

Introduction

*Miguel A. Cabañas, Jeanne Dubino,
Veronica Salles-Reese, Gary Totten*

Travel writing has gained recognition over the past two decades as an important field of study and is now the subject of sustained scholarly research and an integral part of college and university curricula. While this scholarship emphasizes the inherently personal dimension, it also reveals the inherently political nature of travel and travel writing. As an important form of life writing, the travel narrative often uses mobility, in Sidonie Smith's words, to "alter the terms" of the traveler's identity.¹ Indeed, Frances Bartkowski has argued that travelers choose their "place", "routes", and "questions", and in their travel texts "the writing of their displacement lead[s] them to a re-shaped sense of self".² At the same time, Debbie Lisle states that the global politics of travel writing continue to transform the genre, and the travel narrative engages "in the wider debates of global politics through its structuring tension between colonial and cosmopolitan visions".³ Lisle suggests that contemporary travelers maintain a cosmopolitan vision that is both ambiguously and symbiotically related to the colonial vision. Paul Smethurst identifies a related dichotomy in the tension between the inherently disorderly mobility of travel and "imperialism's paradigms of order and control". Smethurst contends that European mobility allowed and informed imperial exploration and, ultimately, discourse through the production of a binary privileging the West's "mobility, science and (modern) progress" over "the historical and geographical stasis of 'the Rest'" of the world. Imperial discourse relies upon this system of binaries to suppress the inherent instability and disorder that accompanies mobility, giving rise to an imperial form that attempts to order and control "disorderly mobility".⁴ In this volume, we examine the intersection in travel writing between the personal and the political and the dialectic between mobility and stasis, testing the claims of Lisle, Smethurst, and others through an analysis of specific cases across geographical and historical boundaries.

We could view travel narratives as renegotiating cultural boundaries even while they actively establish such boundaries. Stephen Greenblatt notes that "if culture functions as a structure of limits, it also functions as the regulator and guarantor of movement. Indeed the limits are virtually meaningless without movement; it is only through improvisation, experiment, and exchange that cultural boundaries can be established." The tension between mobility and

constraint will vary in different cultures, but Greenblatt insists that both are necessary to some degree for cultural survival. Greenblatt further argues that works of art “do not merely passively reflect the prevailing ratio of mobility and constraint; they help to shape, articulate, and reproduce it through their own improvisatory intelligence” and “variations upon received themes”.⁵ As narratives of movement, travel texts offer compelling examples of the ways in which writers represent instances of mobility and stasis. Mobility, however, is dynamic and transforms identities. According to Martinican writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant: “Worldness is exactly what we all have in common today: the dimension I find myself inhabiting and the relation we may well lose ourselves in. The wretched other side of worldness is what is called globalization or the global market”. Those who were static and were mere travelers are becoming “travelers” and are narrating the world from the point of view of “plural, multiplying, fragmented identities”.⁶

The political is a concept that can be understood in multiple ways in relation to travel writing. All travel writing can be considered political, due, among other reasons, to the inevitable production of ideology that accompanies the production of narrative;⁷ the encounter with difference that accompanies most travel experiences; and the interrogation of cultural identity that much travel writing undertakes. As John Zilcosky notes in his introduction to the edited collection, *Writing Travel: The Poetics and Politics of the Modern Journey*, “[b]ecause it carries more historical baggage than, say, the relatively neutral ‘displacement,’ ‘travel’ demands a politically aware, self-critical exploration”. Zilcosky’s claim suggests both the outer (politically aware) and inner (self-critical) trajectories of travel writing and criticism. But, as the authors in this volume demonstrate, travelers also engage with specific political issues and contexts. Indeed, we do not aim to merely investigate how, as Zilcosky states it, “travel writing – created mainly by upper-class white men – has ‘produced “the rest of the world”’: how it has invented ‘others’ – women, people of colour, and the poor – in order to craft a certain image of ‘Europe’”.⁸ Instead, we seek to understand the politics of travel texts in material terms, what Edward Said has defined as “worldliness”.⁹

We are interested in the ways in which the travel text represents actual political conditions and thus engages in debates about national, transnational, and global citizenship; how travel texts propose real-world political interventions in the places where the traveler goes; what happens when the travelers rewrite or refute the political views of the traveler and her audience; what tone the travel narrative takes toward political or sociopolitical violence; and how travel writing intersects with political debates in public spaces. We view these issues as products of modernity. As Aníbal Quijano claims in “Coloniality of Power”, “[t]he intellectual conceptualization of the process of modernity produced a perspective of knowledge and a mode of producing knowledge that gives a very tight account of the character of the global model of power: colonial/modern, capitalist, and Eurocentered”.¹⁰

Travel writing contributed to this modern production of knowledge, and it is through travel writing, and what Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan identify as the “commodification of place” supported by the tourist industry,¹¹ that these modes continue to be critiqued and transformed.

As some of our authors show, travel writing can be viewed as political in a purely instrumental sense, but travel writing’s reception and ideological interventions also transform personal and cultural realities and affect the cultural mapping in our societies. For example, travelers want to travel to places where they can tackle global or transnational political issues. As Graham Huggan points out in *Extreme Pursuits*, “[t]his self-conscious engagement with global modernity has resulted in several new, or at least reinvigorated, forms of travel practice. These include practices attached to specific forms of ‘responsible’ tourism (ecotourism, humanitarian tourism, spiritual tourism)”.¹² Furthermore, Arjun Appadurai notes that globalization heightens the interaction between different areas of the globe, and travel writing follows these new trends of information flow: “The various flows we see – of objects, persons, images, and discourses – are not coeval, convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent. They are in what I have elsewhere called relations of disjuncture”. These disjunctures create individual and cultural problems of “livelihood, equity, suffering, justice, and governance”,¹³ and travel writing often represents these problems in complex ways. Disjuncture also manifests as diaspora, which sometimes subverts notions of nationality and belonging and leads to new forms of non-absolutist forms of citizenship, as James Clifford suggests. Following Clifford, “a view of human location [is] constituted by displacement as much as by stasis”.¹⁴ Such mobility and stasis have both political contexts and personal effects, for instance in the case of labor migration, war relocation, political exile, or other forms of global dislocation.

By focusing on the intersection in travel writing between the personal and the political and the dialectic of mobility and stasis, this volume differs from prior studies that are more specific to a group of writers, period, or geographical location. From the upsurge of scholarly interest in travel writing have emerged fine studies of travel writing’s relationship to sociological issues, and there have been a few focused studies of the relationship between travel writing and politics. These studies include Paul Hollander’s *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928–1978* (1981), Bernard Schweizer’s *Radicals on the Road: The Politics of English Travel Writing in the 1930s* (2001), Monica Anderson’s *Women and the Politics of Travel, 1870–1914* (2006), Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst’s *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility* (2008), and Debbie Lisle’s *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (2006). Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan sometimes engage in political analysis in *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (2000), the essays in John Zilcosky’s *Writing Travel: The Poetics and Politics of the Modern Journey* (2008) emphasize the

aesthetics of travel writing but also touch on political aspects of the genre, and Rick Steves has published *Travel as a Political Act* (2009), a non-scholarly how-to-guide about traveling with a political purpose. In addition, Ulrike Brisson and Bernard Schweizer published an edited collection of essays on the subject, *Not So Innocent Abroad: The Politics of Travel and Travel Writing* (2009) and our volume responds to Brisson's call in her introduction to *Not So Innocent Abroad* for more scholarship on the subject.¹⁵

The essays in this collection thus examine the ways in which politics' material effects inform and intersect with personal experience and identity in travel texts and engage with travel's dialectic of mobility and stasis, with the understanding that in spite of globalization and efforts to eradicate the colonial vision in travel writing and in travel writing criticism, this vision persists in various and complex ways. The politics of travel turns our attention to the simultaneously liberating and subjugating representations that travel writers undertake as they narrate their journeys. While acknowledging that the travelogue can be a space of discursive and actual oppression, these essays suggest that the travelogue is also a narrative space in which the traveler might use features of the journey or the genre to assert authority over his or her experiences of mobility. Using Homi Bhabha's conceptualization, travel is where the nation is in continual narration and "[w]hat emerges as an effect of such 'incomplete signification' is a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated".¹⁶ In other words, travel allows the in-betweenness and informs the idea of global flow that makes us look beyond the nation and understand the local histories and global designs.¹⁷

The first section, "Travel and the Politics of Perception", examines how the traveler's personal and political perspective influences the narrative representation of mobility and stasis. David G. Farley argues that while Chekhov's empirical view of the horrors of the Russian prison at Sakhalin Island might undermine his goal of humanizing the prison, it also emphasizes how the inherent mobility of Chekhov's travel narrative, *Sakhalin Island* (1895), is bound up in the processes of modern knowledge production. Implicit in Chekhov's approach is a tension between telling about and expressing his own personal horror at the atrocities he witnesses. Chekhov's narrative is an important act of testimony to a social problem that speaks to our present moment. Miguel A. Cabañas's essay on Adrián Giménez Hutton's retracing of Bruce Chatwin's Patagonian travels explores somewhat different processes of knowledge production in travel narratives, revealing how even as travelers rework the mobility of those before them they also uncover new insights into the political terrain of those previous travels. Giménez Hutton realizes that Patagonia can only be narrated by acknowledging the presence of Chatwin's shadow and by writing a palimpsest over it, showing us in *La Patagonia de Chatwin (Chatwin's Patagonia)* (1998) how Chatwin fabricated and falsified the people, the conditions, and the local history in his Eurocentric version of Patagonia. Through the palimpsest, Giménez Hutton

emphasizes the ethical issues of considering *In Patagonia* (1977) as an accurate travel narrative. Shizen Ozawa discusses the more personal aspects of the travelers' perceptions by exploring the ways in which M. G. Vassanji's *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* (2008), a record of the writer's first and subsequent visits to the country, navigates cultural and religious syncretism in the face of increasingly dominant Hindu fundamentalism in India. Vassanji's text demonstrates how experiences of mobility can lead travel writers to deeper understandings of their own rootedness. This seemingly personal concern inevitably assumes a political dimension when Vassanji criticizes the violent tensions between different religious communities at the time of his visits and defends the country's religious and cultural heterogeneities, the most telling example of which is none other than his own roots.

The second section focuses on how issues of "Gender and Sexuality" intersect with personal identity, political reality, and the traveler's mobility. Discussing the journal and early nineteenth-century Brazilian travels of Maria Dundas Graham, M. Soledad Caballero reveals how Graham's common tourist prejudices concerning dress and manners shift as she becomes a more permanent fixture in the country, as governess to the royal family. Graham's physical mobility enabled her to adapt her perspective and imagine a role for herself in the development of Brazil's political and aesthetic future. Christopher Richter explores both physical and cultural mobility, drawing distinctions between British and US women's travel writing about Greece between 1839–1915 in the context of US exceptionalism. He notes that in their representation of Greece's political landscape and their own identities, women writers participate in an ideology of the United States as a free, classless society and onetime rebellious European colony, an ideology that creates an interesting tension between cultural progression and repression, which largely ignores the contradictions of the United States' own imperial agenda. Mark DeStephano's analysis of John Whittier Treat's *Great Mirrors Shattered*, a travel text dealing with the response to the AIDS epidemic in Japan, deals with the effects of cultural repression, emphasizing the writer's simultaneous mobility as a traveler and containment as a gay man traveling in Japan, and underscoring how travel challenges us to move beyond both intellectual and physical stasis.

The third section examines tensions between the personal and political, between mobility and stasis, as they relate to issues of "Race, Ethnicity, and Otherness". Donald Ross observes how late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century US travel writers grappled with their government's Indian removal policy, based on assertions about the need to geographically dislocate tribes in order to assure the survival and self-government of indigenous people. Some writers opposed the policy on the grounds that it was cruelly exploitative of the Native Americans, while others thought it was the best option for the nation. The writers used personal experiences in Indian territory to add support to their views. This conflict of political views reflected the debate that became much more public and widespread when

the Indian Removal Act was proposed in 1830. Joyce E. Kelley also explores the intersections of race and mobility in her study of concert pianist Philippa Duke Schuyler's travel narrative of her world tours, *Adventures in Black and White* (1960), which underscores how Schuyler sought to play with facets of her national and racial identities. Kelley demonstrates that Schuyler focuses on the social and political climates of countries other than the United States in her narrative. Schuyler is especially attentive to politics of race and color and delights in the racial mixing and ambiguity that is prompted by both her background and by her music. Kelley shows how Schuyler's travel narrative allows her to construct a mobile self that resists static cultural categories. In addition, Kelley demonstrates how a mobile identity in travel allowed Schuyler to live a cultural fantasy and feel a sense of belonging not yet achievable in her home country. The tension between mobility and the various restrictions governing it is especially pronounced in the liminal space of border crossing, as Diana Gumbar explains in her analysis of Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* (2005). Gumbar discusses how Urrea's border-crossing narrative construes the frontier as a dystopia, signaling the need to reconsider the meanings of belonging and the seductive power of national grand narratives, such as equality in the modern nation-state and transnational mobility. She reads *The Devil's Highway* as a new kind of travel narrative that inscribes "illegal" travelers into the discourse of both nations, claiming a space for political and cultural representation for undocumented immigrants and, simultaneously, presenting the border-crossing narrative as a foundational text of the US national community in the new millennium.

The fourth section explores issues of "Empire" in relation to the volume's themes. Jonathan S. Burgess examines the connections between Homer's Odyssean stories and Ionian political realities. Burgess notes that Homer's *Odyssey*, the story of Odysseus's return to Ithaca, is unclear about the extent of Ithaca's economic and political power. Modern visitors portray Ithaca as unequal to the Homeric island of their classical education; notable in modern narratives is a discourse that celebrates the island's Homeric heritage but appropriates it from current inhabitants. Burgess's study enhances our understanding of the relationship between fictional and historical representations of the area's political dynamics. Travel writing's relationship to imperial ideology is further explored in Pamela M. Barber's essay on the parallels between eighteenth-century conjectural history and travel narratives in the Ottoman Empire. Conjectural historians of the Scottish Enlightenment viewed travelers' depictions of distant societies as a central source of evidence for their hypotheses regarding the progress and decline of civilizations. Conjectural historians proposed a stadial theory assuming that cultures in similar stages of economic development share various social and political characteristics. British political preoccupations of the period shaped notions of stadial theory and are illustrated by aspects of distant societies that are typically discussed in both conjectural history and travel writing, as exemplified in the Near East travel writing of Eyles Irwin

and John Logan. Jeanne Dubino's study of Emily Eden's travels in India in the early nineteenth-century deals with both the ideological and physical infrastructures of empire. Eden's travel tale in *Up the Country* (1866) is a "picturesque" one, meant to entertain and not to be useful. At the same time that Eden writes in the picturesque mode she also enters into "survey modality" as she provides useful commentary on the physical foundation of Empire. Dubino examines the way the survey interweaves with the picturesque and how the effect of both modes makes Eden, though unwittingly and often unhappily, a representative – albeit a critical one – of Empire. Michele Willman further explores women's relationship to imperial agendas in her article on the texts of Arctic explorer Louise Arner Boyd. Boyd's fascinating life overshadows her work, leaving her texts unexplored, particularly by travel critics. Willman argues that Boyd's work deserves further scrutiny both for what it can contribute to an understanding of women within the masculine tradition of exploration and in imperial discourse, and for the possibilities it can open up for a renewed look at the work of other women explorers and their place within these discourses.

The final section, "Travel, Globalization, and Geopolitics", contains essays treating personal and political mobility in the context of increasing globalization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While the section on "Empire" also touches on some of these themes, it does so through a more focused examination of imperial ideology. Peter Hulme's study of travelogues by US writers in Cuba during the 1950s and '60s underscores the close connections between personal travel experience and geopolitical conflict and change and the ways in which such connections are reflected in the formal characteristics of travel writing. Travel to Cuba proliferated during and after the Cuban Revolution, and many of the travel writers such as LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and C. Wright Mills took the opportunity of their mobility in Cuba to discuss political issues of race and freedom both in Cuba and in the United States. In his analysis of Allen Ginsberg's Cold War travels and resulting poetry, Adam Beardsworth further examines the representation of geopolitical conflict in travel writing by calling our attention to Ginsberg's ability, through his travels, to transform the space of exile into a dynamic critique of the polarized but equally repressive totalitarian power of the East and the "bio-power" control in the West. From the point of view of a guidebook author, Steven K. Bailey explores these issues in the context of the tourist travel industry, arguing that the authors of travel guidebooks should move away from the focus on extreme usability and challenge readers to question their own assumptions about the cultures they encounter, thus acknowledging the significant ways in which globalization affects mobility. Ultimately, for him, there is a responsibility to make guidebooks have an explicit political point of view.

This collection of essays engages questions of travel and specific local and global politics. How does travel literature engage with political debates? How do travelers engage with poignant questions of their time? How do mobility and stasis

interact? Mobility raises ethical considerations or unethical silences, when authors encounter questions of discrimination, ideological control, unethical representation, war and conflict, and inhumanity. The search for unmediated knowledge of politics often mobilizes travelers and attracts the readers' interest. Is it important who moves and who stays static? Stasis remains the very nature of reading, but through travel, readers move into worlds they could never imagine. Travelers often write from the point of view of privileged mobility, but we are able to see that migrants, refugees, and exilic figures are emerging and upsetting this dichotomy. Other times, in their position of spatial stasis, travelers rebel against the traveler's point of view. Travel writing will continue to be political at the local, regional, national, and global levels, and as the globalized world imbues interactions with "a new order of intensity".¹⁸ This collection offers a range of the political nature of these interactions.

NOTES

1. Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 25.
2. Frances Bartkowski, *Travelers, Immigrants, Inmates: Essays in Estrangement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 101.
3. Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 5.
4. Paul Smethurst, Introduction, in Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, eds., *Travel Writing, Form and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 2, 1, 2.
5. Stephen Greenblatt, "Culture", in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas Mc Laughlin, eds., *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 228–9.
6. Édouard Glissant, "Le divers du monde est imprevisible", lecture, qtd. in Nora Vegara Legarra, *Estética Afrocaribeña y Días pora en la Obra de Kamau Brathwaite*, dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2013, p. 165.
7. Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 79; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 3.
8. John Zilcosky, Introduction, in John Zilcosky, ed., *Writing Travel: The Poetics and Politics of the Modern Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 9–10.
9. Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).
10. Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification", in Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, eds., *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 181–224 (at p. 197).
11. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 3.

12. Graham Huggan, *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/Writing in an Age of Globalization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), p. 6.
13. Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination", in Appadurai, ed., *Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 1–21 (at pp. 5, 6).
14. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 9, 2.
15. Ulrike Brisson, "'Naked' Politics in Travel Writing", in Ulrike Brisson and Bernard Schweizer, eds., *Not So Innocent Abroad: The Politics of Travel and Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 1–16 (at p. 15).
16. Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation", in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1–8 (at p. 4).
17. We invoke here Walter D. Mignolo's book *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
18. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), p. 27.