Metamorphoses of Travel Writing

Metamorphoses of Travel Writing: Across Theories, Genres, Centuries and Literary Traditions

Edited by

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CONTENTS

Part II: Literary Journeys in the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Centuries

Part III: Travel Literature(s) in the Twentieh Century

PREFACE

Travel has always been one of the key motives in the texts of all major literary traditions even though the itineraries, ideologies and means of representing them have been changing throughout the centuries, as have types of travellers, their reasons and goals of travel, means of travel and literary genres at the disposal of (travel) writers. Critical reflection on travel literature, however, is a relatively new phenomenon. This situation is undoubtedly mostly due to the hierarchical system imposed by the critical paradigm, which is often referred to as "liberal humanism". This paradigm was dominant in the anglophone literary criticism and scholarship until the late 1960s and in many other literary traditions, even much longer. Under its universal rule, "high literature" was clearly delineated from "popular literature" and it was only the former that was deemed to be a proper subject of scholarly concern.

"Travel writing", according to a recent definition by Jan Borm, (2004, 13) is not a literary genre "but a variety of texts both predominantly fictional and non-fictional whose main theme is travel". "Travel writing" in the anglophone literary tradition is also known under the alternative names of "travel genre", "travel literature" and "literature of travel". Most texts which we today include in the category of "travel writing", because of their largely non-fictional and/or hybrid generic status, were located beyond the scope of most scholars' academic research.

The "turn to theory" in anglophone literary criticism, which started in the early 1970s, resulted in the situation where many texts of travel literature came under close scrutiny from various, very distinct theoretical perspectives. Feminist and post-colonial studies have become two fields that have concentrated on the texts of travel literature in the most sustained and fruitful ways; the former exposing its patriarchy and redressing the balance between the attention paid to female versus male travellers and travel writers, the latter being keen to prove travel writing's and travel writers' (often unconscious) complex involvement and implication in the projects of Orientalism, colonialism, imperialism and post-colonialism.

But there remain whole areas within the field of travel writing studies which are still largely unexplored, and waiting to be researched with a wider variety of tools than have been used so far. The articles gathered in this volume examine some of those areas: poetry and tragedy in travel

writing but also travel writing texts written in languages other than English, within different literary traditions. These articles draw from different theoretical backgrounds such as that of narratology, generic studies and cultural literary theory and, last but not least, postmodernism. *Metamorphoses of Travel Writing: Across Genres, Centuries and Literary Traditions* is divided into three sections, each dealing with different kinds of practices and texts. They are preceded by the introduction on travel and travel writing approached from various perspectives: European, Polish and personal.

Part One: Across Theories and Genres

In the opening article, **Zbigniew Białas** argues that travel literature is an area in which the connectedness of the mind and body is particularly evident, but that the travellers' somatic engagements have not been comprehensively revealed in major critical studies. In a wide sweeping survey covering such travellers as Odysseus, Lemuel Gulliver or Baron von Münchhausen, and spanning a wide range of theories and variety of theorists from Edmund Husserl and Mikhail Bakhtin to Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva and Jean Baudrillard, Białas ponders on the nature of somatics and corporeality of travel and the emotions accompanying them as well as their textual and graphic representations in travel literature.

Grzegorz Moroz traces the development of the anglophone literary criticism's mostly reluctant treatment of the questions of literary genre(s) in the context of travel writing in general and travel books in particular. His paper highlights the possibilities of more positive attitudes to these issues introduced by scholars drawing on such fields of research as narratology, generic criticism and cultural literary theory.

Barbara Klonowska proposes to read the contemporary, non-fictional, journalistic, travel narrative *Into the Wild* as a tragedy. Drawing on Aristotle's understanding and definition of tragedy as a literary genre, Northorpe Frye's treatment of it as an aesthetic category as well as Max Scheler's ethical approach to it, she demonstrates convincingly the sustained use of the form of tragedy throughout the whole text and offers a novel interpretation, which also points to new opportunities for trans-generic research in travel writing studies.

Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of the road being an instance of writing, of fracturing which opens the landscape to differentiation and inscription, **Paulina Amroży-Lis** demonstrates the growing loss of confidence in two American road poems, a modernist and a post-modernist one, which she reads against the "Romantic certainty of the

spiritual end of the road" as seen in Walt Whitman's notion of the open road. William Carlos Williams's poem is shown on the one hand to resuscitate some of Whitman's optimism about the power of language but, on the other, to pave the way for Derrida's *via rupta*, whereas Rosemarie Waldrop's poem is read as presenting a new, very different version of the Whitmanian open road; "with the road always already textual".

Jerzy Kamionowski analyses and compares two poems by Afro-American poets who tried to represent the real horrors of the Middle Passage, the transportations of African slaves across the Atlantic. Robert Hayden's poem is found wanting in this respect largely because of its strong reliance on the dominant Western discourse and literary tradition, while Sonia Sanchez's "Improvisation" is presented as much more successful thanks to the innovative use of the form of traditional oral African poetry which, among other things, allowed to transcend the limitations of the individual experience and transform it into the general female experience on a slave ship.

Anna Szczepanek-Guz analyses "the travel poems" of two poets of the New York School and concentrates on the ways in which they dealt with the representation of their own selves and the worlds through which they travelled. The paper discusses how and why, in many of these poems, the balance between these two main constituents of any travel writing moves towards the poet's self.

Agnieszka Włoczewska presents the selected, experimental poems of Blaise Cendrars in the context of their relying on the poet's actual travelling experiences as well as their treatment of travel as a metaphor. Her text analyses the innovative aspects of Cendrar's poetry in such areas as themes, attitudes and rhetorical tropes.

Part Two. Literary Journeys in the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Centuries

Bożena Dybiec interprets the playfulness of Mark Twain's travel book not so much as the characteristic feature of the genre, but predominantly as a result of its being a "post-tourist" text. Relying on Maxine Feifer's explanation of this concept as well as on relevant recent research in the areas of sociology and literary studies, Dybiec manages to avoid the dangers of anachronism and demonstrates many levels and elements in *Innocents Abroad* that allow for such interpretation.

Aleksandra Budrewicz-Beratan compares two travel books resulting from the trips to America written by Britain's and Poland's nineteenth-century most canonical and popular novelists: Charles Dickens and

Henryk Sienkiewicz. The wide range of areas dealt with by Budrewicz-Beratan includes: the form and style, the influence of the former writer on the latter, the relationships of these travel books with their novels and other forms of fiction and non-fiction, "transatlanticism", as well as the shattering of writers' preconceptions and expectations about America.

Balázs Venkovits introduces an important nineteenth-century Hungarian travel book about the Americas focusing on Pál Rosti's rendering of his observations, which are analysed against the earlier images of these two continents in the wider context of the social and historical situation at that period in Europe in general and in Hungary in particular. Moreover, the innovative nature of Rosti's photographs, lithographs and engravings accompanying the text is presented in the light of the development of the travel book as a genre.

Using the examples of French nineteenth-century travel books recounting journeys to the Orient written by the canonical writers, **Catherine Robert** presents the francophone perspective of the evolution of the travel book as a genre in this crucial period. The focus is on the differences and similarities, as well as on the ideological and stylistic issues in the construction of writer-travellers' personae in the travel books of Alphonse de Lamartine and François-René de Chateaubriand.

Aleksandra Niemirycz presents different types of texts that resulted from the journey to the Holy Land undertaken by Juliusz Słowacki, a Polish Romantic poet and bard. These texts are perceived within the wider context of European literary travelling to the Orient, but also, more specifically, of the journeys and poems of Lord Gordon Byron.

Krystyna Kralkowska-Gątkowska presents a brief outline of the honeymoon journey in literature and moves on to examine this motif in two nineteenth-century novels. Drawing on mainstream travel writing discourse, she shows how culture-specific notions resulted in the different treatment of the honeymoon journey motif by Polish and French novelists; Henryk Sienkiewicz Guy de Maupassant respectively.

Drawing from the social, linguistic and generic interpretations of *Gulliver's Travels* in the context of trends dominant in the Early Modern Period, **Rocio G. Sumillera** focuses on how this canonical text handles relationships between language and morality. She argues for the hiatus existing between Swift's overtly expressed, conservative views on the importance of stability and constancy in the language and the innovative, artful and creative use of English.

Jakub Lipski evaluates to what extent Henry Fielding, while writing his text about the journey to the other world, relied on such literary conventions as *katabasis* or *voyages imaginaries*. The paper also focuses

on showing that this text, despite some weaknesses in the plot, conveys a strong moral statement executed in an elaborate way.

Part Three: Travel Literature(s) in the Twentieth Century

Małgorzata Rutkowska analyses and compares two well-known and extensively researched contemporary travel books recounting the desert experiences of their authors. The key concepts focused on in her analysis include ways of representing desert time and space in these narratives, and also the desert as a place of liminal potentialities opening up opportunities for the radical transformation of the Western self.

Zdzisław Głębocki concentrates on showing how Bruce Chatwin's rendering of his encounters with Australian Aborigines in particular, and his theorizing of the nomadic experience in general, have been analysed in recent literary and cultural criticism. Głębocki also compares and contrasts Chatwin's experience with that of twenty-first-century "nomads" surfing the cyberspace.

Jacek Wiśniewski analyses a book of Second World War memoirs by Keith Douglas in terms of its affinities with texts of travel literature. The other crucial frames of reference for *Alamein to Zem Zem* include: Daniel Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, Douglas's other prose narratives and, last but not least, Douglas's poetry.

Magdalena Horodecka analyses Ryszard Kapuściński's travel book *Imperium* in the context of Maxim Waldstein's arguments of its Orientalist bias. Relying on Edward Said's original explanation of the term, Horodecka concentrates on showing that the narrative's overall structure of Kapuściński's book is anti-Orientalist and that Waldstein's reading of it is true only on the level of individual statements and "some generalizations".

Krzysztof Hejwowski analyses the translations from Polish to English and French of two travel books by Ryszard Kapuściński. By reverting to a wide range of examples the text demonstrates how the combination of apparently minor translators' mistakes, their inadequate knowledge of the source language culture as well as seemingly innocent choices on grammatical and syntactical levels can lead to serious discrepancies between the interpretations of the original text and its translations on such grounds as the alleged Orientalist and racist attitude of Kapuściński's narrative personae.

In the light of Michel Foucault's "archaeological method" and Rena Sendyka's "cultural theory of the genres", **Marek Pacukiewicz** traces the development of Polish mountaineering literature over the last century. The

generic perspective adopted in this paper offers an opportunity to analyse how different types of mountaineering texts have been applied to cope with the changing approaches to mountaineering and how they have dealt with representing mountaineers' experiences.

While relying on Caren Kaplan's mapping of the figures of a tourist, a traveller and an exile, and drawing on canonical postmodernist and postcolonial scholars, **Julia Szołtysek** analyses two novels, Paul Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) and Esther Freud's *Hideous Kinky* (1992), as well as the two films based on these novels. She concentrates on showing the differences in the options of identity formation open to Euro-Americans moving to and living in Africa in the middle and towards the end of the twentieth century.

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich offers the reading of Olga Tokarczuk's (a contemporary Polish female novelist) *Bieguni* (2007) as a postmodern travel novel. Drawing on Ihab Hassan's, as well as other theorists', understanding of postmodernism, she demonstrates the pervasiveness in *Bieguni* of its key tenets, such as: indeterminacy, fragmentation, decanonization, decentering, selflessness, irony and intertextuality.

Krzysztof Kosecki, relying on George Lakoff's definition of a stereotype, compares the American and Polish stereotypes about various European nations. His research is based on the one hand on Fodor's *Guide of Europe* and, on the other, on selected Polish newspapers and websites of travel agencies.

The texts gathered in *Metamorphoses in Travel Writing* visibly illustrate the fact that travel writing studies play a significant role in critical thought and practice. The manifold perspectives applied by the authors and the heterogeneity of the problems approached point to the potentialities this burgeoning field of research offers.

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INTRODUCTION

JOLANTA SZTACHELSKA

Those of us who have approached the notion of travel know that it is not easy to say something new, something that we have not known about for a very long time. Please, allow me to present a few reflections, almost personal, free from scholarly discipline and the need to provide definitions.

The first story

The most beautiful journey of my life—unexpected, a bit crazy and undertaken at the sharp turn of life—was the journey to Iran. Today I see it very clearly—it was the journey to the cradle of what we call the European civilization; after all it was from there that peoples and languages spread in different directions …

I remember that at one moment, some two hundred kilometers away from the Persian Gulf, from which the hot wind was blowing, I saw something that we, people of the twenty first century—transfixed on ourselves and on the gadgets of our inventive era: laptops and mobiles—see so rarely. In the open, green fields we met a tribe of nomads, who with their wives, cows, chickens, donkeys and portable workshops, capable of anything necessary for life, were covering hundreds of kilometers—in search of better land, greener grass and bluer sky—free and happy…

While reliving this picture in my mind, I have come to the conclusion, that it was necessary to travel so far, see them, stand in front of the majestic tombs of the Achaemenids, fall deep in thought in the temples of Zarathusthra, and visit cities built of clay many thousands years ago to return to oneself.

The second story

I live on the outskirts of the city; in a place which is not beautiful, and most certainly in a place one would not boast about. Is there anything extraordinary about it? Directly above us—I have not really made it up—

there is a route of migrating birds, which twice a year—in the early spring and in the autumn—give us a unique performance of life …

Led by instinct, that never fails them, they fly north and then return to sustain the wonderful ritual of nature's rebirth…

We keep staring at the sky—my dog and I—listening to the distant calls of cranes and wild geese…

The third story

One of the most wonderful books I remember from my childhood is *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* (*Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige*) by Selma Lagerlőf. A naughty boy is transformed into a dwarf and on the back of a huge goose makes a long journey. He learns about the world and about himself, distances himself from every day life, acquires respect for people and nature…

***

All these stories tell us about travel, about its different dimensions, about how crucial an experience it is: primeval, essential, and unique.

Cultural expressions of this experience are subjected to historical changes; literature and civilization have preserved them. But even when they change, they preserve their basic character as representing our longings and the need to move beyond the place that has been prescribed to us.

Travel has remained a passion of mankind since its dawn; some talk about instinct, some about atavism that we inherited from our nomadic ancestors, for whom to wander meant to survive. Others point at the cultural heritage in the form of myths, legends and the oldest epics, the bible and the *Odyssey* with its heroes: Gilgamesh, Theseus, the Wandering Jew, Moses and Odysseus. And at this point I would often add those belonging to slightly later periods: Herodotus and Dante, the former as the founding father of all types of reporters, the latter as the most famous—since Orpheus—traveller to impossible worlds.

This list, far from being complete, shows us, however, that travels and wanderings are, first of all, an absolute necessity of mankind and we should realize that they are, in a way, an evolutional necessity (socialization)—both on the level of individuals and groups (tribes, communities, nations). After all, getting away from what is maternal (from a mother, a land, or an area to which fate bound us), exploration of space and time, choice of individual paths, are the necessary conditions for

acquiring our own identity, built in the dialogue with the others and with them in the background. In the case of communities only the scale is different—tribal or national identity cannot be constructed without confrontations with other tribes or nations; and these usually take place while travelling.

Secondly, 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.

The predilection for travel grew significantly in the eighteenth century, becoming one of the key features in the culture of the Enlightenment, which was also developing in Poland. What makes Poland different in this respect from Western Europe was the lack of the social and economic growth of the middle class, with its stress on individualism (in the area of literature it is Robinson Crusoe, who personifies these changes). Poland's partitions at the end of the eighteenth century were yet another factor which significantly altered the situation. Whenever all over Europe, as Ryszard Przybylski (1983, 116) testifies, culture and literature were activities of intellectual speculation or fun, in Poland they became the areas of grave speculations and national mourning. Polish national culture of the partitions' period became a unique emanation of national identity; Polishness has found a haven in its culture. This situation also altered the ways in which Poles travelled.

The nineteenth century in Europe was the period of travel mania. The "travel bug" was a common phenomenon then as well as the existential restlessness which mostly overcame those artists searching for inspiration and looking for experiences. But it should be borne in mind, that travelling at that time was not only the fulfilment of dreams and the soul's desires, but a concrete venture undertaken with concrete goals, aims and pragmatics. After all, mass tourism was born in the nineteenth century. It became possible, thanks to improvements in the modes of travelling and man's conquering of time and space. The inventions of the steam engine, electricity, new means of transport (railways, balloons, air-planes, bicycles and cars) simplified man's travelling, but at the same separated it from poetry. The increasing comfort of travelling deprived it of the aura of uniqueness. We no more needed courtiers, servants, or even a chaperone.

Travelling acquired features of individual expedition, it no longer required special rituals surrounding it; travelling became an every-day experience.

There are many ways to classify Romantic travel (and travel literature). It seems that the most important one primarily distinguishes the direction and aim of travelling. Stanisław Burkot (1988, 31-38) lists the following types of travel: oriental, caused by necessity (forced exile), home travels, scientific, educational in Europe (the Grand Tour). Janina Kamionka-Straszakowa (1988) enumerates fifteen different types of Romantic descriptions of journeys: historical, to the Slavonic and folk roots, sentimental, creative, national pilgrimages, painters' travels, for initiation, picturesque, live pictures, panoramic, to the sources of civilization, farmer self-instructional, to the Promised Land, imaginative.

The intensity of travelling in the world strongly influences the ways in which it is recorded, not only in fictional travel writing but also in novels. The novel, a fictional genre, had adopted from the ancient literature an old rhetorical trope of a journey and the archetype of *homo viator*, and filled them with the formal realism and the individualism and consciousness of Early Modern travellers. As early as the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a characteristic bonding of travel with the anthropological project of the period was discernible: travelling is an experience of epistemological dimensions, extending the knowledge of reality and of man. Polish novels written throughout this period show this very clearly: Ignacy Krasicki's *Mikolaja Doświadczyńskiego Przypadki (Adventures of Mikolaj Doswiadczynski)* (1776)—in which, in an exemplary fashion, almost all possibilities of the new genre are employed, with such themes as Parisian voyages, exotic adventures, desert islands and even utopia; Cyprian Godebski's *Grenadier-filozof (Grenadier-Philosopher)* (1805)—a kind of sentimental romance in the manner of Laurence Sterne; and even in Fryderyk Skarbek's novels; one of which had a meaningful title *Podróż bez celu* (*Aimless travel)* (1824-25). Therefore, though the motive of travel is often regarded as banal, it is also perceived as exciting and liberating and associated with:

> progress, the quest for knowledge, freedom as freedom to move, self-awareness as an Odyssean enterprise, salvation as a destination to be attained by following a prescribed pathway [...] (Van den Abeele 1992, XV)

During the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, the times of intensive colonialism and huge migrations—driven by both political and economic reasons—travel writing showed a remarkable inventiveness in creating different types of travellers Romanticism created almost

archetypical models of travellers, thinkers and experience seekers, errant knights—led by a sad traveller from La Mancha—wanderers touched by Bovarism, pilgrims to Sacrum and Nature, rebelling escapees from rich, bourgeois Europe. For all of them travel was connected with the state of the soul: boredom, atrophy of emotions, lack of strong impressions, existential morass, or even rebellion against existence, writer's block, the search for inspiration, exceptional sensitivity, but also with the need to participate in history. These were also days of travels undertaken out of passion and for gain, both scientific and exploratory, without which—or more precisely, without the results of which—it would be difficult to conceive of the modern world (for example, the travels of Charles Darwin, Bronisław Malinowski, Joseph Conrad, David Livingstone, and Henry Stanley). These travels transformed not only the travellers but also the reality, which was reinterpreted, and the perception of man, mankind, nature and culture. It was also in the second half of the nineteenth century that mass tourism was born; which aimed (and still aims) at bringing the world closer, encounters between different people, ways of thinking, styles of life and better understanding of cultural diversities.

What matters in travel—apart from direction, goal and motivation—is the luggage. This phrase sounds wonderful in Italian: *viaggio con bagaglio*, travelling with luggage. What is included in the luggage? Apart from a toothbrush and warm pyjamas? Our luggage can contain our stereotypes through which we perceive both co-passengers and the local people, sentiments that we bestow upon them. But the luggage can take a form of our mission with which we visit other countries and cultures. Our luggage can include books; those which we take with us and those which help us on the way; those, which we write while travelling and those which we—for whatever reasons—do not write… The matter of the luggage has been introduced here, because everything that concerns travelling creates new tropes. Even the things that seem to have been so well described—as, for example, the so-called sociology of travel—are constantly subjected to new facts, revelations and hypotheses. The theme of travel seems to be inexhaustible.

Nowadays we turn mostly to two basic models of travel. (Waśko, 2007) The classical model seems to be built around the Homeric character of Odysseus. His travels are connected with the perennial return, because they were caused by the anger of the gods. Odysseus travels not because of his own will, but because of Fate. Travels are a great, unquenchable longing for the country, fatherland, home, love. We often feel like inheritors of Odysseus when we want to underline our bond with Ithaca. In this type of travel all that matters is the return.

The modern model is, paradoxically, contained in the personality of Don Juan, for whom travelling is a style of life. Don Juan travels a great deal, because he constantly runs away from disgruntled lovers and moneylenders; but we can look at it from another perspective as well; he runs after passion, because he experiences perennial lack of fulfilment. Travelling for him means to be alive; the return to Seville would mean death.

The third model, the contemporary one, is slightly strange, because it is connected with travelling in the enclosed space of the city, the mind and personality. It is the closest to the virtual travels of our times and is closely connected with the writings and personality of Charles Baudelaire. This is the model of the Parisian *flâneur*, city wanderer and the observer of contemporary life.

The second and third models have been presented here, for they clearly show what has happened to travel in our times; the times of mass-tourists who are not directed towards extending their knowledge, but towards fulfilling their specific desires, mostly connected with consumerism: exotic cuisine, sex, and extreme sports. On the other hand, we commonly perceive the modern world as global, borderless and our style of life as nomadic.

When we think about representing travel in literature we tend to rely on different patterns and it should be borne in mind that travel discourse, known in all cultures of the world, was at the root of many contemporary literary genres. During the nineteenth century, when the novel's position as the most important narrative genre stabilized, the roles of travel and travelling themes diminished, the former fictional travel discourses were transformed into reportage. Contemporary novels very rarely describe explorations of unknown lands, especially after man's landing on the Moon. Travelling, unless it is into the depths of our minds, when it becomes time travelling, has a very conventional role as a compositional pattern in popular literature or, on the contrary, tends to transforms itself into allegory or myth. It shows the human condition with its longings and dreams of unknown adventures of the body, mind and soul.

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PART ONE:

ACROSS GENRES AND THEORIES

THE MOBILE BODY: PROLEGOMENA TO THE CORPOREALITY OF TRAVEL

ZBIGNIEW BIAŁAS

One of the most famous travellers in Western culture was also a notorious liar and trickster; although fictitious, he was nevertheless formidably myth forming. Odysseus, confronted with the Cyclops' monstrous body, denies his own corporeality. "Nobody is my name, Nobody they call me" insists Odysseus frantically, answering the Cyclops' impatient question (Homer 1995, 343). The shift from *Οδυσ[σεύς]* into *Οὔτις* is more than cosmetic—it is indeed life saving. "Nobody is slaying me by guile and not by force," roars blinded Polyphemos, denying *a body's* participation in the process of his mutilation (Homer 1995, 345). Soon after, Odysseus temporarily withdraws under *a no-human-body* when, in a successful attempt at escaping, he hides his cunning self beneath the mass of Polyphemos' favourite ram. This example illustrates not only the obvious truth that the paradigm of travelling has its roots in ancient times but also the fact that the traveller's body—whether hotly denied or not, whether saved or mutilated—remains at the very core of the representational enterprise of travel writing. That Odysseus denies the somatics of travelling is understandable because he wants to save his body from being devoured. This is, however, lost on the Cyclops, who is not sufficiently intelligent to understand that no "body" equals no "meat": "Nobody will I eat last among his comrades," (Homer 1995, 343) brags the monster, and it remains an empty threat, as it, indeed, must. One may note that, somewhat as a by-product, the Cyclops rather than Caliban emerges in the frontline of the long array of native cannibals that people latter-day literary representations.

After many centuries and the discovery of a few new continents, in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* Lemuel Gulliver, reconciling two opposing careers, is both a rather benign Polyphemos-figure in the country of Lilliputians and an Odysseus-figure in the country of Brobdingnag. Swift introduces an explorer whose body—at times treading upon the ground and at other times being trodden upon—is almost always out of

proportion when judged against the explored worlds. In a comparable literary culture representing European dogmas of the Enlightenment, we encounter yet another travelling charlatan. The historical figure of Baron Karl Friedrich Hieronymus von Münchhausen (1720 - 1797), when turned into the hero of a *Volksbuch,* highlights the fate of the body perhaps even more forcibly than do the combined figures of Odysseus and Gulliver. Both in Raspe's and in Bürger's versions, Baron von Münchhausen, "Gulliver Revived" becomes a caricature of his real-life counterpart, reflecting the travellers' obsessions and fabrications, the mutations of the body in motion, and the ardent denial of bodily limits and limitations—in effect, a prime illustration of somatic monumentalism. Indeed, gargantuan illustrations adorn most editions of the book, both official and pirated. In other words, the traveller's own body, when represented in writing, when immobilised in the midst of motion, somewhat like Keats' figures on the surface of the Grecian urn, is not only and not necessarily a somatic construction. It is a symbolic construct that enters into a relation with the surrounding world.

"The intimate connection, which exists between the body and the mind," wrote Thomas De Quincey, "has never been sufficiently enlarged on in theory or insisted on in practice." (Quoted in Youngquist 1999, 346) These words were written in 1803 and may have been inspired not so much by the taking of opium as by restless walking in the streets of London. Today, because of the recent turn in philosophy and criticism, De Quincey would be partly satisfied. Contemporary materialism, in its varied configurations (Bakhtinian carnivalism, Lyotardian and Derridean postmodernism, Foucaultian epistemology, Deleuzian philosophy and Irragarayian feminism, etc.), persistently challenges claims that the body can be relegated to a subservient position when compared to reason. Postmodernism emphasises that the body plays a tremendous role in the constitution and destabilisation of the speaking (and writing) subject. However, with all the knowledge that bodies and significations are interlocked in a somewhat Laocöonian embrace, when it comes to colonial and postcolonial theory, the result of materialistic grounding usually appears to be a one-way ticket.

In most pertinent studies, ranging from Frantz Fanon's texts in the early 1950s, through Henry Louis Gates's influential collection of essays on "race" and literature, published in 1985, to Anne McClintock's studies published in the mid-1990s, the body is seen by and large as a specific material text, upon and by means of which signs of difference are easily instituted because of either the body's enticing visibility (nakedness) or its harrowing invisibility (as in Arab countries or, symbolically, in Conrad's

Heart of Darkness). Yet, to be able to test and/or appreciate to what extent the postcolonial body was and remains today a battleground for discursive control, it is helpful to start with the awareness of the somatics of the traveller himself—his agreement to and with his own person or lack thereof *vis-à-vis* other bodies, his "sensibility," his translation of the somatic into the semantic. Nowhere perhaps is the connectedness of the mind and the body more manifest than in travel writing; nowhere perhaps is the Cartesian postulate of the dichotomy of the mind and the body denounced more blatantly than in travel narratives, where the somatic element is, and has to be, slightly on the overindulgent side.

Yet, remarkably, if one were to judge by the lack of momentous critical studies in that particular realm, the traveller's physical engagement is denied a wider significance. Charles Grivel noted that travel writing was "a neglected literature" (Grivel 1994, 256). In a more recent study Barbara Korte states that neither a poetics nor a comprehensive history of travel writing has been undertaken, and—commenting on the scarcity of critical studies to date—concludes that the literariness of travel discourse is a "widely neglected" issue (Korte 2000, 2-3). Explorers are genuine performance artists who use their bodies as material and who, like many performance artists, have those bodies ignored by the public. In effect, De Quincey's postulate of the intimate connection between the flesh and the mind remains unrecognised today in the prevailing traveller-focused criticism of colonial literature. We do not need to follow the Romantic philosopher's strategy as delineated in "The Last Days of Immanuel Kant", where he somewhat hastily places the body *before* the mind, but, in neo-Darwinian, post-Freudian, and post-postmodernist times, we should at least establish some codes determining, for instance, why travellers should want, in the manner of Odysseus, to deny their bodies. I believe that critics— hopefully with more success than the blinded Cyclops—should not let them do so. It is equally interesting to see how other travel writers defend the primacy of their physicality and follow in the grotesque footsteps of Baron Münchhausen. And although it would be already axiomatic to state that there is no consistent relationship between physical senses and discursive senses because all signs are arbitrary, that does not yet mean that somatic representations are devoid of semiotic value.

Edmund Husserl, in his essay "The World of the Living Present and the Constitution of the Surrounding World External to the Organism", emphasizes the very performance of motion as a major cognitive act through which the mobile self experiences and understands its *unity* in opposition to the rest of the world. In effect, the outside is equated with the "beyond-the-body"—*no-man,* the genuine *Οὔτις*—in relation to which the

travelling body, held together by bones, muscles and skin, continually changes its position and, by doing so, convinces itself of its oneness and uniqueness. Many thinkers would point out that this conviction is illusory. The body is far from impenetrable, as Mikhail Bakhtin demonstrates convincingly in his study of Rabelais' work. It is open to many interactions, and Odysseus skilfully usurped the prerogatives of the world beyond his body wall, the *what-his-body-is-not.* The manoeuvre worked successfully not only in enabling his further voyage but also in embellishing the subsequent representation, the acts of recounting.

Bakhtin maintains that at the time of the Renaissance, in that epoch of great geographical discoveries, bodies could not yet be considered for themselves; they still transgressed the limits of their isolation. He juxtaposes the classic image of the finished man to that of the grotesque man, incomplete, open, not separated from the rest of the world by boundaries but blending with it, outgrowing itself and transgressing its own limits. (Bakhtin 1984, 23-25) Bakhtin (1984, 317) stresses repeatedly that the acts of the bodily drama take place on the confines of the body and the outer world. It is obvious that the grotesque man in this understanding would not allow a division between *the mobile body* and *what the mobile body is not*, and that this division would correspond to the formula of the classic man. The classic man is self-sufficient, and the borderlines separating him from the outside world are sharply defined.

Husserl, unlike Bakhtin, juxtaposed theoretically the mobile body and the world that is the *beyond-the-mobile-body* as if it were a matter of smooth apportionment, but, on the level of cultural production and practice, the situation is more complex. The metaphorical tradition of seeing the external world and even the entire Universe as a human frame is as ancient as Egyptian cosmography and is widespread enough to be also found in Babylonian thought, Jewish study of truth, and Tantrism (Gandelman 1991, 83). In Medieval times Christ's body was symbolically projected on to the *mappa mundi,* and, in maps drafted prior to Columbus' voyages, the mystical identification of the earth with the human body became a fashion. In the seventeenth century, especially with the advent of John Donne's cartographic poems, the opposite direction was taken, in which the human being became a geographical category. This only strengthened the potentiality of the metaphorical identification between the body and the external world.

The culture of the Enlightenment was especially responsive to the attempt to regard the explorer as a measurable world if only because the eighteenth century generally coincided with the introduction of new technologies of computation and quantification. This was also the epoch of

the introduction of power through surveillance, as exemplified by the Benthamian idea of Panopticon. Swift, ever ironical, and himself torn between extravagant notions, recognized those tendencies, and, when Gulliver was fitted with a suit of new clothes during his travels in Lilliput, the tailor treated his frame as a traveller would normally treat the land. The result was pitiful, testifying, in an indirect sense at least, to Swift's distrust of most new-fangled tendencies.

The second half of the eighteenth century not only saw the birth of intense inquisitiveness and scientification, but, as Michel Foucault has demonstrated, it witnessed the crystallization of the predominant modern episteme. "Nature" became a pervasive concept, a password in religion, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy and politics, (Willey 1986, vii; Solnit 2000, 119) while "Science" granted primacy to Newton's postulates. Newton apparently assumed the role of neo-Diogenes: he professed that motion was the cornerstone of all reasoned doctrine and claimed confidently in *Opticks* that "to demonstrate how the properties and actions of all things follow from two or three principles of motion would be a very great step in philosophy" (Quoted in Willey 1986, 138). At the same time, Locke's psychology emphasized that meanings were derived through sense perceptions from the surrounding world and what developed as a result was a heightened responsiveness to the dynamism of the outside world (Marx, 96). Little wonder that, starting from the eighteenth century, travellers became emblematic figures in literature (Solnit 2000, 182).

Bearing in mind Husserl's and Bakhtin's musings on the relationship between the body and what-the-body-is-not, we can presume that at least some of those travellers/writers could be tempted to ponder questions which the act of travelling intensifies and dramatizes. Those questions concern the relation of the body to what is hidden inside it and the relation of the body to what remains outside. Bakhtin is helpful in elucidating the issue at stake:

> The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots. (Bakhtin 1984, 27)

This invokes two somatically charged concepts: that of "the orifice" and that of "the surface." Discursive celebration of "the surface" is, in simplified terms, the glorification of the body wall and its assumed smoothness, the location of those spaces where absorbing and ejecting is

exiguous, while the triumph of "the orifice," wherever pronounced, glaringly introduces those critical places where the body wall is penetrable.

Other related questions may arise. If the travelling body, held together by bones, muscles, and skin, continually changes its position in relation to the outside world (equated with the "beyond-the-body") and, by doing so, convinces itself of its uniqueness, what happens with this oneness if parts of the body separate from it? How will those lost parts function symbolically? How will the body function without them? These questions, introducing anatomical fantasies, or, in Bakhtin's words, "the free play with the human body and its organs," (Bakhtin 1984, 345-46) were popular not only in the culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In *Mardi,* fiction that Melville's preface indicates he wants to be taken for fact, this dilemma is clearly at the centre of the amputation episode:

> Now, which was Samoa? The dead arm swinging high as Haman? Or the living trunk below? Was the arm severed from the body, or the body from the arm? The residual part of Samoa was alive, and therefore we say it was he. (Melville 1970, 78)

We need to acknowledge that in recent psychoanalytical criticism a related direction has developed, most evident in the later works of Julia Kristeva. We can adapt Kristeva's argument on the essentiality of the "abjected matter", by which she would define anything "from finger clippings to faeces, all that we must shed, and from which we must distance ourselves, in order to be" (Burgin 1990, 117). There is an obvious practical side to it when the concept is applied to the activity of travelling, as the shedding and the distancing is a "staying alive" tactic, and Kristeva's "in order to be" becomes equivalent to "in order to survive" and "in order to proceed." Here, the very act of geometrical distancing oneself from what one sheds is the measure of the journey's continuity and success. It is, then, already in this limited sense that applied geometry and applied vectoriality is directly related to abjection. More generally and less practically, the need to produce "abjected matter" seems to be the result of the plain fact that all subjects have boundaries and that all egos are bounded by matrixes, which is where Kristeva's hypothesis by and large remains in keeping with Husserl's definition.

But even without a psychoanalytical disposition, the concept of abjected matter is of interest. It can be related to what has been discussed above with reference to amputation and to some of the diseases that result in the production and disposal of abjected matter in more drastic representations, where it is not just finger clippings but fingers from which the disgusted ego distances itself. One would also need to consider

opposite situations, for example, not the ones where a part of the body is severed from the body *in toto*, becoming, organically, a part of the world outside the body wall, but those instances when the external world gains entry into the body. In other words the injected matter is as interesting as the abjected matter. This direction is most prosaically common when it comes to nourishment. In the act of eating, the body transgresses its own limits, as Mikhail Bakhtin succinctly pointed out:

> [the body] swallows, devours, rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world's expense. The encounter of man with the world, which takes place inside the open, biting, rending, chewing mouth [is where] man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself. (Bakhtin 1984, 281)

There is yet another, perhaps more hyperbolic, way of looking at the activity of travelling. The traveller, in disaccord with the boundaries and bounds of the conventional, crosses realms and lives on the edges of the known. The abyss of unfamiliar space attracts him; otherwise he would not be travelling. If the sedentary community forms, as it usually does, the static *body politic,* a leviathanesque mould, then travellers are the ones who are abjected from the *stasis*, in the sense that it is the abjected that temporarily moves away from the static body, sometimes in an act of resistance, at other times as this social body's mobile augmentation, and sometimes —much as it sounds paradoxical— in both functions. A logical objection might arise: how is it possible for the abjected to engage actively in motion? This objection could and should be waved away, however, since we are talking of the symbolic meanings, and it is not at all a new idea, certainly not in myriads of myths and fairy tales. It certainly is not a revolutionary idea even outside fairy tales. In the grotesque images of the body, the essential role belongs after all to those parts that can detach themselves and lead an independent life, hiding the rest of the body as something secondary (Bakhtin 1984, 317). That the abjected, the amputated, is in motion was certainly conceivable in Emerson's hyperboles on the state of society where, "the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man" (Emerson 1903, 83).

The gravest aspect of abjection is depression (melancholy). Abjection is not only a condition of being servile; it is also a state of misery and wretchedness. It is instructive to study the journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Lewis experienced depression both as a witness and a victim. On the return from the Pacific, several Indian women were brought