

hension, incompetent selection on the part of ill-prepared travellers, or resistance on the part of indigenous peoples (interference by the networks of other cultures).<sup>25</sup>

In relation to the texts studied in this book, however, Latour's notion of 'combination' pays insufficient attention to the problem of credit facing eighteenth-century travel writers, although (as I shall argue in Chapters 2 and 3) the early nineteenth-century stabilization and disciplining of traveller's subjectivity, combined with the rise of the 'museum order' as a means of organizing physical mobiles, made this less of a problem in the later decades. Thus travellers describing unknown regions faced the problem that, in the words of William Browne (the first European to visit the Sudanese kingdom of Dar-fur in the 1790s): 'the praise of fidelity, the only one to which the writer lays claim, cannot be received until another shall have traced his footsteps'.<sup>26</sup> Objects collected by travellers, as well as journal entries recorded 'to the minute', could too easily lose their 'original' meaning when removed from their original context and redacted in travelogue form, and this fragility of credit partly explains the currency of epistolary or journal-based travelogues based on the convention of 'writing to the moment'. Questions of literary form and style (including the vexed question of plagiarism and intertextuality) were key factors here, problematizing the reception of travel narratives and their efficacy as 'combinables' in the accumulation cycle.

The starting point for all the chapters in the present book is the manner in which mobiles were returned to the centre (hence my title 'from an antique land')<sup>27</sup> rather than the 'primary' experience of the traveller on the periphery. It might not be an exaggeration to claim that the accumulation of knowledge in the travel *narrative* (usually based on the redaction of field journals) was seen to provide the sole philosophical justification for the moral and physical risks of distant travel. Whatever the romantic appeal of the heroic traveller/explorer in an imperial culture, the contribution made 'to visions of empire and to imperial expansion depended crucially on seemingly mundane tasks undertaken in

<sup>25</sup> Latour's model is apposite for the travellers discussed in the present book. But, as Steve Clark indicates, travellers do not always move along Latourian networks: 'in principle travel may be from the periphery to a stronger, if none the less exotic culture . . . and in a more contemporary guise, to the metropolitan centre: the post-war immigrant to London . . . the European to New York . . . the American to Tokyo', *Travel Writing and Empire*, p. 5. For an account of 'reverse travels' in the 18th century, see Michael Harbsmeier, 'Early Travels to Europe: Some Remarks on the Magic of Writing', in *Europe and its Others*, ed. by Francis Barker et al., 2 vols. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), 1, 72–88.

<sup>26</sup> William G. Browne, *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria, from the year 1792 to 1798* (London, 1799), p. viii.

<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Amitav Ghosh's marvellous travelogue/novel *In an Antique Land* (London: Granta Books, 1992) appropriately misquotes Shelley's line to evoke the experiences of an Indian anthropologist doing field work in Egypt.

centres of calculation',<sup>28</sup> including the travel writer's rhetorical success in encompassing distance in the published travel account.

### Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Distance

Curiosity is seldom so powerfully excited, or so amply gratified, as by faithful Relations of Voyages and Travels. The different Appearances of Nature, and the various Customs of Men, the gradual Discovery of the World, and the Accidents and Hardships of a naval Life, all concur to fill the Mind with Expectation and with Wonder. (Samuel Johnson, Advertisement to John Newbery's *The World Displayed*, 1759)<sup>29</sup>

Whilst Bruno Latour's sociological theory of 'the mobile' offers an excellent purchase on the spatial dynamics of travel writing, it ignores the aesthetics of distance—the traveller's *desire* for the distant—which is crucial to the literary interest of travel writing.<sup>30</sup> Fortunately, such an aesthetic theory was well developed in the eighteenth century in terms of the notion of 'curiosity', and its cognate terms 'novelty', 'singularity', and 'wonder'.<sup>31</sup> Samuel Johnson's linkage of curiosity, travel, and wonder illustrates this configuration, highlighting the fact, remarked upon above, that the term 'curiosity' is coterminous with the practices and representations of travel throughout the whole period. 'Curiosity' was, of course, by no means limited to travel: as Hans Blumenberg and (more recently) Krzysztof Pomian have demonstrated, the term has a long and ambivalent history in European culture as the disposition of mind which desires knowledge of the world, but one which easily oversteps the boundaries set by God in a Faustian show of intellectual pride.<sup>32</sup> Assailed by Aquinas and the

<sup>28</sup> David Miller, Joseph Banks, Empire, and "Centers of calculation" in late-Hanoverian London', in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany and Representations of Nature*, ed. by David Miller and Peter Reill (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 33. See this endorsed by Dr Johnson's remarks in the *Idler* no. 97, quoted in Thomas Curley, *Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel* (Athens, Georgia: Georgia University Press, 1976), p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> Newbery's was a collection of travels and voyages; quoted by Curley, p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> Denis Porter offers a psychoanalytical explanation of the desire for distance in *Haunted Journeys*, interpreting travel as an Oedipal 'flight from repressive paternal power' (p. 149). However, he seems to admit a problem with this approach in acknowledging the danger of being 'both ahistorical and apolitical' (p. 14). See also Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edwin Arnold, 1977), chapter 5.

<sup>31</sup> For an illuminating study of these and other cognates, and the semantic fluctuations of the term 'curiosity' itself, see Neil Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Word Histories*, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, Band 81 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966), (English trans. by R. Wallace, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983); Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800* (1987), trans. by Elizabeth Wiles-Porter, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). Blumenberg's grand narrative of the triumph of 'theoretische Neugierde' (theoretical curiosity) in the modern age is contradicted by more recent, historically localized work on curiosity by Pomian, Benedict, Daston and Park, and Kenny. As Kenny indicates, this is because Blumenberg's 'theoretische Neugierde' *sometimes*

Church Fathers, 'blind' curiosity again came under censure with the rise of the scientific revolution, condemned by Descartes in favour of 'research carried out in accordance with the rules of method'.<sup>33</sup> But, as Pomian writes, from the early seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries at least, curiosity as 'a science of miracles, exuberant, incoherent, muddled, assailed by contradictions, and pulling in all sorts of different directions, enjoyed a temporary spell in power, an interim rule between those of theology and science'.<sup>34</sup>

The role of wonder in Renaissance travel writing has been the focus of attention in some of the best recent scholarship, exemplified by De Certeau, Pagden, and Greenblatt's discussions of Jean de Léry's narrative of his wonder-struck reaction to the singing of the Brazilian Tupinamba Indians in his *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre de Bresil* (1578).<sup>35</sup> In an important recent study (although one not primarily concerned with travel literature), Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park have described how wonder briefly allied itself with curiosity in the early modern period, so that whilst wonder (as it were) caught the attention of the inquirer, curiosity riveted it. The alliance was however short-lived: in the eighteenth century, they argue, curiosity and the knowledge that it provoked were more often conceived as a *cure* for 'vulgar' wonder than its product.<sup>36</sup>

On the evidence of the texts studied in this book, it would seem, however, that concepts of wonder and curiosity survived longer in the discourse of distant travel than in many other fields. Arguably a general overemphasis on the enlightenment rhetoric of *enargeia*, and a narrowly epistemological understanding of eighteenth-century empiricism, have obscured the continuing importance of curiosity and wonder in later travel accounts. As Pinkerton's slighting remark about the mere 'curiosity' of pre-1768 travelogues (cited in the Preface) indicates, by 1814 the term had assumed a highly ambivalent meaning for British geographers at least. On the other hand, its currency in contemporary travelogues and exhibition culture suggests that the 'official' critique of curiosity was unrepresentative. Coleridge's arch apology for publishing his exotic fragment 'Kubla Khan' 'rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the grounds of any supposed *poetic* merits' (in the poem's 1816 Preface) suggests *both* the distance of curiosity from polite aesthetics *and* the extent to which romantic poets

coincides with historical uses of the word 'curiosity' and its cognates, but 'does not do so systematically or necessarily' (Kenny p. 47).

<sup>33</sup> Pomian, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Michel de Certeau, 'Ethno-Graphy: Speech, or the Space of the Other: Jean de Léry', in *The Writing of History*, trans. by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 209–43; Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World* (pp. 42–7); Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 16–17.

<sup>36</sup> L. Daston and K. Park, *Wonder and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), pp. 305, 311, 321.

sought to recuperate the discredited discourse of curiosity in justifying exotic and orientalist literature.<sup>37</sup>

Henry Home's, Lord Kames's, extended treatment of the aesthetics of curiosity in his influential *Elements of Criticism* (1762) reveals not only the semantic complexity which the term had come to bear in the second half of the eighteenth century but also illustrates the bifurcation in its meaning observed by Daston and Park. Because Kames's treatment is at once typical of, and yet more extensive than, those of his near-contemporaries (like David Hume, Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, Adam Smith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, or Richard Payne Knight, not to mention French commentators like Furetière, La Bruyère, Diderot, or Grimm discussed by Pomian), I shall limit my analysis to it alone.<sup>38</sup> Kames formulated the aesthetics of distance in terms of a rhetorical question which illustrates the dynamic relationship between curiosity and its cognates such as novelty, singularity, and wonder:

men tear themselves from their native country in search of things rare and new; and novelty converts into a pleasure the fatigues and even perils of travelling. To what cause shall we ascribe these singular appearances? To curiosity undoubtedly, a principle implanted in human nature for a purpose extremely beneficial, that of acquiring knowledge; and the emotion of wonder, raised by new and strange objects, inflames our curiosity to know more about them.<sup>39</sup>

Kames here posits a sequential relationship between novelty, curiosity, and wonder: novelty 'invariably raises' wonder, which in turn 'inflames' curiosity to know more; this affective chain converts the pains into the pleasures of travel as otiose wonder is converted into a desire for knowledge. But wonder/novelty, the motivating impulse of travel (like surprise, from which it differs in other respects)<sup>40</sup> is marked by the 'shortness of [its] duration' as novelty 'degenerates' into familiarity.<sup>41</sup> In this respect wonder differs from the sublime (discussed in

<sup>37</sup> S. T. Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, ed. by E. H. Coleridge (Oxford University Press, 1912), p. 295. The distinction between romantic 'retro' curiosity and the vestiges of 18th-century patrician curiosity is exemplified in William Hazlitt's essay 'Fonthill Abbey', which contrasts William Beckford's effeminate and patrician curiosity as a collector of tacky *chinoiserie*, with a more appealing version of orientalism set in 'the marble baths of the Moorish Alhambra, or amidst the ruins of Tadmor, or in barbaric places, where Bruce encountered Abyssinian queens!' *Complete Works of Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London and Toronto: Dent, 1930–4), xviii., pp. 173–80.

<sup>38</sup> Stafford misreads Kames's account of wonder as the equivalent of enlightenment empiricism, ignoring his subsequent critique of its primitivism and puerility. *Voyage into Substance*, p. 409.

<sup>39</sup> Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, (1762), 11th edition with the author's last corrections and additions (London, 1839), p. 112.

<sup>40</sup> Kames, p. 113.

<sup>41</sup> The most celebrated 18th-century account of the somatic disturbance wrought by wonder is Adam Smith's 1774 (?) essay 'The Principles which lead and direct Philosophical Enquiries; illustrated by the History of Astronomy'. Smith concludes that '[the subject] must find out some resemblance or other, before he can get rid of that Wonder, that uncertainty and anxious curiosity excited by its

the preceding chapter of Kames's *Elements*), which, although sharing wonder's effect of 'transport', is not dependent upon novelty but can also be elicited by familiar objects.<sup>42</sup> The discourse of wonder/novelty is likewise distinct from the rhetoric of sublime inarticulacy ('words cannot describe . . .') in that it generates precise and paratactic description, the attempt to articulate verbally or visually *exactly* what was singular and remarkable about an object, motivated by desire but often issuing in pedantry.<sup>43</sup>

For Kames the 'curious', fast-burning desire for novelty, by an association of ideas, can be attached to persons or objects encountered at home, as well as stimulating the desire to brave the hazards of travel. Distance in space can also substitute for distance in time (a substitution which will be further explored in the next section), so that 'a friend . . . after a short absence in a remote country, has the same air of novelty as if he had returned after a longer interval from a place near home: the mind forms a connection between him and the remote country, and bestows upon him the singularity of the objects he has seen'.<sup>44</sup> For Kames, distance itself becomes a scale for measuring value in the appetitive economy of wonder: if two 'new and singular objects' are offered to the spectator, he equivocates; but 'when told that one of them is the product of a distant quarter of the world, he no longer hesitates, but clings to it as the most singular'.<sup>45</sup>

Kames's association of novelty and wonder with woman's fashions<sup>46</sup> and 'foreign luxuries' as well as 'foreign curiosities, which appear rare in proportion to their original distance',<sup>47</sup> suggests a link between curiosity and the rise of eighteenth-century consumer culture in the mercantilist economy of imported 'luxuries'. Nicholas Thomas argues that 'curiosity was deeply, almost causally, linked with commerce—the desire for novelties being postulated as the stimulus to trade—and with the moral ambiguities and latent corruption of commer-

singular appearance . . . Philosophy, by representing the invisible chains which bind together all these disjointed objects, endeavours to introduce order into this chaos of jarring and discordant appearances, to allay the tumult of imagination' (*The Essential Adam Smith*, ed. by Robert L. Heilbroner and Lawrence J. Malone (Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 31). Daston and Park point out that wonder was entirely absent from Hume's analysis of the passions in the *Treatise*, and that Smith was almost unique among 18th-century theorists in treating it at such length (*Wonders*, p. 327). As we shall see, this should not be taken to mean that it was insignificant in contemporary travel accounts.

<sup>42</sup> This may explain why the sublime tends to assume less importance than curiosity and wonder in exotic travel accounts. Chloe Chard, writing of the hyperbolic language of the Grand Tour narrative, suggests that the sublime invests the topography with a wonder that is not dependent upon novelty: 'this topography of the not-so distant foreign is, in some ways, at a disadvantage, when compared with more exotic regions . . . by invoking the sublime, the traveller is able to insist that the Alps and Italy offer an effect of strangeness that is undiminished by familiarity', *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 113.

<sup>43</sup> Katie Whitaker, 'The Culture of Curiosity', in *Cultures of Natural History*, ed. by N. Jardine, J. A. Secord, and E. C. Spary (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 82. Whitaker writes that in the late 17th century 'This accurate reporting of wonders formed a new style of natural history' (*ibid.*).

<sup>44</sup> Kames, p. 116. <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116. <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113. <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

cial society'.<sup>48</sup> Selling off 'curiosities' collected *en route* (as well as publishing a travel narrative) could, of course, help the traveller to recoup some of the expenses of the voyage.<sup>49</sup> At the same time we need to remember that, despite their 'unconsecrated' aesthetic status, objects of curiosity were still in Pomian's term 'semiophores',<sup>50</sup> that is to say, their value as collectibles depended upon their removal from the economic circuit, so that their link with the 'invisible' and distant endowed their possessors with symbolic capital. The distinction is extremely fragile, however: eighteenth-century travels are frequently described as being 'both curious and useful', distinguishing between a disinterested and an interested (commercial, colonial) motivation which qualifies their complementarity in respect to the 'cycle of accumulation', but the two types of motivation easily collapse into one another.<sup>51</sup> One thread of the present book reveals an increasing commodification and popularization of curiosity as it was exorcized from scholarly and scientific discourse and associated with popular wonder and the commercial profit deriveable from it, illustrated in my concluding comparison between Humboldt and William Bullock. At the same time, by an apparent contradiction, curiosity continued throughout the period to describe the traveller's 'disinterested' motive for braving the hazards of travel, as well as frequently providing an ethnological *cordón sanitaire* dividing him from the 'native', who, although maybe possessing a sense of wonder, appeared *incapable* of curiosity.<sup>52</sup>

Kames's linkage of the effect of wonder/novelty with verbs like 'inflare' and 'swell'<sup>53</sup> prepares the reader for the critical tone introduced later in his chapter, supporting Thomas's contention that the eighteenth-century discourse of curiosity (he is discussing responses to ethnographic objects) was 'not fixed but morally slippery . . . the legitimacy of curious inquiry is uncertain'.<sup>54</sup> This is perfectly demonstrated in Kames's rhetorical question:

the love of novelty . . . prevails in children, in idlers, and in men of shallow understanding; and yet, after all, why should one be ashamed of indulging a natural propensity? A distinction will afford a satisfactory answer. No man is ashamed of curiosity when it is indulged in order to acquire knowledge. But to prefer any thing merely

<sup>48</sup> 'Licenced Curiosity: Cook's Pacific Voyages', in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds.), *The Culture of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), p. 123.

<sup>49</sup> See Dolan, *Exploring European Frontiers*, pp. 153–88.

<sup>50</sup> *Collectors and Curiosities*, p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> As Simon Schaffer writes in his afterword to *Visions of Empire*, 18th-century commentators 'were able and willing to discriminate between philosophical curiosity and commercial or imperial purposes' (p. 338).

<sup>52</sup> Hawkesworth's *Account of the Voyages* famously describes the episode when a group of Tierra del Fuegians boarded the *Endeavour*, commenting 'curiosity seems to be one of the few passions which distinguish men from brutes; and of this our guests appeared to have very little' (ii. 45).

<sup>53</sup> Kames, p. 114.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, p. 122.