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

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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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