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Scope and Topics: The ***Journal of Travel Literature Studies*** is dedicated to advancing research in travel literature and its theoretical methodologies, encompassing a wide range of in-depth themes. These include, but are not limited to: the history of travel literature, travel narrative studies, pilgrimage writing, exploration literature, imperial and colonial travel texts, scientific expedition narratives, women's travel writing, autobiographical travel writing, cross-cultural travel experiences, spatial narratives and literary geography, landscape aesthetics and the picturesque, mobility studies, transportation technology and travel modernity, ecological travel writing, travel media in the digital age, diaspora literature, translation and cross-cultural communication of travel texts, as well as pedagogical explorations and disciplinary development in related fields. The journal promotes interdisciplinary perspectives and adheres to international academic standards. It does not operate with fixed thematic sections and welcomes scholarly contributions that engage with the above areas—or beyond. Furthermore, to reflect ongoing academic developments, the journal continuously accepts interviews with established scholars and academic book reviews in the field of travel literature studies. The writing style and formatting requirements for such contributions are consistent with those of standard academic articles.

Submission Guidelines: ***JTLS*** follows a corresponding author system. If the manuscript contains multiple authors, the corresponding author is considered to be the research leader and contact person. Please confirm the author's name, author order (including corresponding author designation), author affiliation, author position/title, E-mail address, funding project(s), etc. before submitting the manuscript. It is recommended that no more than five authors be listed on a submission. The paper must include the title, author name(s), abstract, and keywords in English. References are sorted alphabetically by last name. All manuscripts must follow the latest APA format. Articles (including references) should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words. Book reviews should be at least 3,000 words. Manuscripts can be submitted via E-mail to **jtls2026@163.com**. To facilitate the review process, please include "Author Name(s) + Article Title" in the subject line of your submission E-mail. For further details on submissions, please visit the journal's official website: https://www.tlsjournal.com.

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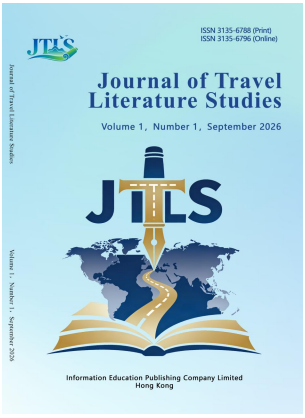

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From "Travel Writing" to "Travel Literature": Disciplinary Evolution and Structural Decentring—Serving as an Inaugural Editorial

Mingyi Wang and **Juanjuan Wu**

Abstract: This inaugural editorial introduces the *Journal of Travel Literature Studies* as a dynamic academic forum dedicated to the exploration of travel narratives. By addressing the field's definitional ambiguities, it champions the term "travel literature" over "travel writing" to foreground the artistic, mediated, and constructed nature of such texts. Tracing the disciplinary evolution of the past half-century, the editorial critiques persistent problems—most notably a deeply entrenched Eurocentric bias—and urgently advocates for a structural decentring of the field. By amplifying perspectives from the Global South and engaging with emerging ecological, spatial, and decolonial frameworks, the journal endeavors to foster a genuinely global and inclusive scholarly dialogue, a vision thoughtfully embodied in the issue's inaugural essays.

Keywords: *Journal of Travel Literature Studies*; inaugural editorial; travel writing; travel literature; definition; decentring

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"HUMAN HISTORY IS the Story of a traveler, an Odysseus" (Williams, p. xi). Whether driven by the pursuit of enlightenment, the fervor of faith, the exigencies of survival, or an irresistible, visceral curiosity, human beings invariably depart only to return, physically or imaginatively transformed. Mere physical movement, however, rarely satisfies the intellect. Out of this collective restlessness, travel literature emerges. The genre is not merely a record of physical movement and spatial transit, but also a discursive and affective site in which encounters with alterity recalibrate the coordinates of the self.

Nearly five decades after Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) fundamentally reshaped the critical understanding of travel narratives, and more than a quarter century since the founding of *Studies in Travel Writing* (1997), scholarship on this genre "has reached a certain stage of disciplinary maturity" (Forsdick et al., p. xvii). Yet, the accelerating conditions of global interconnectedness, marked by migration, ecological crisis, geopolitical tension, and the expanding influence of technological and digital mediation, continue to transform the contexts in which travel is experienced and represented. At the same time, a series of critical reorientations

across the humanities, including the spatial, translational, affective, ecological, digital, and decolonial turns, have significantly reshaped the conceptual frameworks through which travel is studied. These developments have drawn renewed attention to questions of mobility, representation, and power, while also exposing the uneven geographies of knowledge production that continue to privilege Euro-American perspectives. In the context of intensified cultural contact, exchange, and friction, sustained and rigorous attention to travel, as both a historical practice and a contemporary phenomenon, remains essential.

The *Journal of Travel Literature Studies* has been founded to answer this intellectual call. It seeks to provide a forum for analytically precise, theoretically informed, and globally attuned scholarship that engages travel literature as a dynamic and evolving literary domain. Analysing texts that traverse linguistic, national, and cultural boundaries, the journal adopts an expansive, global framework to examine the diverse aesthetics, cultural memories, shifting identities, and geopolitical realities embedded in travel literature while actively engaging perspectives from the Global South and other historically marginalised contexts. Before outlining the journal's editorial vision and introducing the contributions to this inaugural issue, however, it is necessary to lay some groundwork by revisiting a foundational question: what, if anything, constitutes travel literature? Revisiting this question is not merely a matter of definition, but a means of identifying the critical gaps and unresolved tensions that continue to shape the field.

Half a century of sustained inquiry has yielded no stable definition of the field, and this instability is compounded by a persistent ambiguity between the terms "travel writing" and "travel literature." Although often used interchangeably, the two terms carry distinct intellectual associations. "Travel writing" tends to function as an expansive, umbrella designation, encompassing a wide range of textual practices, from diaries, letters, and journalism to guidebooks and digital media, thereby emphasising the act of inscription and the author's documentary impulse. "Travel literature," by contrast, has often been used to foreground aesthetic features, intertextuality, narrative form, and style, aligning such texts more closely with fiction. The tension between these terms is not merely semantic but methodological: it reflects an unresolved question within the discipline as to whether travel narratives should be approached primarily as empirical records of movement or as crafted

representations shaped by rhetorical and imaginative processes.

It is precisely in response to this tension that this journal insists on the latter formulation. To adopt the term "travel literature" is not to deny the referential or documentary dimensions of these texts, but to foreground the ways in which the travel experience, whether actual or imaginative, is mediated, selected, and transformed through narrative form. In doing so, it aims to accommodate both the diversity of travel-related texts and the interpretive rigor required to analyse them.

Attempts to define the genre have repeatedly encountered conceptual fragmentation, laying bare its foundational ambiguity, inclusiveness, and instability. Early scholarship tended to reduce travel writing to a commercial taxonomy masquerading as a literary category. As Ian Jack observes, mid-twentieth-century usage often refers to travel writing as "the journalism that appeared in the travel sections of newspapers and magazines" (p. vii). In his influential *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (1982), Paul Fussell aimed to elevate its status by introducing distinctions between the utilitarian guidebook and the travel book. As he observes, "a guide book is addressed to those who plan to follow the traveler," whereas "a travel book, at its purest, is addressed to those who do not plan to follow the traveler at all," but instead seek "the exotic or comic anomalies, wonders, and scandals" unavailable in their own milieu. He further characterises travel books as "a sub-species of memoir" grounded in encounters with unfamiliar realities, yet one that "claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality" (p. 203). While Fussell's formulation is instrumental in elevating the literary status of travel narratives, it remains limited by its emphasis on audience and utility rather than intrinsic formal qualities. His preface to *The Norton Book of Travel* (1987) recycles this same limitation (pp. 15–17). Subsequent scholars, including Tim Youngs, have further expanded the corpus of travel writing. In launching the inaugural issue of *Studies in Travel Writing*, Youngs declared the journal would embrace "not only travel narratives, letters, diaries, and so on, but also texts such as tourist brochures and guidebooks, whatever is written, is about travel, and is interesting" (p. v). Jonathan Raban scoffs at such a broad definition, dismissing travel writing as "a notoriously raffish open house where very different genres are likely to end up in the same bed" (p. 253). Youngs and Peter Hulme later identify travel writing as "a broad and ever-shifting genre, with a complex history which has yet to be properly studied" (p. 10). Yet this inclusivity

frequently comes at the cost of methodological precision, as criteria such as "interest" proved difficult to sustain as scholarly standards.

More recent theoretical approaches have sought to refine rather than resolve this definitional impasse caused by the genre's ambiguity. Building on earlier debates, scholars such as Carl Thompson have proposed a more conceptually flexible framework that foregrounds the encounter between self and other precipitated by movement as a constitutive feature of travel writing. Thompson argues, "If all travel involves an encounter between self and other that is brought about by movement through space, all travel writing is at some level a record or product of this encounter, and of the negotiation between similarity and difference that it entailed" (p. 10). Whether this encounter is narrated directly, offering "a narration of the events that occurred during the writer's travels", or remains implicit, providing "an account not of the actual travelling but of just the new perspectives or the new information acquired through travel", it continues to shape the text's meaning. He further argues,

> Consequently, all travel writing has a two-fold aspect. It is most obviously, of course, a report on the wider world, an account of an unfamiliar people or place. Yet it is also revelatory to a greater or lesser degree of the traveller who produced that report, and of his or her values, preoccupations and assumptions. And, by extension, it also reveals something of the culture from which that writer emerged, and/or the culture for which their text is intended. (p. 10)

Travel writing is hence defined by a constitutive duality of representation. On the one hand, it represents the external world of reality, aligning with its documentary, observational, and quasi-ethnographic role; on the other hand, it encodes the subjective, imaginative, and reflective experience, becoming a mirror of the traveller's own positionality. Thompson also goes one step further, arguing that travel writing is not just personal but also culturally embedded and socially situated. Abandoning the search for a monolithic definition, he instead focuses on two dynamic tensions that animate the travel narrative: the interplay between empirical data and imaginative fiction, alongside the complex negotiation between aesthetic merit and epistemological authority (p. 12).

However, it seems that every attempt to define the genre inevitably circles back

to a point made by Youngs over two decades ago: "Travel writing feeds from and back into other forms of literature. To try to identify boundaries between various forms would be impossible" (*Travellers*, p. 8). This recurring circularity exposes not a failure of definition but a structural condition of the field itself and a fundamental source of the genre's endurance. Dissolving all formal boundaries, scholars embrace Michel de Certeau's provocative assertion that "every story is a travel story" (p. 89). The aesthetic survival of travel narrative depends on its capacity for continual adaptation—a permeability Glenn Hooper and Youngs locate in "its absorption of differing narrative styles and genres, the manner in which it effortlessly shape-shifts and blends any number of imaginative encounters, and its potential for interaction with a broad range of historical periods, disciplines and perspectives" (p. 3).

Junwu Tian further offers a pragmatic resolution to this circular analytical loop. Building on earlier debates, he opts for "travel literature" to shift the conceptual focus and reorients the field by anchoring the literature across four coordinates—paradigm, taxonomy, praxis, and intertextuality. Rather than continuing the discipline's longstanding preoccupation with boundary-policing, he urges scholars to redirect its critical attention toward the material, comparative, and representational reality of the creative act itself. To substantiate this move, he draws on Morris Weitz's application of Wittgenstein's notion of "indefinability" and applies it to art, positing that "the very expansive, adventurous character" of artistic production, marked by its "ever-present changes and novel creations", makes it logically impossible to ensure any set of defining properties (p. 32). As Weitz demonstrates through canonical examples, such as John Dos Passos's *U.S.A. Trilogy*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, and James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, generic classification does not proceed from prior definition but from the elucidation and description of conditions among works already provisionally grouped together (p. 34). Tian extends this insight to "travel literature" and argues that "the inherent heterogeneity of travel literature may preclude strict definition, but this does not prevent us from studying this long-neglected genre grounded in its factual similarities such as observable formal, thematic, and historical affinities" ("Definition", p. 80).

From this perspective, taxonomic ambiguity is not the discipline's Achilles' heel. Instead, this inherent resistance to stable categorisation fuels the genre's adaptability, provided that scholarly inquiry remains anchored in empirically and

historically situated analysis. Stylistically, travel literature resists confinement to any single framework, yet the narrative tension generated by its cross-generic hybridity is precisely what sustains its literary vitality. Epistemologically, it operates on the porous boundary between referentiality and imagination, authenticity and fictionality, encouraging us to bring our attention beyond the text as a self-contained artifact toward the broader processes of mediation, circulation, and reception that shape it. In this sense, embracing generic fluidity is a strategic intervention with wider political and cultural implications. It enables a critical reconfiguration of the field that challenges entrenched hierarchies and unsettles the persistence of Eurocentric canons. As the intellectual perimeter expands, travel narratives that have been historically marginalised, particularly those by indigenous peoples and those in non-Western areas, can be re-situated as constitutive rather than peripheral to the discipline and finally secure their legitimate authority within scholarly discourse.

Against this background, naming this publication *Journal of Travel Literature Studies*, rather than adopting the more commonly used "Travel Writing," is a deliberate choice. First, insisting on the term "Literature" demands that we interrogate travel narrative, whether fictional or nonfictional, as crafted works and artistic constructions rather than merely passive documentary evidence and straightforward records of travelling experience. While "writing" prioritizes the act of recording, it may suggest associations with a faithful depiction of what has been objectively seen or encountered; insisting on "Literature", however, directs attention to form, structure, rhetoric, and interpretation. "Travel literature" acknowledges that the representations of foreign places, peoples, and cultures are never merely recorded, but actively curated through an intricate synthesis of memory, convention, narrative technique, tropes, and imaginative engagement. It is therefore not intended to impose a restrictive hierarchy or exclude emerging forms. Rather, it signals a critical commitment. To approach travel narratives as literature is to foreground their constructedness—their reliance on narrative strategies, figurative language, intertextuality, and authorial intentions—regardless of medium. Whether in print, digital, or visual form, travel narratives are not transparent reflections of reality, but mediated representations shaped by aesthetic and rhetorical choices.

This choice also responds to a longstanding tendency within Anglophone academic scholarship to place travel narratives at the margins of literary studies, often

treating them as secondary to more established genres such as the novel or poetry. The present journal adopts a different position. It regards travel literature as a field with its own historical development and evolving critical frameworks. The title functions as an explicit reclamation of its literary legitimacy. We assert the genre as a primary aesthetic category, driven by its own evolutionary genealogy, established masterworks, and specialised critical vocabularies. The emphasis on "literature" thus functions as an interpretive lens rather than a gatekeeping device. The journal also seeks to restore balance by situating travel narratives more firmly within the domains of comparative and world literature, while remaining open to interdisciplinary perspectives. In doing so, it aims to examine how travel literature, across linguistic, cultural and national boundaries, not only reflects the world but also actively shapes how it is perceived and understood.

Before launching a new journal, it is also important to chart the field's development through several overlapping phases. Prior to the late twentieth century, travel writing was often treated as a peripheral form, valued primarily as a source of historical or biographical information. As Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst point out, "Despite its long and venerable heritage, travel writing as a genre did not attract much critical attention until the 1980s" (p. 1). This marginal status was challenged in the 1970s and 1980s, most notably through Said's critique of Orientalism, which revealed the ideological underpinnings of travel narratives and their entanglement with imperial power. At the same time, scholars such as Fussell contributed to the canonisation of travel literature as a legitimate object of literary study. Solidifying this canonisation, Fussell edited *The Norton Book of Travel* (1987). In this anthology, which swept from Herodotus to Paul Theroux, he explicitly mapped the genre's zenith, bracketing its golden age between Romantic subjectivity and mass tourism. This academic resuscitation paralleled a powerful commercial revival. Beginning in 1984, the British literary magazine *Granta* began introducing travel specials to a broader audience, playing "a vital part in establishing, or re-establishing, travel writing as the popular literary form it has become" (Jack, p. vii). A wave of foundational monographs quickly followed. Works by Bernard Lewis (1982), Jamaica Kincaid (1988), and Mary Baine Campbell (1988) challenged traditional readings, while Philip Dodd consolidated these emerging inquiries into *The Art of Travel* (1982), assembling the first cohesive critical anthology dedicated to British travel writing.

Percy G. Adams's *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (1983) eliminated the artificial boundaries separating empirical travelogues from imaginative fiction.

The 1990s witnessed a diversification of approaches, incorporating feminist, postcolonial, and cross-cultural perspectives. Travel literature scholars increasingly centred the complexities of the traveller's identity, particularly its gendered dimensions. Simultaneously, the field engaged in a critical reassessment of the postcolonial critiques that had dominated the previous decade. Building upon seminal scholarship by Dennis Porter (1990), Sara Mills (1991), Mary Louise Pratt (1992), and James Buzard (1993), scholars such as Ali Behdad (1994), Inderpal Grewal (1996), Caren Kaplan (1996), and James Clifford (1997) further broadened the discipline's scope. John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze* (1990) signified a sociological turn. By framing travel—whether highbrow or popular—as a socially constructed form of visual consumption, Urry redirected the field's focus from elite travelogues to the critical analysis of mass tourism. In 1997, Donald Ross organised the international conference "Snapshots from Abroad" at the University of Minnesota. This pivotal gathering led to the founding of the International Society for Travel Writing and the launch of the journal Studies in Travel Writing, marking the institutionalisation of the field.

By the early twenty-first century, travel literature studies had achieved a degree of institutional consolidation, marked by the establishment of a new dedicated journal, alongside many conferences, anthologies, and comprehensive reference works mapping the field's development. At the start of the new millennium, *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing* made its debut. Scholarship soon flourished. As Peter Hulme and Youngs observed in 2002, academic production hit "unprecedented levels" (p. 1). Although Hulme and Youngs argued in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002) that the field had not yet become a fully established academic tradition, their volume served as a landmark in laying that critical foundation. Subsequent anthologies have since charted and expanded this evolving landscape. *Perspectives on Travel Writing* (2004) explored European mobility, highlighting "how ideas, people and customs operate within certain known, geo-political parameters, but also how they have come to influence—and be influenced by—other locales, jurisdictions, and cultures" (p. 1). A decade later, *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (2015) foregrounded "theoretical approaches to

travel writing and to advance the discourse" (p. 3), while *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing* (2016) excavated emergent twenty-first-century debates and engaged with the "long-established topics so as to reflect the latest thinking" (p. xviii). Devoting substantial attention to non-Western archives, *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019) further broadened the canon. In the same year, *Keywords for Travel Writing Studies: A Critical Glossary* (2019), inspired by Raymond Williams's lexicographical model, offered a structured vocabulary for the discipline, indexing both canonical terms and emerging concepts like "affect", "extreme travel", "psychogeography", and "vertical travel." Additionally, *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing* (2019) championed interdisciplinary methods and, in reviewing the current state of research, paved the way for the expansion of future scholarship.

Alongside these collaborative volumes, single-authored studies have also played a vital role in shaping the field's expanding scope. Notably, Thompson's *Travel Writing* (2011) provides an accessible account of key theoretical questions, helping to bring coherence to a diverse body of scholarship. Meanwhile, over the past two decades, scholarship has continuously refined its critical scope, employing categories such as time, ethnicity, region, and methodology to elucidate the intricate connections between travel writing and broader historical evolutions. Today, scholars worldwide continue to explore the field's diverse sub-disciplines—whether through studies on contemporary international politics (Lisle, 2006), reflections on postcolonial writing (Edwards and Graulund, 2011), ecocritical approaches to the natural world (Smethurst, 2012), the material history of print (Keighren et al., 2015), 20th-century American fiction (Tian, 2021), the era of pandemic lockdowns (Fisher and Robinson, 2022), or the reassessment of colonial history (Das, 2023).

While the field of travel literature studies has benefited from sustained scholarly attention, it remains a site of immense critical potential. This momentum is further accelerated by the digital turn and the growing interconnectedness of global cultures. Emerging critical frameworks, such as the Anthropocene, the translational turn, the affective turn, the digital humanities, and the decolonial turn, are progressively expanding the scope of inquiry, encouraging fresh ways of reading travel narratives.

Nevertheless, several limitations remain. To begin with, close attention to literary form and narrative technique is not always effectively integrated with analysis of

historical and cultural contexts. Interdisciplinary practice, though widely encouraged, can sometimes lapse into superficial engagement, in which concepts are borrowed without sufficient depth or methodological care. Theoretical rigidity also persists. Scholars frequently extract established concepts, such as the imperial gaze or identity construction, then apply them across diverse texts, risking the flattening of important historical and geographical distinctions. Such decontextualised application obscures the localized historical nuances that actually animate travel narratives.

Secondly, this decontextualising tendency is further reinforced by the endurance of a relatively fixed canon largely centred on established Western travel narratives. Travel literature from the East or the Global South, despite its rich traditions and historical continuity, has remained underrepresented in Anglophone scholarship. This imbalance is not merely a matter of omission; it also limits the conceptual range through which the field understands mobility, encounter, and representation. For example, Chinese travel literature offers a productive point of comparison. While much Western travel literature of the 18th and 19th centuries was frequently driven by and shaped by scientific expeditions and imperial conquest, traditional Chinese travel writers operated within fundamentally different intellectual assumptions. Grounded in the idea of harmony between humanity and the natural world, they projected moral virtues onto the landscape. They did not set out to conquer mountains. Instead, the aim was less conquest than attunement. This contrast becomes particularly instructive in the late nineteenth century. While Western missionaries and explorers conducted surveys of China that were frequently informed by Orientalist frameworks, Chinese envoys, reformers, and students travelled to Europe and North America with their own interpretive frameworks. Drawing on classical learning, they engaged with societies marked by technological advancement yet shaped by unfamiliar cultural and political systems. These journeys, which build upon earlier patterns of exchange associated with the Silk Roads, form an important counterpoint to dominant narratives of unilateral Western expansion. Attending to such histories is essential if the field is to move beyond a narrowly Eurocentric model and develop a more genuinely comparative perspective.

In addition, much scholarship remains shaped by an anthropocentric focus, privileging the reflective consciousness of the human traveller. Such an approach inadvertently overlooks the active agency of non-human forces. Developments in

transportation technologies, environmental changes, and broader ecological systems all contribute to actively shaping both movement and perception. Landscapes are not inert settings but dynamic assemblages, in which vegetation patterns and climatic rhythms shape routes, encounters, and narrative attention. Animals encountered in the course of travel, for instance, also serve as interpretive mediators through which travellers register and evaluate unfamiliar cultures, landscapes, and modes of life (Youngs, 2013; Wu, 2023). Equally, systems of arrangement, such as mapping technologies and logistical networks, also mediate how travel is organized, experienced, and represented. Together, these human and non-human elements constitute an interconnected field that underpins the production of travel literature. Greater attention to these dynamics, through approaches attentive to spatial formations, material environments, and ecological relations, would enable a more comprehensive and analytically precise account of the genre.

Furthermore, the slow progress of decentring within the field also demands critical scrutiny. Conventional scholarship retains a persistent Anglocentric bias, where Western paradigms shape the subjects, frame the questions, and monopolise the gaze. Whenever the East or the Global South enters this framework, it is too often trapped within colonial epistemologies, silent and exotic. As early as 2002, Hulme and Youngs noted this "Anglocentric concentration" (1) on the opening page of their foundational collection. While recent anthologies gesture toward inclusivity by dedicating chapters to China and the broader East, these concessions often seem cosmetic against the massive weight of the Western canon. An academic discipline claiming global relevance cannot sustain its intellectual credibility while structurally silencing Eastern voices. Decentring is often coupled with a call for decolonization. This school of thought seeks to achieve a genuine rebellion against the existing colonialist ideology through an epistemological revolution, and is committed to fostering "a vision of travel and travel writing that is more expansive, more inclusive, and prepared not only to acknowledge the influence of colonialism on the field but to resist and move beyond it" (Din-Kariuki and Meersbergen, p. 83). Natalya Din-Kariuki and Guido van Meersbergen contend that progress in this direction requires us to centre our research on "practices of travel and travel writing and how we make sense of them today"; for instance, involving intersectional approaches, "a reimagining of travel and travel writing which does not take a particular form (e.g.

prose narratives), practice (e.g. colonial exploration), or subject (e.g. the Western male traveller) as its privileged object of analysis," and "a commitment to scrutinizing the contemporary academy and its disciplinary structures, epistemological hierarchies, and received categories of thought" (p. 86). The task ahead, then, is not merely to expand the archive, but to fundamentally reconfigure the terms through which travel literature is read, valued, and theorized.

Following the closure of *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing* in 2021, the *Journal of Travel Literature Studies* arrives at a crucial moment in the humanities and social sciences, a moment marked by a proliferation of critical "turns." From the spatial, affective, environmental, posthuman, and mobility turns—and more recently, the decolonial and digital turns—scholarship has increasingly foregrounded how we understand travel, mobility, narrative, modernity, and world-making. These shifts are especially urgent in the context of the Global South, where travel has long been mediated through asymmetrical histories of empire, extraction, and epistemic marginalization.

Positioned within this evolving landscape, the journal aims to provide an inclusive forum that advances both theoretical innovation and methodological rigor. If, as this editorial has suggested, travel literature emerges from the movement between worlds and the encounter with alterity, then the study of this field must itself remain in motion. Rather than being bound by strict temporal or geographic confines, it attends to the heterogeneous forms of travel across genres, media, and historical moments through a deeply interdisciplinary lens. Drawing on insights from history, anthropology, geography and other related fields, it aims to bridge established scholarship with emergent and insurgent voices and perspectives. This commitment is reflected across its formats encompassing original research articles, book reviews, and dialogues with leading and rising scholars in the field.

Central to the journal's mission is a substantive decentring of the field: not merely adding new materials, voices, and perspectives but reconfiguring the terms of inquiry itself. Just as travel writing unsettles the boundaries between self and other, here and elsewhere, the journal seeks to unsettle inherited critical frameworks that have long structured the field. By bringing into focus the intellectual traditions, narrative forms and lived experiences of the Global South and other historically marginalised contexts, the journal aims to challenge the inherited theoretical

landscape of travel literature studies, expand the field's conceptual horizons and recalibrate its interpretive priorities. In this sense, the decentring or decolonisation agenda this journal espouses is manifestly not a transfer of cultural authority. Rather, it is grounded in sustained dialogue, reciprocal recognition, and the coexistence of multiple epistemic centers. The promise of true civilisational exchange remains a fragile utopian vision, but this journal is committed to pursuing it. The journal, therefore, invites contributions that dismantle entrenched geographic and epistemological hierarchies, rethink critical paradigms, and participate in the ongoing rearticulation of travel literature as a truly global mode of literary and cultural inquiry.

The inaugural issue of the *Journal of Travel Literature Studies* marks the first step in this new intellectual itinerary. Bringing together six original contributions, this collection maps the expanding frontiers of the discipline across diverse historical and geographic contexts. Together, they demonstrate the very scholarly insights and cross-cultural dialogue the journal seeks to advance. Establishing our foundational premise, Junwu Tian's "Anthropology of Travel" calls for rethinking the ontological meaning of mobility beyond consumerist tropes, arguing that travel is so central to anthropology that its oblivion equates to the amnesia of human history. Shifting from macro-historical paradigms to the intimate mechanics of encounter, Tomasz Ewertowski examines the 1904 travelogues of two Polish women in Japan. Drawing on sensory history, Ewertowski demonstrates how travel extends beyond the visual to encompass aural, tactile, and kinaesthetic experiences, revealing how bodily interactions simultaneously reinforce and challenge perceptions of otherness. Broadening the critical scope, Jiajun Tao systematically engages with four paradigms of Western globalisation scholarship, advocating for mutual civilizational learning as a pathway beyond Eurocentric hegemony. Engaging with colonial legacies and identity, Feng Zhang and Xinwei Tang apply new materialism to Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*. Their analysis foregrounds the agency of objects, such as the map and the ebony table, as vital vessels of affective memory within the refugee experience. Finally, Jinxiang Huang evaluates Junwu Tian's monograph, *American Travel Narratives and Cultural Metaphors in Twentieth-Century Fiction*, exploring how it combines genetic criticism and historical context to analyze the narrative forms and cultural meanings of travel in twentieth-century American literature. Collectively, these articles demonstrate that travel literature can function as a prism for examining

human mobility, embodied experience, cross-cultural encounter, epistemological authority, material culture, and postcolonial memory.

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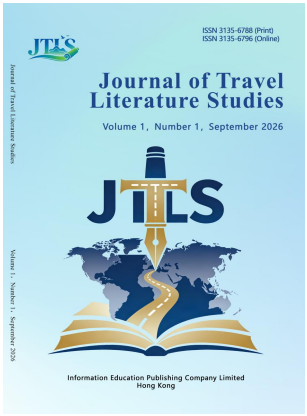

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Anthropology of Travel

Junwu Tian and **Tingcong Lin**

Abstract: This paper aims at eliminating the consumerist misunderstanding of travel prevalent in the academic field and reevaluating the ontological meaning of travel from the perspective of anthropology. As a kind of spatial displacement in geography, travel exists in the whole history of humankind, ranging from "Out of Africa" migration in the remote antiquity to the contemporary transnational flows of population. Travel, in the sense of anthropology, not only covers the variety of spatial movements such as ethnic migration, geographical exploration, military expedition, commercial trade and foreign communication, but also refers to the collision of human thought in performing these geographical activities, therefore reflecting the grand human progression. Thus, classical anthropology holds that the core of anthropology is travel, the oblivion of which is the amnesia of human history.

Keywords: tourism; travel; travel anthropology; progression of modernity

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Introduction

When thinking of travel, the first thing that comes to mind for most Chinese people is tourism, especially "Chinese-style tourism." In fact, behaviors such as taking photos at scenic spots are not exclusive to "Chinese-style tourism"; the foreign middle class also engages in such behaviors. As Susan Sontag (1973, p. 10) notes, "Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter. Unsure of other responses, they take a picture. This gives shape to experience: stop, take a photograph, and move on." Sontag's remark commented on the tourism behavior of European middle-class workers in the 1950s and 1960s. Whether Chinese-style tourism or the European middle-class tourism described by Sontag, both differ essentially from what "travel" means for anthropologists—especially pre-modern human travel. The distinction lies not only in the difference of connotations between the two but also in their different roles in the human social process.

Examination of the Connotations of Travel and Tourism

As Frances Bartkowski (1995, p. xxiii) writes, "Travel is movement, movement through territorialized spaces movement by those who choose to move and those who are moved by forces not under their control." In the remote ancient era, when travel tools were extremely lack, travel could only be undertaken on foot; thus, "travel" at that time was extremely painful, a degree of suffering far beyond the imagination of modern tourists. Scholars have verified that the word "travel" originates from the French "travail" (hardship), which in turn derives from the Latin "trepalium," referring to a torture instrument (Fussell, 1980, p. 39). In ancient time, there were two main causes of travel's pain: the absence of modern transportation and the hazardous travel environment. As John W. Parkers (1839, p. 12) notes,

> The difficulties of land-travel, so often interposed by the simply natural circumstances of the earth, are largely experienced by all creatures that move by the aid of feet, and, therefore, among the rest, by all the human race …. The atmosphere, the seasons, the hours of the day and night, are sometimes hostile,

> for shorter or longer periods; but, besides these, there are difficulties of the surface only, which last the entire year.

Beyond the natural environment, the dangers of the social environment also made travelers suffer. David Constantine (1984) studies 16th-century European travel in Greece and concluded that "The journey to Greece and travel in Greece were strenuous and dangerous. The travelers risked capture and robbery by pirates at sea, by brigands on land; as well as plague, harassment by the Turks and a thousand casual accidents" (p. 6). The time consumed by travel was even longer than modern tourists can imagine. Due to the lack of modern transportation, the Greece–Egypt journey of the "father of history," Herodotus (484–425 BCE), took more than 20 years, whereas under modern conditions it would take at most a week. Even by the 13th century CE, when travel tools and environments had improved to some extent, Marco Polo's (1254–1324) journey to China still required four years.

In contrast, "tourism" is more closely related to "pleasure," "holiday," and prescribed destinations; it is a consumerist behavior. As S. Medlik (2002, p. vii) notes, "For most people tourism has a connotation of leisure travel and tends to be synonymous with holidays (vacations). This is also reflected in dictionaries, which commonly refer to tourism as travel for pleasure." Etymologically, "tourism" implies "circulation" or "circling," which emphasize the cyclical nature of spatial displacement. Tourism refers to short-term departures from home to scenic places for recreation and sightseeing, usually with a return to the original residence after viewing the destination. Alister Mathieson and Geoffrey Wall (1982, p. 1) similarly describe tourism as referring to "the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs." Modern tourism began in the early 19th century; the advent of modern transportation tools such as steamships and trains significantly shortened travel time, reducing physical pain and spiritual loneliness, and endowing travel with entertainment characteristics. In 1841, Thomas Cook led a tour group on a one-day excursion between Leicester and Loughborough in Britain, marking the shift from travel to tourism. As David Seed (2004, pp. 1–2) describes,

> Some time after the middle of the nineteenth century, as the Graphic Revolution was getting under way, the character of foreign travel—first by Europeans, and then by Americans—began to change. Formerly travel required long planning, large expense, and great investments of time. It involved risks to health, even to life. The traveller was active. Now he became passive. Instead of an athletic exercise, travel became a spectator sport.

Thomas Cook's tourism industry once prompted scholars of travel to lament that the rise of modern tourism signaled the end of traditional travel: as Michael Mewshaw (2005, pp. 2) argues, "travel no longer exists. It's all been replaced by the plague of tourism." Nevertheless, some anthropologists insist that "travel" will not end with "tourism." Biswanath Ghosh (2010, p. 3) argues that "tourism and travel are not synonymous. All tourism involves travel, but not all travel is tourism." For these scholars, traditional travel will never perish. Travel is indispensable in human life because "immobility reminds us of that ultimate fact of life—i.e., Death—we remain eager to prove we're still alive by moving around and rubbing up against our fellow traveler" (Mewshaw, 2005, p. 2). Travel is even elevated to the Cartesian philosophical level of "I think, therefore I am," becoming "I travel; therefore I am" (Mewshaw, 2005, p. 3).

To distinguish "travel" and "tourism" ontologically, Western scholars tend to use the term "journey." "Journey" not only denotes physical remoteness and the hardship of the travel process but is also elevated metaphorically to refer to spiritual growth and life experience. As George Lakoff and Mark Turner (1989, pp. 60–61) note,

> All journeys involve travelers, paths traveled, places where we start, and places where we have been. Some journeys are purposeful and have destinations that we set out for, while others may involve wandering without any destination in mind. To understand life as a journey is to have in mind, consciously or more likely unconsciously, a correspondence between a

traveler and a person living the life, the road traveled and the "course" of a lifetime, a starting point and the time of birth, and so on.

Anthropological Representations of Travel

"In spite of Levi-Strauss's grumpy protesting against travelling and explorers, not even he could deny that anthropology and travel are intrinsically connected" (Grgurinovic, 2012, p. 45). Anthropologically, "Travel is defined as going from one place to another, usually over some distance, and in many ways the modern world is defined by people traveling around the world. Humans have traveled ever since Homo sapiens began to walk out of Africa and populate the world." (Taylor, 2022, p. 3). In prehistoric times, although bipedal walking freed ancient apes from animal nature and evolved them into humans, these newly human-like apes soon faced new survival crises: group expansion, food scarcity, and climate change. To resolve these, group-living apes adopted the modern human practice: migration. As William H. McNeill (1984, pp. 1–18) points out: it can be said with certainty that when our ancestors evolved into humans, they had already begun to migrate, wandering around and hunting. Migration and travel are mutually inclusive: "Migration describes the movement of a person away from their usual residence whereas travel describes a person who passes from place to place, for any reason. Migration and travel have shaped the history of humanity and enriched societies economically, socially and culturally" (Semenza & Ebi, 2019, pp. 1–13). The chief causes of migration, especially large-scale group migration, include climate change, deterioration of living conditions, war, and the search for resources. The "Out of Africa hypothesis" holds that human ancestors originated on the African continent. More than 1.9 million years ago, Homo erectus living in African primitive forests migrated en masse to escape climate change and forest fires, reaching the vast African savanna and beginning plains hunting and simple farming and herding. Subsequently, to survive better, these African Homo erectus began migrating from Africa to the Eurasian continent—an unprecedented large-scale human migration known as "Out of Africa." About 1.9 million years ago, Homo erectus appeared on the African continent. In the following tens of thousands of years, they spread throughout Africa, the farthest reaching the Eurasian continent—becoming the first primitive humans to leave Africa (Krause & Trappe, 2021, p. 30).

During migration, Homo erectus gradually evolved into African Homo sapiens. About 200,000 to 60,000 years ago, when our ancestors reached northern Europe and Asia along the Alps, they encountered cold climates, different food sources, and new food predators. Eventually, evolution began in these wandering tribes: their skin brightened, their metabolism adapted to new food sources, and their immune systems coped with different pathogens. These Homo sapiens began evolving into different subspecies, or different races (Hunter, 2014, pp. 1019–1022). African Homo sapiens later evolved into the ancestors of the four major races—Black, Brown, Yellow, and White—first migrating to Europe and Asia, then entering the Americas via the Bering Strait. Among these migrating groups, one branch settled in Europe; the Neanderthals, said to have become extinct in Europe, are descendants of African Homo sapiens who left Africa. On the other side, about 600,000 years ago, the Homo erectus remaining in Africa separately evolved into Neanderthals, Denisovans, and modern humans (Krause & Trappe, 2021, p. 30). According to the "Out of Africa" hypothesis, the British may also be descendants of African Homo sapiens; fossils found in the Thames Valley prove that Homo sapiens appeared in Britain approximately 1.25 million to 700,000 years ago. Britain's most direct and recent ancestors are likewise products of migration. The Celts, Britain's nearest ancestors, "were tribes from the upper Danube River. They spread outward from there and eventually settled in Italy, Spain, and Britain. … They came to Britain around 700 BCE and soon replaced the primitive tribes there" (Strong, 2022, pp. 4–5). Anthropologist Franz Boas (1928, p. 30) examines the changing genealogies of African, European, and Asian races in geographical environments and concludes: "From the beginning, we have a map of continuous human migration, which includes the fusion of various human groups." Although migration plays a decisive anthropological role in human racial distribution and formation, it is realized through travel. "Any migration—whether voluntary or forced—must be achieved through travel. But unlike ordinary travel, spontaneous migration is often a decision after careful consideration. Therefore, after spontaneous migrants leave their point of departure, they mostly will not choose to return for long-term residence" (Fan, 2013, p. 40).

Migration not only dispersed African Homo sapiens worldwide, forming modern world nations, but is also semantically linked to modern "immigration" and "diaspora." "Immigration is a kind of migration. Immigration can be simply divided into

international immigration and domestic immigration" (Fan, 2013, p. 40). Regardless of type, immigration has voluntary or forced causes. Britain's immigration phenomenon is typical. "Today we would call Britain an immigrant nation, built by centuries of encounters, interactions, and exchanges among a succession of migrant groups and ethnic communities." (Cramsie, 2015, p. 3). In British history, especially the 19th century, immigration included domestic and international forms. Domestic immigration accompanied industrialization, with large numbers of Britons moving from countryside to rapidly industrializing areas such as Birmingham, Manchester, and London. Throughout the 19th century and earlier, Britain maintained an open-door immigration policy, attracting foreigners. The largest group was the Irish, until the great famine represented by the potato event. By the 1870s, Britain launched large-scale overseas immigration. "In the 19th century, Britain became a pioneer in large-scale overseas group immigration. The main target countries for British overseas immigration were the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa" (Hatton, 2004, pp. 149–171). Between 1853 and 1913 alone, 1.3 million Britons left Britain and settled elsewhere.

According to their methods and legality, immigration can be divided into legal and illegal. Illegal immigration mainly appears as "smuggling," "refugees," and "asylum seekers." Whether legal or illegal, long-term residence in a foreign country inevitably produces the melancholy feeling of "being expelled from home and displaced" and nostalgia for the homeland; this phenomenon is called "diaspora." In Jewish culture, "diaspora" refers to "Israelites 'scattered' throughout the world. 'Diaspora' thus acquired such meaning. A certain ethnic group left its homeland to live in a foreign land; their diaspora always carries the theme of 'testing asceticism' yet maintains the characteristics of homeland culture" (Peng, 2013, p. 4). After the "Babylonian disaster" in 586 BCE, the Jewish scattering worldwide lasted more than two thousand years. Besides Jews, other nations experienced large-scale diaspora due to slave trade, livelihood pressures, religious conflicts, etc.—for example, Africans in the 16th century, Chinese in the 19th century, and Slavs in the 20th century. Thus, "diaspora" generally refers to minority ethnic immigration and "is the external manifestation of travel and the result of crossing borders. In this sense, it can become the theme of travel literature performance, such as displacement, seeking foreign lands, contacting the alien" (Choi, 2019, p. 69).

Travel not only shares an anthropological origin with migration but is also closely related to exploration, especially geographical exploration. In distinguishing travelers and explorers, Mike Grimshaw (2014) points out: "The difference between traveler and explorer is that the traveler sets out to find what already exists, while the explorer sets out to find what should exist. Their commonality is that both must undergo the journey to reach foreign lands" (p. 44). Grimshaw's view is quite absolute; in fact, travelers' departures are not always to find what already exists—many unknown regions were discovered unintentionally during travel. As John Cramsie (2015, p. 35) states: "British travellers built on medieval movements between Europe and the North Sea, North Africa, and, thanks to the 'decisive influence' of Marco Polo's account, Asia. Atlantic voyages of discovery gave a new impetus to acquire first-hand knowledge of humanity, near and far." Many unknown countries and regions in Europe, Africa, and the Atlantic were discovered intentionally or unintentionally by these travelers. Of course, as travelers with clear discovery goals, explorers or explorers play a greater role in discovering unknown areas and bear greater hardships. Since untraveled paths are usually more dangerous, many explorers even died en route. All this shows that exploration and travel share many commonalities—sometimes so many that anthropologists find it difficult to distinguish them. "It is not easy to distinguish exploration from the commonly known travel. Even in the days of crossing the Atlantic, every traveler felt he was an explorer" (Hamilton, 1906, p. 19). Italy's Marco Polo, Spain's Columbus, and Britain's James Cook are all famous historical travelers and explorers whose journeys and explorations worldwide left precious cultural wealth for humanity. Because the two are not easily distinguished, in many historical, anthropological, and sociological writings they are sometimes simply juxtaposed. "Explorers and travelers determined to 'scrutinize this foreign world, to perceive it in all its empirical qualities—and to write home about it in meticulous detail'." (Cramsie, 2015, p. 35).

As a spatial displacement behavior from home to foreign lands, "this travel … can also be a personal or political appeal (e.g., merchants or colonists), or out of simple knowledge curiosity (e.g., Ibn Battuta's travel reports), or out of complex motivations (e.g., the European Crusades)" (Friedman & Frigg, 2017, pp. vii–viii). Myra Shackley (2007) explicitly states: "In ancient society, travel mainly had commercial … political and military motivations, although there is also a small

amount of evidence that some travel has recreational factors since ancient Greece" (p. 6). Trade is originally a commodity-buying-and-selling behavior "but has become the main driving force for human flow in world history since ancient times. Although its meaning is no longer obvious today, before the arrival of the virtual market it has always been inextricably linked with travel" (Van Meersbergen, 2019, pp. 256–258). In ancient Greece, trade between city-states became the main reason for regional travel. To meet demands for grain, gold, silver, ivory, and other items, merchants shuttled between prosperous Mediterranean cities via land and sea transport. By the Roman Empire period, commercial travel expanded to distant lands such as China, India, and Tanzania in Africa. The ancient "Silk Road" is the classic representation of East–West commercial travel. Modern commercial development followed the same pattern. In January 1601, the London-based East India Company, about to undertake its first Asian commercial voyage, first sought help from Richard Hakluyt (1552–1616), believing that this compiler of the epic *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* and British consul in Paris possessed the greatest authority on Asian commercial knowledge. As Aske L. Brock and others (2021, p. 1) state,

> … as "historiographer of the Viages of the East Indies," Hakluyt had access to some of the most complete and up-to-date information about Asian commerce available in Elizabethan England. Over the previous decades he had acquired, edited, translated, and published a vast array of texts that detailed the experiences of European travellers across the world. Drawing on oral and written testimonies from Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and English travellers to Asia, Hakluyt was well-versed in the region's geography, politics, and cultures, and could offer advice ranging from the principal places where pepper grew to the type of herb (China root) thought to most effectively cure syphilis.

The Crusades belonged to military travel. In fact, from the beginning of recorded human civilization, travel had military purposes. As anthropologist Ke Fan states: "War is also inseparable from travel. Before the world entered the nation-state era, royal powers and empires of different regions often conducted long-distance

conquests for economic and population plunder" (2013, p. 38). For example, in ancient Greece, a 100,000-strong Greek coalition once took more than 1,800 warships, endured sea hardships, and traveled thousands of miles to attack Troy. In the Roman era, Alexander the Great of Macedonia led a huge army, marching more than 22,000 miles in 12 years and conquering more than 70 cities along the Mediterranean coast. The Crusades, lasting more than 300 years, were Europe's military expeditions against Asia. However, Europe's eastern expeditions were more like travel or immigration than warfare. Especially the civilian Crusaders of the first expedition seemed not to go to fight against Christianity's enemies but more like family immigration; they used oxen and sheep as horses, dragged two-wheeled carts along the way piled with broken luggage, with children sitting on them. Every time they passed a fortress or town, the children stretched out their hands and asked, whether it was Jerusalem (Thompson, 1997, p. 489). Yet this seemingly pitiful group massacred large numbers of Jews and Hungarians they regarded as "heretics" during the long journey. Throughout history, wars have included just wars of self-defense and far more unjust wars of aggression; the latter brought enormous harm to people's lives and property worldwide, including controls on travel and destruction of transportation facilities. As Jonathan S. Burgess (2019, pp. 19–32) writes,

> In the Hellenistic Age, following the military campaigns of Alexander the Great, the spread of Greek culture and language throughout the eastern Mediterranean facilitated travel. During the Roman empire, the *Pax Romana* enabled relatively safe transportation throughout the Mediterranean.

Travel and the Human Modernity Process

Caren Kaplan (1996, p. 1) believes that travel "is very much a modern concept, signifying both commercial and leisure movement in an era of expanding Western capitalism." The travel modernity that Kaplan defines is more likely to be a kind of tourism modernity, since large-scale tourism indeed arose during capitalist development. Strictly speaking, travel's modernity refers to its historical role in the entire human modernity process. "Travel has always played a crucial role in the long river of human evolution and development. We know that without exchanges between different cultures and human groups, human civilization could not have reached

today's achievements" (Fan, 2013, p. 38). Taylor (2022, p. 4) further positions the traveler as both agent and witness of historical events:

> Travelers are agents of historical events, i.e. they make history, and they are also witnesses to those events. They provide insight into places through the lens and bias given where they come from. How travelers tell their stories, to whom and what their experiences tell us about the circumstances are in many ways as meaningful as the journeys themselves.

Examples are numerous: medieval travelers' accounts of European encounters with indigenous peoples are the only historical documents we possess today. Matteo Ricci spent decades studying Chinese culture; his Chinese travel logs influenced Western imagination of China for centuries.

In fact, travel's anthropological ontological features inherently link it with modernity. Regarding modernity's essence, scholarly views differ. As Peter Osborne (2005, p. 282) notes: "There are few bushes more tangled than the concept of modernity into which it falls." The earliest use of "modernity" is generally attributed to French literary critic Charles Baudelaire's 1863 series "The Painter of Modern Life." Baudelaire's "modernity" pertains mainly to art: "Modernity is transience, fleetingness, contingency; it is one half of art, the other half being eternity and immutability. For every past painter there existed a form of modernity" (Baudelaire 1996, p. 136). What, then, is sociological or anthropological modernity? In anthropology and the titles of numerous works in the social sciences and humanities, monographs and articles containing the word "modernity" abound, yet there is no consensus on its content, boundaries, form, or temporal limits (Hubinger, 1998, pp. 85–95). However, "for a 19th-century British or American commentator, modernity mainly referred to rationality, industrial progress, democratic ideas, and social adaptation. Pre-modernity and non-modernity were primarily associated with myth, superstition, rural lifestyles, feudal government, and stable social customs" (Hansson, 2011, p. 257). In the author's view, Marshall Berman's (1982, p. 15) definition of "modernity" best aligns with anthropological and sociological concerns. Berman writes:

> There is a mode of vital experience-experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience "modernity." To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world-and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind.

According to Berman, modernity is the human subject's perception of external-world changes and the subject's simultaneous self-change while altering the external world. As the West's most dynamic concept, modernity is closely linked with the idea of progress and is regarded as change and improvement. We need not expend much effort to find examples from many teleological ideologies—from ancient myths to today's various religions and political doctrines, including Marxism-Leninism (Hubinger, 1998, pp. 85–95). Modernity manifests in multiple forms (e.g., scientific rationality, the emergence of the state, urbanization, globalization), and many factors promote the human modernity process. Among them, travel is both content and one of the chief means of advancing modernity.

As an important way for the subject to perceive external change, learning and education "make direct and independent contributions to individual modernity" (Yin, 1985, p. 97). Learning and education appear not only in systematic academic institutions but also in travel. Since ancient times, travel—the behavior of moving from one place to another—has always been regarded as a metaphor for learning, gaining experience, and acquiring knowledge (Hunt, 1976, pp. 44–47). In ancient Greece, travel was viewed as an important way to broaden horizons and learn foreign knowledge. The word "theory" originally came from Greek "theoria," referring to travel and observation activities; city-states sent special observers to other city-states to watch ceremonies, and upon return they reported foreign conditions, thus forming "theory." In the Renaissance, Bacon (1908, p. 79) deeply recognized travel's educational role: "Travel is part of education for the young; for the old, it is part of life experience." In the Enlightenment, the "Grand Tour" was seen as necessary for

young gentlemen to gain modern knowledge and educational growth. As Michel Delon (2013, p. 622) argues, "The Grand Tour is a growth travel that enables young British gentlemen to increase knowledge in social and political practice through travel in various European countries and study of Italian classical culture." Travel drives learning and educational modernity because it

> … is an encounter, an encounter between the eyes of the other and strange reality … Further, travel is a spatiotemporal process. In travel, time and space have complex meanings. The time dimension … constitutes the entanglement of the traveler's own traditional time level and the current time level of the destination. Spatial transfer not only involves sudden geographical changes but also huge contrasts in humanistic environments. The complex comparative reference between one's own society and culture and those of the destination inevitably produces profound recognition and reflection on one's own culture and identity. (Zhou, 2000, p. 115)

Only through travel can humans leave familiar domains, enter the unknown world, broaden their horizons, and better recognize the external world. Under the strong impact of new external things, humans generate strong reflection, break with traditional concepts, and produce modern consciousness.

Colonialism is one of the decisive factors promoting global modernity and globalization. Gerard Aching (2010, p. 29) points out that "modernity is a global phenomenon that arose with the rise of European overseas colonies and empires." Although Asian, African, and Latin American countries and regions (exemplified by modern China and India) internally nurtured capitalist modernity's germination, feudal traditional forces were too strong and suppressed its development. Western colonialism opened the feudal doors of backward countries and regions from outside, drawing them into global modernity and globalization. For the Chinese people, post-1840 modern Chinese history is undoubtedly a humiliating history; the Opium War forcibly opened China's sovereign door, turning China into a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. Yet from another perspective, beginning in 1840 China moved toward modernity, enlightenment, and awakening—an extremely painful process accompanied by rupture with feudal tradition and the violent pain of sovereignty loss.

During this period, modern Chinese intellectuals represented by Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan, and Yan Fu awakened, proposed the modern slogan "learn from the West," and launched movements such as the Self-Strengthening Movement and the Hundred Days' Reform aimed at making China a modern nation.

Murray Pittock (1997, p. 150) believes travel "is linked with empire through the worship of the colonial qualities in Orientalism and early archaeology." The relationship between travel and colonialism lies in the fact that travelers' and explorers' discoveries of foreign geographies, customs, and objects aroused European colonialists' desire for colonial conquest. "The oriental travels written by early Western adventurers directly stimulated the emergence of colonialism, because the Orient they described was full of gold, jewels, spices, and silk; behind those beautiful words beat the desire for conquest and plunder" (Kong, 2017, p. 13). Moreover, "the intensification of worldwide travel since modern times originated from the rise of colonialism" (Fan, 2013, p. 40). This bidirectional interaction portrays the isomorphic relationship between travel and colonialism. Especially during the Age of Discovery and the Industrial Revolution, demand for overseas raw materials and markets prompted "various 'exploration' and trade fleets to cross oceans and compete fiercely for overseas colonies and markets. Capital became the direct driving force for overseas exploration voyages. With the establishment of overseas colonies and markets, the human travel network further expanded" (Fan, 2013, p. 40). Wherever this travel network reached, it drew local races into the world modernity system formed by colonial trade. An example vividly illustrates the relationship: Indian anthropologist Amitav Ghosh once conducted fieldwork in an imagined remote Egyptian village. Upon arrival, Ghosh was surprised to discover that local life had already integrated into the modernity process of the entire Middle East and even the world. Villagers had long escaped the narrowness of small countries and few people; they shuttled between Middle Eastern countries and linked the village to the outside world through commerce.

In Western writings, modernity is always combined with mobility, and mobility is regarded as a main feature of modernity. Just as travel is human spatial movement, mobility first refers to humans' spatial movement: "Mobility involves spatial displacement—the displacement behavior of different spatial points. These spatial points can be towns or locations a few centimeters apart. This is the simplest

understanding of mobility on the flow map" (Cresswell, 2006, p. 12). Mobility involves time, space, and speed; it refers to the same concepts as travel and can even be said to be travel. "Mobility is the foundation of human life. From the birth of humans, humans began to migrate and travel, whether voluntary or involuntary, for spiritual and material pursuits, out of spiritual necessity or simply out of curiosity" (Schaff, 2020, p. 11). John Urry (2007) expands mobility's meaning to three aspects:

> First, there is the use of mobile to mean something that moves or is capable of movement …. Second, there is the sense of mobility deployed in mainstream sociology/social science. This is upward or downward social mobility …. Third, there is mobility in the longer term sense of migration or other kins of semi-permanent geographical movement.

Thus, besides referring to bodily spatial displacement, mobility also refers to the movement and flow of objects, information, capital, gender, class, culture, and other fields. The relationship between mobility and modernity is that "mobility is a progress, a freedom, an opportunity, a modernity" (Cresswell, 2006, pp. 1–2). In Anthony Giddens's view, mobility enables the modern subject to break free from spatial constraints; this "disembedding" constitutes modernity's hallmark. With such disembedding, humans are no longer confined by tradition, can conduct regional and national exchanges, spread ideas, and enable economic capital flow, so society overall tends toward progress.

The relationship between mobility and modernity is especially reflected in the modernization of travel and communication tools. To achieve faster bodily displacement and idea dissemination, humans have never ceased improving and inventing communication and transportation tools. As Michael Kimaid (2015, p. 54) states:

> Speed is the primary objective and function of technological development as it relates to transportation in the modern era. Prior to the advent of the steam powered engine in 1781, horsepower was a literal term. People and things moved at speeds dictated by biology and geography. The application of the coal powered steam engine, and later the oil and gas powered internal

> combustion engine to transportation had a profound effect on the modern world as it developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Railroads and ships made transportation faster, and the increased efficiency was a primary interest of the commercial markets the machines served.

In 1761, British aesthetician Edmund Burke, after a 200-mile trip from London to northern Britain, was deeply impressed by steam-era travel speed. He comments that, in the past, traveling to the countryside was considered as difficult and great as sailing to the Indian islands; but in his time, the repair of roads and the improvement of many travel facilities have opened a new situation for exchanges between several regions in our British Isles (Burke, 1786, pp. 206–207). People bravely set out and found they could easily cross the entire country: carriages, machines, airships, post carriages, and other transportation tools are always ready to transport passengers in distant places in cities and kingdoms; a girl can eliminate time and space restrictions before dreaming of her lover's arrival and embrace her lover (Burke, 1786, pp. 206–207). The transportation tools that Burke saw were mainly pre-modern—carriages, post carriages, primitive steam trains. The speed revolution brought by 19th-century transportation transformation far exceeded 18th-century imagination. The 19th-century train, as the invention and advent of modern transportation, greatly promoted the flow of personnel, goods, and information; mobility is modernity's typical manifestation. As Anthony Giddens (2011, p. 90) notes: although migration, nomadism, and long-distance rushing were commonplace in the pre-modern period, compared with the dense mobility provided by modern transportation tools, the vast majority of the pre-modern population remained in a relatively solidified and isolated state. John Urry (2007, pp. 2–3) even materializes modernity—with modern transportation as its main representation—as "the train," believing the train enables large batches of people to move at high-speed relying on mechanized tools, which is a huge innovation; the train thus has become the symbol of modernity.

Conclusion

From the perspective discussed above, travel in an anthropological sense is

> … one of the earliest and oldest of man's activities, its history coextensive with that of the race itself, a primary impulse of the human species and a major determinant of history. Whether as migration or exploration, science or pleasure, enforced displacement or irrational wanderlust, it has figured as a condition of every race and age, era or culture. (James, 1958, p. 13)

Precisely because of travel's crucial role in human development history, Mary Beard and John Henderson (1998, p. 31) firmly assert that "the core of classical studies is travel", and forgetting travel is humanity's own amnesia. Percy Adams (1983, p. 80) extends travel to "every field of the intellectual world, to every important commercial, political … academic or creative activity." It is well known that Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721) is an epistolary novel of 160 letters reflecting the early Enlightenment spirit of re-understanding reality and seeking truth. Yet the book's writing owes much to works describing travelers' journeys in the East. His famous political-science treatise *The Spirit of Laws* (1748) also quotes enormous travel materials, not merely discussing climate's influence on law. Montesquieu's travel borrowings influenced later European thinkers and writers such as Leibniz, Voltaire, and Goethe. John Mandeville, "the arm-chair traveler," by simply contrasting British and Arab people freely in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, played a crucial role in Europeans' understanding of its external world. No wonder Lévi-Strauss sighs that since the Renaissance, Western Europe experienced "crucial moments … thanks to the great discoveries, the human community that once thought itself perfect suddenly learned … to achieve self-cognition, it must first look at the unrecognizable image of itself in the mirror" (1979, p. 102). In short,

> … travel from the beginning, from the moment in which mankind realized its uniqueness and importance, has acquired a wealth of connotations; many of which transcend its purely utilitarian, practical character that could be discerned in the ventures of a missionary, colonial, exploratory or scientific nature, where the goal is clearly defined and accounted for. These are mostly connotations of a social, philosophical and cultural nature. Thanks to them travel has become a factor stimulating the growth of European civilization,

> and an important, unique way of life, the way of spending life and the model of culture. (Sztachelska, 2010, p. 3)

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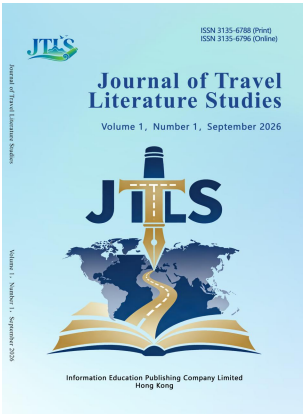

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Other Bodies: An Embodied Perspective on Two Women's Travel Accounts of Japan (1904)

Tomasz Ewertowski

Abstract: This article examines how bodily and sensory experiences shape representations of cultural otherness in early twentieth-century Polish travel writing about Japan. Focusing on travelogues by Antonina Wernicowa and Helena Witwicka, it shows that travel experience extends beyond visual observation to include a wide range of aural, tactile, olfactory, and kinaesthetic sensations. Drawing on sensory history and body studies, the analysis identifies several modes of representing bodily experience, from simple references to more elaborate, affective descriptions and reflections. Such representations lend immediacy and credibility to the narrative while constructing vivid images of foreign spaces. At the same time, embodied experiences are shaped by pre-existing discourses and social conditioning, often producing ambivalent responses that combine fascination with discomfort. Particular attention is paid to everyday practices and interpersonal encounters, which reveal how bodily interactions could both reinforce and challenge perceptions of otherness, introducing nuance into depictions of Japan as an exotic Other.

Keywords: Polish travel writing; Japan; body; sensory history; embodiment

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Introduction

One approach that has been extremely productive in travel writing studies in recent decades can be summed up in the phrases "travelers' gaze" and "in travelers' eyes." Examining what travelers "see" and what they do not—often treating "seeing" in a metaphorical way—can lead to thought-provoking reflections on representations of observed reality and the discourses that influence it (Pratt; Jezernik). However, despite the remarkable results of this conceptual framework, such a focus on travelers' eyes inevitably invites a question: what about the rest of their bodies? With this issue in mind, we can read the following excerpt about a Buddhist temple in Osaka, visited by the Polish traveler Antonina Wernicowa in 1904:

> I turned toward the temple; the devout were purchasing various kinds of incense as offerings to the deities. Another offering consisted of throwing a small coin, worth one-tenth of a cent, into the stone trough in front of the temple. After making this payment, the Japanese would pull a rope, whereupon a sound could be heard, as if wood had struck a basin. Inside the temple, several of the devout, standing, clapped their hands and whispered a prayer. It was quite noisy there; some were entering, others leaving. People spoke loudly. Children laughed and called out. The bonzes moved bells and gongs. On the right side, deeper inside, stood a small stone statue of the Buddha. The devout touched, or rather rubbed, various parts of its body, after which they did the same to their own bodies. There were such bustle and noise in the temple that I could not remain there for long (Wernicowa, p. 217).[1]

[1] Translations into English are my own unless otherwise stated. The original reads: "Zwróciłam się do świątyni; pobożni nabywali różne kadzidła na ofiarę bożkom. Drugą ofiarą było rzucanie pieniążka, wartości jedna dziesiąta centa, do kamiennego koryta przed świątynią. Po złożeniu tej opłaty, japończycy ciągnęli za sznur, poczem dawał się słyszeć dźwięk, jakby drzewem uderzono w miednicę. W świątyni kilku pobożnych, w postawie stojącej, klaskało w ręce, i szeptało modlitwę. Było tu dosyć gwarno; jedni wchodzili, drudzy wychodzili. Rozmawiano głośno. Dzieci śmiały się i nawoływały. Bonzowie poruszali dzwonkami i gongami. Po prawej stronie, w głębi, stał niewielki, kamienny posąg Buddy. Pobożni dotykali, a raczej pocierali różne części jego ciała, poczem czynili toż samo na swojem ciele. W świątyni taki był gwar i hałas, że długo w niej pozostać nie mogłam."

This excerpt is a typical piece of travel writing, recording a personal, singular experience of visiting a landmark and events taking place there during a journey. Wernicowa portrayed what she saw, but also much more than this. At the beginning, it was through the embodied experience of movement that the described scene was initiated ("I turned toward the temple"). In the end, the bustling atmosphere of the temple put Wernicowa's body under such pressure that she had to leave the place. In between, numerous bodily sensations were recorded, predominantly aural, including human voices, gongs, and bells. Although the traveler did not write about her own tactile or olfactory engagements, her remarks about incense allow one to reconstruct the smell of the temple. There is also a phenomenon that can be variously described as "touch of the eye" (Garrington, pp. 7, 9, 20, 89), "extended haptics" (Smolińska, p. 62) —and "haptic visuality"—a way of looking focused on surfaces and textures (Jackson, p. 229): Wernicowa suggestively wrote about worshippers touching the statue of the Buddha and their own bodies. Finally, the very fact that the travel writer emphasized that she could not remain there for long, while it was apparently not a problem for local temple visitors, suggestively set Wernicowa apart from the Japanese, revealing an embodied experience of othering.

This example clearly demonstrates that the travel experience consists of much more than seeing (Podemski, pp. 9–10; Adler; Pettinger and Youngs, pp. 208–61). The way in which various bodily experiences are conveyed in travel writing is an intricate issue that will be examined in this paper. My main goal is to investigate how bodily experiences are represented in narratives, what the functions of such descriptions are, and how they correspond with travel writers' ideologies and discourses. In the next section, the conceptual and methodological background of this inquiry will be described, which will also help characterize the article's goals and structure in more detail. Before that, in the remaining part of this introduction, I will present my sources and the context of the travels described in them.

Two travel accounts analyzed in this article were written by the aforementioned Antonina Wernicowa and by Helena Witwicka (1841–1923), two Polish women who independently visited Japan and whose accounts were published in Polish newspapers. Wernicowa stayed for a few years in Harbin in Northeast China, where her husband was working for the Russian-built Chinese Eastern Railway. His career was not a

unique situation; Poland was not an independent state at the time, and the Russian enterprise employed many Poles who were Tsarist subjects and for whom career opportunities in Asia were greater than in the oppressively ruled historical Polish lands.[1] In 1904, when her husband's contract was about to expire, she decided to take a short tourist excursion to Japan, "about whose civilization I have heard so much" (Wernicowa, p. 104). She visited Nagasaki, Kyoto, Kobe, Osaka, Tokyo, and Yokohama, and shortly after that she published a serialized travelogue in the weekly *Tygodnik Polski* (Polish Weekly). She represented the sensibilities of a tourist, using opportunities created for Europeans during nineteenth-century globalization to experience what she perceived as an exotic foreign country. Additionally, because of her few years of residence in China, in her writings readers encountered comparisons of the "familiar exotic" (Chinese) with the "unfamiliar exotic" (Japanese).

Helena Witwicka's travel was of a different character.[2] She came from an aristocratic, landowning family. Her brother was an industrialist and a Polish patriot, and Helena never married, accompanying her brother in his various business and social activities. Because of his enterprise, Witwicka stayed for many years in Russia. In 1888–89, she traveled through Siberia to Japan together with her friend, the singer Dina Nikolaevna Kravtsov-Krasov, giving concerts. Due to their status as members of the nobility and as musicians, they were able to meet Japanese notables, including a brief encounter with Emperor Meiji (born Matsuhito, 1852–1912, reigned 1867–1912). They even performed in front of the court. In comparison with Wernicowa, Witwicka wrote much more about personal interactions with the higher levels of Japanese society and much less about typical sightseeing activities. She published a serialized account of her stay in Japan in 1904 in the Warsaw newspaper *Kurjer Warszawski* (Warsaw Courier).

The two Polish accounts offer a relatively rare perspective on female travel experience. Despite a few famous, well-known, and extensively studied female travelers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Isabella Bird

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[1] For a general overview of the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway, see Elleman and Kotkin and Nilus. For the Polish perspective, see Kajdański. For an overview of the activities of Poles in Northeast China, see Borysiewicz, "Polish Settlement," and "History and Historiography."

[2] The biographical information is based on a blog about the Witwicki family (https://rodzinawitwickich.blogspot.com/) that contains not only descriptions of family life but also numerous scanned sources and is the result of research begun as early as 2009 (Stępień). A book on the Witwickis is currently being prepared by the blog's author, Olga Stępień. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Olga Stępień for her kindness and generosity in sharing information and resources on Helena Witwicka.

Bishop, Mary Kingsley, and Ida Pfeiffer, in the period in question women still traveled and wrote about it less often than men.[1] In a relatively conservative Polish society, this situation was even more pronounced (Wojda 100–105; Forajter), so it is especially valuable to analyze accounts penned by them. Additionally, even though Polish travel writing on Japan has been the object of some, although not extensive, scholarly attention (Gromadzka; Konopka-Wilk; Kalarus), Wernicowa and Witwicka are not mentioned there. In fact, I am not aware of any studies investigating extensively their accounts, besides short remarks about Witwicka's stay in Japan in publications concerned with the role of her family in the Skarżysko region and a footnote mentioning both travelers in a PhD dissertation concerning Polish participation in the Russo-Japanese War (Bębenek, p. 140). They are not recorded in dictionaries or general overviews of Polish travel writing or in the bibliography of Polish Japonica (Zieliński; Słabczyński; Nowakowski). Therefore, making these two female travelers the subject of an analysis allows one to introduce sources that are rarely known even in their native country.

From the perspective of the main topic of this article, bodily experiences in travel writing, female travelogues are important because their authors' sensory engagements could be very different from those of men; for example, they were allowed into various private spaces prohibited to male visitors and more often wrote about interactions with people and friendships (Bassnett, pp. 229–30; Mills, p. 105; Kumojima, pp. 50–52). Additionally, in female travel writing the body can be seen as a site of gender performance and experimentation (Bird). Furthermore, E.M. Collingham, in her investigation of "imperial bodies" in British India, states, following Pierre Bourdieu, that bodily dispositions and attitudes are acquired through the process of socialization, resulting in the fact that "social structures are embedded in the body" (Collingham, pp. 2–3). Consequently, due to differences in the socialization process, women's sensorial experiences could differ from those of male travelers. All this makes Wernicowa's and Witwicka's accounts a significant subject of investigation.

Their travel writings about Japan are a compelling topic also because of the island country's "categorical ambiguity" (Kumojima, p. 2). At the end of the

[1] On gender issues in travel writing in general, see, e.g., Bassnett and Aldrich. In a colonial and East Asian context, see, e.g., Mills, Bird, Kumojima, and Wu.

nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the period of high European imperialism, for Europeans Japan was clearly an "exotic other," but it avoided the fate of Asian and African countries subjected to colonialism and economic domination. European writings about Japan from that period represent a conflux of different, partially contradictory discourses. There was a fascination with Japanese aesthetics intertwined with a Eurocentric, superior attitude toward "Eastern others." Japan's rapid modernization was admired, but it also caused disparaging comments about "aping" the West. Technological development and military successes were praised, but they also caused anxiety by undermining assumptions about inherent Western racial and civilizational superiority (Adas, pp. 357–65). Additionally, Japan's growing expansion was one of the factors contributing to the rise of the "yellow peril" discourse (Keevak, pp. 125–44). In the Polish context, one more aspect is important. In that period, Poland was not independent, with a large part of historically Polish lands being under harsh Russian rule. Japan's rapid modernization was seen by some Poles as a positive example, and its victory in the war of 1904–05 over the Tsarist regime was widely welcomed (Crowley). Some Polish nationalist geographers and politicians wrote enthusiastically about Japan (Romer; Yasui), whereas during the war Józef Piłsudski, the future leader of the Polish independent state recreated in 1918, went to Japan to offer support for its struggle against Russia. Both authors analyzed in this article traveled before the outbreak of hostilities, but their accounts were published during the initial stages of the war, so this context should be taken into account together with the other discourses pointed out at the beginning of this paragraph. Traveler's bodily experiences emerged at their nexus. Wernicowa and Witwicka, physically felt the otherness of Japanese culture, sometimes with attraction, sometimes with revulsion. Consequently, travel writing about Japan, perceived as both an exotic other and a curious example of the first fully successful modernization of a non-European society (Eisenstadt, p. 435; Denison, p. 27), offers ample material for reflection on "traveling bodies," and this research approach will be characterized in a more detailed way in the following section.

Bodies in motion: conceptual background

This paper is situated at the intersection of several fields of research. First, it explores the particularities of women's travel writing, as indicated above in the discussion of

the backgrounds of Wernicowa's and Witwicka's travels. Second, by analyzing the writings of two travelers from partitioned Poland in Japan, I contribute to discussions of what the involvement of peripheral European nations in travel practices in the age of empire reveals about their position within the world system (Křížová and Malečková; Mrázek; Patton; Schär and Toivanen). However, for this article, the most important fields are sensory and embodied history and their application to travel writing studies.

The corporeal turn of the 1980s and 1990s rendered embodiment an important topic of analysis (Allen, p. 65). The history of the body is intertwined with sensory history, because "Reports from 'the senses'—via the sight, smell, touch, auditing, and speech of others—always mediate and constitute the facts of any historical matter, the grounding evidence" (Allen, pp. 71–72). The human sensorium is culturally conditioned: societies assign various meanings to sensory acts, understand perceptions differently, and descriptions of sensuous impressions transmit cultural values (Low, pp. 3–13; Classen, *Worlds of Sense*, p. 5; Rodaway, pp. 22–25). Additionally, Mark M. Smith and other historians oppose the idea of a sharp division between modern and premodern culture, the former allegedly characterized by the primacy of the visual. They emphasize that modernity intensified particular aural, tactile, haptic, olfactory, and gustatory dimensions of human existence (Smith; Classen, *A Cultural History of the Senses*). This is especially important for the topic of this article, because modern travel practices are not limited to seeing; for example, modern means of transportation created new aural and haptic sensations (Merriman, pp. 72–97; Ewertowski, "Bodies in Networks"), while increased mobility and the rise of tourism were accompanied by a growing appetite for "tasting the world," also in the literal sense of exploring foreign culinary traditions (Wieczorkiewicz; Bąk).

In general, travelogues are of great interest for sensory history and anthropology because, as noted by Zaid Fahmy, they are both the most promising and the most problematic sources. Although travelogues can be biased and represent reality in a distorted way, they offer a variety of sensory information: "Travel accounts are loaded with sensory information, as foreigners who are unfamiliar with the new sounds, sights, smells, tastes, and textures they encounter rush to write down every unfamiliar detail" (Fahmy, p. 18). This is, however, only one of the reasons why traveling, travel writing, and reflection on the body and senses are interlocked. As indicated by the

editors of an important collection, *Traveling Bodies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Traveling as an Embodied Practice*, the body is "the medium of our travels, and our mobility, our perceptions and experiences strongly depend on its condition and its functioning" (Maruo-Schröder et al., pp. 1–2). Besides the fact that, as indicated by Fahmy, visiting new places offers new kinds of sensory input, it also made travelers experience their own bodies in new ways, not always pleasant (e.g., travel diarrhea). Sensuous impressions are also an important part of the rhetoric of travel writing; by describing them, writers try to bring to life in readers' minds places and situations encountered during journeys (Maruo-Schröder et al., p. 3). References to the senses highlight a travel writer's individual experience, reinforce their authority as a credible witness, and foster reader engagement with the narrative (Temmerman). This is noticeable in the excerpt about the temple quoted above. The way in which Japanese people and their actions are described corresponds with another aspect of bodily experiences in travel writing—how the bodies of travelees are portrayed as sights and how such descriptions carry meanings linked with particular ideas about physicality (Maruo-Schröder et al., p. 9).

When reading Polish travel accounts about Japan, it is important to consider how historical research focused on the body and the senses engages with such spatial and historical contexts. This article contributes to "sensory research in Asian settings," which is, as indicated by Kelvin E. Y. Low, "in a largely nascent stage" (Low, p. 4). Low proposes an inspiring approach of investigating "how senses in everyday life manifest in historical and contemporary contexts within Asian communities and cultures" (p. 4), attempting to "analyze multipronged sensory ties and connections" (p. 6). In the context of travel accounts written by Europeans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on sensory connections between different regions, as suggested by Low, also requires attention to another line of inquiry, namely the physical, sensory experience of colonialism (Collingham; Rotter). Virtually all European interactions with Asia, even in the case of Japan, which was not colonized and occupied ambiguous position (as indicated above), and Polish travelers, who were themselves under foreign rule, were underpinned by "an imperial cloud"—"a shared reservoir of knowledge, which was not bound to a single empire, but had a multi-local existence and was accessible to agents of different empires, both from the peripheries and the metropoles" (Kamissek and Kreienbaum, p. 165). In the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries, the period of the most extensive European colonial expansion, the Land of the Rising Sun, until recently closed to outside visitors, was full of sensuous surprises described by travelers, but it is necessary to remember that ideas of racism, Orientalism, European superiority, and various stereotypes and preconceived notions impacted how the two Polish women felt Japan. Because of that, the most promising mode of analysis of embodied experience in travelogues is to focus on the notion of otherness. I would like to explore how sensory impressions of the East Asian country and its inhabitants contribute to the construction of an alien space; how bodily interactions with the Japanese could reinforce or weaken the sense of their foreignness; and how, while writing for a Polish audience, the two female authors sought to provide an appropriate representation of the places they visited.

Embodied feelings of cultural otherness in travel accounts from Japan manifested themselves on a few levels, which will be examined in the three following sections of this article. In the first section, the perception of "sights" representing Japan will be explored. Travelers visited temples, monuments, theaters, and exhibitions that were recommended in guidebooks; during these visits, besides the conscious observation of cultural heritage, their bodies experienced sounds, smells, and other sensations, giving bodily texture to the experience of cultural otherness.

On the second level, travelers became aware of Japan's otherness by experiencing seemingly simple everyday life situations, such as eating, sleeping, and walking. Such experiences will be scrutinized in the second section.

Finally, travelers interacted with Japanese people, and such encounters offered an opportunity to overcome differences between cultures, but they could also collapse into misunderstandings and even escalate into violence. Such situations will be the subject of the third section.

"There were such bustle and noise in the temple": Sights of Japan from a Sensory Perspective

The excerpt quoted at the beginning of this article is an example of an embodied approach to typical "sights." It demonstrates how sacred sites were loci of otherness not only because of religious differences (Polish Catholics and Buddhist Japanese) but also because of a different physical experience. Aural and other bodily sensations were so unlike those familiar from European churches and other public edifices, and

so overwhelming, that Wernicowa left the temple. In the other analyzed account, we also find an example of the embodied feeling of difference in temples. Witwicka wrote that when she was offered a visit to a Buddhist temple, she and her companions were repulsed in a similar way to Wernicowa: "the darkness prevailing inside, the chaotic noise and clamor of human voices inspired so little confidence in us, especially with evening falling so quickly, that despite our heightened curiosity, we postponed the plan until later"[1] (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no. 72, p. 2). What is important in both situations is that the intellectual curiosity of a tourist wanting to explore religious and cultural sites is countered by physical discomfort, which eventually turns out to be stronger. In Witwicka's account, there is yet another interesting scene describing a visit to a Buddhist temple in Tokyo together with a young, progressive Japanese intellectual (Stępień). The Polish travel writer commented on deities evoking fear and disgust; mysterious darkness, with the gaze lost in the recesses of the vast nave; the overwhelming excess of ornamentation and detail; and aural sensations of gongs and the gloomy murmuring of mantras by monks. This description of confusing sensory overload, similar to Wernicowa's impression, is accompanied by comments from Witwicka's Japanese companion, who presented the temple as a site of backward superstitions and contrasted Buddhism with what he called the modern religion of Shinto. Later, this young Japanese intellectual took his guests to "his" Shinto shrine, where "Young Japan," including the emperor, gathered. Witwicka felt richly rewarded by the beauty of that site—marked by elegant lines, simplicity, and refined decoration—where a calm and composed audience gathered to pray in a serene atmosphere devoid of the frightening deities and overwhelming excess seen in the Buddhist temple. Here, the contrast between embodied reactions to the two places of worship is interlocked with the discourse of modernization. This is reinforced by comments from the Japanese intellectual reported by Witwicka, who condemned the traditional religion with an aura of modern superiority, usually associated with European colonial discourse, revealing internal ruptures and leaps accompanying the transformation of Japanese society (Josephson).

A visit to the Japanese theater offered a different kind of bodily experience, revealing other aspects of embodied otherness. Wernicowa wrote that, being in Japan,

[1] "panujący wewnątrz mrok, bezładny hałas i zgiełk ludzkich głosów, tak mało wzbudzał w nas zaufania wobec szybko przy tym zapadającego wieczoru, że pomimo zaostrzonej ciekawości, odłożyłyśmy na później ten projekt."

she would feel ashamed not to attend a Japanese play. This makes cultural activity a part of a tourist duty, showing how conventions of tourist travel determined a traveler's decisions. Eventually, the Polish woman had mixed feelings about the theater. What was positive was associated with visual sensations—she praised the actors' mimic skills, magnificent costumes, and decorations. Aural sensations were far less enjoyable; according to her, actors did not know how to declaim, whereas the performance of the orchestra and choir during the most dramatic moments of the play was called by her "an infernal music" (Wernicowa, p. 184). The bodily arrangement of the audience—sitting cross-legged on mats, not on seats, and walking to one's place on a ramp—was described as "strange" (Wernicowa, p. 184). In general, it is not surprising that Wernicowa was not in raptures after visiting the theater; not only did she not speak the language, but she was also unfamiliar with the traditional stories that form the fabric of the plays, she did not know Japanese theatrical conventions, and she entered the audience in the middle of the performance. In fact, she failed to register even what specific form of Japanese theater she attended (her description suggests it was kabuki). The excursion was motivated neither by a genuine aesthetic engagement nor by a desire for immersion in popular entertainment; rather, it functioned primarily as a touristic encounter with local culture, like visiting a temple for sightseeing, not for religious worship, or tasting a local dish out of curiosity, not out of hunger. Describing visits to the theater while in East Asia was a staple of travel accounts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Wernicowa wrote that she went to performances in Harbin many times, compared Chinese theater with the Japanese, and her impressions in Japan, although not enthusiastic, were still more positive than the responses of the majority of Polish travelers to Chinese theater (Ewertowski, *Images of China*, pp. 300–2). Significantly, paying attention to a variety of sensory experiences helps avoid simplifying generalizations regarding travelers' encounters with otherness. Visual sensations in Japanese theater were relatively similar to European conventions, and they offered Wernicowa what she enjoyed, namely looking at costumes and decorations. Still, she complained about the fact that, unlike in European theater, the stage was not separated by the orchestra pit and was open on both sides, and it destroyed the visual illusion. In contrast to the costumes and decorations, auditory sensations differed significantly from those of European theater: the music was too brash, and the audience laughed and talked loudly, which

drew Wernicowa's disapproval. Finally, spectators' bodily positions contrasted with the familiar rows of seats and were therefore described as "strange." As a tourist, she was interested in exploring otherness and thus wished to visit the theater; however, what departed too far from customary conventions and produced unfamiliar bodily sensations was evaluated negatively as strange. Importantly, her feeling of discomfort had deep social roots. As suggested by James H. Johnson in the context of Paris, but applicable to Poland as well, silent spectatorship accompanied the rise of bourgeois ideas about decent and proper conduct as signs of social status (Johnson, pp. 238–36; Łuksza, pp. 73–111). Noises and spectators sitting on mats thus contradicted bodily dispositions acquired by the Polish traveler through the process of socialization.

While the theater spectacle failed to provide Wernicowa with real enjoyment, it was different in the case of another example of cultural heritage, namely geishas' performances. She did not write a description as detailed as the one about the theater, but she commented that their dance "does not intoxicate, but rather delights with extraordinary grace"[1] (Wernicowa, p. 230). Witwicka, who, thanks to her position, was invited to a dinner and party at a well-established Japanese family home, gave a much more elaborate description. Initially, her reaction resembled Wernicowa's theater experience: the music was far from impressive, but the magnificence of the performers' costumes attracted visual attention.

> At a given signal from Okin-San, an elderly Japanese woman seated herself to the side before a stringed instrument lying on the ground, several cubits in length. Plucking its strings in rhythm, she began to sing in a trembling voice—a plaintive, high-pitched melody in a minor key. Yet with the appearance of the geisha in splendid new costumes, everyone's attention turned to them[2] (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia ," no. 252, p. 4).

The following description of the dance reveals how it created a space of shared feeling between cultures:

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[1] "jej taniec nie upaja, lecz zachwyca wdziękiem nadwyczajnym."

[2] "na dany znak przez Okin-San, zasiadła, z boku stara Japonka przed leżącym na ziemi instrumentem długim na pare łokci, a brząkając w takt po strunach, zaczęła śpiewać drżącym głosem, rozpaczliwie-piskliwo minorową melodye. Dzięki jednak zjawieniu się gejsz w przepysznych nowych kostiumach, uwaga wszystkich zwróciła się na nie."

> At first, only four dancers appeared, assuming solemn poses—at times writhing in despair, at others surrendering to the sweetness of consolation, and finally bowing as if before a higher power. Okin-San explained that this dance represented the turmoil of the human soul, ultimately humbled by a deity, and that it belonged to the category of religious dances.
>
> The movements, the plasticity, and the gradual changes of physiognomy were rendered here with astonishing clarity, involuntarily drawing the viewer into a genuinely serious and reflective mood. This may seem amusing, and yet I experienced it myself[1] (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no. 252, p. 4).

Witwicka did not dance herself; she watched the dancers and listened to the music, but her experience can be described using the formula of "extended haptics" mentioned in the introduction: "the somaesthetic modality of many senses which activates the haptic system" (Smolińska, p. 62). The haptic is understood broadly and includes not only tactile but all cutaneous sensations (including pressure, temperature, and pain), as well as kinesthesia (the sense of movement), proprioception (the sense of bodily position), and the vestibular system (the sense of balance) (Paterson, p. ix). Despite being "just" a spectator, Witwicka's embodied reaction immersed her in the mood of the dance. Cultural barriers were surmounted. On an intellectual level, she might not have been attracted by the traditional religious content of the dance and, as we have already seen, visits to sacred sites were just examples of tourist consumption. However, the atmosphere of the dance aroused in her feelings that brought her closer to her Japanese hosts' artistic and religious sensibilities. Furthermore, her description of the dances contains also a notable remark on geishas' skills:

> In the subsequent dances, the beautiful geishas captivated us with the precision of their movements, full of gentle grace, or with the adoption of poses marked by sharp lines—always so original that they bore no resemblance whatsoever to our dances. Their mimicry was remarkable, and the very skill of moving

[1] "Z początku wystąpiły tylko cztery tancerki w poważnych pozach, raz wijących się w rozpaczy, to znów napawających się słodyczą ukojenia, korząc się w końcu jakby przed siłą wyższą.
Okin-San objaśniła, iż taniec ten wyobraża miotanie się duszy człowieka, upokorzonej ostatecznie przez bóstwo i zalicza się do rodzaju tańców religijnych. – Ruchy, plastyka i stopniowe zmiany fizjognomii oddane tu były ze zdumiewająca wyrazistością, wprowadzając widza mimowolnie w jakiś rzeczywiście poważny nastrój myśli. Wyda się to może śmiesznem, a jednak doświadczyłam tego na sobie."

> harmoniously in trailing kimonos, which wrapped around the figure in serpentine coils, deserves special attention.[1]

She was so amazed by the high skills of the geishas that even the fact that their dances "bore no resemblance whatsoever to our dances" did not lead to a feeling of "strangeness" but was described as a positive value, namely "originality."

One can ask why dance and music were experienced in a different way than theater or temples, and why, through this kind of artistic impression, the binary division between the traveler and the travelee was transcended. It can be speculated that dance and music are nonverbal, and even if they use symbolic codes unknown to spectators, they can still be appreciated in an aesthetic way on a pre-cognitive level. This is a phenomenon described by Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce as "kin-aesthetics—the aesthetics of movement" (pp. 498–99). Dance is characterized by creativity, rhythm, and simple, pleasant muscular sensations linked to movement, which can be felt even by foreign observers through the mechanism of "extended haptics." In the analyzed case, an aesthetic bridge between cultures was built. Consequently, in Witwicka's account it is descriptions of bodily sensations that lead to the creation of a positive image of the island country within the convention of friendly exoticism, even though many aspects of the intellectual assessment of Japan point to its alienness.

"Egg Yolk Baked with Sugar Inside a Tomato": The Body and Otherness of Everyday Life

Mechanisms of feeling otherness in everyday life functioned differently from tourist encounters with Japanese landmarks and heritage described above. Such sensations were often involuntary and meant being involved in very ordinary situations. Otherness manifested itself, for example, through the clapping of wooden shoe soles on the stony street surface. Wernicowa remarked that she was often awakened by them at night (121), demonstrating how even singular unfamiliar bodily sensations

[1] "W następnych tańcach śliczne gejsze zachwycały nas precyzją ruchów pełnych łagodnej gracyi, lub też przybieraniem póz o ostrych linjach a tak zawsze oryginalnych, że w niczem literalnie nie przypominają naszych tańców. Przytem mimika zdumiewająca, a sama umiejętność harmonijnego poruszania się w powłóczystych kimonach, owijających wężowemi zwojami figurę, jest godną uwagi."

encountered while traveling impacted the whole bodily condition. Witwicka made this sound a part of a longer description of her point of entry to Japan, Nagasaki:

> The rumble and noise are entirely unknown here. Neither passing carriages nor the clatter of horses' hooves disturb the silence, for the simple reason that there are neither in the whole city. Instead, on the asphalt street beneath the windows, one could hear a characteristic clattering, reminiscent of a herd of cows in Zakopane: it was the sound of the sandals of graceful Japanese women and their lively companions striking the ground. Accompanying it was the delicate chirping of some local cricket, which would sing out from time to time as dusk fell swiftly in that region, while the aromatic scent of musk filled the air more and more intensely. This scent is characteristic of Japan—it can be encountered everywhere[1] (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no 97, p. 3).

This fragment describes the experience of Japanese otherness using a method typical of travel writing: relating the unfamiliar to familiar concepts and facts through analogy, contrast, and exaggeration (Maier, p. 446). First, the familiar European sound environment is contrasted with "exotic" Japan. The term keynote—"recurring, generally repetitive, background sounds against which the other sounds in a soundscape may be heard" (Rodaway, p. 87; see also Schafer, pp. 9–10)—is useful here because the comparison made by Witwicka is based on contrasting two keynotes, one typical of the European soundscape, the other of Japan. However, when the travel writer wanted to describe in more detail the Japanese keynote, unfamiliar to her readers, she used an analogy: the clattering of wooden sandals was perceived as analogous to a herd of cows in a Polish resort town. Interestingly, whereas Wernicowa characterized this sound by pointing out its negative impact on her bodily condition, Witwicka used it as a vehicle for a positive characterization of the Japanese people, who walked lively and gracefully, demonstrating the validity of R. Murray Schafer's assertion that "the keynote sounds of a given place are important because they help to

[1] "Turkot i hałas są tu zupełnie nieznane. Ani przejeżdżający powóz, ani tupot koni nie mąci ciszy dla prostej przyczyny, że ani jednych ani drugich nie ma w całem mieście. – Natomiast na asfaltowej uliczce pod oknami dawał się słyszeć charakterystyczny klekot, przypominający stado krów w Zakopanem: były to uderzenia sandałów zgrabnych Japonek i ich ruchliwych towarzyszów. Wtórował im delikatny świergot jakiegoś miejscowego świerszcza, odzywającego się śpiewnie od czasu do czasu przy szybko zapadającym w tamtej strefie zmierzchu, a zapach aromatyczny piżma napełniał coraz silniej powietrze. Zapach ten jest charakterystyczny w Japonji: wszędzie go się spotyka."

outline the character of men living among them" (p. 9). However, one can then wonder why the analogy is made with cows, which points to a general problem of difficulties in conveying through words bodily sensations alien to the readers. Finally, olfactory sensations also found their way into this multisensory portrayal of Japan with the reference to the scent of musk. By emphasizing its alleged omnipresence, Witwicka constructed the olfactory geography of Japan on the basis of exaggeration. Additionally, while scholars have emphasized the power of smell to create a strong emotional response (Rodaway, pp. 64–65) and that among the senses smell had, probably, the greatest potential for creating and marking others (Smith, p. 59; see, e.g., Huang), the reference to this allegedly "omnipresent" aroma of musk appears only once in Witwicka's travelogue, and other olfactory references are also not as prominent. Why is this so? One answer could be the elusive nature of the sense of smell and the difficulties of verbalizing such sensations (Rodaway, p. 65). Another is that the smellscape of travel writing is often part of negative characterization based on a critique of others' habits and/or racist stereotypes (Brant, pp. 251–53), whereas Witwicka was creating a positive image of Japan.

Another everyday life practice important for constructing sensory representations of the other in travel writing is eating. Here the situation is complex, because eating involves several different phenomena: first, the physical sensation of the taste of food, which is inextricably linked with smell; second, the very experience of having a meal, which, besides taste and smell, encompasses, for example, the look of dishes, the position of the body while consuming, and also interactions with others; third, cultural conventions connected with eating. Additionally, although the act of eating is not involuntary (contrary to smelling or hearing, discussed above), consuming food is necessary for human survival, so in a foreign country a traveler depended on local resources. The global dominance of European colonial powers in the late nineteenth century did not change this, even in the "comfort zone" of Western hotels (Peleggi). When Witwicka, in a Western-style hotel in Nagasaki, asked for milk, the servant responded to her with contempt and indignation that milk was not allowed and that no one drank it, because feeding such large animals would be complicated and no self-respecting Japanese person would put such a repulsive drink to their mouth (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no 142, p. 2). Wernicowa, while returning from a long excursion in Nagasaki, felt tired and hungry, so she entered one of the local

restaurants. Knowing Japanese customs, she removed her shoes and ordered a light meal (p. 140). These two simple examples demonstrate how travelers navigated a triangle formed by their own needs and wants, local cultural conventions, and the foodstuffs available. How Wernicowa had to adjust herself when wanting to eat in a restaurant and how a Japanese servant reacted to a request for milk illustrate that descriptions of food and eating habits are often used as a means of constructing otherness. Conversely, in some situations travel writers strive to render foreign food familiar (Horolets, p. 201). For example, Witwicka remarked that the kaki fruit, beloved by the Japanese, looked exactly like a tomato (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia", no. 252, p. 4). The kaki fruit, being popular in Japan but unknown in Poland, also attracted the attention of Wernicowa, who made a general sensory comparison of different fruits. She concluded that Japanese fruit trees were more beautiful than Polish ones (or European, as the travel writer simply used the pronoun "ours"), and that cherry blossoms gave off a more pleasant fragrance than roses. However, the fruits themselves did not equal the better varieties of "our" own in taste. The flavor of the favorite Japanese fruit, kaki, was somewhat disparagingly described as resembling "egg yolk baked with sugar inside a tomato" (Wernicowa, p. 245).

Uta Schaffers asserts that bodily responses to food may seem natural, but they are shaped by cultural discourses, as seen in our example of the Japanese servant's response to milk or the analogies with tomatoes made by both travelers. In travel writing, descriptions of the other's food do more than convey sensory experience; they often serve to denigrate or exoticize other cultures while affirming the superiority of one's own. From another perspective, eating can symbolically "incorporate" the other, both creating connections and reinforcing divisions between "us" and "them" (Schaffers, pp. 145–46). Ross Forman (p. 65) also claims that the travel writer's dual role as both eater and narrator simultaneously reinforces cultural boundaries and blurs them. To familiarize foreign culinary cultures, travel writers often rely on analogy to render unfamiliar practices comprehensible, although such attempts often yield questionable results. Could Polish readers who had never tried kaki fruit really feel and understand its taste after reading Wernicowa's analogy to egg yolk baked with sugar inside a tomato? As in the analogy with the herd of cows mentioned above, this question could serve as an entry point to a larger philosophical discussion about the communicability of sensory impressions, but I will not delve into this topic here.

Witwicka's description of the Japanese servant's reaction to milk directs our attention to one more issue raised by Forman: in some cases, travelers may also defamiliarize their own food traditions by revealing their potentially "strange" character to others (p. 65). By allowing the servant's perspective to emerge, albeit only in indirect speech and under the full control of the travel writer's voice, Witwicka nonetheless introduced a foreign perspective on a basic element of Polish cuisine.

In Witwicka's account, we also find a relatively long description of an opulent meal given for foreign guests by a rich aristocrat, which was followed by the geisha performance analyzed above. A long excerpt from this scene can help us to understand how the aforementioned dynamics of simultaneously reinforcing and blurring cultural differences work, as well as allow us to introduce some additional aspects of portraying otherness through bodily sensations:

> The soup served was clear water, however of a pleasant taste, as a few green sprigs of ginger floated in it, which is why it was called "ginger [soup]."
>
> After it, a portion of thinly sliced raw fish was brought, "caught today," in appearance similar to cooked bacon. It is a delicacy much favored by the locals. As for me, I must admit, it did not delight me very much. Next, whale schnitzels were served, the meat white, very tasty, resembling young pork. During the meal there is general merriment and laughter, provoked by our "European," very clumsy use of Japanese chopsticks. The conversation does not falter either, for every well-bred and cheerful geisha continually entertains the guest she "attends to" (not serves). At the same time she often pours sake into a microscopic cup, inviting one to drink it[1] (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no. 252, p. 3).

[1] "Podana zupa była to czysta woda przyjemnego smaku wszakże, bo w niej pływało kilka zielonych trawek imbiru, dlatego nazwana szumnie imbirową. Po niej przyniesiono porcyjkę cienko ukrojonych plasterków surowej ryby "dziś wyłowionej" - na wygląd podobnej do ugotowanej słoniny. Jest to smakołyk, za którym przepadają krajowcy. Mnie zaś - przyznam się - nie zachwycił wcale./ Następnie podano sznycelki wielorybie, - mięso białe, bardzo smaczne, zbliżone do młodej wieprzowiny. Podczas jedzenia panuje wesołość i śmiech ogólny, wzbudzony naszem europejskiem, bardzo niezgrabnem użyciem pałeczek japońskich. Rozmowa też nie upada, bo każda dobrze wychowana i wesoła gejsza bawi ciągle gościa, którym się zajmuje (nie usługuje). Przytem często nalewa 'saki' do mikroskopijnego kubeczka, zapraszając do wypicia."

Descriptions of dishes include their appearance, taste, ingredients, and how they were valued by both the travel writer and locals. Witwicka tried to make Japanese food more familiar to her audience—details and the use of analogies are noticeable—but the general tendency was that of othering. The very fact that all dishes required introduction is significant; additionally, the Polish traveler made a clear distinction between her own tastes and those of local people. The culinary dynamics of othering and familiarizing were complex, encompassing much more than just descriptions of dishes. On one level, the very fact of having a meal together brought Japanese and Europeans closer. However, the description of accompanying activities, such as the attendance of geishas, creates an image of otherness. The remark about chopsticks also offers an interesting perspective from which to reflect on embodied cultural differences. These utensils epitomize the otherness of East Asian traditions (Wang). An attempt to eat like a Japanese person can be seen as a recognition of their culture and an abandonment of any pretensions to European supremacy. However, the clumsiness of this effort caused laughter. Some aspects of Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry can be applied here. It is used by Bhabha to comment on attempts by colonized subjects to imitate colonizers; being "almost the same, but not quite" (122) invites mockery but also subtly undermines the nature of authority by demonstrating its ambivalence. In the analyzed chopsticks scene, it was non-European others who were imitated by Europeans, causing merriment, but Witwicka wrote about it without resentment. It can be read as a sign of the self-confidence of European visitors, who did not feel the need to fear being laughed at. Nonetheless, this scene demonstrates how, in the context of cross-cultural interactions, even apparently innocent gestures can be burdened with meaning. Without language, communication, and knowledge of cultural context, bodily experiences of everyday life situations could be very confusing, as indicated by the following example. An amusing but potentially distressing situation caused by differences in body language is noted in the description of the same dinner. Witwicka tried to raise a European-style toast to her geisha, but each time the geisha swiftly took the cup and drank it herself, assuming it was being offered. This made the Polish traveler very upset, but another European attending the dinner later explained that this was not rude at all, but a polite Japanese response to a gesture that was interpreted as offering a cup to the geisha. Taking this whole scene into account can thus lead to the conclusion that basic physical needs and actions also

bridge cultural differences (Japanese and Europeans eat, even if their tastes are not similar), but the cultural conventions surrounding them reinforce the image of otherness, even if in a friendly and amusing way.

Finally, it is worth noting that both Wernicowa and Witwicka made a very similar remark about Japanese dining habits. Even after eating a dinner consisting of many dishes, they were still hungry: "A dinner at seven consisting of fourteen or fifteen courses, yet the dishes were so homeopathic in size that after eating them the traveler was not satisfied"[1] (Wernicowa 120); "Having returned to the hotel, despite the cheerful memories and charming images still lingering before our eyes, we were ravenously hungry after that exotic dinner."[2] (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no. 252, p. 4). Nothing better demonstrates that eating while traveling is a form of navigation between a traveler's own needs and wants, local cultural conventions, and the foodstuffs available, and that a traveling body may emerge not satiated even from an opulent dinner.

"One Must Suffer to Be Beautiful": People-to-People Encounters

In the final section of the article, I would like to pay attention to the embodied character of interpersonal encounters in travel writing. As stated by Catherine Mee, "encounters are as essential to travel as place; they shape and define journeys" (p. 3). Wernicowa and Witwicka, being foreign women in Japan, interacted with local people in a particular way. Importantly, such encounters encompassed much more than the exchange of words. Paying attention to the embodied character of their meetings reveals that these interactions could open up possibilities for bridging cultural differences, yet just as easily give rise to misunderstandings and even escalate into conflict.

Wernicowa described a scene in which she felt endangered by people invading her personal space. In Kyoto, where foreigners were a rarity, her appearance drew an inquisitive crowd that quickly surrounded her (Wernicowa, p. 153). Catherine Mee, while analyzing staring as an encounter, comments that "to travel is to submit oneself to such discomforts as the travellee's stare" (p. 94) and examines various responses to

[1] "O 7-ej obiad złożony z 14–15 dań, ale dania były tak homeopatyczne, że po spożyciu ich podróżny nie był nasycony."
[2] "powróciwszy do hotelu, pomimo wesołych wspomnień i czarownych obrazów snujących się jeszcze przed oczami, byłyśmy szalenie głodne po owym egzotycznym obiedzie."

being stared at, concluding that this involves "opening oneself to the possibilities of encounter" (p. 94). In the analyzed scene, the possibility of a friendly encounter quickly collapsed. First, two street boys stared impudently into Wernicowa's face and mocked her discomfort, violating her personal boundary even without direct bodily contact. Then the whole situation was exacerbated when one of them deliberately stepped on her dress. Still, there was no skin-to-skin contact, but since clothes constitute a "liminal zone between bodies" (Maruo-Schröder et al., p. 10), it was too much for Wernicowa, and she reported this to her guide. He began to scold the street boys sharply in Japanese. Ashamed, the boys clasped their hands, bowed deeply, and apologized. Whereas at first body language was used to provoke and scoff at Wernicowa, it was then employed for apology. But it was not the end of the story. The crowd grew restless, with voices rising against the guide. Fearing the situation might escalate into a fight, Wernicowa discreetly slipped away and hid in a temple for one hour. All these unpleasant interactions occurred without direct verbal communication between the Polish traveler and the crowd; the presence of the traveler's body caused a commotion by drawing attention with its foreignness, and then the whole situation unfolded through body language, violating conventions of personal distance and suggesting possible physical confrontation. Ultimately, it was resolved by the Polish traveler making her body absent. The scene examined above not only reveals the centrality of the body to interpersonal interactions, but also demonstrates how both sides of an encounter can be sensitive to the apparent breaking of rules of physical proximity, which can potentially lead to violence. Wernicowa's readers could generalize this scene into the conclusion that Japanese others are menacing toward different, foreign bodies.

In Witwicka's account, we can find examples of encounters of a different character because, as mentioned in the introduction, her travelogue focuses less on sightseeing and more on meeting people. They provide a worthwhile counterpoint to the conflict scene in Wernicowa's account and demonstrate how the construction of an image of an alien Japan, outlined in the two previous sections, is partially softened by friendly personal, bodily interactions. Of special interest are two scenes that revolve around femininity and the body. The first arises from an accidental interaction in a public space, when foreign bodies draw attention, and is thus analogous to the scene from Wernicowa's account discussed above. However, instead of an encounter with an

aggressive crowd on the street, it takes place among women in a train carriage (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no. 142, p. 1), showing how the modernization of transportation in the late 19th century Japan created new spaces of interaction. The Japanese female passengers gathered in small groups and, before the train departed, lit tiny pipes. Despite the smoke, Witwicka remained with them as they began taking out various amusements. Curiosity about the other overcame the physical discomfort caused by such practices as smoking. A pale, very young woman sitting beside Witwicka took out a mirror and began applying makeup. Noticing Witwicka's interest, she politely offered her the mirror and even attempted to color her lips, finding them too pale by Japanese standards. This scene presents a gendered, intimate encounter in which the everyday management of the female body becomes a site of both othering and connection. Beauty standards separate the traveler and the travelee, but the attempt to color the Polish woman's lips represents an effort to connect on the basis of a shared, gendered experience of cosmetic practices. Witwicka declined, explaining in English that such practices were improper in Europe. An older woman translated her words, prompting laughter among the group, before remarking in broken English that she had already guessed the foreign origin of Witwicka and her companions from their height and "round eyes." The Polish travel writer explained that mentioning the eyes was a compliment, noting that some Japanese women even had their eyelids altered to achieve round, European-style eyes. In this way, the scene, although grounded in a shared gendered experience, still maintained a barrier between the two cultures and reinforced European superiority by presenting the European body as an ideal for the Japanese.

Witwicka met people not only casually; the connections of this travel writer enabled her to socialise with the Japanese upper classes. One such situation was a private visit to the bedroom of Witwicka's female Japanese friend. This scene is similar to the one analyzed above, but the general overtone is different. When the Polish traveler was surprised by an empty bedroom, the girl demonstrated the sleeping arrangement by lying on a thick, elegantly embroidered quilt (futon) and using a small padded wooden support for her neck. Words were not enough for a demonstration; the whole body was involved. When Witwicka protested that such "a pillow" seemed torturous, the friend replied playfully that this was necessary to protect traditional Japanese women's hairstyles and that one grew used to it—"following the idea, *Il faut*

souffrir pour être belle [one must suffer to be beautiful]"[1] (Witwicka, "Moje wspomnienia," no. 172, p. 2). Like the scene analyzed above, this is also a gendered, intimate encounter during which Witwicka had access to embodied practices inaccessible to male foreign travelers. Cosmetic bodily practices were a site of both othering and connecting, but with a different conclusion than in the scene on the train. At first, the Polish traveler projected European notions of comfort onto a typical Japanese sleeping arrangement, describing sleeping on a wooden support as "a torture," but this was countered by her Japanese friend with a reference to a logic familiar to European sensibilities—"one must suffer to be beautiful." The specifically Japanese practice of hairstyle preservation was interpreted as a generalized gendered experience. This moment of connection was reinforced by the use of the French phrase. The scene thus illustrates how femininity forms a basis for connection. Although bodily practices were initially presented as alien, in conclusion they were seen as parallel forms of gendered self-regulation. In this sense, the encounter produced a moment of affective proximity grounded in shared notions of social expectation connected with female beauty.

Conclusions

In this article, I address a series of interrelated questions posed in the first two sections: How are bodily experiences represented in travel narratives? What functions do such descriptions perform? How do they correspond to travel writers' ideologies and discourses? More specifically, I examined how sensory impressions construct an alien space, how bodily interactions shape perceptions of Japanese foreignness, and how the two female authors, writing for a Polish audience, represented the places they visited. These questions can be answered by drawing together the findings of the three preceding sections.

Verbal representations of bodily experiences are plentiful in both analyzed accounts. Sometimes they were presented directly; however, when the phenomena described were unfamiliar to the audience, Wernicowa and Witwicka often relied on comparisons based on analogy, contrast, and exaggeration. A loose typology of writing about bodily sensations can be outlined as follows: first, basic mentions of bodily sensations, consisting of simple references that indicate the presence of sensory

[1] "w myśl idei, qu'il faut souffrir pour être belle."

experience with limited descriptive detail ("Children laughed and called out"); second, bodily sensations linked to personal response, where sensory impressions are connected to the traveler's physical or emotional reactions (e.g., Wernicowa was awakened by the clapping of wooden shoe soles); third, detailed and affective sensory descriptions, offering elaborated depictions of bodily sensations, including their qualities and impact on the traveler ("The movements, the plasticity, and the gradual changes of physiognomy were rendered here with astonishing clarity, involuntarily drawing the viewer into a genuinely serious and reflective mood. This may seem amusing, and yet I experienced it myself"); and finally, sensory experience connected to broader reflection, in which bodily sensations serve as a basis for cultural, social, or philosophical interpretation (e.g., Witwicka's visit to her friend's bedroom).

The functions of these descriptions are diverse, and the remarks by Temmerman and Maruo-Schröder et al., discussed in the second section, provide a useful basis for addressing this question, even though the analyzed material suggests some modifications to their arguments. References to bodily sensations lend the narrative a personal dimension, thereby fulfilling a key condition of travel writing—its autobiographical axiom. They also reinforce the travel writer's authority, as Witwicka wrote, "This may seem amusing, and yet I experienced it myself." However, in the analyzed travelogues, their primary function is to create a representation of otherness that is more vivid and concrete than generalized statements about Japan as an exotic other. In one letter to her family, Witwicka commented that "In short, everything here is different—the people, the houses, and the color of the trees" [1] (Stępień), and such a sentence conveys the traveler's impressions, but is much less evocative than a visceral description of a Japanese dinner or a visit to a temple. Finally, descriptions of embodied experience can introduce productive ambiguities into the portrayal of the foreign country and the overall tendency of the narrative, as demonstrated by the two scenes of personal encounters with the Japanese analyzed at the end of the previous section.

Travelers' bodily sensations clearly correspond to their authors' ideologies, discourses, and preconceived notions about Japan, which is most evident in Wernicowa's account of her visit to the theater. This correspondence is inevitable, since, as indicated in the second section of the article, perception is conditioned by

[1] "Słowem tu wszystko inne, i ludzie i domy i kolor drzew"

socialization; impressions that are new are often described as strange, which can carry either a positive value ("always so original that they bore no resemblance whatsoever to our dances") or a negative one ("chaotic noise and clamor of human voices inspired so little confidence in us"). At times, an interesting tension emerges: tourists may feel intellectually obliged to visit temples or theaters, yet their embodied reactions are unpleasant. However, as suggested at the end of the previous paragraph, scrutinizing embodied experiences introduces a degree of ambiguity into representations of Japan, challenging the idea that they are merely reproductions of content "downloaded" from the "imperial cloud." Here, scenes of interpersonal interaction are of crucial importance. Whereas both accounts are dominated by the discourse of Japan as an exotic other, typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, face-to-face encounters with Japanese people bring these notions to the test. In Wernicowa's case, her unpleasant encounter in the streets of Kyoto may contribute to an image of a hostile, dangerous other. Witwicka's private, female encounters, by contrast, demonstrate the possibility of transcending binary differences through the shared experience of femininity.

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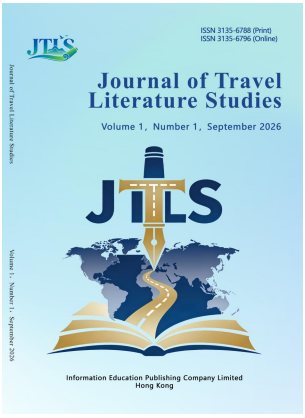

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A Critique of Eurocentrism: From the Paradigmatic Perspective of Western Globalization Studies

Jiajun Tao

Abstract: This study interrogates the constitutive tension between Eurocentrism and its critiques as they manifest within contemporary Western globalization theory and knowledge production. Through a critical engagement with four major paradigms that have shaped Western globalization scholarship since the 1970s—world-systems theory, anti-Eurocentric approaches, the global industrious revolution thesis, and global history as a disciplinary formation—the analysis exposes the persistent conceptual contradictions that structure this discursive field. In response to these problematics, the study advocates for a hermeneutics of civilizational encounter predicated on bidirectional interpretation and mutual learning between civilizations. Such an approach, it is argued, offers a way beyond the epistemological impasse engendered by Eurocentric hegemony in globalization discourse. The inquiry further interrogates the violent character of modern Western civilization, its contemporary project of global integration, and the imperial imaginaries that inform current Western geopolitical thought. It concludes by advancing the possibility of a renewed civilizational form—one grounded in the resources of Chinese civilization and the

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distinctive patterns and trajectories of Eastern globalization—as an alternative to prevailing Western models.

Keywords: globalization; paradigm; anti-Eurocentrism; civilization

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Introduction

Globalization refers to the migration and flux of commodities, cultural artifacts, people, ideas, technologies, and knowledge across geopolitical boundaries—such as those of ethnicities, empires, and nation-states—as well as geographical divides spanning continents and oceans, and the demarcations of diverse civilizations. This process engenders a continuous and intensifying global course of connectivity, convergence, and integration across economic, political, socio-technological, and civilizational dimensions. While globalization serves historically as the perennial leitmotif of mutual enrichment, dialogue, and fusion among heterogeneous social and civilizational forms, it also functions as the most potent catalyst and propellant of the ever-evolving modern world. Nevertheless, the theoretical and intellectual discourses concerning the history and phenomena of globalization did not emerge within Western humanities and social sciences until the 1970s. These discourses bear the hallmarks of modern Western civilization, and as they collude with Western capitalist hegemony, the technologies of power in Western capitalism and globalization discourses contrive a certain mutualism. Their synergy seeks to construct, on a global scale, a grand historical narrative of the capitalist system and Western civilizational form, perpetuating Eurocentric hegemony of knowledge and theory. Yet, such Western-centric discourses are consistently challenged by various anti-Eurocentric counter-discourses, leaving it in a constant precarious state of being interrogated, contested, and even subverted.

Since the late 1990s, Western scholars occupying a range of theoretical, disciplinary, cultural, and political positions have engaged in vigorous debate over what might be termed the “aporias” of globalization—the conceptual perplexities

surrounding its definition, its essential character, and its historical specificity. In their influential article "Globalization," Held and McGrew (1999), writing from a sociological perspective, propose that globalization represents "a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions—assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact—generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power" (p. 483). Their analysis identifies six major globalizing phenomena characteristic of the contemporary world: the formation of ethnic diasporas and accompanying patterns of racial integration or pluralism; the emergence of new forms of global culture driven by religious proselytism, advances in transportation and communication technologies, and the expanding reach of transnational corporations; the development of global governance mechanisms and institutional systems that operate beyond the framework of the nation-state; the proliferation of threats to regional and global security arising from colonial wars, terrorism, innovations in weapons technology, and the establishment of global arms production networks; the consolidation of economic globalization through financial capital markets; and the unprecedented scale of regional and global ecological and environmental crises.

In her article "A Critical Methodology of Globalization: Politics of the 21st Century?" Kumar (2003) undertakes a systematic review of how globalization has been conceptualized and defined across the disciplines of sociology, economics, law, politics, international relations, and social theory, revealing the extent to which disciplinary perspectives shape competing understandings of the phenomenon. Extending this interdisciplinary impulse, Dator et al. (2006), in their study *Fairness, Globalization, and Public Institutions: East Asia and Beyond*, approach globalization from a theoretical vantage that deliberately transcends any single disciplinary viewpoint. Addressing modes of transport, communication, and their historical transformations, they argue persuasively that "globalization is much, much more than a set of economic factors alone (more than the global flow of capital and goods) and more even than the transborder flow of labor, though that latter aspect of globalization is generally underappreciated" (p. 15). Globalization is also the flow of genes (of genetic information), the flow of popular culture and of new ideas, and the flow of

environmental problems including diseases. This expansive conception insists upon the irreducibly multidimensional character of globalizing processes.

A particularly significant strand of this scholarly conversation concerns the cultural dimensions of globalization, and specifically the phenomenon of "Americanization"—the distinctive form of Westernization propagated through the global dissemination of American cultural icons, consumer practices, and normative values. In her study *Diver City – Global Cities as a Literary Phenomenon*, Pooch (2016) offers a pointed critique of this process, arguing that "Americanization can be translated as neo-colonialism due to its focus on consumerism, commercials, mass media, mass production, and sales" (p. 23). Essentially, everything is money-focused. The settling and colonization are no longer performed in a physical manner but rather via the transportation of trends, values, and legends like the "American dream." In response to the perceived hegemony of both generalized Westernization and its specifically American variant, Pooch affirms the possibility of a "third path": the hybridization of global cultures, a process through which local particularities interact with transnational flows to generate novel cultural formations that resist simple assimilation to any single civilizational model.

The critical discourse on globalization within contemporary Western academia, for all its professed reflexivity, remains ensnared in a distinctly Eurocentric problematic, one that manifests in at least five fundamental ways. First, such scholarship tends, implicitly or explicitly, to endorse the Western capitalist eco-political order and its attendant civilizational model as the normative horizon against which the very object of its inquiry—globalization itself—must be measured. This tacit allegiance produces a form of analysis that systematically overlooks, evades, or actively misconstrues the actual historical and geopolitical conditions that have shaped global integration. Second, this body of work substitutes a deductive and narrowly particular—that is, Western—model of globalization for the multi-focal, multi-dimensional, and intricately interwoven tapestry of globalizing processes as they have historically unfolded. In so doing, it marginalizes or negates the contributions and developmental trajectories of diverse civilizational forms, which have, under conditions of co-existence and mutual learning, explored alternative pathways to global interconnection. Third, the epistemic cartography drawn by Eurocentric globalization theory proves singularly inadequate for mapping global

conditions either prior to the putative 16th-century Age of Discovery, before the late 18th-century Industrial Revolution in Western Europe, or beyond the geopolitical spaces dominated by the Atlantic basin and its hinterlands. Fourth, and following from this, this discourse lacks the conceptual apparatus to reassess, from the standpoint of civilizational radiation and influence, what might be termed "Eastern Globalization"—a primary and alternative axis of global integration centered on China, with its spheres of influence extending across the Western Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and the vast reaches of Eurasia. Fifth and finally, these theoretical reflections remain largely confined to the realm of conceptual clarification and disciplinary boundary-work. They fail to mount a reflexive critique of the dominant paradigms themselves at the level of critical theory, and consequently are unable to articulate the endogenous, anti-Eurocentric discourses and theoretical-political positions that are latent within any genuinely comprehensive construction of globalization knowledge. This study seeks to redress these failures by undertaking a critical analysis of four major paradigms that have shaped globalization studies over the past half-century: the world-system paradigm, the explicitly anti-Eurocentric paradigm, the Industrious Revolution paradigm (posited as a counter-narrative to the Western Industrial Revolution), and the global history paradigm. Through this critique, it aims to decenter the Western episteme and contribute to a more genuinely global and historically grounded understanding of its subject.

The World-Systems Paradigm

Drawing its conceptual lineage from Fernand Braudel's historiography of the *longue durée* and the Dependency Theory advanced by the Argentine Marxist Raúl Prebisch, the work of the American sociologist Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein represents a signal contribution to modern historical sociology. His *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, published in 1974 as the inaugural volume of a four-part series, effectively inaugurated what has come to be known as world-systems theory. Casting his gaze across the long arc of modern history—from the sixteenth well into the twentieth century, Wallerstein distills a number of overarching themes. These include: the formation of the modern world-system and the consolidation of its economic and political institutions in the early modern period; the rise of mercantilism, the

stabilization of the European world-economy, and the ascendance of Western European hegemony between roughly 1600 and 1750; the second great expansion of the capitalist world-economy between 1730 and 1840, marked by the Industrial Revolution, the political upheavals of the French Revolution, the intensifying rivalries among Western European capitalist powers, and the waves of independence movements across the Americas; and finally, the crystallization, between 1789 and 1914, of a global geoculture commensurate with the modern world-system—one shaped decisively by the ascendancy of centrist liberal ideology as the dominant political and intellectual framework of the age.

Distinct from the uniform, evolutionist assumptions underlying classical modernization theory, Wallerstein's world-systems analysis delineates a grand historical contour for the emergence and consolidation of the modern world-system. At the core of his framework is the concept of a world-system itself, which he defines as "a unit with a single division of labor and multiple cultural systems. It follows logically that there can … be two varieties of such world-systems—one with a common political system and one without" (Wallerstein, 1979, p. 5). The former corresponds to the "world-empires" that characterized pre-modern political formations, wherein a single political authority encompassed diverse cultural groups under a unified administrative structure. The latter, by contrast, refers to the modern world-economy, a historically unprecedented formation defined by the dominance of capitalist accumulation across political boundaries. Wallerstein attributes the ascendancy of this capitalist world-economy to two interrelated developments: first, advances in transport technologies enabled long-arm jurisdiction over trans-Atlantic and interregional markets; second, the refinement of military technologies in Western Europe secured overseas colonial rule and stabilized production zones essential to capital accumulation. Within this framework, the capitalist world-system is organized hierarchically into three analytically distinct zones: the core, the semi-periphery, and the periphery. The core regions are characterized by highly developed urban centers, thriving manufacturing sectors, highly secularized and technical agriculture, a skilled and relatively well-compensated labor force, and massive concentrations of investment capital. Through these structural advantages, core areas extract resources and surplus value from the periphery, which is confined to the production of primary commodities, experiences urban decay, and relies on cheap, unskilled labor and

technologically backward methods of production. Capital, accordingly, flows persistently from the periphery toward the core. Situated between these two poles is the semi-periphery, an underdeveloped yet strategically significant zone that functions simultaneously as a primary destination for capitalist investment and as a source of labor reserves for the core. This tripartite structure, Wallerstein contends, is not merely a static typology but a dynamic configuration that reproduces the inequalities constitutive of the modern world-system.

During the 1970s and 1980s, world-system theory succeeded modernization and development theories as the dominant paradigm for global grand historical theory. Various disciplines converged to demonstrate the interconnectedness between nation-states and the global systemic nature of the capitalist economic order, as evidenced in works such as Friedman's (2000) *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Denemark et al.'s (2000) *World System History: The Social Science of Long-Term Change*, and Chase-Dunn and Anderson's (2005) *The Historical Evolution of World-Systems*. Despite its considerable influence, the world-systems paradigm exhibits three distinct flaws. First, its economistic reductionism causes it to overlook the transmutation and variability of capitalism, as well as the diversity of capitalist forms (rather than a singular, monolithic Western capitalism) under varied historical and geopolitical circumstances. Consequently, it neglects the non-economic—political, social, and cultural—factors in the processes of integration and interaction across different regions and on a global scale, thereby lacking political, social, and cultural interpretations of globalization. Second, the Wallersteinian world-system is more of a theoretical model and a contextual presupposition than an evolving development formed by the fusion and interaction of diverse factors in the real world. Thus, any dogmatic application of this theoretical model to explain specific and unique globalized economic, political, cultural, and social phenomena inevitably leads to a procrustean distortion. Third, this research paradigm is characterized by a deeply ingrained Eurocentrism. It twists the globalizing process of the modern world to resemble a trajectory of the rest of the world being incessantly integrated into the European capitalist world-system. Within this framework, the European dominance over the world economy is once and for all perpetuated through colonialism, imperialism, and contemporary neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism as white mythology.

The Anti-Eurocentric Paradigm

The anti-Eurocentric paradigm emerged in the 1980s, derived from the theoretical contributions of scholars such as Janet L. Abu-Lughod, André Gunder Frank, and Samir Amin. It also benefits from the post-colonial and diaspora studies by Edward Said, G. C. Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. In *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350*, Abu-Lughod (1989) subverts Wallerstein's Eurocentric model from both the aspect of periodization and systemic modality. She argues that the critical period for the formation of the modern world system was not 1500, the century designated by Wallerstein corresponding to Western European dominance, but between 1250 and 1350, characterized by the collective interactions of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The world-system of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was not dominated by a single hegemony but was polycentric, consisting of multiple sub-systems organized into core, semi-periphery, and periphery structures. The entire Afro-Eurasian world system comprised eight interlinked, city-centered regions, further integrated into three sub-systems: the European sub-system (including the Champagne fairs, industrial Flanders, and commercial Genoa and Venice); the Mid-Western route (encompassing the Middle Eastern heartland across Mongol-occupied Asia, Baghdad, the Persian Gulf, Cairo, and the Red Sea); and the Indian Ocean sub-system (spanning India, Southeast Asia, and China). Before the late fourteenth century, the coasts of India, Southeast Asia, and particularly China, experienced four centuries of thriving trade and economic growth. Chinese fleets travelled between Southeast Asia, India, the Middle East, and East Africa, supplying the world with Chinese art, science, technology, and industrial products. China was the most developed and significant region in the world.

The anti-Eurocentric paradigm, which crystallized in the 1980s, draws on the foundational theoretical contributions of scholars such as Janet L. Abu-Lughod, André Gunder Frank, and Samir Amin, while also benefiting from the post-colonial and diaspora studies of Edward Said, G. C. Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. Among these figures, the German-born diaspora intellectual André Gunder Frank exerts a transformative anti-Eurocentric influence across three major fields of research: underdevelopment, dependency theory, and global economic history. From the 1980s onward, he dedicated himself to the reflexive critique of Eurocentrism and the world-

system paradigm, publishing works such as *The Centrality of Central Asia* (1992), *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (1993), and *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (1998). In *ReOrient*, Frank applies a long-term historical focal length covering the period from 1400 to 1800 to argue for an Asian-dominated, China-centered global economic system. He proposes that it was China, rather than Western Europe as emphasized in Western academic discourse, that occupied a prominent and active position in economic history prior to the Industrial Revolution. Not the late-rising European world-system, but this long-standing Asian world-system, sustained by silver as the primary medium of trade payment, shaped the early modern world. Thus, the authentic modern world economic system "cannot be squeezed into the procrustean structure of Wallerstein's European-centered 'modern world-system,' for the globe-encompassing world economy/system did not have a single center but at most a hierarchy of centers, probably with China at the top" (Frank, 1998, pp. 327–328). In Frank's view, European capitalist-led colonialism, imperialism, and technological advancement contributed to the historical conditions of only the last two hundred years of a five-century-long formation of the modern world-system.

Similarly, Samir Amin, the Egyptian neo-Marxist theorist and international political economist, has employed Marxist theory since the early 1970s as an intellectual weapon to address issues of poverty, underdevelopment, dependency, political chaos, and cultural distortion in post-colonial Afro-Asian countries resulting from contemporary Western imperialism and transnational capitalism. He developed analytical models such as underdevelopment (or dependence), accumulation on a world scale, and Eurocentrism to critically interrogate Western-style capitalism and its political and cultural hegemony. In his article "Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa: Historical Origin," Amin (1972) reconstructs the history of Western capitalist encroachment on Africa through four periods—the pre-mercantilist, mercantilist (seventeenth to early nineteenth century), post-mercantilist (nineteenth century), and the colonial era (since the late nineteenth century)—concluding that the root of African underdevelopment is Western colonial capitalism. Together with Abu-Lughod's revisionist historiography, Frank's recentering of Asia, and Amin's structural critique of dependency, the anti-Eurocentric paradigm offers a fundamental reorientation of global historical inquiry, challenging the temporal,

spatial, and conceptual premises upon which the Wallersteinian world-systems analysis rests.

In *Eurocentrism*, Amin (1989) critiques Eurocentrism as a distinct cultural formation whose animating core is what he terms "Hellenomania"—the obsessive reverence for Greece resurrected during the Renaissance. The reorientation of productive forces from the southern Mediterranean basin, the discovery of the New World, and the "rediscovery" of Greek civilization together furnished the foundational conditions for the emergence of modern Western capitalism centered in Western Europe. This conjuncture, in turn, paved the way for Western Europe's global conquest, the elaboration of Eurocentric ideology, and the consolidation of what Edward Said has theorized as Orientalism, alongside deeply entrenched forms of racism. As the dominant ideological formation of Western capitalism, Eurocentrism functions to legitimize the systemic inequalities constitutive of the capitalist world order. From the Renaissance and Enlightenment through the nineteenth century, Eurocentrism fabricated a coherent value system composed of interlocking myths: the redemptive narrative of Christian love, the genealogical fiction of Greek ancestry, the civilizational dichotomy of Orientalism, the moralizing imperative of "the White Man' s Burden," and the teleological schema of linear historical progress bequeathed by the Enlightenment. Amin incisively observes that Eurocentrism retains its toxic purchase in the contemporary world, pervading not only popular consciousness but also the categories and assumptions through which global history, politics, and culture continue to be theorized.

The Industrious Revolution Paradigm

The Industrious Revolution paradigm was first proposed by the American economic historian Jan de Vries in his 1994 article "The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution" and was subsequently refined in his monograph *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (2008). De Vries argues that during the two centuries following the seventeenth century, an "Industrious Revolution" emerged within the interstices linking the trans-Atlantic world-system and the Eurasian systems spanning the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This movement, which predated the Western European Industrial Revolution, originated in China and East Asia before extending across a vast

geographical expanse encompassing East Asia, Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and North America. Its leitmotif was the transformation of household economies and the reorientation of cultural consumer tastes. Beginning in the seventeenth century, population growth in Western Europe and the formation of urban networks conducive to economic development and industrial growth catalyzed fundamental changes in the organizational models of households. This, in turn, led to an increase in household purchasing power, the diversification of global commodities converging toward Western Europe, and a sustained flourishing of material culture.

Central to de Vries's framework is the concept of the "long eighteenth century," which he defines as the period from 1650 to 1850. During this era, Western European consumers developed an avid appetite for novel commodities originating in Asia and the Americas, including "sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, raw cotton and imported cotton piece goods, and distilled spirits.... Once Europeans were exposed to the new products of the East, they became eager consumers" (de Vries, 2008, pp. 154–155). The Dutch East India Company (VOC) first imported Chinese tea to Europe in 1610, followed twenty-five years later in 1635 by the British East India Company, which began regular tea shipments from China to Britain. As tea gradually integrated into Western European social patterns and dietary structures, demand increased dramatically. Yet the most coveted cultural-material luxury in Western Europe during the long eighteenth century was porcelain imported from China, together with its subsequent imitations produced in the Netherlands, Britain, and Germany. Representative examples of such imitations included the British willow pattern ware, Dutch Delftware, and German Meissen porcelain. These ceramics, whether imported or domestically produced, profoundly reshaped the consumption habits of middle-class and even lower-class households, marking a decisive shift in the material culture of early modern Europe.

In *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, Bayly (2004) identifies three principal drivers of modern globalization: the Industrious Revolution, industrialization, and the last "great domestication" of nature. He repositions the Industrious Revolution as a global economic and cultural phenomenon spanning both East and West, characterizing it as a sustained and widespread cultural turn in the representation of consumer values. Its impacts extended across Western Europe, the North American colonies, China, and Japan,

fostering the prosperity of commercial capitalism, the expansion of interregional commerce, and the emergence of new patterns of global trade. Bayly further notes that the exploitation of silver and other resources in the Americas, the system of slave production, and the massive dissemination of information collectively amplified the Industrious Revolution ' s impact in Western Europe (p. 52). At its core, the Industrious Revolution facilitated a series of transformations in dining utensils, furniture, and interior decoration—triggered by what Bayly describes as "the invention of breakfast" (p. 52) that began in Western Europe—thereby significantly altering global trade patterns, consumer fashion in Europe (particularly Britain), and the commercial relationship and cultural-epistemic migration between China and the West. Stearns (2010), in *Globalization in World History*, corroborates this interpretation, observing that Western Europe, India, and China simultaneously entered a period of economic prosperity, with their affluent classes expanding and living standards rising. Consumer culture exhibited new shifts: luxuries once reserved for the nobility and elite began appearing in abundance within ordinary wealthy households.

Hans van de Ven, a scholar of Chinese history, advances this revisionist framework in his article "The Onset of Modern Globalization in China" by arguing for a China-centered system of globalization in East and Southeast Asia dating from the twelfth century—a system encompassing social contact, trade exchange, diaspora, and cultural practices. From an anti-Eurocentric perspective, van de Ven ' s analysis powerfully supports the Industrious Revolution paradigm pursued by de Vries, Bayly, and Stearns, while overturning the singular "tributary system" and "pre-modern globalization" narratives long dominant in Western scholarship. Within this system, a tributary order dominated by imperial hegemony coexisted with a private commercial capitalist system sustained by maritime trade and diaspora communities, the origins of which can be traced to the maritime trade, navigation, and diaspora of the twelfth-century Southern Song Dynasty. During the Yuan Dynasty, China deepened commercial exchanges with Japan, Java, and Thailand. This process reached its climax in the fifteenth century with the Ming Dynasty ' s maritime trade and interactions expanding across East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the entire Indian Ocean region. Between 1570 and 1640, the late Ming period witnessed a resurgence of economic prosperity, achieving a degree of commercialization, urbanization, a

sophisticated industrial division of labor, and an affluent consumer culture that, by many measures, far surpassed those of contemporary Western Europe.

The Global History Paradigm

Representative works of contemporary Western global history research include Hopkins's (2002) *Globalization in World History*, Robertson's (2003) *The Three Waves of Globalization: A History of a Developing Global Consciousness*, Bayly's (2004) *The Birth of the Modern World*, Osterhammel and Petersson's (2005) *Globalization: A Short History*, Mazlish's (2006) *The New Global History*, Stearns's (2010) *Globalization in World History*, and Conrad's (2016) *What Is Global History?*. Collectively, these studies have facilitated the formation of what may now be termed the Global History Paradigm, a distinctive analytical framework that foregrounds interconnection, comparison, and the critique of methodological nationalism. In *Globalization in World History*, Stearns (2010) periodizes the history of globalization—understood as the progressive intensification of interregional trade, contact, exchange, and influence, particularly the migration of material culture and knowledge—into five sequential stages: the preparatory stage from 1200 BCE to 1000 CE (the Ancient period); the second stage beginning around 1000 CE; the third stage commencing circa 1500 CE; the fourth stage initiated in the 1850s; and the fifth stage unfolding from the 1940s onward. This periodization underscores the *longue durée* of global interconnection while also marking critical junctures of acceleration and transformation.

Conrad (2016), a German historian, provides a more refined and theoretically self-conscious articulation of the paradigm in *What Is Global History?*. He addresses essential questions regarding the intellectual conditions that necessitated global history's emergence, its definitional boundaries, the intersecting disciplines and paradigms upon which it builds, and its characteristic methodologies and approaches. Conrad posits that globalization, understood as the proliferation of entanglements and connections across spatial and cultural boundaries, constitutes the primary symptomatic feature of the contemporary world. These entanglements, he argues, give rise to various complex systems of interaction and exchange that cannot be adequately apprehended within the frame of the nation-state. The global historian's task, accordingly, is to trace these connections without presupposing their directionality or

valence, attending to the asymmetries of power, the uneven flows of knowledge and capital, and the diverse temporalities that structure global integration. In this way, the Global History Paradigm not only expands the geographical scope of historical inquiry but also fundamentally reconfigures its conceptual architecture.

However, the modern humanities and social sciences—including sociology, history, and philology—remain tightly bound to the framework of the nation-state, presupposing a methodological nationalism that takes the nation-state as the a priori unit of research and the naturalized container of territorial and social processes. Thereby, knowledge about the world is prefigured into a static discourse framed by the nation-state, while global exchanges and connections—whether between, beyond, or transcending nation-state politics and history—are systematically excluded, bracketed, or marginalized. In parallel, Eurocentric assumptions have been seared into the conceptual architecture of modern academic disciplines. Modern European capitalist development is foregrounded, with Europe cast as the central driving force of world history; a particular European historical trajectory is substituted for a universal template of human development. Analytical categories such as "nation," "revolution," "society," and "progress" are deployed to convert specifically European experiences into putatively universally applicable theoretical discourses. Methodologically, this entails the imposition of European categories upon all other nations, cultures, and societies, leaving their past and present in a state of intellectual and theoretical colonization.

Since the 1970s, however, a range of critical paradigms—comparative history, transnational history, world-systems theory, post-colonial studies, multiple modernities, and the history of globalization—have progressively paved the way for the emergence of the global history paradigm. What distinguishes this paradigm is its sustained emphasis on connectivity, mobility, exchange, and integration at the global level. The Global History Paradigm exhibits the following distinctive methodological characteristics:

First, adopting not merely a macro-perspective, it seeks to situate specific historical events and phenomena within a more expansive global context, thereby denaturalizing nationally bounded frames of reference. Second, departing from conventional spatial units such as the nation-state, empire, or civilization, it mobilizes alternative spatial conceptions that enable analysis through various nodes within

relational networks—for instance, religious or ethnic diasporas, trading circuits, or epistemic communities. Third, it views historical units—whether civilizations, nations, or families—not as developing in isolation but as evolving through interaction with the "Other" and in response to global exchange and circulation. In this sense, exchange and interaction between regions and nations, or even between Europe and the rest of the world, are understood as constitutive forces of modern social development rather than secondary effects. Fourth, the paradigm participates in and promotes the broader "spatial turn" within the humanities. Spatial metaphors including territory, geopolitics, circulation, and networks are deployed to displace temporal concepts such as "development," "time lag," or "backwardness," thereby rendering the teleology of modernization and development theories obsolete. Fifth, it decouples from the *longue durée* and the traditional notion of continuity inherited from civilizational history, while emphasizing instead the synchronicity, resonance, and coevalness of historical events on a global scale. Finally, and crucially, it insists on a conscious and reflexive critique of Eurocentrism—not merely as an ideological supplement but as a methodological imperative that reorients the categories, periodizations, and geographies through which global history is narrated.

Conclusion

Bearing the goal of critiquing Eurocentrism and the Western capitalist civilizational model, and drawing from previous critiques of the four paradigms of globalization, we propose abandoning conventional economic and political narratives of globalization. Instead, we advance a new paradigm: cross-civilizational reciprocal interpretation. Grounded in the long-term cyclical migratory movement of civilization between East and West, this paradigm emphasizes mutual learning and cross-civilizational exchange. This paradigm is articulated through four key dimensions. First, by upholding a stance of reciprocal interpretation based on mutual learning among civilizations within the global system, we seek to dispel the epistemic aporia of academic and knowledge discourses imprinted by Eurocentrism. This perspective enables a critical interrogation of the inherently violent nature of modern Western civilization, the processes of global integration, and the imaginary construction of the contemporary Western world-empire. Second, we construct a model of the migration network in globalization, employing network analysis and knowledge-discourse

analysis to map the movement of commodities, cultural artifacts, knowledge, technology, and people across diverse civilizations. Third, alongside the migration network model, we introduce a three-level dynamic superposition model for cross-cultural dialogue, interpretation, and knowledge discourse: (1) knowledge-discourse practices during the dissemination of civilizations, in which intercultural translation and interpretation serve as primary mechanisms; (2) the juxtaposition and "docking" of heterogeneous civilizational discourses at the destination, resulting from an active and dynamic selection process; and (3) the deep transformation, fusion, and creation of new knowledge discourses arising from the interface of heterogeneous civilizations. Finally, the practice of this reciprocal interpretation paradigm allows us to reconstitute the nexus of Chinese and foreign civilizations within the global system and reorganize civilizational hierarchies. Such an approach opens new horizons for cross-civilizational cognition and interpretation. The reciprocal interpretation and mutual referencing between civilizations, as we emphasize, "shall not end in estrangement, divergence, or dispute, nor shall they lose themselves in the buffer zones of economic development, technological change, political systems, or religious beliefs." Rather, they should ascend toward a return to the origin of civilizational Tao, actively contributing to a new form of human civilization dedicated to global human well-being.

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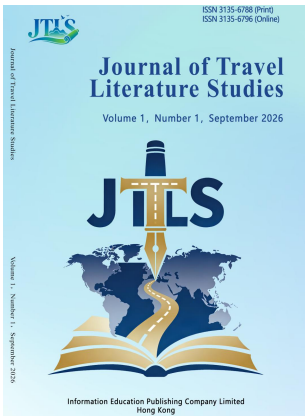

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Thing Narrative and the Refugee Theme in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*

Feng Zhang and **Xinwei Tang**

Abstract: Throughout Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*, a constellation of materially resonant objects recurs with insistent symbolic weight—the ud-al-qamari, the ebony table, the map, the house, articles of food and clothing, the telephone, among others. To examine these objects through the lens of new materialism is to uncover the manifold operations of thing-narrative within the text. Such an approach accomplishes three critical interventions. First, it foregrounds the agency of things and the materiality of human subjects, thereby dismantling the conventional binary opposition between persons and objects. Second, the actor-network formed by the entanglement of human and nonhuman entities not only propels the novel's narrative momentum but also deepens the complexity of characterization. Finally, things assume an indispensable role in the constitution of refugee identity: they function as vessels of affective memory and as instruments of cross-cultural negotiation. Attending to the thing-narrative in *By the Sea* thus sharpens our understanding of the novel's central preoccupations—the reciprocally constitutive relation between persons and their material world, and the lived textures of the refugee experience.

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Introduction

By the Sea (2001), by the 2021 Nobel laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah, enacts a narrative of reconciliation through its interwoven perspectives and nonlinear chronology. The novel traces the converging paths of two sworn enemies—Latif Mahmud and Saleh Omar—who, in the aftermath of the Zanzibar Revolution (1964), find themselves exiled in Britain, where the labor of recollection gradually undoes a lifetime of estrangement. Rooted in the commercial and cultural networks of the Indian Ocean world, the text bears the imprint of monsoon trade routes, which lend its imaginative geography a distinctive regional texture. Throughout the novel, a constellation of recurrent objects—the ud-al-qamari, the ebony table, the map, the house, food, clothing, the telephone—functions as a narrative apparatus, binding the characters' fates and registering the pressures of historical transformation. Critics have approached these material presences from a range of interpretive angles: Ruberto (2009) examines the relation between Saleh's luggage and the constitution of refugee identity (pp. 201–214); Kaigai (2014) traces the circulation of objects as an index of hospitality (pp. 181–199); Newns (2020) reads objects and houses as emblems of

identity and belonging (pp. 119–136); Samuelson (2013) considers the map's role within Indian Ocean narrative frameworks (pp. 78–82); and Cooper (2008) attends to the social life and valuation of things (pp. 86–87). Yet for all their insight, these studies tend to treat objects as passive repositories of meaning, leaving comparatively unexplored the question of thingly agency and the intersubjective entanglements between persons and material forms. A more capacious framework for understanding the narrative operations of things is offered by Yin and Tang (2019), who propose a tripartite model: "Things may play three roles in literary narrative: as cultural symbols that reflect or influence human culture; as agents with subjectivity that act upon characters and drive the plot forward; and as ontological entities that transcend human language and cultural representations to reveal 'ontological thingness'" (p. 78).

Within the field of refugee literature, these functions assume heightened significance. For displaced persons, material objects frequently serve as crucial mediators: they sustain ties to a lost past, enable negotiation with an unfamiliar present, and participate in the fashioning of new forms of identity under conditions of duress. Drawing on this theoretical groundwork, the present article offers a new materialist reading of thing narrative in *By the Sea*. It investigates how Gurnah's novel works to dissolve the conventional subject-object dichotomy, while attending to the specific operations of things in advancing narrative momentum, complicating characterological depth, and amplifying the novel's meditation on the textures of refugee experience.

This article argues that Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* demands a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between persons and objects, one that moves beyond the interpretive limits of conventional symbolic readings. It contends, first, that the novel systematically dismantles the subject-object binary by investing material things with a vitality and agency that rival those of its human characters. The ud-al-qamari, the ebony table, the suitcase, the house—these are not inert props but active forces that shape, resist, and endure alongside the displaced persons who encounter them. Second, the article demonstrates how Gurnah's narrative constructs what actor-network theory would recognize as intricate webs of association, wherein humans and nonhumans alike function as nodes within networks that generate the conditions for memory, storytelling, and reconciliation. The map and the telephone, in particular, emerge as agents that chart trajectories of exile and enable the fragile work of connection across

vast distances. Finally, this reading contends that refugee identity in the novel is irreducibly material—forged not in the solitary recesses of consciousness but through ongoing transactions with a world of things. Saleh's ud-al-qamari anchors his fractured history; food and clothing mediate the precarious negotiations between cultures; the withheld or confiscated object marks the violence of exclusion. In tracing these material entanglements, the article illuminates how *By the Sea* offers a profound meditation on identity as constitutively bound to the things we carry, lose, and recover in the aftermath of displacement.

The Dissolution of the Subject-Object Binary Between Humans and Things

New materialism posits that things possess inherent properties and agency, resisting reduction to mere extensions of human subjects. When objects exceed their functional roles, they disclose their essential "thingness" (Brown, 2001, p. 4). Moreover, as they actively shape human experience, emotion, and social relations, they emerge as "hybrid objects" endowed with a form of subjectivity (Brown, 2015, p. 372). In *By the Sea*, things not only perform utilitarian functions but also operate as agents bearing distinct meanings and values. At the same time, the material qualities manifested by the characters suggest a corresponding dissolution of human subjectivity. Saleh's engagement with objects, particularly the ud-al-qamari, exemplifies the acquisition of subjectivity by things. The tree releases its distinctive fragrance only upon being damaged, a quality that enriches it with considerable commercial value. This scent attracts the Persian merchant Hussein and provokes the greed of Kevin Edelman, a British customs officer whose unlawful confiscation of Saleh's ud-al-qamari reflects the predatory logic of European colonial rule. Colonizers, as Gurnah (2001) observes, often "acquire the world's beautiful things so they could take them home and possess them" (p. 20), thereby reducing objects to symbols of status and instruments of dominion. Saleh, though equally drawn to the fragrance, seeks instead to comprehend the ud-al-qamari's intrinsic and cultural significance. He approaches it with scholarly care, tracing the etymology of its name: "ud-al-qimari, the wood of the Khmers," correcting the common misnomer "ud-al-qamari, the wood of the moon" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 29). In doing so, he transcends the paradigm of human mastery and affirms the object's autonomous thingness.

Saleh's engagement with maps further illustrates the according of subjectivity to things. The term "map" appears twenty-nine times in the novel, signaling its significance. For Saleh, maps are not merely instruments of navigation but objects worthy of collection and exchange. When Hussein gifts him his grandfather's old map, the gesture deepens their bond, facilitates trade, and sets the stage for subsequent events. Saleh regards maps as representations of world order, rendering chaotic space intelligible (Gurnah, 2001, p. 35). To him, they are not inert objects but equal subjects capable of imparting understanding: "I speak to maps. And sometimes they say something back to me" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 35). This reciprocal engagement indicates that maps exceed their traditional passive function, acquiring attributes of communication and agency. From a new materialist standpoint, the relationship between Saleh and maps dissolves conventional subject-object dichotomies, revealing a distinct intersubjectivity. Concurrently, human subjectivity undergoes a corresponding dissolution. As Jane Bennett (2010) contends, human materiality renders us susceptible to objectification (p. 10). In *By the Sea*, this dynamic is pronounced among marginalized figures, manifesting in the experiences of Saleh's family servant Nuhu, Zanzibaris under British colonial rule, and Saleh himself as a refugee in Britain. Nuhu's objectification is most evident in his reduction to an instrument. Owing to his exceptional physical strength, Saleh's father bestows upon him the nickname "Faru" (rhinoceros). He performs all manual labor in the shop and is valued for his obedience and brawn. The master's frequent remark, "Look at him, like a rhinoceros" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 154), encapsulates his degradation to a mere tool of labor.

Under British colonial rule, Zanzibaris were subjected to systemic objectification. Colonial schools, unlike traditional Zanzibari institutions, imposed rigid age restrictions, barring overage students from enrollment (Gurnah, 2001, p. 35). Such administrative mechanisms effectively categorized students as objects. Those deemed too old are likened to "a coconut that had overripened and become undrinkable, or cloves that had been left too long on the tree and had swollen into seeds" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 35), while pupils compelled to repeat grades "lived with their shame throughout their school life" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 36). This metaphorical reduction of persons to expired or defective commodities starkly illustrates the dehumanizing logic of colonial governance. The objectifying gaze follows Saleh to Britain, where he is

assessed primarily in terms of utility. Kevin Edelman, the customs officer, perceives the elderly, non-English-speaking Saleh as unlikely to contribute to the British economy—an appraisal that treats refugees as commodities to be evaluated for their productive potential. Saleh is deemed "too old to work in a hospital, too old to produce a future England cricketer, too old for anything much except Social Security, assisted housing and a subsidized cremation" (Gurnah, 2001, pp. 48–49). This utilitarian calculus subjects him to relentless scrutiny during his asylum application and provokes a pointed self-characterization: "Think of me as one of those objects that Europe took away with her. [...] I am fragile and precious too, a sacred work, too delicate to be left in the hands of natives, so now you'd better take me too" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 12). In this ironic reversal, Saleh appropriates the logic of colonial plunder to expose its absurdity. In *By the Sea*, things transcend their conventional status as inert objects, acquiring agency and subjectivity, while human figures confront the predicament of being rendered thing-like. This mutual crossing dissolves the entrenched subject-object opposition that has long structured human relations with the material world.

Humans and Things in Actor-Networks

Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) posits that things can be mobilized and activated within their native environments, performing a range of social functions (Latour, 1990, p. 74). As "actants," they possess the capacity to influence human choices and behaviors (Latour, 2011, pp. 800–801). The term denotes agents capable of initiating action, whether human or non-human (Zielke, 2022, p. 630); an actant "has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events" (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 2010, p. viii). Such actants do not operate in isolation but interact and co-act within networks constituted as "assemblages." Actor-Network Theory offers a salient framework for apprehending the narrative architecture of *By the Sea*. Though the novel opens with Saleh's arrival in Britain, it deploys things as narrative threads, unraveling the intertwined family histories of both men in Zanzibar through the interwoven dual perspectives of Saleh and Latif. This technique not only discloses plot development and affective shifts but also underscores the constitutive role of material objects in the story. In Gurnah's text, things and humans act conjointly to propel the narrative forward. Objects profoundly

shape characters' choices and conduct, emerging as pivotal agents in the reconfiguration of destinies. Through the intervention of specific things, the fates of Saleh and Latif—initially unconnected—become entangled, generating enduring effects within each other's actor-networks and weaving a complex web of relationality.

This network originates with a transaction involving an ebony table. As an actant, the table alters the trajectories of both the Saleh and Mahmud families. In Zanzibar, Saleh's furniture shop contains an exquisitely crafted ebony table, which he later sells to Hussein. In the exchange, Hussein offers cash and "a twenty-pound packet of the ud-al-qamari" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 31). Both men are drawn to the other's possessions: Hussein admires the table's workmanship, while Saleh values the quality of the ud-al-qamari and the trading stories Hussein shares. This transaction, mediated by things, establishes the foundation for subsequent exchanges between them; the ud-al-qamari later confiscated originates from this very deal. As the ebony table circulates, the network of relations surrounding it expands. Hussein uses the table to court Latif's elder brother Hassan, ultimately taking him to Bahrain. For the Mahmud family, the table initially signifies shame. When Hussein presents it to Hassan, Rajab Shaaban Mahmud furiously sequesters it in the warehouse downstairs, attempting to conceal what he perceives as a "sinful" relationship. Yet after Hassan's departure, the table's meaning undergoes transformation. Asha's attachment to it becomes an expression of her longing for her son: "[...] when she started to talk about the table, the misery and recriminations of his departure all came back. All of a sudden it became so important for my mother to get that table back" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 104). For the Mahmud family, the table now serves as a substitute for Hassan, assuaging the grief of his loss. Within this network, whether Hussein deploys the table to pursue Hassan or Asha channels her yearning through it, both scenarios underscore the centrality of Hassan and the table as pivotal nodes in the actor-network. More significantly, the table facilitates the first encounter between Latif and Saleh. Asha's insistence on reclaiming it compels Latif to seek Saleh out. Saleh's refusal becomes an enduring wound for Latif, one he revisits when they reunite in Britain years later. Ultimately, after affecting the fates of two families, the table returns to Saleh's furniture shop. The ebony table has long transcended its instrumental properties—its very existence becomes a driving force in the narrative's progression.

The furniture shop where the ebony table was sold also serves as the backdrop for Saleh's marriage. In the spring of 1963, Salha accompanies her mother to the shop to order velvet sofa covers, and it is there that Saleh first sees her. He falls in love at first sight, proposes on the day the covers are completed, and they marry soon after. In this romance, objects carry particular weight. Though Saleh struggles to articulate his feelings for Salha, he describes the dark green velvet with vivid precision: "[...] a beautiful piece of material, feel the softness of the fabric, and how the color ripples when you run your hand through it" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 146). The fabric not only witnesses their first meeting but also becomes a medium through which Saleh expresses his affection. The ebony table also marks the beginning of a commercial partnership between Hussein and Saleh, one that extends the novel's actor-network and ultimately draws houses into its orbit. Early in their collaboration, Hussein borrows a substantial sum from Saleh and persuades Rajab to invest in his ventures. Rajab secures the loan by using his house and its contents as collateral. This agreement precipitates a blood feud between the Mahmud family and Saleh, setting in motion a chain of events that leads both Latif and Saleh to leave Zanzibar and eventually reunite in Britain.

In this intricate network, houses assume a pivotal role. The novel centers on two dwellings: the seaside house Saleh inherits from his stepmother Maryam, and the Mahmud family home that Hussein offers as collateral. Complicating matters further, Saleh and the Mahmud family are not merely economic adversaries but also distant relatives: Maryam is Rajab's aunt, while the collateralized property is what Rajab inherits from another aunt, Sara. Both houses originate from their respective former husbands' legacies, and their histories not only expose a tangled web of kinship but also bind the fates of several families together. This property dispute profoundly shapes the lives of both protagonists. In Latif's eyes, Saleh is a grasping aggressor, the architect of his family's nightmares. Yet Saleh is himself a victim—duped by Hussein and ensnared in a bitter contest over property. In the course of debt collection, he endures Rajab's provocations, is framed and imprisoned through Asha's machinations, and ultimately loses everything before fleeing to Britain. Shortly after being driven from the house by Saleh, Latif too departs Zanzibar to study in East Germany. Even abroad, the past remains an unhealed wound: "[...] it's as if I went on from Saleh Omar's house and right out of the country, and through the years I have

been finding my way to his other house by the sea" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 104). Tracing the trajectories of the ebony table and the houses reveals how things actively participate in shaping human destinies. The intervention of things not only alters modes of life and relations between people but also inflects emotional experience, ultimately reconfiguring human subjectivity itself (Brown, 2004, p. 39). This influence is especially pronounced in Saleh. Drawn to exquisite objects, he converts his father's halwa shop into a furniture store, confessing: "I have always had an interest in furniture. Furniture and maps. Beautiful, intricate things" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 19). Such things not only satisfy material needs but also offer spiritual sustenance. In Britain, the furniture shop becomes Saleh's refuge, granting him "a kind of content and the possibility of mercy and absolution" in a foreign land (Gurnah, 2001, p. 4). Yet the pursuit of things also enmeshes him in complex social networks. In Zanzibar, commerce brings wealth and status but also breeds resentment. He reflects: "A life of business is a cruel one, merciless, preying, open to misunderstanding and gossip" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 17). Saleh recognizes that his desire for things is no different from that of men like Edelman (Gurnah, 2001, p. 21), a realization that exposes humanity's universal greed when confronted with enticing objects. For Saleh, the ebony table is more than furniture; it is a symbol. It awakens latent desire and ambition, impelling him toward a series of morally dubious transactions. Yet when the table finally returns to the shop, his reluctance to part with it arises from the object's intrinsic allure rather than its commercial worth. The table becomes a mirror, reflecting Saleh's ambition and desire, and in doing so, prompts a reckoning with his past.

Similarly, the ebony table's significance within the Mahmud household undergoes a profound transformation: from a symbol of family shame to a vessel for longing for Hassan. Objects, as Turkle (2007) observes, can carry emotions, sustain memories, maintain relationships, and inspire new thoughts (p. 3). Hussein pursues Hassan by giving him "a wrist-watch, a fountain pen, a notebook, expensive things" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 89), rendering these gifts as carriers of affection. The ebony table, among them, is initially concealed but later becomes a medium through which Asha channels her longing after Hassan leaves home. The materiality of space likewise shapes human perception. The large room downstairs in Latif's home, by virtue of its peculiar purpose and accumulated history, becomes a place saturated with fear and darkness. Once Hussein's dwelling and the hiding place of the ebony table, it

provokes in Latif an enduring dread: "Yet when I look back, I find some objects still gleam with a bright malevolence and every memory draws blood. It's a dour place, the land of memory, a dim gutted warehouse with rotting planks and rusted ladders where you sometimes spend time rifling through abandoned goods" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 86). These objects, stripped of function, seem to arrest time, evoking painful recollections. They not only generate a gloomy atmosphere but also symbolize the decline of the Mahmud family.

Finally, ud-al-qamari exemplifies the profound entanglement of things and human emotion. From Saleh's delicate evocation of the scent at the novel's opening, it is clear that this spice was already woven into the fabric of his Zanzibar life. The fragrance is more than an olfactory sensation; it is a key that unlocks depths of feeling. Saleh confesses: "Ud-al-qamari: its fragrance comes back to me at odd times, unexpectedly, like a fragment of a voice or the memory of my beloved's arm on my neck" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 14). As Brown (2015) observes, memory "revolves around small things" (p. 279). The scent of ud-al-qamari stirs in Saleh a vivid constellation of recollections—of family, of festival, of a world lost. This long accretion of sensation and sentiment renders the spice a kind of habitual object, one that subtly shapes his inner life. The fragrance, intimately bound to happiness, becomes his private emblem. To inhale it is involuntarily to recover joy. And for the exile, such sensory memory possesses a singular healing power: the scent of ud-al-qamari not only soothes but also sustains, offering solace in a strange land.

Things and the Construction of Refugee Identity

In *By the Sea*, objects function not merely as inert, passive presences but as active agents in the construction of the characters' social and cultural identities. They inscribe the traumatic memories of the Zanzibar Revolution, encode the protagonists' experiences of displacement, and materially shape the contours of their refugee identities. Food, as a special category of object, transcends its basic physiological function to become a potent signifier of mental state and social belonging. In the Zanzibar detention camp, the debilitating quality of the food administered to Saleh and other prisoners enacts a form of corporeal and psychological erosion: "[...] we became weak and worn out from malnutrition and disease and tedium. [...] Our bowels tormented us all the time, with hunger, with constipation and wind from the

unvarying diet of starch and beans, with diarrhea from the bad water and from infections" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 231). Upon his arrival in England, Saleh's first meal at the refugee hostel—comprising "toasted bread, baked beans, and tinned ham" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 53)—becomes the site of a painful cultural confrontation. His refusal to eat ham, grounded in his Muslim identity, is met with derision from Ibrahim, a fellow refugee from Kosovo, who mocks him with the racialized taunt: "Muslim man, he don't eat pig, he don't piss alcohol. Clean clean clean, wash wash wash. Black man" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 53). In this scene, dietary observance—an expression of faith—is weaponized as an instrument of cultural discrimination and racial prejudice, turning a private act of piety into a public marker of otherness.

Clothing, as the object most intimately bound to the body, exerts a similarly profound influence on the formation of social identity and cultural affiliation. For Latif, shoes acquire an extraordinary symbolic weight, serving as a lens through which his experience of exile is refracted. They are more than mere footwear; they become a synecdoche for his fraught process of integration into an alien society. Visiting Elleke's family in East Germany, Latif discovers that his Zanzibari shoes, so suited to the "tropical streets" of home, are utterly inadequate for the "slippery pavements" of Germany (Gurnah, 2001, p. 125). The physical pain and numbness they cause render tangible his estrangement from the new environment. In this context, the shoes become a medium through which the relationship between self and world is negotiated. The kindness extended by Elleke, and the replacement shoes offered by his friend Ali, gesture toward human solidarity, yet they also underscore the profound dislocation that marks Latif's passage through foreign space. The shoe thus operates as a key object in the narrative of displacement, mediating between the embodied self and the inhospitable geographies of exile.

In contrast, Saleh's resistance to wearing trainers constitutes a form of quiet defiance that registers his profound alienation from British society. The trainers given to him by Rachel Howard, a worker at the refugee organization, are unremarkable objects in the British everyday, yet wearing them while walking by the sea—a landscape laden with personal memory—induces in him a visceral discomfort (Gurnah, 2001, pp. 119–120). The unfamiliar footwear not only intensifies his sense of estrangement but also deepens his longing for home. Although he accepts Rachel's

gift out of politeness, his inward disposition remains one of vigilance and tacit rejection toward the material culture of his host country.

Beyond food and clothing, the transformation of domestic space in the protagonists' lives offers a still more stark register of displacement. Latif's trajectory moves from East Germany to England, but Saleh's journey is marked by a series of radical spatial ruptures. In Zanzibar, Saleh had owned a spacious house by the sea, built in the Islamic style—a dwelling that not only held the memories of a contented past but also signified his social standing. The Zanzibar Revolution, however, brought about the imprisonment of tens of thousands of Arabs. The cells into which Saleh was thrown were overcrowded and dark, their wretched conditions devastating his body and mind, and twisting his spirit. Upon his arrival in England, he is confined once more, this time to a cold and dilapidated detention center, a converted warehouse whose previous function is made chillingly explicit: "The sheds that accommodated us could once just as easily have contained sacks of cereals or bags of cement or some other valuable commodity that needed to be kept secure and out of the rain. Now they contained us, a casual and valueless nuisance that had to be kept in restraint" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 43). This bitter self-deprecation equates refugees with stored goods, laying bare the callous instrumentality with which they are treated by the British asylum system. The trajectory from a spacious mansion to a dark prison cell and finally to a cold detention shed maps the precipitous collapse of Saleh's status and identity, each shift in dwelling mirroring the turbulent upheavals of his inner world. Together, the degradation of living conditions and the inhospitality of material culture—unfit food, alien shoes, soulless shelters—underscore the predicament of the displaced refugee. This predicament is not merely one of material deprivation; it is, more fundamentally, a crisis of identity. Stripped of the familiar environments and objects that once anchored their sense of self, refugees in foreign lands are plunged into a state of profound anxiety and psychological distress.

Yet objects are not solely instruments of estrangement; they also play a vital, constructive role in the refugee's project of identity reconstruction. The shift from initial refusal to gradual acceptance of foreign material culture is not a mere matter of material substitution; it constitutes a process of spiritual self-redemption and reconciliation. Identity reconstruction, in this context, does not entail the wholesale negation of the past, but rather the forging of a means to coexist with that past in

exile—preserving ethnic and cultural identity while simultaneously cultivating new forms of cultural belonging. In *By the Sea*, the persistence or substitution of homeland objects in foreign settings vividly illuminates how emotional attachments to home and cultural heritage become entangled in the protagonists' efforts to remake themselves. This process finds embodiment in several resonant objects. In Saleh's childhood, his father's halva shop represented the locus of his most cherished memories. When, in England, he converses with Latif, the recollection of halva-making transports him back to pre-revolutionary Zanzibar—a time of familial wholeness when the taste of halva was intimately bound to the sweetness of youth. Now, in exile, Saleh's diet has contracted to a monotonous and flavorless routine of beans, bread, and tea. Yet his longing for halva has never diminished; it is not the craving for a confection, but a profound and aching nostalgia for home and for the life he has lost.

In similar fashion, ud-al-qamari—a fragrance laden with personal and cultural memory, becomes a crucial medium for sustaining continuity with the past. Its loss upon his arrival in England severs a sensory link to home and deepens the identity crisis of the "Other." Saleh seeks refuge in books, and a passing mention of ud-al-qamari in his reading allows him, momentarily, to recover something of the warmth of home (Gurnah, 2001, p. 211). To compensate for its absence, he lingers at perfume counters in department stores, drawn by "the astringent scents in the air" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 200). Fragrance thus becomes his means of seeking belonging in a foreign land—at once an invocation of home and a tentative mode of engagement with the new environment. Through these olfactory and gustatory traces, Saleh negotiates the fraught passage between loss and survival, between the irrecoverable past and the possibility of a reconfigured present.

In this process, certain objects acquire an exceptional significance, becoming vessels for memory, dignity, and the fragile possibility of renewal. The towel that Alfonso, a fellow refugee, gives to Saleh upon their parting in the detention center is one such object. Seemingly mundane, it comes to embody the deep friendship between the two men and the hope that sustains Saleh through the ordeal of displacement. Alfonso's gift enables Saleh to maintain a measure of cleanliness, but its function quickly transcends the practical. It becomes a source of warmth and security, a symbolic refuge: "I ran away to Alfonso's towel, and once on it I felt as if I was in an invisible place" (Gurnah, 2001, pp. 58–59). At the novel's end, Saleh

returns to the towel once more, its presence a quiet reassurance: "[...] I had Alfonso's towel with me if the worst came to the worst" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 245). The understatement of this remark belies the towel's profound emotional weight; it has accompanied him through the harshest years and now stands as a token of survival and the resolve to begin anew. In Saleh's enduring relation to this object, we witness how an ordinary piece of cloth transcends its materiality to become an anchor for the self—a locus of emotional continuity and spiritual support in the flux of exile.

The telephone, by contrast, functions as a link to the social world, and Saleh's evolving attitude toward it charts his gradual integration into British society. His initial refusal is categorical and resonant: "I'd prefer not." This negation signals a deeper resistance to the outside world, a willed maintenance of the barrier that separates him from the society that now houses him. Yet the resolution of his long-standing grievance with Latif precipitates a shift. The refusal softens, modulating from "I'd prefer not" to the more provisional "I have no urge to do so"—a change that marks the beginnings of an openness to connection, a tentative willingness to engage. Latif himself plays a crucial mediating role in this process, encouraging Saleh to install a telephone and helping him to navigate the psychological obstacles that had kept him isolated. Their interaction exemplifies the forms of mutual assistance that sustain immigrant communities and facilitate the slow, uneven work of integration.

Through the analysis of such objects, we discern the multiple dimensions in which things participate in the shaping of refugee identity. They bear witness to the trajectory from displacement to the tentative reconstruction of life; they serve as vital media for the preservation of cultural memory and the continuity of identity; and they register the complex, often contradictory process of seeking recognition and belonging in a foreign society. These dimensions intertwine, constructing the layered and ambivalent texture of refugee experience. In its attentive depiction of everyday things, the novel reveals the dynamism and the tensions inherent in refugee identity formation: objects simultaneously carry the longing for a lost home and the adherence to cultural tradition, even as they become instruments for adapting to a new environment and rebuilding a viable self. This very contradiction—this productive tension, illuminates the predicament of refugee communities, caught between memory and survival, between the irrecoverable past and the still-unfolding present.

Conclusion

This article examines the recurring objects in Gurnah's *By the Sea*, exploring the novel's refugee theme through a new materialist lens. These objects serve three key functions: First, they drive plot development—triggering the conflict between Latif's and Saleh's families while facilitating their eventual reconciliation. Second, they shape refugee identity, linking the protagonists to their homeland while witnessing their adaptation to new environments. Finally, they reveal the psychological states of refugees, evoking warm memories of home and deepening feelings of alienation in foreign lands. By examining thing narrative in *By the Sea*, we gain deeper insight into the relationship between humans and things and the predicaments facing transnational refugees.

By the Sea reveals a complex relationship between humans and things that extends far beyond simple possession or utility. Things in the novel actively shape consciousness, memory, and identity. They demonstrate how material culture operates as embodied knowledge—carrying histories, encoding social relations, and mediating emotional experiences that transcend their physical properties. This challenges conventional humanist narratives that position humans as sovereign subjects acting upon inert matter. Instead, Gurnah's novel suggests a more entangled reality where human subjectivity emerges through ongoing encounters with the material world.

For transnational refugees, this human-object relationship takes on heightened significance and profound vulnerability. Displacement severs the intricate web of material connections that anchor identity and belonging. When Saleh loses his house, his ud-al-qamari, and the familiar objects of Zanzibar, he loses more than possessions—he loses the material scaffolding through which his selfhood is constituted and maintained. The refugee predicament involves not only geographical dislocation but also a fundamental disruption of the material conditions that enable coherent identity.

However, the novel also reveals resilience and adaptability in human-thing relationships. Saleh's journey from rejecting the telephone to accepting it, his treasuring of Alfonso's towel, and his persistent seeking of familiar fragrances in British department stores all demonstrate how refugees actively negotiate their material circumstances. They neither passively accept imposed material cultures nor

rigidly cling to lost pasts. Instead, they engage in creative bricolage—repurposing, substituting, and reimagining objects to reconstruct meaning and belonging in hostile environments. The towel becomes far more than hygiene equipment; it transforms into a portable sanctuary, a material anchor of dignity and hope. This creative agency suggests that while displacement inflicts profound material and psychological wounds, the human capacity to forge meaningful relationships with objects—even unfamiliar or substitute objects—offers pathways toward healing and reconstruction.

Ultimately, *By the Sea* demonstrates that understanding refugee experience requires close attention to the material dimension of displacement and resettlement. Abstract discussions of identity, belonging, and trauma must be grounded in the concrete realities of everyday objects and their profound influence on human consciousness. Thing narrative in *By the Sea* offers a methodological model for refugee studies and migration literature: by tracing how objects circulate, get lost, get substituted, and get reimagined across borders and through time, we can map the complex processes through which displaced persons negotiate between past and present, homeland and host country, loss and reconstruction. In this sense, things become narrative agents that tell stories of survival, resistance, adaptation, and the possibility of reconciliation—not only between former enemies like Saleh and Latif, but between refugees and their fragmented, dispersed, yet persistently meaningful material worlds.

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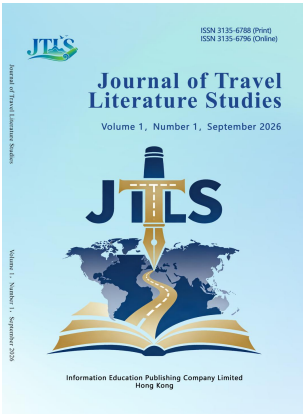

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From Movement to Metaphor: A Review of Junwu Tian's *American Travel Narratives and Cultural Metaphors in Twentieth-Century Fiction*[1]

Jinxiang Huang

Abstract: Junwu Tian's *American Travel Narratives and Cultural Metaphors in Twentieth-Century Fiction* examines how travel in twentieth-century American fiction becomes both a narrative structure and a cultural metaphor. This review approaches the book by grouping the forms of travel discussed by Tian into two major categories: vehicle-based travel and quest-like travel. The first category shows how movement by car, train, or carriage can signify postwar restlessness, social aspiration, economic survival, historical loss, or modern violence in different texts. The second category examines how modern American fiction revises the classical quest structure through heroic journeys, wandering, drifting, time-space travel, and spiritual search. Particular attention is given to Tian's use of biographical and genetic criticism, since the book repeatedly links writers' travel experiences to the genesis of their literary works. By connecting authors, individual works, modes of mobility, and cultural meanings with the experiential, historical, and creative origins from which they emerge, the book

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offers a systematic account of how twentieth-century American travel narratives take shape.

Keywords: travel literature; cultural metaphor; twentieth-century American fiction; mobility; genetic criticism

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"I moved to be moving, for the pleasures of merely circulating" (Mewshaw, p. xvi). This sentence, taken from Michael Mewshaw's *Between Terror and Tourism*, captures something essential about the human impulse to travel: movement, in this formulation, is not undertaken for any external purpose—neither as a means of reaching a destination nor as a strategy for securing material gain, but instead becomes its own reward, a pleasure inseparable from the act of circulating through space. Travel is one of the oldest practices in human society, and since journeys invite record and narration, travel literature grows out of the practice of travel itself and therefore also boasts a long history. As early as the Twelfth Dynasty of Egypt, more than a thousand years before Homer's *Odyssey*, travel narratives had already emerged, including a tale of a shipwrecked sailor on an isolated island.

Junwu Tian, Professor of English and American Literature at the School of Foreign Languages, Beihang University, China, has long focused his research on travel writing and the intricate relationship between literature and cultural history. Having published extensively on major American literary movements such as the Lost Generation, the Beat Generation, and Southern fiction, Tian is particularly interested in how physical mobility shapes narrative form and cultural meaning. His monograph, *American Travel Narratives and Cultural Metaphors in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (2021, hereafter referred to as *American Travel Narratives*), represents the culmination of more than a decade of research into the intersection of movement, literary expression, and American cultural mythology. The book deals with one of the oldest and most enduring literary genres—travel literature, yet instead of recounting its long history across time and space, it concentrates on twentieth-century American

travel writing. This focus is especially appropriate, for twentieth-century America provided particularly fertile ground for travel writing due to the rise of the automobile, the expansion of mobility, and the deep cultural association between movement and freedom; against this historical and cultural background, twentieth-century American fiction becomes a revealing site for examining travel narratives and their cultural metaphors.

Before turning to analysis, Tian first defines what "travel literature" is, since there is still no consensus in academia on what exactly constitutes the term. He argues that its definition depends both on form and on whether the text is fictional: nonfictional and non-belles-lettres writing belongs to travel literature in the strict sense, whereas fictional writing in a purely literary form belongs more properly to literature in the conventional sense. Although classical literature with travel features has long been a major concern of literary criticism, travel literature as a distinct field did not receive sustained scholarly attention until the 1970s. Existing studies have tended either to impose a single paradigm on works from a given period, to concentrate on individual authors, or to foreground thematic meanings without asking how those narrative patterns are formed. Moreover, there has been no monograph devoted specifically to travel narratives in twentieth-century American fiction that combines both macroscopic and microscopic analysis. Therefore, *American Travel Narratives* aims to reveal the narrative features and cultural metaphors of travel in twentieth-century American fiction through the lens of genetic criticism, with attention to writers' personal travel experiences.

In terms of methodology, the book begins with the rise of the automobile and the social phenomenon of automobile travel in the United States, highlighting the central place of the car in twentieth-century American life and imagination. It then groups twentieth-century American writers into categories, including the Lost Generation, the Leftist, Southern writers, the Beat Generation, Jewish writers as well as Black writers, and analyzes their travel experiences before moving to close readings of their major works. By drawing on biographical criticism, the book traces the genesis of literary creation, showing how writers' personal travel experiences shaped their creative practice within specific historical contexts, rather than moving directly to broad thematic or cultural abstraction. By bringing literary analysis into dialogue with philosophy and political thought, the book uses travel literature to illuminate broader

transformations in political structures and intellectual history. More importantly, the book moves beyond isolated paradigms by offering a clustered study of the diverse themes represented in twentieth-century American fiction, clarifying both their common patterns and their differences.

The book proceeds through an author-centered, chapter-by-chapter structure, but this review adopts a different organizing logic by focusing on the two key concepts highlighted in the title, travel narrative and cultural metaphor, in order to foreground more clearly the book's central concerns and critical contribution. Rather than treating these two dimensions as separate, the following discussion will emphasize their close interrelation. In the book, travel is never presented as a mere change of place. Different modes of movement also carry distinct symbolic meanings within specific historical and cultural contexts. The travel narratives examined in *American Travel Narratives* can be grouped into two interrelated categories: vehicle-based travel, such as journeys by car, train, or carriage; and quest-like travel, including wandering, escape, pilgrimage, and spiritual search.

The first category is vehicle-based travel. The same kind of travel narrative does not produce a single fixed symbolism. As the book shows, vehicle-based movement can signify postwar restlessness, sexual desire, social aspiration, economic survival, historical loss, or even modern violence, depending on the literary and cultural context in which it appears. For the Lost Generation and the Leftist, the car serves as a narrative vehicle for postwar restlessness, unfulfilled desire, and the illusion of the American dream. In Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Barnes keeps moving through urban space by car, as if mobility could temporarily compensate for his postwar trauma, both physically and psychologically. In Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* (1934), automobile travel is closely tied to wealth and class aspiration, so that movement comes to signify not just physical mobility but the lure of upward social mobility associated with the American Dream. In Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), the automobile is the material condition of migration and survival. The Joad family's movement toward California depends on the vehicle so completely that the car becomes almost a family member in its own right. It carries not only bodies, but also the fragile possibility of a future. The Southern writers complicate this pattern by diversifying the forms of vehicle-based travel. In Faulkner, carriage travel often carries a strong sense of historical residue, becoming a moving reminder of a

declining social order. In Thomas Wolfe, by contrast, train travel reflects the arrival of modern speed and the disruption of older regional consciousness. Faulkner's carriage looks backward toward a lost past, whereas Wolfe's train points toward the intrusive force of modernity. O'Connor offers an even darker variation. Her use of the automobile frequently links movement to violence, exposing the car as an instrument through which mechanized modern life enters and disturbs Southern society.

Beyond vehicle-based movement, the book identifies travel as a quest structure. In its classical form, the quest narrative usually centers on a single traveler who leaves home, undergoes trials, gains some form of knowledge, and finally reaches a destination or returns in a transformed state. However, twentieth-century American fiction often revises this heroic pattern. Travel is no longer a stable route toward fulfillment, departure does not necessarily lead to arrival, and return often brings no true restoration. Broadly speaking, this quest-like dimension of travel can be grouped into five main forms: heroic journey, wandering travel, drifting travel, time travel, and inner or spiritual travel. In addition, Tian treats Jewish fiction and Black fiction as two distinct traditions whose travel narratives are significantly shaped by their own historical pressures rather than by the generalized model of romantic adventure.

The book repeatedly identifies a heroic pattern of travel, though this pattern is often modernized, ironized, or transformed. Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* is read through the figure of the modern Fisher King. Characters move through European spaces, but travel does not truly heal the wounds of the postwar generation. *Main Street* (1920) is linked to a Don Quixote-like journey, suggesting that heroic aspiration has already become entangled with irony and misalignment between ideal and reality. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the heroic pattern is reworked through the biblical structure of Exodus, so that westward movement becomes both collective migration and a morally charged search for survival. Likewise, *As I Lay Dying* (1930) is associated with biblical resonance and Noah's Ark imagery, which again shows that modern American fiction does not abandon heroic travel altogether, but reuses sacred and epic models in fractured, earthly, and often ironic forms. Even O'Connor's fiction participates in this pattern through contrast: the intrusive traveler in "The Artificial Nigger" (1955) bears the name "pioneer," while the outward-moving family trip in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1953) turns travel into exposure, violence, and moral unsettlement rather than heroic expansion. Burroughs radicalizes this further by

transforming travel into a descent through the underworld of the lower strata of society, a kind of infernal travel book that empties heroic movement of any uplifting meaning.

The book distinguishes wandering travel as a separate mode. Here the journey is no longer oriented toward a stable destination, nor does it promise heroic completion. Instead, wandering emphasizes movement itself, uncertainty, and the inability to settle. This mode becomes especially prominent in Beat writing. In *The Dharma Bums* (1958), Ray Smith follows Japhy Ryder into the mountains, climbs Matterhorn Peak with him, camps outdoors, chants, meditates, and later withdraws into solitary fire-watch duty on Desolation Peak. Travel here is not a means of reaching a worldly goal. Instead, it becomes a way of suspending ordinary social life and seeking spiritual release through motion itself. Wandering travel also overlaps with what may be called drifting travel, a mode especially visible in the Beat Generation. Unlike the heroic journey, drifting has no stable object. Unlike pilgrimage, it has no secure spiritual destination. It is driven instead by dissatisfaction, rebellion, marginality, and the desire to escape ordinary social structures. In *On the Road* (1957), Dean Moriarty abandons wives and children, changes plans abruptly, and drives compulsively from one city to another, while Sal Paradise is repeatedly drawn back onto the road, following Dean across the country through temporary rides, improvised stops, fleeting encounters, and renewed departures. The road becomes a space of perpetual redirection, social looseness, and incompletion. Wandering and drifting therefore represent one of the clearest ways in which modern travel narrative becomes anti-heroic: it rejects closure, distrusts arrival, and remains bound to incompletion. The Beat Generation also develops a more radical form of travel in Burroughs. As the book suggests, this form begins with literal escape but soon exceeds ordinary spatial movement. In *Naked Lunch* (1959), William Lee first flees narcotics agents in New York, but this escape quickly opens onto a hallucinatory itinerary that moves through Mexico and then into the imaginary Interzone. Travel thus passes beyond physical displacement into the crossing of unstable boundaries between reality and hallucination, actual geography and invented zones. Burroughs transforms Beat mobility into a form of time-space travel: the journey no longer unfolds within a continuous world, and the traveler no longer moves through a stable sequence of experience. Formally, the novel's fractured routines and disjunctive arrangement

already anticipate the cut-up aesthetics that Burroughs would later develop more explicitly. Besides, the book identifies what may be called inner or spiritual travel. This is particularly important because it shifts the meaning of travel away from geography alone and toward psychological or existential exploration. Thomas Wolfe is a key figure here, since his fiction often turns travel into a mental and emotional process rather than a merely external route. Journey becomes a search for values, self-understanding, or spiritual orientation. Even when the body moves through space, the deeper issue is how the self confronts memory, desire, and inner lack.

Jewish fiction and Black fiction are discussed separately in *American Travel Narratives*, because in the book they do not simply repeat the general modern pattern of quest and wandering. Their travel narratives are shaped by more specific historical experiences of displacement, identity, memory, and exclusion. In Jewish fiction, wandering is not merely a modern lifestyle or a romantic sign of freedom. It is deeply tied to historical causes. The journey often begins in rupture rather than choice. Works related to J.D. Salinger are linked both to father-son conflict and to quest, showing that travel in Jewish fiction may take the form of a search for meaning under the pressure of fractured inheritance. At the same time, the book also points toward a spiritual exploration of Jewish values, especially in narratives that return to an origin only to discover that the meaning of "home" has expanded beyond any single fixed place. Return does occur, but not as simple restoration. It transforms travelers' understanding of belonging. Black fiction is treated in an equally distinctive way. Here travel is closely connected to racial history and to the problem of movement through space. It reworks quest, exile, and return through the long pressure of racial displacement and the difficult labor of self-definition.

Having examined the book's main arguments in detail, it is worth turning to its contributions as a work of literary scholarship. One of its most valuable features is that it does not plunge directly into twentieth-century American fiction as if these narratives had emerged in isolation. Instead, it patiently reconstructs the larger background from which they arose. The book explains why travel occupies such an important place in the American imagination, linking it to earlier national myths and historical experiences such as ancestral migration, westward expansion, the Mayflower legacy, and the dream of self-making. It also clarifies why the automobile became so central to American travel culture by considering concrete social

conditions, including the replacement of rail travel, the affordability and variety of cars, suburban community patterns, and the expansion of highways. In this respect, the book is highly accessible even to beginners and general readers, because it does not present travel narrative as a purely abstract concept, but as something rooted in recognizable historical experience. At the same time, *American Travel Narratives* offers substantial value for literary researchers. Although its main focus is on the twentieth century, it still traces a much longer genealogy of travel narrative, reaching back to Greek and Roman myth and then moving through nineteenth-century American writing before arriving at modern fiction. This broader historical frame enables Tian to show more precisely what changes in the twentieth century: heroic travel persists, but is redirected toward the search for American identity and the American Dream; automobiles and other forms of transport become far more prominent; and modernist non-linearity begins to coexist with realist narrative logic. Equally important is the book's emphasis on literary genesis. Rather than treating texts as self-contained symbolic structures, it repeatedly relates them to the lived experiences of their authors. The discussion of Jack London is especially illustrative here: his experience as a hobo, his life as a sailor, and the masculine ethos associated with the Gold Rush are all used to illuminate the formation of his travel writing. Similar attention is given to the multiple relocations in the childhoods of writers such as Dos Passos, Lewis, Wolfe, and Bellow, as well as to the extensive travels of Lewis, Strindberg, Faulkner, Wolfe, and O'Connor. The book thus productively revives a biographical and genetic approach to literature. As René Wellek and Austin Warren famously observe in *Theory of Literature* (1949), "the most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator, and explanation through the writer's life and personality has been one of the oldest and best-established methods of literary study" (p. 75).

Another merit of the book lies in its ability to combine horizontal and vertical modes of analysis. Horizontally, it moves beyond isolated author studies by establishing connections among writers and literary groupings. Vertically, it places literary analysis in dialogue with broader intellectual and social frameworks. The chapter on *The Grapes of Wrath* does not remain at the level of narrative or imagery, but brings the novel into relation with sociological reflections on the tension between the group and the individual, Emerson's notion of the Over-Soul, and an almost religious ideal of universal love. The discussions of the Beat Generation and Bellow

are similarly layered. In the case of Kerouac, the book connects Beat mobility with Buddhist thought and a search for spiritual release. In the case of Bellow, it links travel writing to Trotskyism, exile politics, and the ideological conflicts of the twentieth century. In this way, the book not only maps relations across authors and literary formations, but also deepens literary analysis by embedding it in larger structures of thought, history, and culture.

Most importantly, *American Travel Narratives* does more than summarize existing knowledge. It corrects a number of received assumptions and offers fresh judgments of its own, including debates over the "father" of the Beat Generation, the relation between *On the Road* and *Walking* (1862), Salinger's supposed seclusion, and certain interpretations of *Native Son* (1940). The book concludes with a discussion of postmodernist writings, Black women's writing, and Chinese American literature, which opens the field outward rather than closing it down. For that reason, the significance of this book lies not simply in its breadth of coverage, but in its ability to generate new critical insights and to suggest further directions for the study of twenty-first-century travel writing. At the same time, a few minor limitations may also be noted. Because the book covers a remarkably wide range of writers, periods, and modes of travel, some individual texts cannot always be discussed at equal depth. In addition, certain categories of travel occasionally overlap with one another, so that the boundaries between wandering, drifting, and spiritual travel are not always sharply defined. However, these minor reservations do not diminish the overall value of the study.

In sum, *American Travel Narratives and Cultural Metaphors in Twentieth-Century Fiction* is a wide-ranging and illuminating study that successfully brings together literary history, textual analysis, and cultural interpretation. Its chief contribution lies not simply in surveying a broad body of twentieth-century American writing, but in showing how concrete forms of movement are transformed into narrative patterns and cultural metaphors under specific historical and ideological conditions. By tracing the interplay between mobility, literary form, and cultural meaning, the book demonstrates that travel in twentieth-century American fiction is never merely a matter of physical displacement, but a complex mode through which questions of history, identity, desire, belief, and social change are negotiated. For general readers, it offers an accessible and well-structured introduction to the field.

For researchers, it provides a productive framework for further inquiry into travel writing and modern American literature. It therefore deserves the attention of anyone interested in American fiction, travel writing, or the cultural imagination of mobility.

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