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Traditional and innovative register in Alberto Fortis's *Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero*¹

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The Paduan scientist Alberto Fortis, who gained renown throughout Europe for his discovery of the Morlachs and the publishing of «Hasanaginica» in his most famous work, «Viaggio in Dalmazia», began his career as a travel writer with a report on a scientific journey on the islands of Cres and Osor, «Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero», published in 1771. Fortis was primarily interested in geological phenomena, with which he wanted to refresh certain scientific theories. But he also recorded his observations about the island's economy and the way of life and customs of its inhabitants. In Italy during the second half of the eighteenth century there was much lively debate about the language of scientific texts. Traditional complex and periphrastic forms of literary origin were used in opposition to the economy and directness of French prose. In this article, selected examples from Fortis's travelogue are investigated to determine to what degree that champion of «modernity» and reformist on the intellectual and social level, by the linguistic structure of its text, realized the corresponding innovative principles, and how much he remained indebted to his own traditionally imposed education and the environment in which he spent his early years.

Alberto Fortis, the Padua-born scientist, traveler, and writer, who was active in the first half of the eighteenth century, is primarily known as the author of *Viaggio in Dalmazia*. This is his only work which was continuously published and translated until the end of the twentieth century. It is also the text which is most highly valued among the majority of Fortis scholars

¹ *Cherso* is the Italian name for the Croatian town and island today known as Cres. *Osero* is the Italian name for the island known today as Lošinj (translator's note). The article in the form it appears here was previously published in Croatian in the book: S. Malinar «Hodočasnici, pjesnici, hvastavci», Konzor, Zagreb 2008: 129-148. English translation: Alex Hoyt.





and scholars of the literature and culture of his time. After it was published – in Venice, in 1774, in two volumes – *Viaggio in Dalmazia* attracted the attention of the educated public from both sides of the Adriatic, inspiring generally positive reviews, but also heated debates.² The debates for the most part concerned the chapter *De' costumi de' Morlacchi*, which turned out, however, to be the most interesting and most successful part of the book – in accordance with the cultural climate characterized by Rousseau's ideas and the new sensibility introduced by Ossian's epics – and which made the author famous throughout Europe, even outside of scholarly circles, in which he had already gained a considerable reputation. Translations into the main European languages – the first of which was the 1775 German translation of the chapter on the Morlachs – would continue in the following years either in the form of the entire book or just the above-mentioned chapter, which was even translated into Swedish in 1792 (Bratulić 1984: XVIII). The chapter devoted to the Morlachs gave considerable incentive to the literature of that time, inspiring the literary fashion of *Morlachism*. The song *Xalosna pjesanca plemenite Asan-aghinice*, which is included in that chapter, was commented on by Goethe and published in Herder's *Volkslieder* collection, and particularly impressed the Romanticists (from Nerval and Mérimée to Pushkin and Mickiewicz), nor was it forgotten in the periods that followed.³

The English edition of *Viaggio in Dalmazia, Travels into Dalmatia* (printed in 1778), also included three other texts which recount Fortis's experiences from his travels: the first text, *Observations on the Island of Cherso and Osero*,⁴ is the English version of the book which Fortis had published seven years earlier, in 1771 in Venice, under the title *Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero*. This was Fortis's first important work that was based upon his travels: the form of the book allowed him to describe more

² Particularly among distinguished groups of Dalmatian intellectuals. For more detail, cf. Muljačić 1996: 92 and 112-113.

³ For more detailed information on the fate of that text, cf. Bešker 2002: 120.

⁴ The other two bear the title: *Concerning the Island of PAGO and Appendix to the Observations on CHERSO and OSERO. Giving some account of Littoral Croatia, the islands of PAGO and VEGLIA* (Muljačić, 1996: 103, n. 18).





clearly and in more detail what he saw and enabled him to reach a broader and more diverse readership than that of *Giornale d'Italia spettante alla Scienza naturale, e principalmente all'Agricoltura, alle Arti e al Commercio* and other publications that had printed his earlier reports.⁵ In addition, this was Fortis's first report after his visit to and investigation of the eastern Adriatic coast. His visit to southern and southeastern Istria in the spring of 1765 is mentioned only in passing – in an article dedicated primarily to an investigation of Sumano, «a mountain in the area of Vicenza».⁶ The appearance of *Viaggio in Dalmazia* – at that time Fortis was already a renowned scholarly and expert naturalist – was met with the approval of the majority of scholars, Fortis's teachers and colleagues. He was praised by Vallisnieri and Spallanzani, the latter already seeing him as a university professor in Padua (Muljačić 1996: 57-58). But the potential success of the book outside scholarly circles was finally subdued by the publishing of *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, after a period of only three years. Compared to *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, which contained more themes, was richer in data, was more skilled in interweaving diverse thematic components, and was more narrative and more «literarily attractive,» *Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero* seemed overly scientific and mono-disciplinary, detailed and professional, while cultural and historical facts were poorly represented: The philosopher Francesco Patrizi, a native of Cres, was mentioned primarily for his «bold and acute thoughts about the great changes that our globe has endured» (Fortis 1771: 155), while in the ethnological part, the «superstitions» of the inhabitants of Cres and Osor are described, and an example of a «folk song» is included in order to satisfy the Ossianist aspirations of Fortis's patron, John Stuart, the Earl of Bute.⁷ Briefly, *Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero* was insufficiently attractive to everyone not particularly interested in its topics. If we exclude Mommsen, who included the ancient inscriptions published by Fortis in his *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, *Saggio* attracted the attention – in the nineteenth and early twentieth century – of only a

⁵ On Fortis's scientific publications during the period in question, cf. Ciancio 1995: 30-49 and *passim*.

⁶ This was published in the above-mentioned *Giornale* of 20 July 1765. (Muljačić 1996: 19).





few local scholars as the main source of chorographic data about the two islands (Fischer 1967: 62-64). Years later, Fortis himself referred to it as the work of a beginner in geology, although he praised his organization (Muljačić 1996: 27, n. 48).

Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero was a report about a journey to the Kvarner islands of Cres and Osor⁸ as well as their «neighboring little islands,» for which Fortis set sail in May 1770, on behalf of the Scottish collector John Stuart, the Earl of Bute, amateur researcher and admirer of the natural sciences, and archeology. Except for the last chapter, the book was dedicated to Stuart. Fortis traveled in the company of English *Gentleman* John Symonds, a lawyer and expert on social history, an «admirer of agriculture,» and also the physician and professor of botany at the University of Naples Domenico Cirilli, who was also in the service of Bute.

According to Fortis's words, the journey was "quite rushed" (1771: 97) and lasted less than two weeks. However, preparing the final version of the text took him more than a year. In writing certain chapters he received help from his fellow travelers and other collaborators, e.g., Dr. Giuseppe Gennari, the renowned member of the Accademia Patavina. He included in the text his observations from another sojourn on the islands (in September 1771, returning from his first journey to Dalmatia), as well as data which he later received from local figures of influence or people who knew those places, but did not take part in the expedition, such as the bishop of Osor, Matej Sović, and Count Trifun Vračen,⁹ from Kotor, who lived in Venice, serving as the government's advisor for religious questions.

⁷ Cf. Muljačić 1996: 22-23, who refers to yet other sources. Fortis also published „Canto di Milos Cobilich e di Vuko Brankovich“, an Italian translation that he himself wrote (perhaps with the help of one of his friends from Cres and Dalmatia) of the poem “Pisma od Kobilića i Vuka Brankovića”, published in the collection *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga*, by Andrija Kačić Miošić (1756).

⁸ Fortis refers to them as one island. The reason for this is given in the beginning of the fourth chapter. «Cherso ed Osero è veramente un'unione di due isole anzi che un'Isola sola; ma il Canal di Mare, che ne separa le due parti è così angusto, che si può quasi contare che non vi sia» (1771: 134).

In presenting the facts about Fortis's biography, especially in relation to his activities as an explorer and scholar, which influenced his contacts with contemporaries, we have relied upon Muljačić 1996 and Ciancio 1995.

⁹ In Fortis's text: Trifone Wrachien. Sović was mentioned only by his surname (Sovich).





Lord Bute, the initiator and financier of the project - in which he was unable to participate due to the fact that he fell ill in the meantime - was initially inspired by natural science and partly even archeological interests (including questions of literary archeology), which he shared with John Symonds.

The main purpose of the journey, as stated by Fortis, was to collect bone fossils according to data described by Padua scientist Vitaliano Donati in *Saggio di Storia Naturale dell'Adriatico* as well as in subsequent, exaggerated communications which were spread among scientific circles about the existence of such formations on the coasts of Istria and Dalmatia (Fortis 1771: 90-91). This coincided with Fortis's interests, and he himself was particularly suitable to participate in such endeavors because he had already proved himself dealing with similar topics while organizing scholarly field trips to the Euganean Hills and Verona's and Vicenza's Forealps. In 1769, two years before the journey to Kvarner, on some of those field trips he accompanied both Symonds and Bute, and he presented the findings in several articles, which he published in scholarly journals. The main topic of the research, and the field in which Fortis's knowledge could be best revealed was discussed in four of the book's eighteen chapters. These are the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapter («Caverne, e Voragini», «Ossa Fossili», «Impasto de' marmi, e petrificazioni», «Corso degli Strati»), as well as the observations in some other parts of the book. The eighteenth chapter, «Iscrizioni Antiche», also deals with mineralogical and paleontological corpora. Fortis's insufficient knowledge of botany – Bute's second-greatest scientific passion – had to be compensated for by Dr. Cirilli, to whom Fortis gives the entire credit for the ninth chapter, entitled «Arbusti, ed erbe utili, o malefiche». The remaining nine chapters deal with less scholarly topics. The first three include testimonies by ancient authors about the island – Skylax of Caryanda, Scymnus of Chios, Dionysius, Orpheus, Callimachus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Strabo, Pomponius Mela, Pliny, and Ptolemy. Much space is dedicated to the legend of the Golden Fleece as told by Apollonius of Rhodes in *Argonautica*. The legend is about a quest for the Argonauts, which the Colchians and Medea's brother Absyrtus joined after the Golden Fleece was stolen; about the trap that Medea set





for Absyrtus; about his death by Jason's hand on the island, which was therefore named Absyrtides.¹⁰ Nine other chapters present the current state, giving a repertory of general places which are usually found in encyclopedic travel literature, such as the configuration of the land, plant and animal life, landscapes, settlements, agriculture, important architecture, the population and its specific characteristics, social conditions.¹¹ All these topics were inspired by the actual characteristics of the observed «subject.» Fortis's interpretation is saturated with his utilitarian-enlightenment visions and his reformist tendencies, which, in this very work, were overtly expressed for the first time.

Travel literature – we use this term in the broader sense – is based upon an precisely defined existential situation, traveling, which represents its most explicit characteristic (and differentiates it from other literary forms). It is a non-fiction genre in that it refers to the so-called real world or referential universe, that is, it refers to observable objects and phenomena which exist before the text and independently of it. Therefore, text is not the only place where their authenticity is confirmed. Even the protagonist-traveler, identical with the narrator (if we are talking about the autobiographical journey, which is the most common in all periods of the history of literature), is a real person, able to be anagraphically identified. The second basic characteristic of travel literature is the linearity of occurrence, as well as the absence of plot and the leveling of description and narration.

Accordingly, travel literature stands out even in its language features: the frequent use of verbs of motion and visual observation; motion verbs are typical of narrative sequences, while perception verbs precede descriptions. The narrator observer (commentator), identical with the protagonist-traveler (i.e., the autodiegetic narrator), always uses the first person singular. If we are dealing with a multiple protagonist, including

¹⁰ Here we are referring to the first and second chapters «Vari nomi antichi dell'Isola, e Scrittori, che ne parlano» and «Origine de' varj nomi surriferiti Fortis cites authors of the «middle period» (Paulus Diaconus) and more recent ones (Palladius Fuscus, Johannes Lucius). He also offers a summary of the island's history in recent times.

¹¹ See: IV. «Divisione dell'Isola. Sue Città, e Villaggi», V. »Città di Cherso», VI. «Indole del suolo dell'Isola», VII. «Coltivazione», VIII. «Prodotti», IX. «Arbusti, ed erbe utili, o malefiche», X. «Animali», XI. «Pesca», XI. «Lago di Jezero».





the narrator and his co-travelers, who lack a voice but are merged with him in the field of action, the verb is used in the first person plural.

Fortis's book – as the title implies, which starts with the word *Saggio* – is not a tourist guide of the Kvarner islands: it is a report of scientific reconnaissance directed towards the collection of data, many of which were supposed to be used for the verification of proposed or accepted theories, or for the articulation of new hypotheses within the realm of strictly defined scientific problems: disputes about the theories on the origin of the Earth and the related opinions about the phenomenon of volcanoes, topics that at that time were the focus of Fortis's scientific interests.¹² The next word, *observations*, expressed the basic idea of the scientific “deontology” of that time, which considered research carried out in the field, the meticulous exploration of the visible world, to be the first and unavoidable element of each investigation aimed at the formulation of interpretive theories or the achievement of practical goals. The word *observations* denotes visual perception – and in that sense it is equivalent to the verbs *see*, *watch*, *notice*, etc. (verbs that are peculiar to travel literature), in addition to the semantic components “carefully,” “precisely,” “attentively,” “diligently”.

One should stress that the revalorization of doing research “in direct contact” (Ciancio 1995: 37), as the main research method which tends toward scientific discovery, in Fortis's time promoted traveling to become a regular part of the research procedure, and so it was considered a necessary element of the process of renewing science.

The verbs that denote or include visual experience appear especially frequently in a work about geology: «L'altra Caverna, o Foiba, cui visitammo ...»; «Ne incontrammo, come ò accennato più sopra, nelle caverne di Ghermoshall; indi, passato l'Euripo, vicino a Lussin picciolo in tre diversi luoghi»; «Di là passammo all'Isoletta ... dove pur due grandi ammassi ne discoprimmo»; «io ebbi 'l piacere d'osservarla eseguita colla più squisita maestria»; «... delle quali sarebbero rimasti visibilissimi vestigj nella parte meridionale di Cherso e d' Osero da noi visitata, dove non si veggono segni di sovversione, o scombussolamento» (1771: 86, 97-98, 98, 108, 110-111)«; often along with additional emphasis of the «intensifyng»

¹² More information about Fortis the scholar can be found in the book (1995) by Luca Ciancio.





element, in order to support the author's opinions on the pages of live scientific polemics, e.g., against Bourget and his theory of conave angles: «L'attenta considerazione dell'interna, ed esterna struttura dell'Isola, m'è riconfermato nella opinione già nata in me dal replicato uso d'osservare le montagne, e colli nel continente, in proposito degli angoli salienti, ed entranti del Bourguet», «Delle altre fantasie del Bourguet, che dopo d'aver piantate osservazioni poco esatte, profetizzò come per corollarj sopra lo stato passato della terra; trovò il tempo precisamente del cataclismo da essa sofferto (quasi ne avesse sofferto un solo); e si credette d'indovinare le alterazioni, e trasformazioni, cui dovrà soggiacere, non credo sia oggimai più da parlarne» (1771: 111, 113).¹³

Fortis was prompted to engage in these polemics by the experience that he gained, that is, by direct inspection and directly gained cognition, which opposes the claims of «meager philosophants» as well as «archetypical ideas understood in the barbaric way of rusted scholasticism.»¹⁴

The chapters dealing with geology can be characterized as scientific prose because they contain a list of objects accessible to visual observation, minutely described by means of scientific terminology, or appropriate technical vocabulary. «La sostanza delle ossa pell'ordinario è calcinata, e candidissima; alcune volte ella trovasi compenetrata da fioriture piriticose, che Dendriti comunemente son dette. Gli ossi fistolosi come quelli de' lacerti, de' radj, delle tibie, sono interiormente foderati d'una incrostazione d'ingemmamento spatoso, lucida, e pura oltremodo, come quella che vi s'è cristallizzata dopo una filtrazione malagevole a traverso d'un corpo molto compatto. Gli acetaboli, le costole, e generalmente tutte le ossa spugnose conservano esattamente il candore della calcinazione in ogni menoma lamina, o parete delle lor cellule. Quando elleno siano grandicelle, trovansi ripiene d'una materia ocraceo-petrosa di colore rossiccio; e quando sono più anguste, vedonsi tutte incrostate da un ingemmamento stalattitico pur

¹³ For this reason even incorrect claims are the result of (scientific) blindness: »Il Geografo dell'Enciclopedia, dice, ch'ella è una città d'Italia situata sull'Isola dello stesso nome, nell'Adriatico. L'Isola d'Osero non è mai però stata in Italia, e la Città d'Osero non è mai stata sull'Isola, che porta questo nome. Forse *alla cieca* dal Dizionario del la Martiniere avrà ricopiato questo errore il Cavaliere di Jaucourt« (1771: 35) (italics added).

¹⁴ In Fortis's words: «magri filosofanti» and «idee archetipe intese alla barbara foggia de' rugginosi scolastici» (1771: 100, 102).





rossiccio. Delle parti cornee degli animali non si ritrova vestigio» (1771: 94-95).¹⁵ »Le ossa fossili imprigionate nella terra lapidosa sopradescritta non sono la sola curiosità litologica dell'Isola di Cherso, ed Osero ... La pietra, che occupa i più elevati luoghi dell'Isola ... è analoga al marmo d'Istria volgare; se non che contiene maggior quantità di corpi marini della specie più discernibile, e che usa di conservarsi più che le altre, cioè di Faciti, ed Eliciti d'ogni varietà e grandezza. La frequenza di questi corpi semi-lapidefatti, o tramutati in istalattite, ma non resi duri del pari che la matrice, in cui stanno racchiusi, rende quel marmo meno aspro, e men resistente all'azione dell'aria, di quello sia l'istriano« (1771: 103-104).

New syntactic paradigms, as opposed to complex classicized structures, introduce linear and paratactical syntactical arrangement, that is, a natural order of syntactic structures or direct sentential construction, instead of «artificial» or reversed sentential order. This is in accordance with the demand for fluent communication, which in Fortis's time in Italian intellectual circles was increasingly sought after. Following the example of contemporary French prose, an expression should be more oriented toward the features of the referent than the form of lexical expression. Such a linguistic turnabout and deviation from the formalist tradition is particularly manifested in technical and scientific prose, with the support – more declarative than realized – of some of the most renowned scholars of that time, such as Algarotti, Vallisnieri, and Spallanzani (Altieri Biagi 1976: 410-461; Mattarese 1993: 73-85, 203-214). Sentences with direct construction, complex sentences which consist of two or, at the most, three levels of subordination and a limited number of sentences, and even some simple one-predicate sentences are to be found in Fortis's text,¹⁶ most often in those chapters where the author appears as a reporter of “what he has seen” or heard, attempting to offer the reader as accurate a description of this as possible. The careful and often meticulous reproduction of the refer-

¹⁵ It is characteristic of Fortis' syntactic composition to postpone the verb in the first sentence. From the point of view of contemporary Italian scientific vocabulary, many of Fortis's scientific terms would today be considered pseudoscientific, descriptive, and literary (which was a general trait of the language of science in his era).

¹⁶ «Questa breccia corrisponde a una specie di bel marmo dell'Isola di Veglia, conosciuta dagli Scalpellini sotto il nome di *Mandolato*. Ella è per la maggior parte composta di pezzi bianchi, e d'alcuni che àno colore avvinato, uniti insieme da un cemento stalattitico di colore carneo» (1771: 90).





ent's features includes in great part the intention to teach: in the geological section, Fortis disputes or affirms certain theses which he has submitted to analysis and verification; in chapters which contain general information about the area that he and his fellow travelers visited, his pedagogical intention is proved in advising on how to improve the standard of living, especially in terms of economics. Such sentences are also frequent in chapters in which he presents certain localities and towns, contributing to the fluentness and succinctness of description, with some passages almost resembling a news report: «Nia, Onie, o Unie è un Isola, che à intorno a sette miglia di lunghezza, i fondi della quale appartengono alla Mensa Vescovile d'Osero. Ella è posta all'Ouest d'Osero, poco abitata, e da gente oltremodo povera. Da' Geografi antichi non la trovo nominata; ne' secoli bassi è chiamata Nia. À un Porto bello, e capace, e sicuro ... Anche la pesca, che si fa d'intorno a Onie, è prodotto considerabile: ella consiste principalmente in Tonni, Sgombri, e Sardelle: ma i poveri abitanti non àno forze bastevoli per profittarne; e gli stranieri vanno a trarne vantaggio sotto agli occhi loro. Noi non iscesimo su quest'isola»; «Canidole è il nome di due Isolette situate all'Ouest di Osero, che àno di circuito intorno a sette miglia, e uno scoglietto vicino. Gli abitanti Slavoni di Cherso le nominano Stracàne grande, e Stracàne picciola. Sono divise da un canal di mare non molto largo. I Lossignani ne coltivano qualche parte, poichè il terreno v'è docile, e affatto senza pietre» (1771: 118-120).

Shorter sentence structures with «logical» arrangement of sentence components are mixed with traditional linearly structured syntactic paragraphs, which statistically prevail in the overall text. We will disregard the first three chapters as well as some other parts of the book where Fortis refers to the history of Cres and Osor, quoting the testimonies of ancient writers, historians and geographers, for such parts are considered to be a natural source of bookish and artificial syntax, of «eloquent» prose, which was, after all, commonly acknowledged for the presentation of facts of both «social history» and «natural history.»¹⁷

It is certain that Fortis made use of the illocutionary potentials as well as the rhetorical suggestiveness of traditional structures,¹⁸ but in his work

¹⁷ This is recognized by Spallanzani, specifying its characteristics as «elegance, now lively and refreshing, now verbose and flowery» (Altieri Biagi 1976: 458-459).

¹⁸ Cf. two examples in which Bourget is mentioned on p. 14. We would like to warn the reader of the anteposition of descriptive adjectives in relation to the noun in the first





as a whole, these are only partially associated with certain programmatic and controversial intentions or are functionally determined in some other way. «Unreasonably long» subordinate clauses – particularly «unnatural and artificial shifting, and the over-extension of the verb to the end of the syntactic structure»¹⁹ – are to be found in all parts of the book that deal with scientific themes. Moreover, they are literally tucked into the crooks of the scientific discourse,²⁰ making its diaphasic course unpredictable.

Maria-Grazia Fisher, who analyzed *Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero* as a contribution to geological science, emphasized his «scientific conciseness, without any amusing digressions,» yet mentioned that this is not carried out absolutely and that the text is not «completely deprived of literary distinction» (1967: 65). To *Viaggio in Dalmazia* she attributes a conscious intention of *captatio benevolentiae*: these are scientific themes «expressed in literary formulas with the aim of guaranteeing the dissemination of the work by means of enjoyable reading» (*ibid.*). *Saggio* is also a pleasant book to read, as much as this is possible: its scientific style is often replaced by traditional expressive paradigms of literary origin. At every step, by unconscious reaction, Fortis's inborn form of Italian prevails – as a result of his traditional education in the humanities and the style of expression common among the circles in which he moved – the form of Italian that was his primary, natural language of written communication. The diaphasic syncretism that characterizes *Saggio* reflects

sentence, as well as the antepositioning of adverbial markers and the postpositioning of the subject and predicate in the second sentence.

¹⁹ This is how Domenico Manni (professor of Italian at the Florentine archbishop's seminary) describes this way of writing in his manual *Lezioni di lingua toscana* published in 1737 (Mattarese 1993: 33, 183).

²⁰ «Non sono rare nell'Isola di Cherso le voragini»; «un tronco di grossa elce ramosissima l'attraversa»; «vedesi dal basso all'alto una gran macchia di quella pasta medesima, in cui sogliono costantemente le ossa fossili di quelle contrade esser chiuse» (1771: 84, 85 i 90). Here is an even longer excerpt: «Questa straordinaria copia d'ossa, la costanza dell'imprigionamento loro in terra lapidosa ocraceo-stalattitica, la positura de' varj ammassi da noi osservati e quella corrispondenza cui scoprimmo nelle caverne di Ghermoshall, oltre al far sospettare, che uno strato ne fosse composto in lontani secoli, potrebbero anche far, che taluno stimasse con non del tutto irragionevole congettura dedurre, che questo strato alternativamente composto di schegge marmoree, e d'ossa corresse dalle sponde settentrionali del *Quarnaro* fino alle isole dell'Egeo, e più oltre probabilmente» (1778: 99-100).





the state of scientific prose of that time. Thereby it fulfilled the conditions of acceptance by a broader circle of educated readers; on the level of formal expression it was suitable to its own receptive context. Its poor distribution was more a consequence of the public's diminished interest in overly technical analyses – in spite of the proclaimed popularity of science – and the excessively local and limited reach of the represented themes.

Corresponding to the geological part, also contributing to Fortis's procedure of proof, are the first three chapters dedicated to texts about the island of Cres and Osor from the pens of ancient authors. In other words, in Fortis's time, both myth and literature were considered legitimate sources for the study of geology (Ciancio 1995: 72-73). Here, Fortis neither changes his place of residence nor travels. Leafing through books at his desk, he limits himself to examining the credibility of other people's testimonies. He thus acts in the first person merely in order to present his perspective on the stories that he tells us, but to that he adds his criticism of certain «false opinions» of his contemporaries. It is characteristic that every such appearance of his was accompanied by reference to seen and immediate experience: from program announcements of the main tasks of the investigation²¹ to the assumption of concrete attitudes about specific questions²² – with speech that often becomes ornate²³ according to the principle of automatic invocation.²⁴

²¹ «Da questa incostanza, e da qualche altra proposizione di Plinio ... pare si possa dedurre, che il buon Naturalista non conoscea punto le coste della Liburnia, dell'Illirico, e le Isole vicine: cioè che non le aveva visitate personalmente, come dovrebbe far ognuno prima di mettersi a scrivere d'un Paese» (1771: 9, n. 12).

²² «Ma siccome d'un gran fiume, che mettea in mare non molto lungi da Pola, costantissima trovasi la tradizione negli Scrittori più antichi, e manifesti vestigj nell'interno dell'Istria, e nel mare aggiacentevi, così io stimo, che della Istriana Pola, e non d'altra si deggiano intendere i versi seguenti aver fatto menzione» (1771: 17, n. 23). The final structure is formed according to the Latin model.

²³ «Per ora basti accennare il solenne, e scandaloso granchio preso dall'Autore degli Articoli Geografici dell'Enciclopedia, che mette l'isola d'Osero in Italia, e mostra così di non aver saputo, o la situazione di quella, o i confini antichi e moderni di questa. Di sì grossolana svista, che non va sola, dovrò riparlarne andando innanzi» (1771:12).

²⁴ «Sembra impossibile che siffatte balordaggini passino impunemente per più di mezzo secolo sotto gli occhi di persone dedicate per professione alla letteratura e all'istruzione della gioventù» (1771: 80). Both this fragment and the preceding one belong to the





In the chapters that do not focus on a specific topic – according to their descriptive characteristics they can be considered chorographic records – Fortis «travels around,» that is, he passes from one locality to another, dedicating himself, together with his fellow travelers, to the observation of scenes exposed to their view, visiting towns and villages and unsettled island expanses. Speech about their actual travel experience can be found only twice: «L'alternazione delle abitazioni, e della verdura m'ha risvegliata l'idea ...» (1771: 39), «Appiè di quelle rovine avvì una spezie di molo, a cui sta legata una barchetta ... Io v'entrai con un cortese Gentiluomo, che ci volle servire di guida pell'isola» (1771: 80).

In the first fragment Fortis appears in the role of observer, in the second – the only one in which he observes the landscape in admiration, suppressing his usually utilitarian contemplations – in the role of traveler or even tourist. Fortis dedicates three dynamic episodes to the collective traveler – in one he singles out «the renowned professor of botany, our member» (1771: 67) – as well as four static (descriptive) episodes. The cause of this lack of narration is the omission of practically every specific situation in which they took part during their tour of the island. The remark about the inhospitality of the inhabitants of Mali Lošinj was most likely made in reaction to a particular actual event, one which Fortis, however, passes over in silence.²⁵ Only in one situation – in the chapter entitled «Coltivazione» – Symonds appears as the protagonist and is therefore liberated from anonymity, but the incentive is not narrative, but rather descriptive – and the verb *vedere* is used in the past tense.²⁶ With the few exceptions, referring to the aforementioned paragraphs, verbs of

polemic segment of Fortis's work, a component which is in no way unimportant. As his weapon, Fortis relies upon a method that he used frequently in his newspaper articles: words from lower and colloquial registers and grotesquely connotated metaphors, no doubt with comic effect – falling one rung lower on the diaphasic ladder.

²⁵ «Ci parve che gli abitanti di Lossin piccolo non fossero granfatto amici del forastiere» (1771: 39).

²⁶ «Il più bello spettacolo che possa veder un amatore dell'Agricoltura, si è il paese che scopresi dal mare entrando nel seno di Cherso. Il Cavaliere Symonds mio dotto amico che à visitata l'Italia tutta, misurandola per così dire a palmo a palmo, e mettendo una particolare attenzione nell'esaminare i metodi della coltivazione pelle varie provincie, non ha veduto in verun luogo fra noi impiegata maggior industria nel lavorare i terreni» (1771: 53).





visible observation usually appear in impersonal forms: *vedesi*, *appare*, *è visibile*.²⁷ Fortis offers the reader a picture of the island without singling out the person who observes it. He conveys information and presents reports, without assigning them to any voice. But repeating the verb *vedere* in connection with the improvement in the subsequent phases, refers to someone's implicit, suppressed presence (which prevents the narratorial voice from turning into the status of extradiegetic narrator), occasionally even some local reporter or expert. At any rate, as we have seen, Fortis sometimes links in some rare footnote the information that he introduces with his personal experience and the experience of his fellow travelers.

In the geological section, where scientific polemics have a distinguished place, Fortis was keen to provide founded evidence for the attitudes he was presenting: therefore, it was important for him to emphasize his presence *in situ*, whereas observation verbs were often connected with motion verbs.

In sections in which he gives general information, adopting in this matter «the sensitivity of a geographer to the relation between the natural resources of some territory and their exploitation for the benefit of its inhabitants» (Ciancio 1995 : 93). Fortis pushes the point of poverty and ignorance of the people living on the island(s), attributing this to the harmful influences of the clergy – which was suitable for an enlightened intellectual of his time. Here also his journey is in the service of exploration conducted via «tendentiously» formulated observations: now they are directed towards challenging projects that would improve unfavorable living conditions for the local population. In such a situation the impersonal form was able to suggest a more objective approach and make the expressed attitudes more convincing. But the issue here is the incidental effect of the «style» of a chorographic report, static illustration by way of descriptive «pages» that contain a detailed and technically thorough account of the selected *realia*. (The non-personal form of the verb of sight «naturally» belongs to that type of speech.) «Incidental effect» nevertheless also assumes a specific illocutionary value with the repetition of the impersonal form *vedere* and related verbs in fragments where Fortis takes

²⁷ «Colà vedesi a sinistra della via, che conduce a Osero, un'amena vallicella quasi circondata da una selvetta di vecchie Elci, che fann'ombra densissima, e fresca oltremodo. Quel sito è de' più delizioso, che si possano vedere» (1771: 58).





the stand of an involved observer: «L'aria nella state è pestilenziale; e n'è ben chiaro il motivo, da che poco lungi dalle mura v'anno stagni d'acqua salmastra, che pella ignoranza, negligenza, povertà, e scarso numero degl'abitanti non àno scolo, e v'imputridiscono insieme con erbe palustri, ed insetti. Alcuni attribuirono alla Montagna vicina, che ferma il corso de' venti, l'insalubrità dell'aria d'Osero: ma se vi fossero stati fermati dal vento furioso parecchi giorni, come noi, non avrebbero pensato così. Le ragioni della pestilenza, che v'infetta l'atmosfera, sono visibili nella campagna de' contorni, o sotto le mura medesime. Ed è per certo lugubre, e dolorosa cosa il vedere, che una Città ben situata, e popolosa altrevolte sia ridotta adesso rovinosa e inabitabile da un malore, che potrebb' esserle agevolmente tolto. V'anno nel paese medesimo de' fonti, onde trarre il poco denaro necessario alle spese, che si dovrebbero per tal'effetto incontrare»; «quantunque visibile cosa sia che poco denaro sparso con molta carità ed attenzione basterebbe a liberar Osero dall'infezione pestilenziale, e a farle acquistare vigore, e popolazione più proporzionata alla situazione, in cui fu fabbricata con ottimo accorgimento» (1771: 37-38).

Fortis's text, with its own specific structure, offers a starting point for contemplating the extensibility and span of the genre of travel literature and the movability of its boundaries. It also brings up the question of its own position within that genre. If, after taking into account the great variety of travel literature, *Saggio* can be counted among the legitimate members of this genre (Duda 1998: 48-49),²⁸ then that which characterizes it most prominently on the level of narrative organization²⁹ – after certain vectorial indications given at the beginning of the book («L'Isola di Cherso e d'Osero, verso di cui alla metà di maggio 1770. ... io feci vela», 1771:1) - consists only of sporadic and irregular remarks. Balance is again introduced by a letter dedicated to Symonds, as an "Appendix" to *Saggio*, in which Fortis reports on his third journey (Its planned destination was the eastern Adriatic coast, but for unforeseen reasons, it turned into a journey through Italy and along the Italian coast), enumerating its stops:

²⁸ Fortis's text fell into the subcategory of reports on scientific journeys focusing on objective reality, in which description takes precedence over narration.

²⁹ That is, its formation as a sequence of three moments: departure, journey, and arrival-sojourn (occasionally the sequence includes a fourth – the return).





Pula, Rovinj, Ancona, Rome, Naples and its surroundings, Manfredonia, the Dalmatian coast, islands, and interior, the island of Krk, and Osor (1771: 147-151). This, however, does not change the functional status of the journey, which was still subordinate to that which was Fortis's primary interest as a scientist.

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TRADICIONALNI I INOVATIVNI REGISTAR U OGLEDU ZAPAŽANJA O OTOKU CRESU I OSORU ALBERTA FORTISA

Padovanski znanstvenik Alberto Fortis koji je stekao slavu diljem Europe otkrićem Morlaka i objavljivanjem *Hasanaginice* u svome najpoznatijem djelu, *Viaggio in Dalmazia (Put po Dalmaciji)*, karijeru putopisca počeo je izvješćem o znanstvenome putovanju po Cresu, Osoru (Lošinju), *Saggio d'Osservazioni sopra l'Isola di Cherso ed Osero (Ogled zapažanja o otoku Cresu i Osoru)*, objavljenome 1771. godine. Fortisa su u prvome redu zanimala geološke pojave kojima je želio potkrijepiti određene znanstvene teorije, a pribilježio je i zapažanja o otočkoj privredi te načinu života i običajima tamošnjih stanovnika. U Italiji se u drugoj polovici osamnaestog stoljeća vode žive rasprave o jeziku znanstvenih tekstova. Tradicionalnim složenim i perifrastičnim formama literarnoga podrijetla suprotstavlja se





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ekonomičnost i izravnost francuske proze. U članku se na odabranim primjerima Fortisova putopisa ispituje u kojoj je mjeri taj pobornik „moderniteta“ i reformist na intelektualnom i društvenom planu jezičnim ustrojstvom svojega teksta ostvario odgovarajuća inovativna načela, a koliko je ostao dužnikom svoje tradicionalno impostirane naobrazbe i sredine u kojoj se kretao u svojim ranim godinama.

Key words: Alberto Fortis, travel literature, Cres and Osor, geology, verbs of perception, scientific vocabulary, syntactic structure

Ključne riječi: Alberto Fortis, putopisna književnost, Cres i Osor, geologija, glagoli percepcije, znanstveni leksik, sintaktička struktura

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