, he alternated both positive and negative remarks on Sardinia and its people, especially on its main areas, on its typical wild boars and carabineers. Beautiful pictures of both people and places are also widely displayed throughout the book.

Among others, G. Costa was often named in Goldring's book. Costa wrote *The Island of Sardinia and its People – Traces of Many Civilizations to Be Found in the Speech, Customs, and Costumes of this Picturesque Land*, published in January 1923 in *The National Geographic Magazine*, enriched by beautiful pictures, again both of landscapes and people. Unlike the previous authors, Costa was a Sardinian teacher of English, who liked writing ethnographic articles. Since the article appeared in the *The National Geographic Magazine*, an objective and impersonal approach would be expected. However, neither this nor a laudatory and hyperbolic language was used. As Virdis underlines, "In a paper by a Sardinian with such a social and family background, so fond of his region and culture, any reader would expect to find, from the first line to the last, a passionate apology for and partial tribute to his home(is)land" (2007: 545-46). Instead, he started his article referring to Sardinia's central position in the Mediterranean, its foreign influence, unspoiled character, including banditry, hospitality made not so much of "worldly goods", but "rich in welcome" (Costa 1923: 1). The author alternates positive and negative evaluations. Irrigation and automobiles, geography and climate, development around rivers and lakes, sea pools and islets, history, manners and costumes, language and literature, transportation, bread making, people's curiosity about the tourist, costumes, weaving, music and dance, the Saint Efisio celebrations in Cagliari, where to stay and people's hospitality, are among the topics tackled by Costa. Sardinian women are also widely represented, either as housewives or young girls, depicted while carrying out stereotypical activities. One of the features of this article is Costa's direct address to Americans – "So, let the Americans now know the land of the *nuraghi* and learn to appreciate her" –, and a frequent comparison between Sardinian and American people and customs, almost suggesting Americans' superiority (Costa 1923: 27).

The most famous travel book about Sardinia is *Sea and Sardinia*, written by D. H. Lawrence [1921] 1927. This book "is the most frequently quoted piece of literature in Sardinia's tourist guides

and used as a reference point" by most authors (Fodde and Denti 2005: 118). The same observation holds for the websites analysed: all descriptions of Sardinia start with either a reference to Africa or a direct quotation from Lawrence's book. He chose Sardinia over Spain and Africa, because "Sardinia, […] is like nowhere […] has no history, no date, no race, no offering […] neither Romans nor Phoenicians, Greeks nor Arabs ever subdued Sardinia. It lies outside; outside the circuit of civilization […] But there is an uncaptured Sardinia still" (Lawrence [1921] 1927: 10). Lawrence's attitude toward Sardinia before the trip was also representative of the British opinion of the time. He kept comparing Sardinia to Sicily, Malta, Spain and Africa: "Arab-looking palm-desolated malarial plain […] Land and sea both seem to give out, exhausted […] And into this world's end starts up Cagliari […] But it still reminds me of Malta: lost between Europe and Africa and belonging to nowhere" (Lawrence 1927: 84). Now and then, Sardinia is compared with his home country: for example, with Cornwall or the Celtic landscapes (Lawrence 1927: 106-7). He often compares Sardinia to the more familiar places both to him and to a potential English addressee of the book.

He came to Sardinia in 1921 with his German wife Frieda and they visited the island in nine days. They began their trip by train from Cagliari headed towards Olbia, passing through Mandas, Sorgono and Nuoro. An interesting feature of the book is that, notwithstanding the title, he did not dwell upon sea and coasts very much. They are mentioned only in three chapters, but without description: the sea represented a means of reaching and leaving Sardinia. His attention was devoted, instead, to the inner areas, the real destinations of the trip. One of the characteristics of Lawrence's relationship with the land visited is that at times he felt as the one being observed and studied, a sort of role reversal between the visitor and the visited. Before Sardinia, Lawrence had visited other Italian regions and decided to come to Sardinia to search for himself. Many travellers of the time undertook journeys in search of themselves, as if through the Other, the visited, they would gain a better understanding of themselves.

Some parts of the narration seem to be permeated by bitterness and a sort of nostalgia for the ancient world that Sardinia evoked. Lawrence alternated positive and negative remarks throughout the book. Sometimes he seemed to be charmed by the island and its

people, big-hearted, independent, "warm and good-natured" and "so extraordinarily elegantly dressed" (Lawrence 1927: 54, 82, 86). At other times, he appeared to be bothered by the island's negative aspects: transportation malfunctions, poor meals, dirty inns. In these moments, Lawrence despised the Sardinian people, in his opinion unhopeful towards their poverty and their lifestyle, defined with such words as "dark stupidity", "animal-bright stupidity", "without self-consciousness".

Lawrence's descriptions probably benefit from his knowledge on the island acquired through literature, such as Grazia Deledda's books. Lawrence was an English writer, felt himself as a sort of Ulysses, a man who conceived himself as the discoverer of a wild area and there fore (entitled) entitled to criticise it in comparison with his own land.

The beauty of Sardinian costumes really struck him. He loved their colours, their brightness, their uniqueness and, mainly, their being different from Italian khaki dresses, obtained from the uniforms of the recent World War. Instead, he admired the "black and white dress" of men, as virile and solemn. After giving a very detailed description of a peasant in costume, he defined him as "handsome" and "beautifully male" (Lawrence [1921] 1927: 92). Women's costumes were particularly interesting for their colours and their diversity according to the situation and the village.

Lawrence influenced travel guides to Sardinia so much that his observations are either quoted or manipulated in today's texts, both traditional and digital, as the following sentence demonstrates:

> Closer to the North African coast at Tunisia than the Italian mainland, Sardinia (Sardegna) can feel distinctly un-Italian. D.H. Lawrence found it exotically different when he passed through here in 1921 – 'lost', as he put it, 'between Europe and Africa and belonging to nowhere.' The island may seem less remote nowadays – and it's certainly more accessible, with frequent flights serving Cágliari, Olbia and Alghero – but large tracts remain remarkably untouched by tourism, particularly the interior" (http://www.roughguides.com/travel/europe/Italy/sardinia.aspx).

Sometimes, even travelogue messages are influenced by expressions acquired from references to and citations of travel writers that give authority and depth to the texts.

3. Conclusions

This paper has highlighted the role of the tourist in the journey experience along with the writer's role and involvement. The evolution of textual genres from travel books to travel guides has been analysed as a starting point, as much more investigation is to be carried out at linguistic level. In addition, the role of technologies and of images in connection with texts should be further examined.

Travel literature represents the early and natural forerunner of travel guides. The writers of the past already employed those discursive strategies later found in travel guides. The depth and importance of their observations and personal opinions contribute to defining the tourist destination, providing the grounds for today's tourist texts.

The aim of early travel books and guidebooks was to reduce the risks and the unexpected events of the journey, which left room for the traveller's fantasy, creativity and experience to fill in the simple framework built by the guide itself. Nowadays, the travel text no longer refers to a present/past experience the narrator is telling but to a future trip, which will be made possible thanks to the information available. The autobiographical perspective, linked to the author's memories, is abandoned in place of a didactic and almost educational approach through which the traveller is accompanied in his/her itinerary. The tourist is motivated by the search for adventure, for novelty, for a comparison with what is unknown and diverse, for knowledge, for beauty and wellness. A principle underlying tourism is a sort of cognitive and emotional manipulation. If travelling means feeling free, it is also true that those "must be seen" or "must be visited" recommendations found in travel guides lead and control a certain journey. With reference to this concept, Dann gives a metaphorical interpretation of the tourist as a child led and influenced by the tourism industry (1996: 101). He argues that only if treated as a child can the tourist be affected and controlled by the tourism industry. This involves a learning process through which the language of tourism mediates between the tourist and the industry, the addressee and the addresser of the tourist communication. The more personal and evaluative the text, the more crucial its aim to socialise the tourist, a process which Fairclough calls 'enculturation'. The guide's objective is to precede

the tourist, assuring and accompanying him/her on their pathway "directing gazes and prompting responses" (Buzard 1993: 75). Despite making tourists free, autonomous and independent during the journey, inducing them to believe that the journey symbolises freedom *par excellence*, identity and the pursuit of pleasure, guides employ structures and linguistic strategies to operate a strong control over the tourists themselves, persuading them to take action in a certain direction, manipulating their behaviour by following market logics.

The choice of signs, not only historical or geographical, to signify particular themes, of images and texts, is influenced by the target readers and their interests, by the publisher's communicative purposes, by the tourist's intent of where to go and how to structure his/her holiday. Thus, both discourse and representations are affected. A key issue is also the social composition of tourists and of those living in the places visited. The social and physical relationships between the visited and the visitors are discursively revealed by photographers, writers of travel guides, etc. They help build visitor attractions (Urry 2002: 145). The real-space relations of the world are replaced by imaginary-space relations, thanks to the pervasiveness of tourist signs and of the rapid circulation of photographic images.

The choice and representation of these signs is one of the core features of tourist communication, both at an institutional and a private level. Travel guides, in particular, are the most appropriate means of communication as they give the pragmatic and historic-cultural information tourists need, accompanying them through landscapes and cityscapes.

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