



JTLS

Journal of Travel Literature Studies

JTLS, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2026, pp. 19-36.

Print ISSN: 3135-6788; Online ISSN: 3135-6796

Journal homepage: <https://www.tlsjournal.com>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64058/jtls260102rplcg>



Rites de Passage: Literary Critical Genealogy and Cross-Disciplinary Interpretations of Travel Literature

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Abstract: With the rise of cultural studies as the main trend in the 1980s, travel literature begins to receive its due attention from the western theorists and leaps from sub genre to the main literary terrain. Critics in postcolonialism, feminism, anthropology, geography, comparative literature all show their academic interest in the poetics and politics, literary aestheticism and cultural representation of travel literature. This essay regards the resurfacing of travel literature from the literary horizon as its embodiment of not only complex geopolitical and sociocultural elements, but also of its dynamism of being trans-racial, trans-linguistic and trans-disciplinary. Thus, it investigates the scope of travel literature, literary critical genealogies and cross-disciplinary interpretations in an attempt to draw a panorama of the study of travel literature theoretically for domestic scholars.

Keywords: travel literature; criticism of travel literature; postcolonial paradigm; cross-disciplinary interpretations

Received: 24 Jun 2026 / Revised: 01 Aug 2026 / Accepted: 15 Aug 2026 / Published online: 15 Sep 2026 / Print published: 15 Dec 2026. First published in Chinese as Huang, L. (2021). Rites de Passage: Literary Critical Genealogy and Cross-Disciplinary Interpretations of Travel Literature. *Foreign Literature*, 42(2), 134-144.

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Introduction

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once noted, “Travel, the study of languages, periodical literature, have taken the place of that universal language, and establish many intimate and harmonious relations which a universal language could never have brought about” (Goethe, 1973, p. 7). Here, Goethe emphasized the importance of transnational travel for writers. Travel is often associated with themes such as spatial transgression, cultural

encounter, linguistic transformation, escape and resistance, the search for artistic inspiration, and the quest to understand the world and the self. The documentation of travelers or writers on their journey's observations and experiences is collectively termed travel writing or travel literature. It is "a hybrid form, encompassing different genres and discourses, produced in the geo-cultural contexts of different historical periods" (Youngs & Forsdick, 2012, p. 1), expressed in English as travelogue, travel narrative, travel writing, and travel book. Travel literature possesses "dauntingly heterogeneous character" (Kowalewski, 1992, p. 7), covering genres including "the memoir, journalism, letters, guidebooks, confessional narrative, and, most important, fiction" (p. 7). Travel literature both presents the traveler's authentic observations and objective reports while also mixing in subjective biography and the fictional antics of the picaresque novel, blending reality and fiction in parallel (Huang, 2015, pp. 10-14), holding a unique academic appeal.

Since the 1980s, with the rise and development of cultural studies, travel literature has leaped from a marginalized text in Western academia to a significant area of wide attention. Researchers in postcolonialism, feminism, anthropology, geography, and comparative literature have turned their academic interests to travel writing, exploring its poetics and politics, literary aesthetics, and cultural representation. Internationally, the University of Essex organized several international conferences reflecting on the importance of travel, such as "Europe and its Others" in 1984, "Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory" in 1991, and "Writing Travels" in 1992. In 1997, the International Society for Travel Writing was founded. In 2002, Nottingham Trent University in the UK established the Center for Travel Writing Studies to encourage the publication of travel literature research books and journals and to host conferences. Entering the 21st century, research on travel literature began to appear in China, particularly in the fields of overseas Sinology and comparative literature, with many master's and doctoral theses emerging, largely filling the research gap on travel literature in Chinese academia. However, the author believes that most of these results are either confined to presenting the historical facts of travel literature texts or follow Western academia's postcolonial research paradigm. In fact, travel literature resurfaces in the history of literary research as a subgenre because it not only carries complex and

changing geopolitical and socio-cultural elements but also possesses the dynamic qualities of being trans-racial, trans-linguistic, and trans-disciplinary. This article attempts to investigate the scope of travel literature, its critical genealogies, and its cross-disciplinary features: it starts with the definition of travel and travel literature genres, and then traces the trajectory of the criticism of travel literature, and finally, it examines cross-disciplinary interpretations from geography, anthropology, comparative literature, and other disciplines, aiming to benefit current and future travel literature research.

Tracing “Travel”: Definition, Scope, and Genre of Travel Literature

Samuel Johnson believed that defining literary categories is as risky as defining legal categories: “...scarcely any species of writing, of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents; every new genius produces some innovation, which, when invented and approved, subverts the rules which the practice of foregoing authors had established” (Johnson, 1752, p. 221). Although it is difficult to provide a clear, concise, and well-defined boundary for travel literature, similar to genres like castaway literature, adventure literature, bildungsroman, sea literature, colonial literature, diasporic literature, and women’s literature, the subject matter and form of travel literature are related to “travel.” First, it is necessary to clarify what “travel” means. Etymologically, the English word “travel” emerged in the Middle Ages, reportedly derived from the French *travail* or *travaillier*, meaning physical or mental labor or hardship, carrying a sense of pain or oppression, referring to action, trouble, effort, suffering. *Travail* itself has an older origin, the Latin *tripalium*, meaning three stakes, a Roman instrument of torture. Thus, early travel conditions were difficult, imbuing travel with the connotation of physical and mental anguish. Similarly, the Chinese characters “旅” (lǚ) and “行” (xíng) both imply leaving home and wandering about. For example, Fan Zhongyan said in *Record of Yueyang Tower*, “Merchant travel ceased, masts snapped and oars splintered.” Under Confucian thought prioritizing filial piety and emphasizing agriculture over commerce, travel often carried the melancholy of leaving home for a living, as in the saying, “During the three-year mourning period for parents, one should

not stand in groups nor travel.” Thus, etymologically, actual long-distance travel has the characteristic of challenging mind and body, involving suffering and pain.

However, it is precisely this challenge that has attracted pilgrims, literati, and explorers driven by religious piety, curiosity, and adventurous spirit throughout the ages. First, pilgrimage to religious sites was a form of travel for believers: “Christians go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to the places associated with the Lord’s passion, death and resurrection. They go to Rome, to the city where Peter and Paul were martyred, and also to...” (Benedict XVI, 2010). Then, the Middle Ages saw the phenomenon of the “Grand Tour,” where upper-class European families sent their offspring to other countries to gain knowledge, broaden horizons, and overcome intellectual limitations. By the Age of Discovery, travel was no longer confined to European nations. Numerous adventurers, merchants, soldiers, missionaries, etc., from Portugal, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Britain, and France crossed oceans to “discover new continents” around the world, providing new knowledge of other countries. With growing national power and overseas expansion, the British gradually became a prominent presence traveling worldwide, numerous and widespread, partly due to the island nation’s natural geographical environment and earlier industrialization. The insular isolation, combined with the monotonous and dull production environment, and the smog-choked cities like London and Liverpool, made the British particularly fond of traveling abroad (Fussell, 1980, pp. 37-38). In summary, over the centuries since the Renaissance, Europeans have traveled across continents and oceans worldwide, with travel purposes changing according to Western social history and political demands (Porter, 1991, p. 10).

Broadly defined, “exploration, conquest, colonization, diplomacy, emigration, forced exile, and trade to religious or political pilgrimage, aesthetic education, anthropological inquiry” (Porter, 1991, p. 10) can all be classified as travel. Narrowly defined, travel is distinguished from exploration and tourism. According to American cultural historian Paul Fussell (1980), “exploration belongs to the Renaissance, travel to the bourgeois age, tourism to our proletarian moment” (p. 38). Although all three involve long-distance travel, explorers seek the unknown, unexplored territory; travelers follow in the explorers’ footsteps, out of curiosity seeking places historically

discovered by others; tourists go to places industrialized and popularized by commercial interests. If explorers have a pioneering spirit, and tourists are more passively driven by commerce, then “It is between these two poles that the traveler mediates, retaining all he can of the excitement of the unpredictable attaching to exploration, and fusing that with the pleasure of ‘knowing where one is’ belonging to tourism” (p. 39).

Beyond referring to actual long-distance travel, the forms and meanings of travel also include abstract forms, even metaphors for various imagined life activities, such as the journey of life, the course of knowledge, the travel of the mind, etc. Travel encompasses both actual journeys and imagined ones, making this writing genre all-encompassing. From Herodotus’s *Histories* to the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Old Testament*, *New Testament*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Shakespeare’s *Odyssey* and *Hamlet*, 18th-century novels like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver’s Travels*, to numerous 19th and 20th-century literary works, all can be called travel literature. To some extent, travel literature also constitutes a history of human civilization, mainly because the history of civilization is also a history of migration and writing.

Precisely because travel combines actuality and imagination, reality and fiction, scholars debate the scope of travel literature. Given travel literature’s oscillation between fiction and reality, Peter Hulme (qtd. in Youngs & Forsdick, 2012), a professor at the University of Essex, emphasizes the significance of “movement” for writing. He argues that “For texts to count as travel writing...their authors must have travelled to the places they describe. There is, he insists, an ethical dimension to their claims to have made the journeys they recount. If the claim is later found to be false, the author’s work ‘is discredited’ and the text moves out of the category of travel writing into another such as the imaginary voyage” (p. 1). Therefore, he delimits the scope of travel literature into travel writing based on actual travel and fictional, imagined travel writing.

Many scholars emphasize the inherent subjective fictionality of travel literature. For example, Paul Fussell (1980) advocated using the term “travel book” to replace guidebook-style “travelogue” and “travel writing,” because travel books are written for those who do not intend to follow the traveler’s path but seek romance literary forms

like exoticism, comic absurdity, and wonder, which cannot be fully found in their own time and place. He believes the term “travel book” not only satisfies readers’ imagination but also, due to its subjectivity, is closer to memoir; “the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker’s encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative—unlike that in a novel or romance—claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality” (Fussell, 1980, p. 203). Thus, he argues that “travel writing” emphasizes the traveler’s truthful reporting, while “travel book” emphasizes its fictionality and imaginative coloring.

If Fussell called for the literary imagination of travel narrative, Percy G. Adams (1983) attempted to “legitimize” travel literature, examining its complementary relationship with the novel as a significant genre. In his 1983 book *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, Adams examined the critical history of the novel as a genre form, arguing that the rise and transformation of the novel were closely related to European epic, romance, prose, essay, prose fiction, drama, history, biography, travel literature, etc. The novel developed from these genres as “the most independent, most flexible, and most characteristic literary form.” Travel literature, “like the novel, is not a clearly defined genre because it contains many genres in content and form, cannot form a self-contained system, and is itself constantly evolving” (Adams, 1983, p. 282). Just as the novel has two contrasting narrative forms, so does travel literature: the historical and imitative empirical narrative, and the romantic and didactic fictional narrative. Because travel literature has a longer history and tradition, developing through different historical periods with themes and forms appropriate to the era, European novels were profoundly influenced by travel literature in their formation and transformation—intellectually, commercially, politically, religiously, academically, and creatively. As Adam noted, “Many travel accounts share numerous similarities with the early, nascent novels: structure, theme, language, tone, philosophy, even literary tradition and writing purpose, although there are also many differences between the two...” (p. 282). He concludes that if the novel is the epic of the bourgeoisie, then travel literature not only has a longer history than the novel but is also a traceable textual form for examining the historical process of Western modernity. Because of this, travel

literature has become a leading site for scholars to reflect on and critique Western modernity and the history of imperial colonization.

The Politics of Representation: Colonial Discourse Analysis Paradigm and Its Transformation in Travel Literature Studies

Although travel literature is closely intertwined with epics, novels, poetry, drama, and other genres, and despite often being a bestseller, it remained on the periphery of literary criticism and academic attention until the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), when the criticism of travel literature emerged in literary studies. In *Orientalism*, Said drew on numerous travel-related official documents, notes, memoirs, field manuscripts, poems, novels, and other types of writing dating back to the 16th century. He interpreted the close relationship between the spatial poetics and cultural representation in travel literature, unraveling the knowledge enigmas hidden in cross-cultural travel writing and pioneering the critical paradigm of colonial discourse analysis. In the chapter "Imaginary Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental," he pointed out that without empirical space, people's consciousness typically uses "imagination" to fill or even determine space: "space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here" (Said, 1979, p. 55). Here, the poetic process refers to the intervention of language in describing space, inevitably involving subjective imagination. Influenced by Foucault's theory of discourse/knowledge power, Said emphasized the knowledge violence produced by the complicity of imagination and discourse, saying that we do not need to decide whether this imagined knowledge aligns with history and geography, or whether it tramples upon history and geography; suffice to say that over time, imagined knowledge exists in its own way, and is not empirical knowledge (p. 53). This set the tone for cross-cultural writing in travel literature. Said focused on how language or discourse as a poetic medium strengthens and consolidates the Western subject's position: "For there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away" (p. 55). Since the Age of Discovery, the East recognized,

expressed, and represented by Westerners across geographical space was, “culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” (p. 2). It is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 3). Positively, *Orientalism* stimulated an attitude of research towards the history of colonialism and imperialism, and also facilitated countless young, otherwise politicized scholars to gain new modes and fields of inquiry, especially in the literary field” (Bahdad, 1994, p. 173).

Influenced by *Orientalism*, the study of travel literature across space and culture surged in European and American academia during the 1980s and 1990s. First, the scope of Orientalism continuously expanded, not only limited to the East but also covering Africa, South America, and other colonized regions worldwide. For instance, American postcolonial theorist Mary Louise Pratt (1992) extended her research subject of travel writing to European travel writing about Africa and South America from the Enlightenment to the 1990s. Peter Hulme (1986) extended his research perspective to Europe’s politics of representation of the Americas and the Caribbean over more than three hundred years. In *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (1986), he summarized five narrative discourse patterns of colonial encounters: Columbus and the Savages; Prospero and Caliban; John Smith and Ocaontas; Robinson Crusoe and Friday; Inkle and Yarico. Placing colonial discourse in geographical and ideological fields, he pointed out that issues of space and land are often obscured by the topic of savagery—a characteristic of all colonial encounter narratives, discursively linking the Caribbean to barbarism (Hulme, 1986, p. XIII).

Regarding research methods, postcolonial theorists moved beyond the essentialist binary opposition of East-West in colonial discourse analysis, emphasizing the heterogeneous and dynamic structure of Orientalism. Pratt (1992) argued that European travel writing is a form of cultural production, producing not only “the rest of the world” but also, with the expansion of political economy, “the domestic subjects of European imperialism” (p. 4). In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, she proposed the famous concepts of “contact zone,” “anti-conquest,” and “autoethnography” to emphasize the unequal yet mutually transformative and

constitutive power dynamics between East and West, focusing on the resistance and voices of colonized indigenous peoples and their strategies (Pratt, 1992, pp. 5-10). Lisa Lowe (1991), in *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, emphasized the heterogeneous plurality of space and imagination. She argued that external social events and environments affect the writing of the Orient, and the intentions of Orientalist writers are shaped by complex and shifting political and social trends, such that unconscious social thoughts and personal interests influence the writing of the Orient. The differences of gender, race, nation, and class intersect with and intervene in Orientalist narratives. Integrating Foucault's "heterotopia" and discourse theory with Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony, she proposed the concept of "heterotopicality," referring to an open, dynamic, interwoven field of Orientalism (Lowe, 1991, pp. 10-11). David Spurr (1993) refined the paradigm of colonial discourse analysis in depth. In *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, he summarized twelve rhetorical modes of colonial discourse, including surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification, debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubstantiation, naturalization, eroticization, and resistance, pointing to the heterogeneous plurality inherent in colonial discourse (Spurr, 1993).

Furthermore, postcolonial theorists integrated psychoanalysis and gender criticism, broadening and enriching the multidimensional aspects of travel literature research. Dennis Porter (1991) delved into the intellectual imagination and psychological projection of the travel writing subject from a psychoanalytic perspective. As suggested by the title of his book, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing*, Porter argued that studying travel literature requires attention to the anxieties behind travel, because travel reveals the male subject's desire to escape the constraints of social institutions, representing the fulfillment of masculinity and transgression of boundaries in foreign lands. Drawing on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and Lacan's psychoanalysis of unconscious desire, he posited that the decision to leave one's homeland, wander elsewhere, or go into exile, the investment in or rejection of the countries traveled to, usually depends on (the traveler's) early preconceptions of that geographical space, not on objective factors (Porter, 1991, p. 11).

Thus, travel literature is not only about reinforcing the identity of the Other but also about reconfirming one's own social belonging, displaying the self's knowledge model. In this sense, travel writing is a form of self-return, which determines the desire and transgression of travel (p. 10). However, Porter attributed male travel desire and transgression to socio-historical changes. While plausible, this view has the limitation of a male-centered, single-gender perspective.

If most travel literature research from Said onwards focused on European, male, white authors' literary works, exhibiting a strong Eurocentrism and white supremacy, then a significant work exploring women's travel writing is that of renowned British scholar Sara Mills (1992). Using Foucault's theory, Said's colonial discourse analysis, and feminist theory as her framework, Mills linked feminist research with colonial studies, arguing that the construction of women's travel writing texts is a female discourse based on a series of power relations, such as the colonial power acting upon them and the patriarchal power acting upon them as middle-class women. The intersection and conflict of these two power systems determine the style and content of women's travel writing, which also exhibit individual female differences. Thus, she titled her book *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women Travel Writing and Colonialism* (1992), examining the negotiation between women's travel writing and colonialism through diaries, letters, and religious confessions, significantly filling the gender gap in travel literature studies. Other gender-focused results in travel literature research include Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992), Karen R. Lawrence's *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (1994), and Sidonie Smith's *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (2001).

In summary, the study of travel literature was primarily influenced by the post-structuralist methods prevalent in American academia in the 1970s. Post-structuralism holds that all representations are inevitably fictional because, at the knowledge level, no particular form of words is superior to others or closer to the facts. Therefore, different representations require careful scrutiny: regardless of genre or rhetorical device, they inevitably involve discursive politics. The issue of authenticity in travel literature is thus resolved because much of the narrative history, folklore, etc., addressed by colonial discourse is known for its authenticity. Consequently, travel

literature research must analyze not knowledge truth but political ideology, with truth being merely a relatively temporary reality.

Cross-disciplinary Research: Intersecting Interpretations from Geography, Anthropology, and Comparative Literature

Because travelers go cross geographical boundaries, traverse liminal spaces, move through different geographies, civilizations, cultures, religions, races, ideologies, political and economic systems, and attempt to understand, interpret, and write about other cultures, travel literature draws on various forms of knowledge from the social sciences, such as politics, economics, education, ethnology, natural history, anthropology, medicine, aesthetics, etc. It is regarded as “the most capacious cultural holdball” (Gilroy, 2001, p. 1). Travel literature, concerned with the representation of other cultures, has also received varying degrees of attention from geography, anthropology, comparative literature, and other fields, expanding its interdisciplinary travel dimensions and research value.

Said’s method of analyzing the politics of representation in “imaginary geography” significantly influenced geography. French thinkers like Bruno Latour, Michel de Certeau, and Marc Augé began to appear and become active in the field of cultural geography (Conley, 2012, pp. 7-8). Inspired by them, geographers started focusing on the unequal power relations implicit in geographical literature concerning representations of people and place, gender and race, empire and margin, examining travel writing about place and space. In *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing* (1999), edited by British scholars James Duncan and Derek Gregory, more than ten geographers explored issues of place, space, and landscape, integrating geography, literary criticism, cultural studies, and historical research. They focused on the phenomenon of movement in travel literature, covering regional travel writing on Africa, South Asia, and Europe. The ten articles collected are “Introduction”; “Limited Visions of Africa: Geographies of Savagery and Civility in Early Eighteenth-Century Narratives”; “Enlightenment Travels: The Making of Epiphany in Tibet”; “Writing Travel and Mapping Sexuality: Richard Burton’s Sotadic Zone”; “The Flight from Lucknow: British Women Travelling and Writing Home, 1857-8”; “Scripting Egypt:

Orientalism and the Cultures of Travel”; “Dis-Orientation: On the Shock of the Familiar in a Far-Away Place”; “The Exoticism of the Familiar and the Familiarity of the Exotic: Fin-de-siècle Travellers to Greece”; “Travelling through the Closet”; “Writing Over the Map of Provence: The Touristic Therapy of *A Year in Provence*.” Duncan and Gregory (1999) advocate that geographers pay attention to the “physicality of representation” in travel writing, meaning “the sites where travel writing is produced and the spatiality of representation” (p. 2), thereby arguing that cultural representation in travel literature has characteristics of “multiple factors, fragmented pieces, and spatial construction.” “Multiple factors” refers to travel writing being produced under the synthesis of various factors. Using 18th and 19th-century travel writing as examples, they explain that typically, “direct observations collected in the field were either reorganized or integrated into official records” (pp. 3-4), making it a constructed product. Second, “fragmented pieces” refers to the characteristics of travel archives. The forms of representation in travel writing are complex and diverse, including not only written texts but also maps, photographs, paintings, writings, etc. Therefore, “multiple strategies must be employed to attend to the different media of representation” (p. 4). The third characteristic is the “spatiality” of representation. Travel writing is an act of translation, constantly producing a sense of “in-between space.” Explaining this translation, the authors state that “translation implies traveling from one place to another, suggesting a dialectic between recognizing difference and recovering difference.” This means that when representing the qualities of another culture, the traveler must “‘translate’ one place into another, and in doing so constantly rub against the hubris that their own language-game contains the concepts necessary to represent another language-game” (p. 4). Therefore, in the in-between space, descriptions jump from one place to another, and this translation simultaneously losing and gaining meaning. This translation occurring in the intermediate space of cultural encounter is not innocent or neutral but is filled with power relations and desires. This is very similar to Pratt’s concept of transcultural space: she argues that travel writing reveals ambiguity and uncertainty, and its revealed authority and assumptions need to be questioned (Pratt, 1992).

Anthropology is theoretically a science studying human beings, typically based on first-hand materials on other cultures obtained through ethnographic writing. Ethnographic writing is also accomplished by traveling to the field. Anthropology has long tried to draw clear boundaries between itself and travel writing, arguing that the latter tends to employ personal, subjective literary rhetoric. From the early 20th century to the 1960s, ethnography adhered to the rigorous and focused “on-the-spot participant observation” fieldwork concept introduced by Bronislaw Malinowski in the opening of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), blending personal experience with scientific explanation. However, influenced by post-structuralist thinkers deconstructing grand narratives since the Enlightenment, this authoritative fieldwork practice of ethnography has been continuously challenged. It has been pointed out that beneath the mask of science hide power and desire, that discourse possesses the metaphorical function of literary rhetoric, and that writing other cultures “objectively” and “authentically” is merely a “truth claim” or “partial truth” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, pp. 1-26). Since the 1980s, ethnographers have begun to reflect and experiment, attempting to use the first person and employ obvious rhetorical or literary forms in their writing, meaning what they produce are increasingly close to travel literature. Like the return of exiled “travel writers,” the boundary between traveler and field researcher has become blurred (Clifford, 2003, p. 11). Anthropologist James Clifford revised the “fieldwork” of ethnographic research to “dwelling-in-travel,” viewing human dwelling forms as composed of settlement and displacement, emphasizing the process of representation in ethnographic writing. He argues that travel is a complex, universal experience, and displacement continuously constructs cultural meaning. Europe is permeated by external influences and constantly being redefined; thus, ethnography methodologically turns towards the poetic and literary representation of culture. Other anthropologists, such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Edmund Leach, have all shown interest in literary theory and practice, arguing that Western modern anthropological discourse is full of uncertainty and inauthenticity. They contend that cultural accounts in anthropology are constructed and artificial; ethnographic writing is rich in “allegory” in content and form, not the claimed historical “truth,” but rather “partial truth” of history and culture, possessing fictionality.

Comparative literature, involving cross-cultural, cross-national, cross-linguistic literary writing, also incorporates travel literature into its research scope. The French school of comparative literature, known for focusing on international literary relations, has long considered travel literature as an object of study concerning the influence of one nation's literature on another. American school represented by René Wellek criticized such influence research for its neglect of literature's internal aesthetics. While at the end of the 20th century, renowned British comparative literature scholar Susan Bassnett also began focusing on travel literature research. In her book *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (1993), she dedicated a chapter to travel literature, titled "Constructing Cultures: The Politics of Travellers' Tales," exploring the imaginative politics of travel stories in constructing foreign cultures. Bassnett argued that previous academic research on travel literature, using comparative methods for classification and comparison, resulted in establishing textual categories and hierarchical orders such as superior and subordinate nations, powerful and weak cultures, great and minor writers, while ignoring or overlooking the ideological connotations of these hierarchies. However, since the 1980s, comparative literature research has taken a different path. "Every reader of travel accounts, whether these be journeys, diaries, letters, translated accounts or stories told by travellers about their experiences in other cultures, makes adjustments" (Bassnett, 1993, p. 92). Methodologically drawing on theories from gender studies, cultural studies, and postmodern research, it began exposing the subtext hidden beneath the surface of truthful accounts of travelers' journeys in foreign lands, allowing a clearer view of how travelers construct and experience other cultures: "From travellers' accounts of their journeys, we can trace the presence of cultural stereotypes, and the way in which an individual reacts to what is seen elsewhere can reflect tendencies in the traveller's home culture" (p. 93). In the article "Translation and Travel Writing" (2019), Bassnett further points out that translation studies and travel writing research share great similarities, both using travel as a means. If travel writing is a textual translation of experiences of one (or multiple) cultures, then translation is a textual transfer from one language to another, also possessing an ideological dimension. She believes that travel writing research in the academic field during the 1980s incorporated theories and historical

methods from colonial studies and gender studies, viewing travel literature as a way to interpret colonial history. So-called truth and objectivity are unreliable, just as fidelity to the original in translation is untrustworthy. Therefore, when publishing translations, translators typically explain their strategies and decisions in a preface, aiming to account for the translator's mediating role in reshaping the material (Bassnett, 2019, p. 550). From the 1990s onwards, Bassnett and André Lefevere called for translation studies to focus on the ideology and cultural connotations in the conversion between two languages. Entering the 21st century, translation, along with travel literature, has become a textual field of interest for world literature scholars.

To conclude, the study of travel literature is the study of literature about spatial movement, about displacement, code-switching, cultural translation, and identity fluidity. It possesses cross-disciplinary, cross-linguistic, cross-national, and cross-cultural characteristics, involving colonization, exile, immigration, transgression, and the resulting issues of belonging and anxiety related to cultural identity. The study of travel literature transcends the limitations of the nation-state perspective in literature, re-examining humanity's history of writing about gender, race, religion, and cultural identity from the perspective of spatial movement rather than native soil and rootedness. Travel literature involves the politics of representation and cultural criticism. If the existence of a system or culture needs to be defined and reflected by an external, opposing factor, then travel writing significantly reveals the alternative formation history of cultural identity. As Stephen Greenblatt stated in "A Mobility Studies Manifesto" (2010), contemporary social sciences and humanities research must place high importance on mobility. He points out that the study of mobile spaces should focus not only on the visible movement of people, objects, images, texts, and ideas but also on their invisible movement, identifying and explaining the "contact zones" of cultural commodity exchange, listing the tensions between individual agency and structural constraints, and interpreting the feelings embedded within them (Greenblatt et al., 2010, pp. 250-252).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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