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The Paradoxes of Travel (and) Narratives

edited by Beata Gontarz and Anna Maj

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EMAIL: rias@iasa-world.org
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ON VOYAGING AND *BILDUNG*
(The Case of Wellingborough/Redburn)

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3251-2540

When I reflect on the curious trajectories of the Americanists of my generation living in the former Eastern Bloc countries, I am often struck by a profound sense of wonder. Immobilized behind the Iron Curtain, the only transoceanic expeditions we could afford were those of the imagination—journeys fueled by novels, travel reports, and films, more or less selectively aired by our state-run televisions. Then came the breakthrough of 1989, and although the fall of communism made it theoretically possible for us to travel, academic salaries were prohibitively low; the sheer cost of accommodation in Western countries at the time would keep us sedentary for years. And it dawns on me that were it not for the fact that, at least in the context of my country, Poland, sea sailing became our window onto the world[1], I might have never become an Americanist, I might have never joined IASA, The Melville Society, ASA, or MLA, and in all probability, I would have never written books about literature and the sea. Yet, nothing in life happens by chance: there only are coincidences. One such fortuitous convergence of circumstances was my encounter, in the middle of the Baltic Sea, with the Polish sail training ship the *Zawisza Czarny*. Returning from Scandinavia aboard the heavily damaged yacht *Witeź II*, we found ourselves adrift in a September calm, pitching on a lifeless swell.

When I spotted the distinctive outline of the Polish tall ship on the horizon, I hailed her on the radio. Captain Andrzej Drapella responded, and immediately offered assistance. The ship approached our tiny vessel: the crew provided us with water, food, and much-needed

1 For a more thorough explanation of these phenomena see: Jędrzejko 2015: 101–119.

cigarettes, and the Master, epitome of maritime elegance, invited me aboard. Once I climbed the tall side, his tone suddenly changed:

"You are Paweł Jędrzejko, are you not?" he demanded.

"Aye, Sir."

"According to my documents, you were supposed to be in this crew: you signed up a year ago."

"Well, yes... but..."

"Enough with buts! In September, you *shall* attend my maritime workshops. And next March, you *shall* report on board this ship."

"Aye, aye, Captain. And where are we heading?"

"To the Americas."

The Americas… the very sound of it. Could this dual continent, distant enough to seem improbable, and improbable enough to seem mythical, be within my reach? Indeed, it was. And the fantasy came true: in 1992, I eventually sailed to the Caribbean, the US, and Canada as the mate of the Fourth Watch aboard the *Zawisza Czarny*, a ship universally loved by Polish sailors.

Many years later, that first voyage around the North Atlantic—the Grand Regatta Columbus '92—inspired me to write several chapters about the formative experiences of another young man, Herman Melville, whose first transatlantic journey marked an epistemic breakthrough that influenced almost all of his literary work and shaped the paths of his evolving philosophical reflection[2]. The following text, while not an autoethnographic account of my experiences with/of/in America, integrates my observations on the formative nature of the journey undertaken by Wellingborough Redburn with my own youthful hopes, fears, and projections. But as I look at Wellingborough, I see my younger self, and I smile warmly at the young man, who has long since become me.

* * *

In his 1996 book, *The Weaver-God: He Weaves*, which explores the poetics of Herman Melville's prose works and their genre implications, Christopher Sten dedicates a chapter to the novel *Redburn: His First Voyage*. Analyzing the transformations undergone by the protagonist, whom circumstances compel to prematurely attain an "adult" identity, the author categorizes the work as follows:

2 The book in question is *Płynność i egzystencja. Doświadczenie lądu i morza a myśl Hermana Melville'a* [Liquidity and Existence. The Experience of the Land and the Sea in Herman Melville's Thought] (Jędrzejko 2008).

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

> Redburn is not a pure example of the bildungsroman. It lacks the scope and fullness of the classic instances of the genre, such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Dickens's *Great Expectations*, or Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. It tells us relatively little about the hero's childhood (although it does reveal something, particularly in the first chapter), and offers only a few hints about his later life, hardly more than the fact that "years" later he found himself "a sailor in the Pacific, on board of a whaler" and that, later still, he wrote *Redburn*. Even so, it still qualifies as an abbreviated version of the form, particularly if it is accepted that, as Jerome Buckley has observed, the typical bildungsroman is "strongly autobiographical," as *Redburn* is, and that it has close ties to "confession," as Melville more than hints at in the subtitle. If it fails to give us even so much as the single *lehrjahre* of Goethe's hero, it at least provides the critical four months of Redburn's "first voyage." And it focuses not simply on an important chapter in that life, when he leaves the protection of his home and family to venture into the world for the first time on his own. (112)

Approaching *Redburn* as a novel about character formation, Sten identifies genre elements that allow the narrative sequence to be considered in terms of the protagonist's evolving state of consciousness, shaped by his subsequent experiences. The portrayal of the protagonist begins with his depiction as a child raised under the protective wing of his parents, living in a world governed by clear, comprehensible, and unquestioned rules. The next stage of his evolution involves the confrontation of childish imaginings with practical life, which experience marks a pivotal point on his path to the third stage—discovering an "adult" identity, whose further pursuit involves successive iterations of the continual process of reconstructing, or re-inventing, the "self."

It is worth noting that like White-Jacket and Ishmael, also the narrator of *Redburn* presents his story retrospectively, thus with an awareness of past changes and their impact on the evolution of the storyteller. Consequently, we encounter a protagonist who simultaneously represents two viewpoints: one based on *naïve awareness* (when recounting his childhood) and another, shaped by *experienced awareness*, contemporary with the narrative. Furthermore, one cannot overlook another layer of consciousness embedded in this work: the *authorial awareness*, which manifests itself through stylistic manipulation. Lawrance Thompson emphasizes this point in his seminal study *Melville's Quarrel with God* (1952). Discussing *Redburn*, he points out the importance of the "tripartite perspective" embedded in the construction of the central character. Thompson argues that, although the book's theme is "merely […] a young man's experience in leaving home for the first time" (75), this seemingly ordinary storyline allows Melville to identify and contrast three stages of his own spiritual

and intellectual development. The scholar indicates that the three distinct viewpoints, reflecting three different autobiographical phases of Melville's intellectual evolution (which Thomson aptly dubs "phases of disillusionment"), can be observed with particular clarity when analyzing the stylistic devices employed by the writer to build his literary analogon. The scholar proposes that the first viewpoint, corresponding to the "naïve phase of autobiography," be termed "the Wellingborough viewpoint"—because recounting his own story, the narrator refers to his past self, using only his first name. "The Narrator viewpoint" (or "the Redburn viewpoint")—corresponds to the second stage of the evolution of the character's individual *weltanschauung*, when the protagonist already perceives the difference between his past self and present self, but has not yet re-evaluated or revised many of the elements of his former worldview. The third stage, in turn, corresponds to "the Melville viewpoint"—that of the artistic manipulator who engages the previous two perspectives in a unique interplay with his own, mature, understanding of the human condition (Thompson 75–76).

Adopting such a division facilitates considering the transformations of Wellingborough Redburn in terms of his *pre-visions*, *experience*, and *post-visions*, as each of these phases corresponds to one of Thompson's "viewpoints." The "then," represented by the version of the character to which Melville refers by the name "Wellingborough," is the starting point of the process, for which a state of pre-visionary inventory can be defined.

INNOCENCE. PRE-VISIONS

The very title of the first chapter—"How Wellingborough Redburn's Taste for the Sea Was Born and Bred in Him" suggests that the transformation of the protagonist's *worldview* is a significant theme of the novel: it shapes the reader's expectations. The implied question about "origins" sanctions the retrospective narrative of the bildungsroman: it points to the "then" as it is seen from the position of "now." Following the genre's conventions, the first chapter provides an image of what Wellingborough was "equipped with" before experience made him Redburn.

Providing Wellingborough with the essentials necessary for his journey into adulthood, Melville is rather sparing. Redburn speaks of his "then" self in this way:

> I was then but a boy. Some time previous my mother had removed from New York to a pleasant village on the Hudson River, where we lived in a small house, in a quiet way. Sad disappointments in several plans which I had sketched

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

for my future life; the necessity of doing something for myself, united to a naturally roving disposition, had now conspired within me, to send me to sea as a sailor. (*Redburn* 1)

Melville "equips" his character with a rather typical set of memories. Wellingborough Redburn spent his childhood years in an atmosphere of prosperity, security, and warmth in one of America's busiest major cities. Nineteenth-century New York, where the family lived until the father's death, was a bustling hub of contrasts—a cosmopolitan center of maritime trade. It was also trade that allowed the protagonist's father to prosper—and stories of his business travels, not unlike in the case of Melville himself, would kindle the boy's imagination:

[…] my father, now dead, had several times crossed the Atlantic on business affairs, for he had been an importer in Broad-street. And of winter evenings in New York, by the well-remembered sea-coal fire in old Greenwich-street, he used to tell my brother and me of the monstrous waves at sea, mountain high; of the masts bending like twigs; and all about Havre, and Liverpool, and about going up into the ball of St. Paul's in London. Indeed, during my early life, most of my thoughts of the sea were connected with the land; but with fine old lands, full of mossy cathedrals and churches, and long, narrow, crooked streets without sidewalks, and lined with strange houses. And especially I tried hard to think how such places must look of rainy days and Saturday afternoons; and whether indeed they did have rainy days and Saturdays there, just as we did here; and whether the boys went to school there, and studied geography, and wore their shirt collars turned over, and tied with a black ribbon; and whether their papas allowed them to wear boots, instead of shoes, which I so much disliked, for boots looked so manly. (*Redburn* 3)

Wellingborough, like any young boy, dreams of adulthood, which "then" appears to him as a collective function of external attributes—sometimes as simple as footwear. In the protagonist's imagination, men's high boots hold a much higher status than boys' low shoes: the person who wears boots is an *adult*—like his father—and, like him, can travel. The father, admired and loved, represents the ideal of masculinity to which the boy subconsciously aspires. Learning values—and concepts—that would eventually allow him to navigate the reality he is only just beginning to know, he starts with adopting behavioral models from his parents, and, like almost every child, he takes parental visions of the world for granted: he believes them to be unquestionably reliable and true beyond doubt. Soon, inevitably, the radical clash with the mundane reality, resulting in painful disillusionment, will crush Wellingborough's childish sense of certainty, energizing his struggle to eventually build his own, independent, identity. However, before that happens, his

sense of security will continue to be the "fertile soil," upon which his childhood dreams of distant journeys may flourish. These fantasies of travel naturally align with his curiosity about the Other and Otherness, perceived through the lens of his father's inspiring stories in terms of an idealized "world across the ocean," immensely attractive to Wellingborough's "young, inland, imagination":

> For months previous I had been poring over old New York papers, delightedly perusing the long columns of ship advertisements, all of which possessed a strange, romantic charm to me. Over and over again I devoured such announcements as the following:
>
> FOR BREMEN.
>
> The coppered and copper-fastened brig Leda, having nearly completed her cargo, will sail for the above port on Tuesday the twentieth of May. For freight or passage apply on board at Coenties Slip.
>
> To my young inland imagination every word in an advertisement like this, suggested volumes of thought.
>
> *A brig!* The very word summoned up the idea of a black, sea-worn craft, with high, cozy bulwarks, and rakish masts and yards.
>
> *Coppered and copper-fastened!* That fairly smelt of the salt water! How different such vessels must be from the wooden, one-masted, green-and-white-painted sloops, that glided up and down the river before our house on the bank.
>
> *Nearly completed her cargo!* How momentous the announcement; suggesting ideas, too, of musty bales, and cases of silks and satins, and filling me with contempt for the vile deck-loads of hay and lumber, with which my river experience was familiar.
>
> *Will sail on Tuesday the 20th of May*—and the newspaper bore date the fifth of the month! Fifteen whole days beforehand; think of that; what an important voyage it must be, that the time of sailing was fixed upon so long beforehand; the river sloops were not used to make such prospective announcements.
>
> *For freight or passage apply on board!* Think of going on board a coppered and copper-fastened brig, and taking passage for Bremen! And who could be going to Bremen? No one but foreigners, doubtless; men of dark complexions and jet-black whiskers, who talked French.
>
> *Coenties Slip.* Plenty more brigs and any quantity of ships must be lying there. Coenties Slip must be somewhere near ranges of grim-looking warehouses, with rusty iron doors and shutters, and tiled roofs; and old anchors and chain-cable piled on the walk. Old-fashioned coffeehouses, also, much abound in that neighborhood, with sunburnt sea-captains going in and out, smoking cigars, and talking about Havanna, London, and Calcutta.
>
> All these my imaginations were wonderfully assisted by certain shadowy reminiscences of wharves, and warehouses, and shipping, with which a residence in a seaport during early childhood had supplied me.
>
> Particularly, I remembered standing with my father on the wharf when a large ship was getting under way, and rounding the head of the pier. I remem-

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

bered the yo heave ho! of the sailors, as they just showed their woolen caps above the high bulwarks. I remembered how I thought of their crossing the great ocean; and that that very ship, and those very sailors, so near to me then, would after a time be actually in Europe. (*Redburn* 2–3)

Interestingly, the early childhood memories, such as the one described above, seamlessly fuse two perspectives reflecting the "duality" of the perceiving protagonist. The first perspective, nonexistent "then" but reconstructed "now" to form the authorial retrospection[3], merges with the narrator's perspective—that adopted by Redburn himself. Melville, the "artistic manipulator," expresses his—evidently nostalgic, yet serene—vision of the youthful naïvety of the past, with a touch of irony. He has Redburn recount his experiences as the young Wellingborough, who is thrilled comparing an ocean-going brig to a river sloop. Of course—the copper-clad ship *must be* superior to the riverboats: it is larger, less commonly seen, capable of crossing the ocean, and its cargo is *undoubtedly* much more valuable than the ordinary loads of hay and wood transported aboard river vessels. For Wellingborough, who does not yet know how long a transatlantic voyage ordinarily lasts and what preparations it requires, the fifteen days from the date of the announcement to the planned departure of the *Leda* seem an exceptionally long time. Such a significant advance call suggests to him that the voyage *must* be a mission of immense importance. Redburn-the narrator seems to "aid" the reader in noticing that the frame of reference for all the evaluative statements the Wellingborough-the boy makes is his knowledge of riverboats "then." Similarly, his youthful vision of the travelers of ocean-going ships is endearingly naïve: in Wellingborough's imagination, they are exclusively people of dark complexions and wearing black mustaches, i.e. possessing characteristics that—in his childish reasoning—define them as foreigners. Moreover, they all speak *French*—which, essentially, means *not English*—as French was the only foreign language the boy could hear at home. In Wellingborough's perception, French epitomizes *all* foreign speech, as well as the exotic, fascinating world of the Others.

Furthermore, Coenties Slip, where the architecture of the city almost touches the waters of the East River, almost imperceptibly transitioning into the piers of the port, appears in the boy's hazy memories as a "border zone," separating the known world from the unknown, while simultaneously combining the land and the sea. Thinking of Coenties

3 Note the past forms in the grammar of the narrative already embedded in the past, indicating past perfect, e.g., "I remembered," not "I remember" in the last paragraph of the quoted fragment.

Slip as the place beyond which lie "foreign lands," Wellingborough unconsciously overlays the limits of the world with the boundaries of New York and the City's immediate surroundings. To him, in fact, Manhattan Island is the only known continent, centrally placed on his mental world map. An analogous perspective is beautifully illustrated by John Bachmann in his 1859 lithograph "New York and Environs":

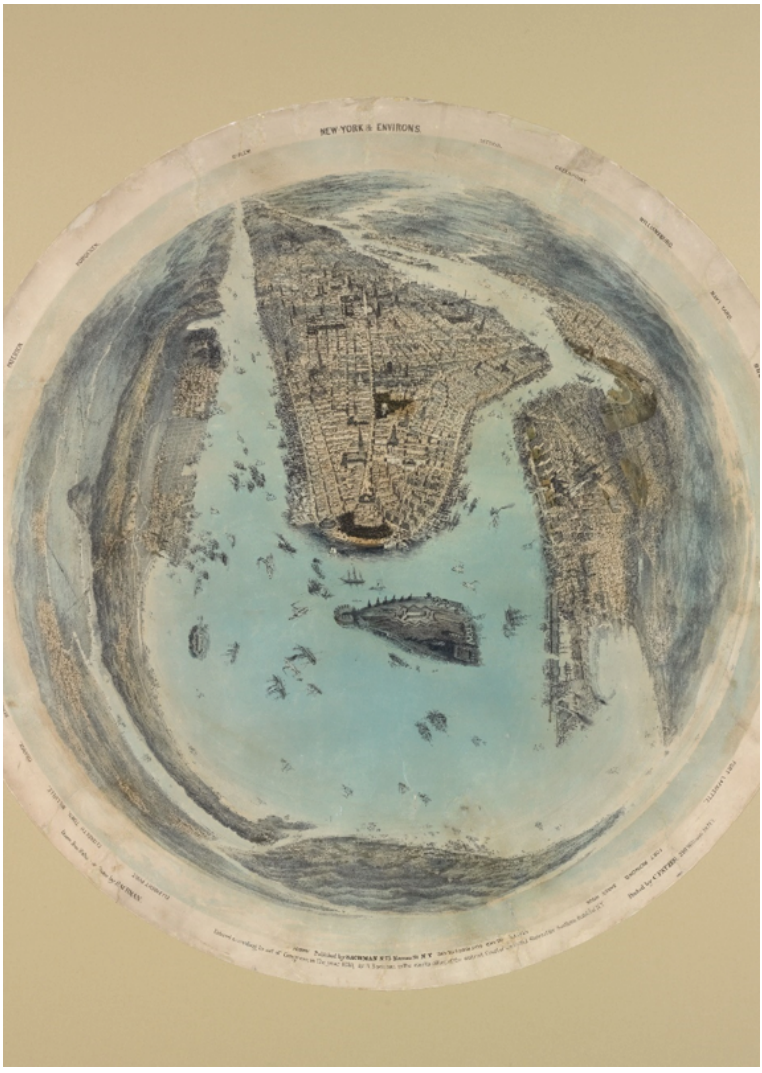

Fig.1: The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. "New York and Environs." A lithograph by John Bachmann (1859). The New York Public Library Digital Collections. Public Domain. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e3-b9bd-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

Hans Bergmann analyzes the image as follows:

> John Bachmann's lithograph published in 1859, "New York and Environs," is the most extraordinary view of New York during the period. Here is the bird's-eye view gone fish-eye. New York in this view is not simply a landscape by itself, filling up and an otherwise blank world: the city is the world itself. The Navy Yard and Sandy Hook are the far edges of the globe; Broadway is the Greenwich meridian. The commercial and cultural centrality imagined in this conception is manifest: there is nothing but New York, and nothing but contemporary New York. Bachmann's illustration published just at the end of the antebellum period, is a remarkable step beyond the exuberant boosterism of panoramas of the early 1850s. Saul Steinberg's *New Yorker* cover illustration looking across the Hudson to "Japan" comes again to mind, and its self-deprecating humor reminds us that Bachmann's illustration may have been comically self-aware too. Bachmann so exaggerates the idea that New York windows are windows on the world, that quotidian New York I everything there is to know, that we cannot help thinking that he might intend a joke. (48)

Although the lithograph was created a decade after *Redburn*'s publication and is obviously based on different assumptions—and despite the fact that the analogy is valid only to a certain extent—the fish-eye vision itself seems to adequately render Wellingborough's youthful concept of the topography of the world. Redburn, of course, does not elaborate on Wellingborough's way of thinking to give himself an opportunity for a political *exposé*; instead, he does so to highlight the boundaries beyond which once lay a distant, idealized world, defined solely by his own, immature, imagination. Young Wellingborough *knows* that across the Ocean lie Europe, Africa, and New Zealand, but his understanding of *what they are like*—and, more broadly, *what the world* he has not yet explored *is like*—is mediated to him only through stories, literature, and paintings. Redburn recalls:

> […] we had several oil-paintings and rare old engravings of my father's, which he himself had bought in Paris, hanging up in the dining-room.
>
> Two of these were sea-pieces. One represented a fat-looking, smoky fishing-boat, with three whiskerandoes in red caps, and their browsers legs rolled up, hauling in a seine. There was high French-like land in one corner, and a tumble-down gray lighthouse surmounting it. The waves were toasted brown, and the whole picture looked mellow and old. I used to think a piece of it might taste good.
>
> The other represented three old-fashioned French men-of-war with high castles, like pagodas, on the bow and stern, such as you see in Froissart; and snug little turrets on top of the mast, full of little men, with something undefinable in their hands. All three were sailing through a bright-blue sea, blue as Sicily skies; and they were leaning over on their sides at a fearful angle; and they must

have been going very fast, for the white spray was about the bows like a snow-storm.

Then, we had two large green French portfolios of colored prints, more than I could lift at that age. Every Saturday my brothers and sisters used to get them out of the corner where they were kept, and spreading them on the floor, gaze at them with never-failing delight.

They were of all sorts. Some were pictures of Versailles, its masquerades, its drawing-rooms, its fountains, and courts, and gardens, with long lines of thick foliage cut into fantastic doors and windows, and towers and pinnacles. Others were rural scenes, full of fine skies, pensive cows standing up to the knees in water, and shepherd-boys and cottages in the distance, half concealed in vineyards and vines.

And others were pictures of natural history, representing rhinoceroses and elephants and spotted tigers; and above all there was a picture of a great whale, as big as a ship, stuck full of harpoons, and three boats sailing after it as fast as they could fly. (*Redburn* 4–5)

It is primarily the images that captivate Wellingborough's imagination, and although reading might still be too demanding an activity, the mere fact that the volumes from his father's library come *from abroad*, are beautifully published, and written in an incomprehensible language, evokes fascination:

Then, too, we had a large library-case, that stood in the hall; an old brown library-case, tall as a small house; it had a sort of basement, with large doors, and a lock and key; and higher up, there were glass doors, through which might be seen long rows of old books, that had been printed in Paris, and London, and Leipsic. There was a fine library edition of the Spectator, in six large volumes with gilded backs; and many a time I gazed at the word *"London"* on the title-page. And there was a copy of D'Alembert in French, and I wondered what a great man I would be, if by foreign travel I should ever be able to read straight along without stopping, out of that book, which now was a riddle to every one in the house but my father, whom I so much liked to hear talk French, as he sometimes did to a servant we had. (*Redburn* 5)

For the young Wellingborough, the existence of the distant world is "not quite certain"; the contents of the home library and the small art collection are not yet sufficient evidence that another reality *could* exist beyond the familiar, palpable, "home" world. For the child, Paris, London, Leipzig—all these names might have held a similar status as the fantastical cities from the *Arabian Nights*, which Melville himself used to devour in his own nubile age. This is clearly indicated by the boy's doubts concerning the French origins of the servant:

That servant, too, I used to gaze at with wonder; for in answer to my incredulous cross-questions, he had over and over again assured me, that he had really been born in Paris. But this I never entirely believed; for it seemed so hard to com-

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

prehend, how a man who had been born in a foreign country, could be dwelling with me in our house in America. (*Redburn* 5–6)

The books on the shelves, the paintings on the walls, and the engravings and watercolors collected by his father—all these objects whet the boy's craving for travel. Yet, a precious family heirloom—a intricately crafted glass model of a warship—inspires him above all:

But that which perhaps more than any thing else, converted my vague dreamings and longings into a definite purpose of seeking my fortune on the sea, was an old-fashioned glass ship, about eighteen inches long, and of French manufacture, which my father, some thirty years before, had brought home from Hamburg as a present to a great-uncle of mine: Senator Wellingborough, who had died a member of Congress in the days of the old Constitution, and after whom I had the honor of being named. Upon the decease of the Senator, the ship was returned to the donor.

It was kept in a square glass case, which was regularly dusted by one of my sisters every morning, and stood on a little claw-footed Dutch tea-table in one corner of the sitting-room. This ship, after being the admiration of my father's visitors in the capital, became the wonder and delight of all the people of the village where we now resided, many of whom used to call upon my mother, for no other purpose than to see the ship. And well did it repay the long and curious examinations which they were accustomed to give it. (*Redburn* 6)

For Redburn "now," *La Reine* (for that is the name of the little ship) triggers associations with the glorious history of his family, but is also a metaphor for his own transformation. However, for Wellingborough "then," *La Reine* is an inaccessible toy, encased in glass. The world of the miniscule man-of-war strikingly resembles that of a real vessel: every detail of the model is meticulously crafted. The artist fashioned each element of the hull and rigging to perfection, precisely shaped the tiny figures of sailors and officers engaged in their usual activities, rendering the little universe complete by including in it a barking dog with a red muzzle. For the reflective Redburn, the model is a rare piece of art; yet, for Wellingborough, who fills the world he is only just discovering with the work of his imagination—the toy ship is a portal to an imagined reality. After all, a child playing with a toy car truly becomes its driver, and engages in play so profoundly that the role he or she assumes and the surrounding objects become (for a moment) the *actual reality*, evoking genuine emotions. For Wellingborough, too, the glass ship is *a real vessel*, in whose holds a *real treasure* must be hidden:

In the first place, every bit of it was glass, and that was a great wonder of itself; because the masts, yards, and ropes were made to resemble exactly the corresponding parts of a real vessel that could go to sea. She carried two tiers of black

guns all along her two decks; and often I used to try to peep in at the portholes, to see what else was inside; but the holes were so small, and it looked so very dark indoors, that I could discover little or nothing; though, when I was very little, I made no doubt, that if I could but once pry open the hull, and break the glass all to pieces, I would infallibly light upon something wonderful, perhaps some gold guineas, of which I have always been in want, ever since I could remember. And often I used to feel a sort of insane desire to be the death of the glass ship, case, and all, in order to come at the plunder; and one day, throwing out some hint of the kind to my sisters, they ran to my mother in a great clamor; and after that, the ship was placed on the mantel-piece for a time, beyond my reach, and until I should recover my reason.

I do not know how to account for this temporary madness of mine, unless it was, that I had been reading in a story-book about Captain Kidd's ship, that lay somewhere at the bottom of the Hudson near the Highlands, full of gold as it could be; and that a company of men were trying to dive down and get the treasure out of the hold, which no one had ever thought of doing before, though there she had lain for almost a hundred years. (*Redburn* 6–7)

Imaginative fantasies thus determine a child's here-and-now: the promise of an adventure shapes it, translating stories into plans, and propelling actions. However, the first confrontation with the external world—unsheltered, unlike the family home—may cause the fragile glass of youthful projections to shatter:

So much for *La Reine*. We have her yet in the house, but many of her glass spars and ropes are now sadly shattered and broken,—but I will not have her mended; and her figurehead, a gallant warrior in a cocked-hat, lies pitching headforemost down into the trough of a calamitous sea under the bows—but I will not have him put on his legs again, till I get on my own; for between him and me there is a secret sympathy; and my sisters tell me, even yet, that he fell from his perch the very day I left home to go to sea on this *my first voyage.* (*Redburn* 8)

The glass ship with its proud figurehead will never be repaired: there is no return to the blissful state of innocence, where reality is defined by fixed principles and unbreakable values, and the confusion of imagination and facts has no unpleasant consequences. The "son-of-a-gentleman" dreaming of a voyager's fame, who trusts adults, is an active member of the Juvenile Total Abstinence Association, does not curse, and, in his naïveté, does not understand how relative the values of birth and upbringing can be—will receive his first lesson in reality with the passing of his father. Sensitive yet proud, convinced of his house's greatness and accustomed to a benign environment where honesty, honor, biblical truths, and good manners prevailed—the child of a once-wealthy family will become a simple ship's boy. "Equipped" with curiosity about the world (awakened by others' stories), a rifle, a hunting jacket featuring enormous buttons,

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

and an old green morocco guidebook to Liverpool, Wellingborough will set out on a journey from which he will return as Redburn.

THE VOYAGE: TOWARDS EXPERIENCE

As it has already been hinted, in the novel the young Wellingborough is fashioned as a *type*, while the mature Redburn is granted the status of a fully developed *character*. This distinction is particularly evident in the closing words of the novel's second chapter, where Melville, in Redburn's words, makes a significant generalization about Wellingborough's past: "Such is boyhood." This remark, singled out in its own paragraph, is distinctly set apart from the rest of the text and serves as a rhetorical gesture that conceptually separates Redburn-the-narrator (an already evolved personality) from Wellingborough, the "typical" child of a good pedigree, who prematurely enters the adult world. However, once he is aboard, the *Highlander*, young Wellingborough's "boyhood" begins to end. He quickly loses his naïve belief in the constancy of the values in which he was raised: his hunting jacket—a symbol of high status—exposed to the elements, loses its style, and his high boots must be drastically adjusted (with the help of a knife) to suit the conditions of life and work on a sailing ship. Even so, at the beginning of the voyage the boy would still experience the new flavors of reality quite euphorically:

> At last we hoisted the stun'-sails up to the top-sail yards, and as soon as the vessel felt them, she gave a sort of bound like a horse, and the breeze blowing more and more, she went plunging along, shaking off the foam from her bows, like foam from a bridle-bit. Every mast and timber seemed to have a pulse in it that was beating with life and joy; and I felt a wild exulting in my own heart, and felt as if I would be glad to bound along so round the world.
>
> Then was I first conscious of a wonderful thing in me, that responded to all the wild commotion of the outer world; and went reeling on and on with the planets in their orbits, and was lost in one delirious throb at the center of the All. A wild bubbling and bursting was at my heart, as if a hidden spring had just gushed out there; and my blood ran tingling along my frame, like mountain brooks in spring freshets.
>
> Yes! yes! give me this glorious ocean life, this salt-sea life, this briny, foamy life, when the sea neighs and snorts, and you breathe the very breath that the great whales respire! Let me roll around the globe, let me rock upon the sea; let me race and pant out my life, with an eternal breeze astern, and an endless sea before! (*Redburn* 64)

In Melville's universe, it is precisely the young and inexperienced dreamers who are granted the privilege to share in the cheerful

transcendentalism of Goethe's and Emerson's. Therefore, while Wellingborough experiences a joyful trance, Redburn's share will be a life marred with doubt and informed with the immediacy of the terrifying, absurd reality. Melville foreshadows this transformation in the next paragraph when he punch-lines the youthful enthusiasm with a comic—and somewhat ironic—juxtaposition of the sublime and the mundane, indicating how the sense of unity with "the All" in a wonderful state of elation quickly yields to tangible, brutal facts of life. Wellingborough ruefully confesses:

> […] soon these raptures abated, when after a brief idle interval, we were again set to work, and I had a vile commission to clean out the chicken coops, and make up the beds of the pigs in the long-boat.
>
> Miserable dog's life is this of the sea! commanded like a slave, and set to work like an ass! vulgar and brutal men lording it over me, as if I were an African in Alabama. Yes, yes, blow on, ye breezes, and make a speedy end to this abominable voyage! (*Redburn* 64)

The experiences that daily encounters bring hardly provide a trustworthy basis for an entirely joyful outlook on the world; the smiles of Melville's mature characters are always bitter-sweet. Although the beauty of the tranquil ocean and the charm of sailing can uplift one's spirits, the "adult" characters harbor too many existential doubts to succumb to euphoria. Only someone as young as Wellingborough can "forget" the terror experienced at the moment of his first direct clash with incomprehensible death, when one of the sailors, in a delirious frenzy, commits suicide:

> […] we were all startled by a horrid groaning noise down in the forecastle; and all at once some one came rushing up the scuttle in his shirt, clutching something in his hand, and trembling and shrieking in the most frightful manner, so that I thought one of the sailors must be murdered below.
>
> But it all passed in a moment; and while we stood aghast at the sight, and almost before we knew what it was, the shrieking man jumped over the bows into the sea, and we saw him no more. Then there was a great uproar; the sailors came running up on deck; and the chief mate ran forward, and learning what had happened, began to yell out his orders about the sails and yards; and we all went to pulling and hauling the ropes, till at last the ship lay almost still on the water. Then they loosed a boat, which kept pulling round the ship for more than an hour, but they never caught sight of the man. It seemed that he was one of the sailors who had been brought aboard dead drunk, and tumbled into his bunk by his landlord; and there he had lain till now. He must have suddenly waked up, I suppose, raging mad with the delirium tremens, as the chief mate called it, and finding himself in a strange silent place, and knowing not how he had got there, he rushed on deck, and so, in a fit of frenzy, put an end to himself.

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

> This event, happening at the dead of night, had a wonderfully solemn and almost awful effect upon me. I would have given the whole world, and the sun and moon, and all the stars in heaven, if they had been mine, had I been safe back at Mr. Jones', or still better, in my home on the Hudson River. I thought it an ill-omened voyage, and railed at the folly which had sent me to sea, sore against the advice of my best friends, that is to say, my mother and sisters. (*Redburn* 47–48)

The author "lets" Wellingborough momentarily suppress his fear, continue appreciating the beauty of the world, and still partake of the joy of life. The suicidal sailor disappears from view and thus ceases to be a part of the protagonist's world; his death is swift, seemingly "painless" for the witnesses. However, Wellingborough will face death again—but this time, the experience will prove impossible to erase from memory. It is this participatory experience of protruded dying, to which the protagonist becomes an involuntary witness in the bustling, wealthy Liverpool, that will allow Wellingborough to finally become Redburn.

To his surprise, in the great city, whose idealized image—inspired by the accounts of his gentlemanly father—he had formed, the protagonist finds, alongside the splendor of architecture and the wealth of affluent neighborhoods, a world of extreme poverty that overshadows the city's brilliance. During his wanderings in the port district of Liverpool, he encounters a family dying of starvation: a mother and three children. Wellingborough tries to obtain help for them and, after being refused, attempts to procure food that could save their barely flickering lives. Alone in his efforts, he begins to understand the terrifying truth about the world's indifference and the heartlessness of people; he must come to terms with the paradox that his attempts to help only prolong the agony of those he seeks to save. While he could rationalize the sudden suicidal death of the sailor aboard the *Highlander* as a consequence of his drunkenness, and quickly move past it, he now becomes part of a slow, absurd dying process. Wellingborough—whether he wants it or not—now has *time* for painful reflection. Above all, by participating in the demise of the destitute family as a powerless observer, he experiences death's radical—and palpable—alienness:

> […] Hurrying to the lane, I dropped the food down into the vault. One of the girls caught at it convulsively, but fell back, apparently fainting; the sister pushed the other's arm aside, and took the bread in her hand; but with a weak uncertain grasp like an infant's. She placed it to her mouth; but letting it fall again, murmuring faintly something like "water." The woman did not stir; her head was bowed over, just as I had first seen her. (*Redburn* 176)

Wellingborough is not prepared for such an experience. Although he intuitively feels that he will not be able to save the dying people, he feels an imperative to act. Unable to do much more, he brings water to the exhausted victims:

> […] I returned to Launcelott's-Hey; and with considerable difficulty, like getting down into a well, I contrived to descend with it into the vault; where there was hardly space enough left to let me stand. The two girls drank out of the hat together; looking up at me with an unalterable, idiotic expression, that almost made me faint. The woman spoke not a word, and did not stir. While the girls were breaking and eating the bread, I tried to lift the woman's head; but, feeble as she was, she seemed bent upon holding it down. Observing her arms still clasped upon her bosom, and that something seemed hidden under the rags there, a thought crossed my mind, which impelled me forcibly to withdraw her hands for a moment; when I caught a glimpse of a meager little babe—the lower part of its body thrust into an old bonnet. Its face was dazzlingly white, even in its squalor; but the closed eyes looked like balls of indigo. It must have been dead some hours.
>
> The woman refusing to speak, eat, or drink, I asked one of the girls who they were, and where they lived; but she only stared vacantly, muttering something that could not be understood.
>
> The air of the place was now getting too much for me; but I stood deliberating a moment, whether it was possible for me to drag them out of the vault. But if I did, what then? They would only perish in the street, and here they were at least protected from the rain; and more than that, might die in seclusion. (*Redburn* 177)

Entering the grim basement that serves as a wretched shelter for the unfortunate poor, Wellingborough is not yet aware that the world he has entered is not his own. He looks at the dying people with the eyes of a sensitive and emotionally susceptible person, but one who thinks logically—in terms that are foreign to the mother of the deceased infant and the two little girls. He expects answers to his questions, completely failing to grasp the absurdity of asking *any questions* at all: if the family had somewhere else to live, they certainly would not dwell in the tomb-like cellar, and "who they are" is more than obvious: they are *no one*, or even less—they are a burden to others, an unbearable remorse to Christian morality.

Wellingborough has entered a tomb where death already reigns. He cannot prevent it, but he cannot stop being its witness. He does not understand death, but tries to fit the dying people into something that could be called the "ontic empire of life," viewing them through the filter of his own categories. In the girls' gazes, he sees only an "unalterable, idiotic expression," stimulating his somatic reaction: he is on the verge of fainting. The woman he addresses, as he per-

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

ceives it, refuses to respond or accept food, and her daughter "stares at him with a vacant look" and "muttering something that could not be understood," a phenomenon not unfamiliar to therapists like Alexander Lowen:

> A genuine smile is the result of a wave of excitation that flows upward, brightening the face and lighting up the eyes, just as a house lights up when someone is home. Vacant eyes give the impression that a person's house is empty. The emptiest eyes of all are those of a dead person. I once looked into the eyes of a patient and saw the empty look of death. I was sure that the person had died a long time ago, not physically but emotionally [...]. (86)

The protagonist intuits that he stands face-to-face with death, yet he cannot comprehend that the people whom he is trying to engage in a conversation *epitomize dying*. Wellingborough has not yet developed any discourse-based defensive mechanisms or emotional armor that—unlike it is the case with physicians dealing with death on daily basis—would allow him to maintain a healthy distance from dying, and to separate himself from the agony, the transitional state between life and death. Quite comprehensibly, soon, the atmosphere of the place becomes "too much" for him. Living the lingering death of another person, he organically experiences basic anxiety (*ur-Angst*). Dying becomes part of his unmediated, direct experience, which he can neither non-verbally grasp, verbalize, nor rationalize—and, consequently, he is unable to integrate it into his framework of learned or inherited concepts. However, because Melville portrays him as a sensitive person, his feelings are, as Alexander Lowen would describe it, attuned to a particular kind of unconscious "resonance":

> Our ability to sense what is happening to another person, an ability I have described as empathy, is based on the fact that our bodies resonate with other living bodies. If we don't resonate with others, it is because we don't resonate within ourselves. If a person can say, "I don't feel anything," then he has cut off not only the feeling of his own aliveness but any feeling he might have for others, both people and beasts. (Lowen 43)

His attitude is thus not only a symptom of mental health: it is also a gesture of saving his own empathetically threatened vitality. When he visits the cellar again and does not find those he is looking for, Wellingborough—who has now become Redburn—feels relief: "[...] they were dead, departed, and at peace." And although he is comforted by the passing of the unfortunate family, which brings an end to their suffering and grants them the peace of soul for which he prayed,

to the boy their "departure" does not prove to be final. Redburn confesses:

> But again I looked down into the vault, and in fancy beheld the pale, shrunken forms still crouching there. Ah! what are our creeds, and how do we hope to be saved? Tell me, oh Bible, that story of Lazarus again, that I may find comfort in my heart for the poor and forlorn. Surrounded as we are by the wants and woes of our fellowmen, and yet given to follow our own pleasures, regardless of their pains, are we not like people sitting up with a corpse, and making merry in the house of the dead? (*Redburn* 178)

Wellingborough can no longer forget what he saw. Although only the first sentence of the quoted passage is formulated in the past tense, the present tense of the whole narrative is markedly branded by the past: the "transformed" Redburn suppresses the traumatic experience, seeking spiritual support from the Bible, which promises resurrection and happy life to all Christians—including the woman and children who met a terrible death. Only this thought allows the protagonist to continue functioning in the world. Nevertheless, the mature Melville, Thompson's "artistic manipulator," bitterly asks, "What are our creeds?"—ultimately questioning the humankind's worthiness of the biblical promise.

FAREWELL DEAR DELUSION: TOWARDS POST-VISIONS

The death of his father and the subsequent voyage aboard the *Highlander* transform Wellingborough into Redburn. All experiences related to his first transatlantic crossing, culminating in the squalid basement at Launcelott's-Hey, force the "son-of-a-gentleman" into developing an identity independent of the inherited patterns—and into premature adulthood. It is already the first encounters aboard that make Wellingborough bitterly realize how false his self-perceptions are. The construct of his aristocratic "self" collapses when his proud-sounding name—Wellingborough—is reduced to a nickname. To the tars aboard, the boy is little more than Buttons or Boots, names that refer to the obvious attributes of his appearance. Such a reduction of a self to a mere object makes it possible for Wellingborough to discover that—unlike his former high status—the buttons on his hunting jacket and his high boots are all that, in the eyes of the others, he truly possesses: these emblems define him in the "here and now." Gradually, the protagonist learns that his identity—and thereby also his self-esteem—depends on the relational epistemologies, determined by the reality that seems to impose the shape of his relationships

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

with people and objects. When the *Highlander* reaches Liverpool, the former Wellingborough looks at the clothes he once was proud of with nostalgia. Although the hero may not yet fully know *who he is*, he has certainly gained an awareness of *who he is not*—but, the above notwithstanding, the power of the youthful fantasies of the exploration of the faraway world and the persevering paternal ideal of "gentlemanly worldliness" continue to drive his actions.

> When I left home, I took the green morocco guide-book along, supposing that from the great number of ships going to Liverpool, I would most probably ship on board of one of them, as the event itself proved.
>
> Great was my boyish delight at the prospect of visiting a place, the infallible clew to all whose intricacies I held in my hand.
>
> On the passage out I studied its pages a good deal. In the first place, I grounded myself thoroughly in the history and antiquities of the town, as set forth in the chapter I intended to quote. Then I mastered the columns of statistics, touching the advance of population; and pored over them, as I used to do over my multiplication-table. For I was determined to make the whole subject my own; and not be content with a mere smattering of the thing, as is too much the custom with most students of guide-books. Then I perused one by one the elaborate descriptions of public edifices, and scrupulously compared the text with the corresponding engraving, to see whether they corroborated each other. For be it known that, including the map, there were no less than seventeen plates in the work. And by often examining them, I had so impressed every column and cornice in my mind, that I had no doubt of recognizing the originals in a moment.
>
> In short, when I considered that my own father had used this very guide-book, and that thereby it had been thoroughly tested, and its fidelity proved beyond a peradventure; I could not but think that I was building myself up in an unerring knowledge of Liverpool; especially as I had familiarized myself with the map, and could turn sharp corners on it, with marvelous confidence and celerity.
>
> In imagination, as I lay in my berth on ship-board, I used to take pleasant afternoon rambles through the town; down St. James-street and up Great George's, stopping at various places of interest and attraction. I began to think I had been born in Liverpool, so familiar seemed all the features of the map. And though some of the streets there depicted were thickly involved, endlessly angular and crooked, like the map of Boston, in Massachusetts, yet, I made no doubt, that I could march through them in the darkest night, and even run for the most distant dock upon a pressing emergency. (*Redburn* 144–145)

Excited at the prospect of exploring Liverpool, of which his father had told him so much, Wellingborough disembarks, unaware that another reality check awaits him on land. He knows the maps contained in the guide—with streets once traversed by his father marked in pencil—by heart. Eagerly, he awaits the moment when he would finally be able to see the world through his eyes. Soon, however, he discovers

that his meticulous study of the green morocco guidebook, feeding his imagination, was in vain:

> Dear delusion!
>
> It never occurred to my boyish thoughts, that though a guide-book, fifty years old, might have done good service in its day, yet it would prove but a miserable cicerone to a modern. I little imagined that the Liverpool my father saw, was another Liverpool from that to which I, his son Wellingborough was sailing. No; these things never obtruded; so accustomed had I been to associate my old morocco guide-book with the town it described, that the bare thought of there being any discrepancy, never entered my mind. […] Then, indeed, a new light broke in upon me concerning my guide-book; and all my previous dim suspicions were almost confirmed. It was nearly half a century behind the age! and no more fit to guide me about the town, than the map of Pompeii. […] It was a sad, a solemn, and a most melancholy thought. The book on which I had so much relied; the book in the old morocco cover; the book with the cocked-hat corners; the book full of fine old family associations; the book with seventeen plates, executed in the highest style of art; this precious book was next to useless. Yes, the thing that had guided the father, could not guide the son. And I sat down on a shop step, and gave loose to meditation. […] Here, now, oh, Wellingborough, thought I, learn a lesson, and never forget it. This world, my boy, is a moving world; its Riddough's Hotels are forever being pulled down; it never stands still; and its sands are forever shifting. This very harbor of Liverpool is gradually filling up, they say; and who knows what your son (if you ever have one) may behold, when he comes to visit Liverpool, as long after you as you come after his grandfather. And, Wellingborough, as your father's guidebook is no guide for you, neither would yours (could you afford to buy a modern one to-day) be a true guide to those who come after you. Guide-books, Wellingborough, are the least reliable books in all literature; and nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guide-books. Old ones tell us the ways our fathers went, through the thoroughfares and courts of old; but how few of those former places can their posterity trace, amid avenues of modem erections; to how few is the old guide-book now a clew! Every age makes its own guidebooks, and the old ones are used for waste paper. But there is one Holy Guide-Book, Wellingborough, that will never lead you astray, if you but follow it aright; and some noble monuments that remain, though the pyramids crumble. […] But though I rose from the door-step a sadder and a wiser boy, and though my guide-book had been stripped of its reputation for infallibility, I did not treat with contumely or disdain, those sacred pages which had once been a beacon to my sire. (*Redburn* 145–151)

Wellingborough's reflection, although fundamental in the process of the formation of his identity, is, nevertheless, ambiguous. On the one hand, the protagonist realizes that the frame of reference according to which his father lived and within which he made decisions will not apply to his own life. Even though it turns out that the "old morocco," more misleading than informative, is worthless as a navigational aid, Wellingborough holds on to his emotional attachment to the booklet: the old guidebook acquires a new value. It now becomes a nostalgic

Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

memory of a happy childhood and all that it entailed: naïve dreams, familial warmth, and safety. Letting go of the belief that his own visit to Liverpool could possibly emulate that of his father's, he embraces the inevitability of discovering reality on his own.

On the other hand, Wellingborough, whose voice becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from that of Redburn's, extends his doubts concerning the guidebook's applicability to reality to encompass all narratives. This indication is interesting: if books cannot serve people as guides-to-reality, then the only reliable touchstone of truth is reality itself. However, if this implication is taken critically, one must also conclude that the error against which Wellingborough/Redburn/Melville warns the reader has just been committed: if literature should not be trusted, then the book in our hands is, by definition, untrustworthy. This metatextual reflection seems consistent both within and outside the presented world of Melville's bildungsroman: Wellingborough, reading the guidebook, fails to learn any truths about the world that he could employ in his own life; likewise, seeking "objective" truths in *Redburn*-the-novel, the reader who wishes to apply the lessons learned by the protagonist from reality in their own context will inevitably be disappointed. The only path leading to self-knowledge is through one's own, direct, unmediated, often painful, experience.

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Wellingborough knows who *he is not*, and realizes that until he embarked upon his journey his vision of the world had relied on constructs corresponding to reality to the same extent to which the green guidebook corresponded to contemporary Liverpool. However, as long as even one element of the formerly embraced grand narrative remains intact—he cannot become adult: religion, which he does not question as a child, remains a constitutive part of Redburn's worldview, and thus stands in the way to his own transformation into Melville, the existentialist philosopher, whose lifelong "quarrel with God" will eventually lead to his "laudation" of the sea, which, as an "inhuman deity," requires no theodicy. Such faith, propelled by aporias, will be a difficult faith—the faith of an "existential man," which forms the core of Redburn's *post-vision*, fundamental to Melville's mature philosophical reflection, determined by his "leaps of faith." Yet, his recurrent choices to embrace "the truth" despite the aporetic "dead-ends" of discourse go hand in hand with his readiness to *revise* such "truths" in confrontation with each new existential experience. Acknowledging the perma-

nence of angst, embracing the fundamental liquidity of discourse, one learns to profoundly accept uncertainty, impermanence, and transience, defining the human experience, a *sine-qua-non* condition of the constant evolution of *epistemes*.

Abstract: Paweł Jędrzejko's reflection on the career trajectories of Americanists from Eastern Bloc countries, including his own, spurs off his autoethnographic account of how sea sailing in Poland became a gateway to the world, leading to his involvement in Melville Studies. His chance encounter with the Polish training ship *Zawisza Czarny* in the Baltic Sea, marking the beginning of his Americanist journey, becomes a point of departure for a literary analysis, in which the author draws parallels between his own youthful experiences and those of Melville's character Wellingborough Redburn. Exploring the character's transatlantic journey in the context of the autobiographical characteristics of the genre of bildungsroman, Jędrzejko analyzes Redburn's journey from naïve boyhood to mature identity, emphasizing Melville's use of Redburn's voyage to Liverpool as a mirror of his own confrontation with reality, the collapse of inherited ideals, and the development of independent self-awareness. The author highlights the importance of direct (unmediated) experience in the shaping of one's self-awareness, and poses questions concerning the reliability of narratives as "guides to reality." By reflecting on the transformative nature of travel and the epistemological shifts it entails, Jędrzejko integrates his personal narrative with broader philosophical inquiries into identity formation, the fallibility of inherited knowledge, and the existential challenges faced by individuals in their pursuit of truth. The text serves as a meditation on the fluidity of discourse and the necessity of embracing uncertainty and impermanence as inextricable determinants of the human condition.

Keywords: American literature, bildungsroman, sea voyage, Herman Melville, identity formation, Redburn

Bio: Paweł Jędrzejko, PhD. D.Litt., is an Associate Professor at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, and Faculty Member of the PhD Programme in Studies in English Literatures, Language, and Translation of the "Sapienza" University in Rome. Author of in excess of 200 publications, including authored and edited monographs. President of the International American Studies Association in the years 2021–2023; Co-Founder and Co-Editor in Chief of the *Review of International American Studies*. Associate Editor of *Er(r)go. Theory–Literature–Culture*. Ocean-Going Yachtmaster. Musician and lyricist. Former Director of the University of Silesia Press. By ministerial appointment, in years 2015–2016, he served as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Implementation of the Strategy of the Open Access to Academic Contents at the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. In the same years, he served as the representative of the President of the Conference of the Rectors of Academic Schools of Poland (CRASP) in an international contact group at the European University Association at the European Parliament. His research interests include literary and cultural theory, history of literature, comparative cultural studies, translation theory and philosophy. Departing from the assumption of the aporetic (ontic/discursive) character of reality, Jędrzejko fosters research penetrating the common grounds of human cognitive experience and creative activity and focusing

upon the complex interdependencies between individual awareness of the worldmaking power of language and the shape of daily interpersonal and intercultural relations. The areas of his particular interest include the philosophy of friendship, the philosophy of existence, the history of 19th century American literature, the literary philosophies of the "American Renaissance" the oeuvre of Herman Melville, postcolonial and post-dependence theories, as well as translation theories. His full CV is available at http://www.ikila.us.edu.pl/index.php/en/staff/item/765-pawel-jedrzejko.

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Paweł Jędrzejko
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
Past IASA President

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INTRODUCTION: ON THE CONCEPT OF JOURNEYING

Beata Gontarz and Anna Maj
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5302-8010
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3958-267X

Travel invariably involves encounters with the impossible and the unpredictable. Whether these are tourist trips aimed at "consuming" the world (both symbolically and literally) or other types of mobility—driven by the requirements of professional work, curiosity, inner need, or necessity—different forms of journeying share certain traits in common. Business trips, artistic or religious peregrinations, scientific or exploratory expeditions, migrations compelled by economic pressures or fear—all entail leaving home, and—to a greater or lesser extent—involve taking risks, stepping out of one's comfort zone, and facing potential logistical disasters, even in the world that is, seemingly, meticulously organized.

There is no doubt that mobility is a significant aspect of contemporary experience, the movement itself often overshadowing the very effort of exploring the world, or the risks taken to gain knowledge. It is true that the organized tourism of today aims to satisfy all the needs of the customers and focuses on delivering the promise of multisensory experience; it is also true that various types of business travel give individuals a sense of operating in a world that *can* be controlled—yet, the unexpected may still occur. On the other end of the spectrum of certainty is the refugee mobility—marked by trauma, further aggravated by the anxiety concerning what they leave behind, the fear of the loss of the beloved people and places, the severing of the physical connection with what is familiar, the disconcerting anticipation that the future may prove equally traumatic, and, last but not least, the lack of hope for a return home. The above notwithstanding, the unexpected may also bring relief, offer a sense of peace, and a happy conclusion to one's escape.

Travel, perhaps primarily so, involves encounters—meetings with the Stranger, the Other, the Unfamiliar, with which one may become close, but which can also evoke a whole range of emotions, negative and positive alike. These engagements contribute to our multifaceted experiences of intercultural communication: challenging stereotypes, they allow us to deconstruct them. Therefore, traveling creates opportunities to change our perspectives: journeying, we may see ourselves (and our lives) in the mirror of the Other's existence, often very different from that of our own. Such encounters not infrequently give rise to profound cultural insights. Involving both observation and engagement, travel thus manifests itself as a vast field of self-reflection, potentially promoting the building of cultural competencies that shape future interactions.

Traces of these insights can be found in the literature of different eras, especially in travel diaries and reports, in non-fiction and fiction, but also in visual culture—in works of various generations and genres, ranging from cartography, through drawings in travelers' sketchbooks, paintings (including panoramas), photographs (documenting acts of conquest, or the cultural diversity of the world), vacation snapshots in private albums and family collections, professional documentaries and amateur videos, YouTube travel vlogs or TikTok reels, to multimedia installations or VR, digitally reproducing the richness of landscapes or specific places. The media may vary, but as long as they allow one to tell a story or, at least, to capture the image of a moment, they are the means by which memories (or their simulations) may come alive. Irrespective of the medium, narratives, images, or recorded sounds become complex signs that allow us to *remember*. Hence, travel cannot be reduced to the merely physical, or merely intellectual experience of mobility; it necessitates, first and foremost, an intensive effort of our cognitive apparatus: the often strenuous perceptual processes involving continuous interpretation of multisensory stimuli and memory work.

Whether literary, visual, or audiovisual—records contain testimonies to the time in which they were created, bearing not only the mark of the author but also of the culture and intellectual environment that had shaped them. As such, they unavoidably carry traces of cultural prejudices, stereotypes, and the dominant discourse of the time. At the same time, narratives and images offer us a "magnifying glass," allowing a close examination of a selected fragment of the world in a given era; authors representing different generations thus grant scholars a unique entry into a world seen through different eyes, and thereby access to "truths" about those who created the record, but also about the realities distant in space or time, or surprisingly

Beata Gontarz and Anna Maj
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland

close. The authors of the texts collected in this issue reconstruct these worlds, offering the *RIAS* readers reflections on the hitherto underappreciated meanings of the travel, the traveler, and the host. The volume opens with three articles presenting new perspectives on journeys and journeying manifest in the works of 21st-century fiction and non-fiction.

The "Features" section begins with Wyn Kelley's article "Gayl Jones and Travel No-Where." In her writing, Kelly argues, Jones—a contemporary American writer (with distant African roots)—transcends the conventions of classic travel narratives. Her characters seem *radically homeless*: they travel, but usually neither to return home nor to find new homes. This allows Kelly to invoke insights regarding the genre of "migration fiction" (proposed by Rodrigo Lazo), where characters are always on the move but never complete their journeys. According to Kelly, defying traditional genre conventions, Gayl Jones accurately diagnoses the contemporary, unprecedented scale of travel-as-migration, as an endless journey to nowhere. Emphasizing the bleak truth about people as perpetual travelers toward an undefined, unpredictable future, the scholar focuses on the potential of Jones's speculative fiction in *Palmares* (2021) and in her satirical travel narrative *The Birdcatcher* (2022), indicating how Jones's work emphasizes the paradoxes of travel and of travel narratives alike.

Another—complementary—perspective is examined by Grażyna Zygadło in "Travelers by Necessity: Ruth Behar on the Way in Search of Roots or Home," analyzing the autoethnographic narratives of Ruth Behar, raised in three cultures: Jewish (both Ashkenazi and Sephardic), Cuban, and American. Zygadło situates Behar's self-analyses (including her journey to Cuba in search of roots and of a lost home) within the narrative model proposed by Gloria Anzaldúa, which focuses on the personal life of the individual but simultaneously tells the stories of others—the tribe, class, oppressed group—and emphasizes the autobiographical element through the frequent use of subjective (first-person) narrative. In Behar's choices, the scholar sees acts of conscious transgression of the traditional Western assumptions of "scientific" ethnography, characterized by the objectivity of the post-Descartian paradigm. Behar describes herself as a "border woman," listing all the symbolic thresholds she has crossed both in her life and in her ethnographic writing. Grażyna Zygadło interprets Ruth Behars "migrations" between places, identities, languages, cultures, yearnings, and illusions, between the university and life, as the state of "nepantla," as described by Gloria Anzaldúa—the state of being-in-

between, in a space that is always unstable, unpredictable, uncertain, always lacking clear boundaries, and always transitory.

Adding to the observations offered by Kelley and Zygadło, Elisa Pesce analyzes travel in Maggie Shipstead's novel *The Great Circle* (2022) as a movement in space that also entails a metaphorical dimension of an inner journey of self-discovery—a journey undertaken by two characters: the woman pilot Marian Graves and the Hollywood actress playing Marian, Hadley Baxter. Pesce points out that exploring various meanings of travel, Shipstead questions the fundamental premises of the traditional travel narratives following the patriarchal paradigm—emphasizing the dominance of the male protagonist and the male desire to achieve a set goal. The Italian scholar demonstrates that the novel engages the relation between travel writing and gender, revealing similarities and differences between past and present forms of female discrimination. Pesce's analysis demonstrates that by the end of the novel both Marian and Hadley conclude that complete knowledge cannot be attained, but the pursuit of it remains important: their understanding of the personal and cultural value of travel gradually shifts from the dominant, typically male paradigm of travel as a quest for wholeness or an epic search for some absolute truth to a more female epistemological framework, which remains inclusive, flexible, and open.

Adopting a different methodological position, in her article "Land of Heathens versus the Land of Liberty: Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* and Ubeydullah Efendi's *Travels*" Saniye Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş examines the American writer's 1869 literary travelogue documenting his journey through the Ottoman Empire. The scholar analyzes Twain's portrayal of the traveler (combining naivety and intelligence), the writer's characteristic language (replete with unique humor), and colonial stereotypes about the East and its people, juxtaposing them with the critical perspective of social behavior adopted by Ubeydullah Efendi, an Ottoman politician, who, having journeyed to the United States, created a compelling literary depiction of the West steeped in orientalist discourse. Efendi, endowed with rare observation skills and unmatched intellect, views the United States and the Americans with kindness. However, although he creates a positive image of the young Western country, a closer analysis reveals the presence of subtle critical undertones in Efendi's narrative, which, on the one hand, reflects broad cultural competencies of the Turkish author, and his political sensitivity on the other.

In the article "A.K. Ramanujan's Observations on Various Aspects of the United States of America: Looking Briefly at the Diary Entries,"

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Jolly Das analyzes the *Travel Diary, 2 to 27 July 1959, Bombay to New York* (included in the anthology *Journeys: A Poet's Diary*, 2018) written by Indian folklore and language scholar Attipata Krishnaswamy Ramanujan. In her study, the researcher emphasizes the emotions of the traveler, who, leaving his country forever to emigrate to the USA, experiences "a transition from the familiar world (his interior landscape, *akam*) to the unfamiliar country (the world outside his self, *puram*)." The article focuses on the previously unpublished work of Ramanujan's, revealing the complexity of the traveler's experiences and shedding light on his original cultural observations prompting self-reflection in the face of the concurrence of a variety of influences.

Addressing an altogether different type of narrative, Daniel Esteban Unigarro's article "Amazonas de tres viajeros cartógrafos: entre la experiencia y la imaginación geográfica" explores the transformations of European cartographic imagination over the centuries, beginning with the 1542 Spanish expedition along the Amazon (from Quito to the Atlantic) and the Portuguese journeys of the 16th and 17th centuries from the river's mouth to its source in the Andes. The author uncovers elements of the cultural imagination of the cartographers, combining their projections of the mythical world with the geographical, cultural, and topographical knowledge, and transformed into visual and functional representation of the terrain—the map of the Amazon basin. In Unigarro's perspective, cartography becomes not only an embodiment of the order of knowledge and power—"the vision machine" of the era—but also a way of narrating the world.

The "Features" section ends with Maxime McKenna's article "From Superhighway to Hyperreality: The Infrastructure of 'Astral America,'" which sheds new light on Jean Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreality culture. The researcher focuses on the technical aspects of traveling, considering in particular "the connections between postmodern theory and the infrastructure of automobility." He relates Baudrillard's *America* to the unique circumstances of the time of the oil embargo imposed by OPEC countries, which necessitated the turn toward the possibility of internal fuel production. Analyzing the French philosopher's insights through such a lens, McKenna argues that the "hyperreal America"—saturated with media images—is a phenomenon directly correlated to the economic crisis and affecting the reorientation of the US economy.

The present issue of the *Review of International American Studies* offers the reader a comprehensive examination of travel as a dynamic interplay between cultural narratives, identity, and the ongoing quest for understanding the self and the world. Even though no single publi-

cation may aspire to completeness, we strongly believe that the insights offered by the scholars whose work we present will prove fruitful in generating further research. With such a goal in mind, concluding our "Introduction," we wish you an inspiring reading experience.

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Co-Editors

Abstract: The plethora of existing concepts of journeying, as explored by the authors of articles collected in the present issue of *RIAS*, reveals the multifaceted nature of travel, irreducible to physical mobility alone. Despite their differences, all forms of travel share common elements, including leaving home, facing risks, stepping out of comfort zones, and encountering logistical challenges, which renders journeying a significant component of existential experience. Involving aporetic encounters with the unfamiliar, travels allow for the deconstruction of stereotypes, offering not only opportunities for the revision of ossified perspectives, but also opening space for philosophical self-exploration. Literature and visual culture throughout different eras have captured these insights, from travel diaries and reports to cartographic works, paintings, photographs, and modern digital media such as travel vlogs and virtual reality. These records reflect the multidimensionality of the "truth" of their times, testifying to the material reality of a given time and place, but also revealing cultural prejudices and the particularities of the dominant discourse of the time. The authors of the texts in this volume reconstruct historical worlds, uncovering new aspects of literature and cultural artifacts, and offering fresh perspectives on travel and journeys as depicted in literary and visual narratives of the Americas since the Spanish Conquest until the first decades of the 21st-century.

Keywords: RIAS, introduction, travel, journey, travel writing, the Americas, media, narratives, images, identity

Bios: Beata Gontarz is an Associate Professor and Director of the Institute of Culture Studies at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. Her areas of interest include discourses of personal documents, the correspondence between literature and visual arts, representations of individual and group experiences of history, identity discourse in individual and collective perspectives, and the axiological aspects of modern culture.

Anna Maj, D.Litt., Ph.D., is a cultural and media studies expert and communicologist. She is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Cultural Studies at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, and the Past Vice-Director of the Institute (2012–2019). Her main research interests include new media, cyber arts, cultural aspects of the AI, media anthropology, digital memory, communication behaviors in new media, perception theory & user experience, as well as travel narratives and their perceptions. She is the author of two monographs (*Media in Travel* and *Transformations of Knowledge in Cyberculture*) and numerous scholarly articles. To date,

she has edited nine multi-author monographs on new media communication, digital art, and digital memories (published, respectively, by Brill, Leiden; Rodopi, Amsterdam–New York; and Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford). She served as a Member of the CULTMEDIA Academic Board (2022–2023), as a Steering Group Member and Project Leader at Inter-Disciplinary Net (Oxford) (2008–2016), and as an ENABLE Network Member (2012–2013). Additionally, she worked as a Katowice Project Team Member for the ECC 2016 contest, and held the function of the Project Leader responsible for the organization of multiple conferences on new media, art, and technology, including the New Media Days in Katowice, Digital Arts at Oxford University, and recently, in 2023, the New Media Perspectives at the Silesian Museum, University of Silesia, and Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice.

Beata Gontarz and Anna Maj
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland

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"GAYL JONES AND TRAVEL NO-WHERE"

Wyn Kelley
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4859-1968

INTRODUCTION

In her historical novel *Palmares* (2021), Gayl Jones, contemporary US author, explores legends of a seventeenth-century Afro-Brazilian *quilombo*, or autonomous fortified city battling Portuguese colonial power in South America.[1] Writing from a feminist and ecocritical perspective, Jones speaks within a Black intellectual tradition that radically questions the assumptions of Euro-American literature. But she also rewrites that already subversive tradition. Thus, while drawing on a US Black narrative of escape and fugitivity, the so-called slave narrative or neo-slave narrative, she moves that narrative from North to South America, creating often disturbing alternatives to US fictions of travel or escape. In laying out this argument, I invoke Saidiya Hartman's theory of "critical fabulation" ("Venus") as it investigates what Hartman calls "violent fictions of the archive" ("Freedom and Fugitivity") and the ways they have silenced Black history, making its stories of heroic resistance and escape invisible. This violent suppression of Black fugitivity has made it what I call "travel nowhere," not travel at all, at least within Euro-American conventions. I see Gayl Jones

1 I am deeply grateful to Paweł Jędrzejko for inviting this paper and to Joaquin Terrones for introducing me to Gayl Jones and Brazil, and for support in writing this essay. "*Quilombo*" is the Portuguese version of the Angolan (Kimbundu) "*ki-lombo*," meaning military training camp. Although it came to signify "maroon community," it is not a Portuguese translation of "maroon," derived from the Spanish "*cimarron*" (having to do with feral livestock), and the French "*marron*" or "feral." Instead *quilombo* maintained its root meaning as a community of people united by a common purpose, usually defense. Its use as a term for Palmares arose after the community was destroyed (Schwarcz and Starling 94).

as resisting the "where" or desired destinations of colonialist travel but those also of the slave or neo-slave narrative; and I will suggest that Jones's fugitive narratives and what they say about Black communities of caring and resistance are necessary more than ever for global survival in a time of planetary crisis.

Palmares tells the story of what happened after the *quilombo* fell to Portuguese militias in 1694; then, departing from a historical narrative that focuses on Zumbi, Palmares' Afro-Brazilian leader (see Anderson, Kent, Reis and Santos Gomes, Schwarcz and Starling), Jones's protagonist, Almeyda, then travels to what she hopes will be a New Palmares. Her journey, however, paradoxically seems to get her nowhere. But, as Jones shows, this nowhere reveals the No-Where of Palmarians' lives, a placelessness that may seem unsettling but that imagines radical freedom. Like legendary "flying Africans" (see McDaniel), people who escaped enslavement by leaping into the air, Jones's characters appear to launch themselves into an unknown, a Not-Know-Where that may take them to Africa or somewhere utterly unimagined. Other versions of this ambiguous travel appear in Gayl Jones's drama, *The Ancestor: A Street Play* (1975; 2020), and her novel, *The Birdcatcher* (1986; 2022)—and incidentally in the works of Toni Morrison, whose novels likewise show concern with "critical fabulation," or attempts to rethink history outside archives, travel beyond maps.

Saidiya Hartman's work illuminates Gayl Jones's characters and themes in remarkably precise ways. Her 2008 essay, "Venus in Two Acts," reflects on Black women as targets of racial and sexual violence, particularly within European historical archives that have deliberately silenced their voices. Hartman thus asks questions that Gayl Jones's work seems intentionally to address: "How can narrative embody life in words and at the same time respect what we cannot know?" (3). Hartman proposes a narrative practice that respects both the silence and what lies behind it: "The intent of this practice [critical fabulation] is not to *give voice* to the slave, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified. … It is a history of an unrecoverable past; it is a narrative of what might have been or could have been; it is a history written with and against the archive" (12).

In writing historical fiction in *Palmares,* Gayl Jones offers just this kind of radical speculation. Merging critical fabulation with travel narrative, she emphasizes the fluidity and agency of Black lives in history. The result is a model for engagement with an unspeakable past: that is the imaginary part, the fabulation. But the critical piece is just as important. This is fiction that rethinks travel in a world that lacks a destination. In Jones's speculative fiction, there is no Underground

Wyn Kelley
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

Railroad, no Great Migration leading characters to freedom. Instead, the "furtive communication" (10) that Hartman speaks of, the whispers and secret touches, songs and stories exchanged among fugitives, guide travelers to places where they may survive catastrophe—in a *quilombo*, a *terreiro* (place of worship), or the New Palmares that is, ultimately, planet Earth.

WHO IS GAYL JONES?

Granting few interviews, Gayl Jones has in a sense kept herself out of the archive or even the canon, although she has inhabited its elite spaces. We know that she was born in 1949 in Lexington, Kentucky, where she now resides. A brilliant student and early writer, she attracted considerable notice: author Elizabeth Hardwick steered her to Connecticut College, where she worked with Robert Hayden; Michael S. Harper, with whom she studied at Brown University, introduced her to Toni Morrison; Toni Morrison edited Jones's first two novels, *Corregidora* (1975) and *Eva's Man* (1976); and more recently Helene Atwan at Beacon Press urged Jones to keep publishing after periods of silence in her career. In 1976 Jones began teaching at the University of Michigan, where she met and married Robert Higgins. Jones and Higgins moved to Europe in 1983, where she continued to publish poetry, essays, and a novel, *The Birdcatcher* (in German), in 1986. In 1988 her mother's illness brought them to Kentucky, where her mother died in 1997 and then Higgins in 1998. After the appearance of two major works—*The Healing* (1998—shortlisted for the National Book Award) and *Mosquito* (1999)—Jones stopped publishing for over twenty years. But she maintained contact with Helene Atwan, who eventually invited Jones to release a stream of work: *Palmares* (2021), *Song for Almeyda and Anninho* (2022), *The Birdcatcher* (2022, now in English), *Butter: Novellas, Stories, and Fragments* (2023), and *The Unicorn Woman* (2024). According to Atwan, Jones had held some of these back for many years ("My Decades"). When *Palmares* came out, reviewers noted that Jones had possibly been thinking about Brazil and Palmares from her earliest work. Jones's interviews from the 1970s and 80s confirm this perception (Jones and Harper, Rowell, Tate).

Although critics and reviewers of Gayl Jones's books tend to agree that Toni Morrison encouraged and influenced her, the reverse may also be true, given that Jones was writing about South American enslavement of Africans before Morrison began to include Brazil in her work and to travel there herself (Coser). This counter-influence, in other words, may have led both authors to journey the Americas,

imaginatively at first, from early in their careers. Toni Morrison acknowledged their connection, famously saying of *Corregidora* that "no novel about any black woman could ever be the same after this" (Ghanash)—including her own? Although *Corregidora* takes place in the US, Jones's title refers to the narrator's great-grandfather, Simon Corregidora, a Brazilian planter who rapes enslaved women and their children—his own children. Jones's Brazil, distant in time and place, nevertheless knits the book together thematically as a reminder of generations of violence against enslaved Africans, especially women.

Through her references to this history, Jones evokes a world of Afro-Brazilian communities in Brazil's northern provinces and in *terreiros*, or sanctuaries, where spiritual practices deriving from African devotion to ancestors and nature deities emerged in a distinctive religious form called Candomblé. Morrison's 1997 novel, *Paradise*, includes a Brazilian woman, Consolata or Connie, who gathers fugitive women in a small community housed in a building called the Convent. In this tiny *quilombo*, Connie draws on Candomblé to heal women who have suffered abuse (Myers). Morrison's 2008 novel *A Mercy*, taking place in the late 17th century, begins on a North American estate run by a Portuguese planter who, like Gayl Jones's Corregidora, rapes enslaved African women; that fact generates the act of mercy that releases Morrison's protagonist, Florens, in ambiguous flight toward ambiguous freedom. Florens finds a home of sorts among Morrison's collection of women without men—another kind of *quilombo*. Such communities and their healing powers prove central in both Jones's and Morrison's books.

Just as remarkably Morrison and Jones may also have discussed the theme of "flying Africans" as it plays out across the Americas. Morrison's first novel after *Corregidora*, *Song of Solomon* (1977), presents one of her strongest female characters, Pilate Dead, as a flying African—a trope Jones had taken up herself in *The Ancestor: A Street Play*, published in 2020 but begun much earlier, when she was a graduate student at Brown University—well before *Song of Solomon* ("Gayl Jones"). Were Jones and Morrison talking in the 1970s about freedom as flight? A flight from the Americas to Africa? A flight made by women as well as men?

But, as we review the relationship between Jones and Morrison, the US and South America, we are deep in Jones's story without knowing where her interest in Brazil came from. In her 1982 interview with Charles H. Rowell, Jones says that "going to the Brazilian history and landscape helped my imagination and writing" (40). But she adds that "the Brazilian experience [was] (purely literary and imaginative

Wyn Kelley
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

since I've never been there) [and it simply] helped to give a perspective on the American one" (41). Nevertheless, regardless of Gayl Jones's own physical location, in novels after *Eva's Man* her characters travel widely. And if they do not always go physically to South America, she refers to transhemispheric travels, histories, and geographies in most of her work. Even more tellingly, her long poem, *Song for Anninho*, written in the voice of Almeyda, protagonist of *Palmares*, first came out in 1981. She later wrote a companion piece, *Song for Almeyda*, recently publishing both in one volume; but clearly she had sowed the seeds earlier.

Likewise Jones's *The Ancestor: A Street Play*, independently published in 2020, was started much earlier. It tells the story of Zumbi and his dramatic death when Palmares fell. We can observe, then, that Jones's writings share certain themes and structures; they travel across the Americas and the globe; and *Palmares* is a travel book in more ways than one—traveling, as it does, in and out of Gayl Jones's other books as they travel in and out of *Palmares*.

PALMARES AND TRAVEL NO-WHERE

In the story told by European historians, Zumbi was born in northern Brazil in 1655 during a time when that part of Brazil, seized by Portuguese invaders from Dutch settlers but mostly ignored because of its inhospitable landscape, offered opportunity for *quilombos* to thrive; these were diverse communities of Black, Indigenous, white, and other groups resisting colonial rule. Palmares was founded around 1605 and led at first by Ganga Zumba, who created a powerful Afro-Brazilian city, capital of a confederation of smaller towns. In Portuguese-based accounts (see Southey, as well as Anderson, Kent, Reis and Santos Gomes, Schwarcz and Starling), Zumbi was born in Palmares but captured as a child in one of the colonialists' periodic raids and raised in Porto Calvo by a Catholic priest, Father António Melo, who taught him Portuguese and Latin and gave him a European education. In 1670, at fifteen, Zumbi returned to Palmares, not, apparently, cutting his ties with Father Melo and continuing to travel back and forth. Because of Ganga Zumba's concessions to local Portuguese officials, which many of his followers saw as betrayals, Zumbi killed Ganga Zumba and assumed leadership of Palmares. From 1678 until 1694, he successfully fought off Portuguese incursions, traded with or raided local towns for goods and recruits, and expanded the size, wealth, military preparedness, and fearsome reputation of Palmares.

Gayl Jones's novel does what no other Anglo-American retelling of Zumbi's story has done (see Southey, Kidder and Fletcher, Harper): it puts the leader and defender of Palmares in the background and focuses on survivors of the *quilombo*'s fall, mostly women. Jones's singular innovation is to suggest that the women of Zumbi's time had complicated lives, traveled in and out of enslavement and emancipation, and formed their own versions of *quilombos*. Their life stories, mostly unimagined until now (except for that of a legendary warrior queen named Dandara; see D'Salete), are rich in the ways Saidiya Hartman claims for Black women's unacknowledged histories. Thus, Jones's narrator, Almeyda, begins her story when she is seven years old, the daughter of an enslaved woman on a sugar plantation. They live with Almeyda's African-born grandmother, a medicine woman whom the Portuguese enslaver regards with lust and fear. Almeyda grows up in this family of women, educated (as Zumbi was) by a Catholic priest, Father Tollinare. When she enters her teens, the enslaver involves Almeyda in a scheme to cure a white man's venereal disease by pairing him with a virgin. The plan fails when Almeyda's mother applies protective herbs that baffle the rapist. In retaliation, Almeyda's enslaver sells her to a shoemaker.

During this period of her life, Almeyda learns about Palmares, a place where Black people may apparently live freely. Almeyda awaits her opportunity, and when men from Palmares raid her new home, Almeyda goes with them willingly. When she arrives in Palmares, a Muslim man named Anninho, one of Zumbi's trusted advisors, chooses her as his wife. Although Almeyda falls in love with Anninho, she quickly observes inequities in the *quilombo*'s power structure that, for example, separate men from women and wives from enslaved women; she has not left patriarchy or the slave system behind, even in an Afro-Brazilian city.

Unexpectedly, for admirers of Zumbi as an early Afro-Brazilian hero, Jones buries the culminating events in Zumbi's life—the fall of Palmares and his subsequent execution— in the center of the novel, where they take second place to Almeyda's story. If the first half of Almeyda's narrative concerns her growth from childhood innocence and enslavement to knowledge, love, and glimpses of freedom, the second half takes up her extensive travels after she leaves Palmares—a much less certain narrative. During the fall of Palmares, Almeyda learns that her husband Anninho had some premonition of the Portuguese attack and has prepared them a hideout. But soon they are ambushed, and Almeyda brutally maimed by Portuguese mercenaries—her breasts cut off with a machete—while Anninho disappears. From that point until

Wyn Kelley
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

the end, Almeyda wanders—in search of Anninho but also of a New Palmares, a *quilombo* where all can be free, not just Zumbi's favorites. Against that background she recovers from her wounds and seeks shelter with a healer, Luiza Cosme, in Bahia. Here she learns the science of plants that, as with her grandmother's and mother's knowledge of herbs, gives the book's women a seemingly mystical power.

After many episodes, some humorous, others horrifying, Almeyda eventually finds Anninho, who has been a traveler himself. The novel ends with their reunion: one that is happy but inconclusive. They are in love but have experienced so much trauma that they will need to find their way back to one another over time. The novel ends before full return and reconciliation.

It should be clear by now that Gayl Jones has written no conventional Zumbi narrative. Just as strikingly, she has written no conventional travel narrative either. Her exercise in critical fabulation or speculative fiction suggests that Almeyda and Anninho have tested and found wanting any number of classic travel-narrative forms: the quest narrative, pilgrimage, flight to freedom, or Homeric epic ending in a return home. Instead, Almeyda and Anninho seem to have arrived nowhere, to have gotten nowhere. It is not certain that a New Palmares exists. It is not clear that they have arrived there. Indeed, so much of Almeyda's experience seems to have taken place in a dream state or fictional world, that the outcome may be nothing more than a fantasy.

In that sense, one might say that Almeyda and Anninho have arrived at a paradoxical no-where. They have traveled but come to a standstill. They have been motivated by love and longing for each other but may have lost that motivation along the way. Their travel has signified freedom from enslavement, but from their new vantage point, it may seem that they never left enslavement at all—the lesson that Toni Morrison's Sethe contemplates in *Beloved*, when she finds that escaping her enslaver leads to new bondage to her rememories, as embodied in her ghost-daughter, Beloved.

The paradox of travel no-where thus has its roots in the paradoxes of enslavement itself. In *Palmares* the enslaved people are its freest characters. They travel beyond the boundaries of family and community, beyond expectation. But, again paradoxically, they have not arrived and are not free. At the moment of their reunion, Almeyda and Anninho seem to experience freedom; but the book ends before they can live it. The second to last chapter is called "The New Palmares," where Almeyda and Anninho meet and share their stories, as Sethe and Paul D do in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Much goes unsaid, however, and Anninho acknowledges that not even his love for Almeyda has

brought him to the New Palmares: "Perhaps you were the reason I came back at first but there were things I learned on the raids that would be useful here when we prepare to fight the Portuguese again" (492). He ends the book by saying: "there will be other days to tell you the details of that story, and to fill in the gaps in the other one" (492). The novel appears to ask, not, what happens to these lovers, but rather, what lies ahead in the world after Zumbi's death, in the world after Palmares itself?

CAUGHT IN PARADOX

In her little-known work, *The Ancestor: A Street Play*, Jones offers a different reading of Zumbi's story, one that may illuminate the travels of her Afro-Brazilian characters in *Palmares* and her North American ones in *The Birdcatcher*—offering as well a deeper sense of what *Palmares* might mean for contemporary readers.

The Ancestor: A Street Play, as I have indicated for *Palmares*, showcases how far Gayl Jones departs from Zumbi's story. This brief play begins with an unnamed woman's account of the fall of Palmares. Whereas Jones's novel *Palmares* presents the narrative generally accepted by historians, in which the Portuguese kill Zumbi and exhibit his head in the plaza in Porto Calvo, in *The Ancestor* the women of Palmares save Zumbi as he leaps from a cliff: "Rather than surrender, our men jumped. (Pause) I began singing. The other women began singing. The men grew wings. They sprouted wings. It was like the old place, you know, the country, Palmares. The palm forest. In the new world, Brazil, but it was like the old country. It was like Africa" (np). On the breath of their songs the women carry the men out of Brazil, presumably to Africa—an interpretation of Zumbi's leap very different from those in traditional US or European accounts (cf. Southey, Kidder and Fletcher, Harper). At the heart of that remarkable transformation lies a paradox: Jones's Palmares *is* Africa; one does not have to travel to get there. Jones's narrator explains that the men fly to an "old country" that resembles the new city they built in Brazil in a palm forest.

Brazil, then, is a geographical palimpsest, through which one sees Africa. Jones also imagines a temporal palimpsest, as characters peer through the present into the past: the woman speaking may be Zumbi's lover, and the old man with whom she speaks may well be Zumbi himself. Now, in the present, they are presumably free, and the play celebrates that freedom, the "soul" of their people, as a note explains: "The metaphor here, however, is that rather than jumping to their

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

deaths they sprouted wings, became birds, and flew away. And in this act of jumping they retain their manhood, their 'soul'" (np). As birds, the ancestors are forever free.

But if in *The Ancestor* flight is freedom, in *Palmares* flight leads the characters to the paradoxical and uncertain freedom of no-where. Against this background it is disconcerting to turn to Jones's *The Birdcatcher*, first published in German in 1986 and translated into English and reissued in 2022. In this book, three late-20th-century Black US expatriates, an artist and two writers, seem to be forever traveling, always in flight, but not necessarily free, and certainly not reaching a particular destination. This book seems a satiric travel narrative, far removed from the epic sweep of *Palmares* or *The Ancestor*. But it opens up Jones's themes of travel, flight, and community in unexpected, even unsettling ways.

The book's central metaphor is a sculpture called "The Birdcatcher." The sculptor is Catherine Shuger, married to a writer of science journalism, Ernest Shuger. The narrator, Amanda Wordlaw, is a travel writer and their devoted friend. Catherine, a brilliant artist and charismatic woman, periodically and paradoxically tries to kill her husband, whom she adores. Each time, Ernest takes her to a mental hospital, retrieves her when the episode passes, and tries to keep potential weapons out of her way until the cycle begins again. Each time the attacks recur, Catherine and Ernest summon Amanda to whatever location they have chosen for Catherine's recovery—in this case Ibiza, off the coast of Spain. Catherine and Ernest *seem* to travel the world with complete freedom. They seem the very picture of glamorous tourists or peripatetic artists. But the specter of Catherine's outbreaks hangs over them, and both turn to Amanda for support. For her part, more and more Amanda seems to turn to her own travels—the places she discovers as a travel writer (including Brazil but also Madagascar, Mexico, and France), the lovers she meets, the books and magazine articles her journeys produce—turning to them for relief from these exhausting friends, whom she also loves more than anyone.

Catherine's glamor suggests the freedom of art, and her sculpture, a lifelong project that involves collecting ephemera to add to this ever-growing assemblage, suggests the freedom of abstract art. But the bird held captive in this bird-catcher of a sculpture is herself. Unlike the bird-people in *The Ancestor*, she cannot fly away from a work of art that seems to represent her fractured, frustrated life. Her husband Ernest tells her it is not finished, not ready for exhibition: her work is "not good enough yet" (179). Yet she cannot have the materials she would like, since they might be used for attacks on Ernest. She falls back on ephemera,

fugitive materials, because "Glass, stone, nails, wrenches, drills: [are] things I cannot use" (186). When Ernest reminds her she cannot have dangerous objects nearby, she asks: "'How do you expect me to work if you keep limiting my materials?'" (20). Catherine abides in paradox, neither bound nor free.

Travel in *The Birdcatcher* thus becomes a series of frustrated flights—temporary escapes from a world in which the artist or writer cannot do her work. Amanda too hops from one place to another as she seeks fulfillment in travel writing. She has left a husband and daughter. Her life as a travel writer has kept her from writing fiction as she once did. Travel has brought intriguing men into her life, the most striking, perhaps, an Afro-Brazilian healer with a remarkable skin disease that has made him white from the waist down. Along with Catherine's sculptures and Amanda's books, his multi-colored body seems to represent a culture where Black people cannot be wholly themselves. Amanda's travels and those of Catherine and Ernest thus seem doomed to go nowhere, even as these privileged people appear to enjoy the enviable freedom of artists. In *The Birdcatcher*, as in *Palmares*, characters seem trapped in the paradoxes of travel—always in flight but never free.

ESCAPING PARADOX

Paradoxes like these, in Jones's work, call for radical responses. In traveling with her characters, Jones brings them nowhere, to inescapable paradox. But just as often she frees them, lets them fly—not by arriving at a destination but by finding healing in a New Palmares, a new *quilombo*. In the knowledge of plant medicines passed from one woman to another, her characters find solace and recovery. And in sharing this knowledge they take up their travels again, becoming, like Saidiya Hartman's women in her 2019 book, "wayward lives" and "beautiful experiments."

The Birdcatcher contains a number of significant healers. Amanda Wordlaw reveals that she has written a book called *The Healers of Bahia*. Her research for that book takes her to Brazil, where she meets an herbalist named Encobierta. This medicine woman has an herbal remedy that can cure Amanda's skin problems. But Encobierta does not consider herself an especially gifted healer. Her son Ensinanco, the man who is Black above the waist and white below and who becomes Amanda's lover for a time, can heal with touch. But, his mother says, Ensinanco has turned his back on what he calls "ignorant country folks' superstitions" to live in the "modern world," to be

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

an engineer (95). Eventually Amanda leaves him, perhaps because he has undervalued his mother's gift.

Or perhaps Ensinanco is another of Jones's wry figures of paradox, like Catherine Shuger, someone living in absurdity. Black above though white below, Ensinanco seems a figure of resistance to European colonialism and its policies of white supremacy. But choosing engineering rather than botanical medicine seems to exemplify the success of European efforts to exploit and capitalize Brazil's natural resources. Ensinanco, a skilled healer, is thus fundamentally conflicted. He remains attached to African and Indigenous medicine; but at the same time, seeing his "disease" through European eyes, he is shamed and embarrassed. Amanda encourages him to go to the beach and show his whole body—and he does, but not happily. This vignette is one of many in the novel that capture paradox as a fundamental condition. Ensinanco simply cannot escape himself, his existential contradictions, and Amanda's invitation to embrace his absurd existence proves too overwhelming a challenge to his own healing powers.

For another of Amanda's writing assignments connected with healing, this one about "the flora of Malagasy for [a] gardening magazine" (134), Amanda visits Madagascar and meets a man, Vinandratsy, who seems to hold the knowledge of healing plants she seeks. It turns out, however, that his sister Miandra knows how to *apply* such knowledge, making a special botanical compound that repels mosquitos and a rice tea that cools the spirit. Vinandratsy, like Ensinanco, becomes Amanda's lover. But Miandra is the one who appears to know more about the powers of plants. In neither Brazil nor Madagascar does Amanda find the deep knowledge she is looking for. But women in both places share their special affinities with the plant world and how it might provide the physical and spiritual healing she cannot otherwise attain.

Palmares contains Jones's fullest rendering of female medicine workers and the healing potential of women's communities. Almeyda experiences some of this knowledge in the first half of the book when she learns from her mother, grandmother, and another elder, Old Vera, how to gain protective and curative powers from plants. In the second half of the novel, after Almeyda escapes Palmares, she apprentices herself to the healer Luiza Cosme to learn what she knows about plants. Unlike Amanda Wordlaw, whose contact with medicine women does not go far, Almeyda gains knowledge that eventually allows her to work as a healer herself. It turns out she has inherited healing gifts that her grandmother brought from Africa, including divination and prophecy. With her knowledge of plants, she enters

a realm inhabited mostly by women (the one male healer turns out to be a quack), where she finds the freedom she lacked in Palmares.

If Gayl Jones's characters, then, seem to get nowhere in their paradoxical travels, they also gain knowledge of healing arts that may create nurturing communities and relieve pain. Such an outcome may seem on some level romantic, but Jones's travel narratives do not produce happy endings. Rather, Jones's use of travel-narrative tropes and structures projects forward provocatively into our current moment.

TRAVEL (AND) NARRATIVE

Gayl Jones would probably not call her work travel narrative, or expect to be grouped with authors called travel writers. But her books do challenge conventions of classic travel narrative. In making Amanda Wordlaw of *The Birdcatcher* a contemporary travel writer, Jones invites speculation on what it means to write about travel in the 21st century. Such a meta-literary question suggests how many authors in the classic European tradition implicitly write travel narrative, even if they are not recognized as doing so: stories in which characters leave home, move through dangerous and terrifying worlds, and return laden with riches, new experiences, and the promise of love and happiness. One does not find such outcomes in Gayl Jones's novels, in which, as we have seen, characters travel but do not typically return home or find new homes.

Gayl Jones's critical resistance to the archive of European travel narratives appears a chief contribution to thinking about this literary genre and intellectual tradition. But what seems distinctive about Jones's work is its *commitment* to getting nowhere—or at least to a "where" defined as a single place or existential condition. Many of Toni Morrison's characters wander: Sula Peace, Macon Dead, Sethe and Paul D, Joe and Violet in *Jazz*, the women of *Paradise*, Florens in *A Mercy*. But in Morrison's novels, characters seem to long for homes—places where women gather in kitchens, as Hannah Peace or Sethe do to make food or conversation or Violet to wash hair on the sink. Wandering tends to end when characters find homes somewhere—not always, but often.

Gayl Jones's characters seem radically homeless, in ways that Rodrigo Lazo addresses in thinking about characters' wanderings in what he calls "migrant fiction" (149): fiction in which characters are always moving but never complete their journeys. Lazo thus draws attention to migrancy as a perpetual, deeply human experience. He also considers the formal and generic implications of migrant literature:

Wyn Kelley
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

"I refer not only to a narrative that recounts a story of and engages with the experience of migration but first and foremost a narrative that gets away from itself, escapes its own terms and moves in unexpected directions" (151). He distinguishes migrant fiction—"the movement of characters across national borders, the movement of books and print culture across borders, and the movement of imagination across various conceptual limitations" (152)—from "immigrant fiction" where characters arrive at and begin assimilating into a new culture. Migrant fiction, in contrast, is "wandering" fiction (163), in which "national belonging can be undone" (163), and literary structures, therefore, can take on new forms.

Jones's vision, for which I borrow Saidiya Hartman's term "waywardness," likewise challenges the premises and meanings of wandering away from one's starting point. To what we have seen in Morrison's and Lazo's accounts, Jones adds the notion of a new *quilombo* as what she calls in *The Ancestor* a place or condition where one finds the "soul" of a people. Maintaining that *quilombo* depends on Hartman's illuminating concept of "furtive communication," endless storytelling and song that keep communities of healing alive. But the wandering, the waywardness never ends, and the *quilombo* may not be in one place.

Where does that leave 21st-century readers? Surely contemplating endless wandering and travel no-where underscores a depressing truth about humans as traveling forever toward uncertain futures. The World Migration Report for 2020, produced by the International Organization for Migration, states that: "The total estimated 281 million people living in a country other than their countries of birth in 2020 was 128 million more than in 1990 and over three times the estimated number in 1970." World migration is massive and growing, decimating planetary resources and exhausting human ingenuity. Moreover, the history of human migration shows this massive growth in scale as a relatively recent phenomenon, as humans scramble to make sense of cataclysmic change happening more rapidly than understanding can absorb.

It is not surprising, then, that it takes time for culture to catch up—to find ways of grappling with traumatic truths and accelerating conditions. But Gayl Jones's work suggests that perhaps humans have been looking for refuge in the wrong places. The uncertainty about what might be considered a "right" place opens up a space of freedom—of imagination or possibility—that requires living with, and surviving paradox. Gayl Jones's characters may join the millions of migrants "living in a country other than their countries of birth"—but if so, they

are prepared, as Anninho says in the last line of *Palmares*, to move on, to "fill in the gaps" in "that [other] story."

Gayl Jones's recent burst of new publications exhibits the energy of a writer who willingly embraces absurdity—and moves on. The "Epilogue" to *The Birdcatcher* ends with these words, all in capitals: "SCRAP THIS AND START OVER." How many times in the half-century of her writing life did Gayl Jones think or write those words? How many journeys begin with them? In Gayl Jones's work the wandering never stops. Nor does her wayward story.

Abstract: Gayl Jones (USA, b. 1949) writes of journeys throughout the Americas, while also, if implicitly, exploring a global African diaspora. Her epic historical novel *Palmares* (2021) focuses on Brazil, retelling the story of Zumbi, 17th-century Afro-Brazilian leader of a *quilombo,* or fortified rebel city. Palmares did finally fall to Portuguese colonial militias in 1694-5, and in her book Gayl Jones's protagonist, Almeyda, then travels to what she hopes will be a new or second Palmares. Her journey, however, frustratingly and paradoxically seems to get her nowhere. But, as we will see, this nowhere reveals the No-Where of Palmarians' lives, a placelessness that seems uncertain, but at the same time offers freedom, or at least imaginative space. Like legendary "flying Africans," people who escaped enslavement by leaping into the air, Jones's characters appear to launch themselves into an unknown, a Not-Know-Where that may take them to Africa or somewhere utterly unanticipated. We can find other versions of this ambiguous travel in Gayl Jones's drama, *The Ancestor: A Street Play* (1975; 2020), and her novel, *The Birdcatcher* (1986; 2022)—and even in the works of Toni Morrison, whose novels show similar concern with what Saidiya Hartman calls "critical fabulation": attempts to rethink history outside archives and beyond maps.

Keywords: Gayl Jones, Toni Morrison, *Palmares*, Palmares, Zumbi, *The Ancestor: A Street Play*, *The Birdcatcher*, Saidiya Hartman, critical fabulation, African diaspora, Portuguese colonialism, *quilombo*, *Candomblé*, travel

Bio: Wyn Kelley is a Senior Lecturer in the Literature Section at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA), where she teaches classes in literature of the Americas with a focus on fluid intersections of race, gender, and class, old and new media, and social, historical, and political contexts. She is author of *Melville's City: Literary and Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century New York* (1996) and of *Herman Melville: An Introduction* (2008); and co-author, with Henry Jenkins, of *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Re-Mixing Moby-Dick in the English Classroom* (2013). Former Associate Editor of *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*, currently Associate Director of *MEL* (*Melville Electronic Library*), and co-editor (with Christopher Ohge) of the Wiley-Blackwell *A New Companion to Herman Melville* (2022), she has published essays in a number of journals and collections and has also worked to develop digital pedagogy with MIT's Digital Humanities Lab. She is a founding member of the Melville Society Cultural Project, which supports programming at the New Bedford Whaling Museum and maritime culture in the New England region. More recently, after an opportunity to teach in São Paulo, Brazil, she has begun new work on the relationship between US authors and Brazil,

Wyn Kelley
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

focusing on writers like Frances E. W. Harper, Toni Morrison, and Gayl Jones. In support of these efforts, she won an NEH grant at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, MA in 2024.

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"TRAVELERS BY NECESSITY" – RUTH BEHAR ON THE WAY IN SEARCH OF ROOTS OR HOME

Grażyna Zygadło
University of Łódź, Poland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2559-631X

Ruth Behar begins her memoir *Traveling Heavy. A Memoir in between Journeys*, published in 2013, with the following citation: "I love to travel. But I'm also terrified of traveling" (3). Later she describes the "various good luck rituals" that she performs before starting a journey, such as checking if she has her "Turkish evil eye bracelet," "a handmade necklace […] to be protected from illness or sudden death" or "rubbing the turquoise glass beads to keep the plane from falling out of the sky" (3). She links all these habits to both her Jewish and Cuban ancestry. And although she calls herself a professional traveler, she also describes herself as "an anthropologist who specializes in homesickness" (*Traveling* 6), which aptly exposes the paradoxes related to the notion of traveling. As a person who likes visiting new places and meeting with new people, at the same time hating long flights and airports and desperately missing the family left behind, I share her perceptions and identify with some of the dilemmas depicted in her writings.

Behar is a Cuban-American anthropologist and writer, who was born in 1956 in Havana, Cuba in a family of Sephardic Turkish, and Ashkenazi Polish and Russian Jews. Following the Castro Revolution, her family emigrated to New York when Ruth was almost five. She studied cultural anthropology at Princeton University and obtained her doctorate in 1983. Her research mostly concerned feminism and the situation of women in "developing countries." Currently, she is a professor at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. At the same time, she is a poet and the author of several books, also for children and young adults: *Lucky Broken Girl* (2017) and *Letters from Cuba* (2020), as well as a picture book, *Tía Fortuna's*

New Home (2022). Moreover, Behar is the co-editor of *Women Writing Culture* (1995) and editor of *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* (2015). She was the first Latina to win a MacArthur "Genius" Award and was named a "Great Immigrant" by the Carnegie Corporation.

Her most acclaimed publications include *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (1993), which is an account of her friendship with a Mexican street peddler. The book received numerous awards and is widely used in courses in women's studies, Latin American studies, anthropology, history, psychology, education, and literature. It was adapted for the stage by PREGONES Theater, a Latino theater company from New York. The stage adaptation, with live music and songs based on the book, has been performed at various universities and the commercial premiere took place in the Painted Bride Theater in Philadelphia[1].

Nonetheless, in this article I aim to initially focus on Behar's second groundbreaking book, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart,* which was first published in 1996 and in which she presented a new theory and practice of humanistic anthropology based on her feminist conviction that personal involvement is a valuable contribution to the discipline of anthropology, or even more broadly to humanities and all social sciences. The book provides numerous examples of how scholars can weave their life experience into the research they conduct. Behar is one of the pioneers of what has become known as the vulnerable approach to science. In this article, I will first discuss her work in relation to other scholars who have attempted this methodology, and then identify her contribution to the transformation of the discipline.

The first essay in the afore-mentioned book, titled "The Vulnerable Observer," begins with a story about the media coverage of the 1985 avalanche in Colombia in the small town of Armero that "buried an entire village in the mud" (1) and took the life of Omaira Sánchez, a thirteen-year-old girl, who was dying for three days trapped in the mud debris in front of the watching journalists and reporters, who could do nothing to help her. The French photographer Frank Fournier captured the image of the dying girl, which was published in Paris Match magazine a few days later. This picture won him the 1986 World Press Photo of the Year award, initiating a public debate about the failure of the Colombian rescue service and the "vulturistic nature of photojournalism." This event was later depicted by Isabel Allende in her short story "Of Clay We Are Created," from the 1989 collection

1 See https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/ruth-behar/translated-woman/.

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University of Łódź,
Poland

The Stories of Eva Luna, in which the photographer is a Holocaust survivor, Rolf Carlé, who could "no longer bear to watch silently from behind the camera" documenting the tragedy "as an innocent bystander," so he threw off his camera and crouched down in the mud to hug the girl "as her heart and lungs collapse" (*Vulnerable Observer* 1). In turn, Ruth Behar used both the tragic incident and Allende's story to discuss her concept of vulnerable anthropology, which, as she admits, is not the one "taught in our colleges and universities. It doesn't sound like the stuff of which Ph.D.'s are made. And definitely it isn't the anthropology that will win you a grant from the National Science Foundation" (*Vulnerable Observer* 3). She focuses on the contradictions of being an observer/witness and/or participant of the described events and further declares that "anthropology has always been vexed about the question of vulnerability." She says:

> Get the "native point of view," *pero por favor* without actually "going native." Our methodology defined by the oxymoron "participant observation," is split at the root: act as a participant, but don't forget to keep your eyes open. Lay down in the mud in Colombia. Put your arms around Omaira Sánchez. But when the grant money runs out, or the summer vacation is over, please stand up, dust yourself off, go to your desk, and write down what you saw and heard. Relate it to something you've read by Marx, Weber, Gramsci, or Geertz and you're on your way to doing anthropology. (*Vulnerable Observer* 5)

It appears that she is not merely questioning her academic discipline, but rather, she is critical of the prevailing approach to science and research, which is largely based on money, funding, and high theories, yet is detached from everyday life and people. Hence the academia, often referred to as the Ivory Tower, is not particularly receptive to the notion of being personally involved in the research that it conducts.

Moreover, Behar's assertion that this aspect of the observer's subjectivity influences the observed events is further supported by feminist standpoint theory and more generally by women's writing. Elaine Showalter, in her renowned 1979 essay titled "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," proposed an innovative classification of women's writing which aimed at creating a new model of critical analysis of female literature. This model avoided adapting male theories and paradigms to women's literature in order to consciously affirm the specific characteristics of women's writing, female literary tradition, conventions used by female authors, and their experiences. This approach has been called gynocriticism and it focused primarily on the examination of the characteristics of women's literature that derive from corporeality and which are rooted in everyday life,

the history of women and their works, their themes, genres, and styles. Gynocriticism paved the way for researchers in various disciplines, enabling them to liberate from the patriarchal paradigms, including the linguistic ones (Zygadło). In my opinion, Ruth Behar is categorically using this "female framework" in her writings.

Furthermore, Behar frequently challenges the assumption that when an observer narrates something they have heard, there must be an acknowledgment that the account may differ if somebody else was listening to it or heard it at a different time. This is because human memory is flexible and the process of remembering is elusive, which means that all social knowledge is subjective. At the same time, traditional researchers still try to distance themselves from the stories they relate, striving for objectivity and abstraction, but they never completely get rid of that which Clifford Geertz calls "the burden of authorship" (in *Vulnerable Observer* 7). Therefore, there is a constant split among ethnographers into those who are willing to accept "vulnerability for the sake of science" and those who want their research to be "person-specific and yet somehow not 'personal'" (*Vulnerable Observer* 8), following the tradition of depersonalizing one's connection to the field. Contrary to that, Behar, who has worked as an ethnographer in Spain, Mexico, and Cuba, is known for her humanistic approach to understanding identity, immigration, and the search for home in the globalized world. Nonetheless, though she believes that "when you write vulnerably, others respond vulnerably" (*Vulnerable Observer* 16), she also realizes that "vulnerability doesn't mean that anything personal goes" (14) and that there exist various ways of witnessing.

Subsequently, Behar observes that "what bothers critics is the insertion of personal stories into what we have been taught to think of as the analysis of impersonal social facts" (*Vulnerable Observer* 12). Historically, storytelling and self-exposure have been a taboo in science, which was meant to "give voice" to the others. With time, life history and life story merged with *testimonios*, which were being practiced in Europe with Holocaust survivors and in Latin America with survivors of various dictators and regimes as a healing method for the psychological trauma. Although they focused on the individual's traumatic experiences, they were meant to illustrate a broader story and finally brought the transformation of the discipline of anthropology, which led to the "retheorization of genres […] and the creation of hybrid genres like self-ethnography and ethnobiography" (*Vulnerable Observer* 26). This growing popularity of autoethnography, in turn, resembles the theory of *autohistoria/teoria*, a term coined by Gloria Anzaldúa to describe the shift which women of color have

Grażyna Zygadło
University of Łódź,
Poland

made from traditional Western forms of representing autobiography (Anzaldúa and Keating).

Autohistoria/teoria focuses on an individual's personal life, but at the same time tells the stories of others – a tribe, a class, an oppressed group – but the autobiographical element is emphasized through the frequent use of the subjective first-person narrative. Taking into account the author's socio-cultural background and thus representing the story of the entire community, the information is saved from oblivion and becomes part of a community's cultural heritage. Such an intergenerational dialogue is a crucial part of anyone's *autohistoria*, but also the fulfillment of the theory of reframing and restoration, which, as the name implies, focuses on finding, recovering, and restoring old narratives to their rightful position (Zygadło).

This textuality of reality (possibility of analyzing social phenomena through texts), which is the basis of postcolonial critical theory, opened the space for the committed epistemology often referred to as an "epistemology without innocence, whose ultimate goal is to create science as practice" (after: Domańska). In fact, this is what many ethnic researchers and authors do – they challenge the dominant models to recover the marginalized points of view of the colonized subjects and to offer a critique of the existing links between power and knowledge and the role they play in the formation of the diaspora's identity. The fundamental question is who has the authority to speak and for whom it has finally been asked.

In *The Vulnerable Observer*, Behar attributes this shift to the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back* by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga in 1981, a collection that discussed sexism, racism, and discrimination from the first-person perspective of various ethnic women writers. She says:

> These first-person narratives, written by those who previously had been more likely to be the ethnographized rather than the ethnographer, challenged monolithic views of identity in the United States, asserted the multiplicity of American cultures, and deconstructed various orientalisms, challenging the assumption that the anthropologist was the sole purveyor of ethnographic truth. (27)

This was also accompanied by the renewed interest in the African-American autobiography, whose origins were in the personal narratives of ex-slaves, hence the debate on what it meant to be "an insider in the culture" gained momentum. Therefore, Behar observes:

> As those who used to be "the natives" have become scholars in their own right, often studying their home communities and nations, the lines between par-

ticipant and observer, friend and stranger, aboriginal and alien are no longer so easily drawn. We now have a notable group of "minority" anthropologists with a range of ambivalent connections to the abandoned and reclaimed "homelands" in which they work. The importance of this "native anthropology" has helped to bring about a fundamental shift – the shift toward viewing identification, rather than difference, as the key defining image of anthropological theory and practice. (*Vulnerable Observer* 28)

At this point, we should examine Behar's positionality in her ethnographic and fictional writing. In *The Vulnerable Observer*, she calls herself a "woman of the border," enumerating all the symbolic borders she has crossed in her life and her ethnographic writing: "between places, between identities, between languages, between cultures, between longings and illusions, one foot in the academy and one foot out" (162). Furthermore, she admits that she "had been drawn to anthropology because [she] had grown up within three cultures – Jewish (both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic), Cuban, and American – and [she] needed to better connect [her] own profound sense of displacement with the professional rituals of displacement that are at the heart of anthropology" (21). Subsequently, although trained to write "cold-blooded logical essays" (*Vulnerable Observer* 33) during her "official" education, Behar "identifies strongly with personal and intellectual *mestizaje*" (Klein) of the Jewish, Cuban, and New Yorker parts of her identity and weaves the personal experiences into her research and writings thus opening the discipline of anthropology to the new perspectives and methods of research. As an anthropologist, she has argued for the open adoption of and recognition by the discipline of the subjective nature of research, which she calls "vulnerable positionality" (Klein). This approach can also be observed in *Traveling Heavy. A Memoir in between Journeys* (2013), the book that I am going to analyze next in the context of how adopting personal emotion-loaded experience while exploring and researching new communities can become not only an identity-formative attribute and a search for one's roots but also a gateway to new academic theories and concepts.

Suffice it to say that the remote ancestors of all human beings were nomadic tribes, it is widely acknowledged that people have always moved from place to place for various reasons – an exploration of new territories and their economic exploitation, military conquests, and the following displacements; therefore, the journey is probably one of the best-illustrated concepts in various disciplines. Yet, the notion of traveling for pleasure as a leisure activity is a relatively new phenomenon in human history. Available and affordable to few, for this reason often a class indicator (sometimes also gender indicator – since

Grażyna Zygadło
University of Łódź,
Poland

historically in Western societies and still in some parts of the world women cannot travel unaccompanied), traveling can be an exciting, desired, and adventurous experience that opens us up to new cultures and diversity. On the other hand, since it involves meeting with the Other, it can be a threatening and exhausting occurrence that causes fear and nostalgia. Sometimes the Other can also become our "alternate Self." This is how Behar refers to it:

> I go to other places for the same reasons most everyone does: to seek out a change of scenery and feel a sense of enchantment, to learn about the lives of strangers, and to give myself a chance to be someone **I can't be at home** [emphasis mine]. We leave behind the creature comforts and familiarity of home in order to explore alternate worlds, alternate selves. (*Traveling* 5)

Subsequently, for her, the journey turns into an existential experience involving transformation and philosophical exploration of oneself, while the whole memoir, which consists of short vignettes, becomes an account of the author's personal ambitions, failures, and successes. Behar depicts her life through her relationships with her grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as her husband and son. The stories are often humorous but always loaded with emotions, even nostalgia, and what joins them is the theme of packing and traveling.

She begins with her first field trip during her graduate studies when she went to a small village Santa Maria in Spain and when she describes the people she researched with a lot of compassion and sympathy, admitting that it was then that she decided to "refuse to surrender to the dry analytical language" (*Traveling* 89) she was being taught at school, even if she risked her program being terminated. Her professors considered that her work "lacked academic rigor," she "didn't understand theoretical concepts" and hence she was "unteachable" (*Traveling* 88–89). Nonetheless, she has "never forgotten Santa Maria. It was a place of my youth. Where the kindness of strangers comforted me and gave me hope when I couldn't go home" (*Traveling* 101). Already in *The Vulnerable Observer*, she revealed that her work in Spain as an ethnographer was something more than just her search for roots: "It was about a desire for memory, 'community memory' in which I might locate my own story" (78). She further admits "the death of memory in Santa Maria provoked a resurgence of memory, for me, about my own Jewish heritage and how I become alienated from it" (82).

Afterwards in *Traveling Heavy*, she describes her travels to Miami to visit her family members, her subsequent field trips to Mexico with her students when she began teaching, and finally a bizarre

pilgrimage with total strangers for a reunion of people who share the same last name to the formerly Jewish town of Bejar in Spain. As she maintains they have done that in the hopes of finding a place to claim as their homeland. Nonetheless, when the reunion ends, she admits: "we'd found little in the city of Bejar that was directly related to us – there was the Jewish museum and the name of the city, but everything we'd seen was contemporary, nothing that tied us firmly to the past and to history." However, she reflects: "we should keep this secret to ourselves and confidently return to all our homes in so many parts of the world and announce that we'd found our roots in Bejar" (*Traveling* 140).

This desperate search for roots accompanied by compulsive traveling is the leitmotif of Behar's works, which is something that links her to all immigrants around the globe. In the opening to *Traveling Heavy*, she observes:

> Travelers are those who go elsewhere because they want to, because they can afford to displace themselves. Immigrants are those who go elsewhere because they have to. If they don't displace themselves they'll suffer: their very existence is at risk. They pick up and leave, sometimes at a moment's notice. The journey is wrenching, often dangerous, a loss of the known world, a change of scenery that creates estrangement, an uneasy dwelling among strangers, having to become a different person against one's will. (5)

In this way, she introduces us to the immigrant experience of her family.

As it was mentioned earlier, her family left Cuba after the Castro Revolution when she was four and a half. They settled in the Ashkenazi section of Forest Hills, Queens, making ends meet by selling "fabric, envelopes and shoes." Consequently, we explore her life as an immigrant child longing for acceptance, since the girl immediately started school although she knew no English, and hence had no friends. "English was the public language, the language of power, competition, and progress – also the language of solitude, the language in which I was totally on my own, without my parents to help me" (*Traveling* 7). Ever since she has been trying to regain the linguistic aspect of her cultural identity, either as an anthropologist able to use her Spanish in the fieldwork among farmers in Spain and Mexico, or later as a visiting academic to Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Fidel reopened the island for tourists. In *The Vulnerable Observer*, she recollects:

> Like other children taken into exile in the United States after the Cuban revolution, I had grown up internalizing the cold war between the United States

Grażyna Zygadło
University of Łódź,
Poland

and Cuba. I had absorbed both the Cuban immigrant paranoia about Cuba as a dangerous place, best left behind forever, and the United States ideology about Cuba as an enemy and a threat. There was also another issue for me, as a Cuban Jew. I kept asking myself what exactly I hoped to find in Cuba. After all, the members of my family were immigrants in Cuba, too. My grandparents, Jews from Byelorussia, Poland, and Turkey, had immigrated to Cuba in the 1920s, after the United States set sharp limits on Jewish immigration. All of my homelands, it seemed, were lost. (121)

That is why in her memoir she confesses: "To this day, no matter where I go, I carry the memory of the girl who felt utterly foreign, helpless, speechless, a misfit, the girl who wanted to dissolve into the cracks in the walls" (*Traveling* 6). Again, Behar's feeling of in-betweenness, not completely fitting anywhere and being suspended in the void resembles Gloria Anzaldúa's idea called Nepantla, which she describes as follows:

Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Nahuatl word meaning *tierra entre medio*. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. Nepantla *es tierra desconocida*, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement – an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it's become sort of "home". (Anzaldúa and Keating 1)

Accordingly, Nepantla defines a state of mind in which we reject old beliefs and myths to gain new perspectives and change our worldview. Therefore, it is a phase of transformation and reconfiguration of our identity. It is where some ideas die and others are born. We have to bid farewell to the comfort and stability of our past, open ourselves to new ways of defining ourselves, and acknowledge the existence of other, alternative cognitive methods or knowledge schemes that Anzaldúa refers to as a search for *conocimiento* (Zygadło 88).

Therefore, suspended among various locations and emotions and with a life bound by the necessity to travel and the search for roots and the notion of an imaginary homeland, Behar's memories meander among various decisive events of her life, yet they always circle back to the place where she began and longed to return: Cuba, "a forbidden territory" (*Vulnerable Observer* 148). Similarly to Salman Rushdie, who considered it impossible for migrants to reclaim the homes they left behind and the only possibility for them was to imagine the fictional locations, she declares:

> I travel 50,000 miles a year. I'm Gold medallion. I scramble to get on the plane, together with the other privileged travelers. I go to Europe. I go to Latin America. I travel to California. To Miami whenever I can – now that I'm older I appreciate an ocean that's warm as a soup. I lost Cuba as a little girl. But I've gained an entire life up in the air, a life of going to other places, a life spent between places.
>
> However much I long for the island I once called home, I'm not beholden to any one place. I'm not stuck anywhere. *But I'm also never sure whether I belong anywhere*. [emphasis mine] (*Traveling* 193)

Accordingly, at the end of her memoir, we find her as a woman with her heart split between her home in Michigan and her "home" in Cuba, trying to reclaim pieces of Cubanness for herself.

However, what seems more accurate is when she calls herself "a professional Cuban building a career out of my search for roots" (*Traveling* 201), since, as she explains, second-generation Cuban Americans "invent research projects for [themselves], but ultimately [they] go back to prove to [themselves] we're not afraid to go back" (*Vulnerable Observer* 140). In my opinion, these two fragments expose Behar's awareness of her privilege – as a middle-class American scholar firstly she can afford to travel whenever and wherever she wants, and secondly, as a recognized professor of anthropology she is conscious of using/abusing her professional training for her personal goals. She is neither an innocent observer nor a vulnerable participant, but both of them interchangeably, depending on the circumstances. Moreover, sometimes she becomes only a deliberate academic conducting her research.

Simultaneously, the issue of belonging constantly disturbs her, accompanied by the doubt about who has the right to remember. A little child she was when they left? Many times, she mentions that people keep telling her that when she left she was "too young to claim a bond to Cuba" (*Traveling* 6), and her Cuban nanny when they met when Behar was a grown-up woman told her that Ruth "didn't realize they were leaving" for good and only thought they "were going on a holiday" (*Traveling* 6). Who is then entitled to mourn the loss of a homeland, an identity? Behar – the scholar – aptly observes: "Aren't all of our childhoods imaginary homelands? […] Homelands from which we have become exiled in the process of growing up and becoming adults? In becoming adults we are encouraged to put the child behind us, to disbelieve our own stories and our childhoods" (*Vulnerable Observer* 134).

On the other hand, her new Cuban friends convince her – the exiled woman – that "the island is [hers]" since she was "born in Cuba, [she'd] be Cuban forever" (*Traveling* 200) pointing out the hereditary notion of homeland. Moreover, Behar offers another explanation for her tear

Grażyna Zygadło
University of Łódź,
Poland

when she says: "Having left as a child, I didn't make the decision to leave" (*Traveling* 205), linking her feeling of uprootedness to the notion of agency. Subsequently, in the final essay in the memoir titled "An Old Little Girl," she tries to wrap up her relationship with Cuba describing the way people say goodbye there. She writes: "This is an essay I can't seem to conclude. It's like a Cuban goodbye. You say goodbye, keep chatting, and say goodbye again, chat a little bit more, then offer yet another goodbye" (*Traveling* 223).

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, Behar's insistence on and practice of an "anthropology that breaks your heart" are embedded in her conviction that ethnographic works should contain not only experiences but also human emotions. As scholars we are taught to detach ourselves from the objects of our study. Despite this, for several decades now in women's studies, especially among women of colors researchers, we have been witnessing a different approach. To provide accurate and genuine representations of social worlds, ethnographers must reject "the artificial barriers between self and other, and between 'truth' and poetics." As Misha Klein writes: "rather than engaging in the fiction of objectivity, Behar uses the subjectivity of fiction to convey deeper truths."

Subsequently, Behar's writings are both narratives representing fictitious fragments of imagined realities, such as her novel for young adults – *Letters from Cuba* (2020), loosely based on her grandmother's immigrant experiences, and theoretically non-fictional memoirs or travel writings such as *Traveling Heavy* (2013) or its predecessor *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba* (2009). Still, what joins all these works is the issue of memory – how/what do we remember? How are our memories changing depending on the time and person we relate them to? Are they "true" descriptions of what "really" happened or are they just stories about the imaginary places – the greener pastures of America or the imaginary diasporas in which we search for ethnic roots, or the stories of our imaginary homeland, wherever and whatever it is? After all, as Behar concludes: "The pieces will form a story – and once a story is told it can never be lost" (*Traveling* 225).

Abstract: Ruth Behar, a Cuban-born immigrant to the US with Polish, Jewish, and Turkish background, begins her memoir *Traveling Heavy. A Memoir in between Journeys*, published in 2013, with the following citation "I love to travel. But I'm also terrified of traveling" (3). Later she describes the "various good luck rituals" that she performs before starting a journey, such as checking if she has her "Turkish evil eye bracelet," "a handmade necklace

[…] to be protected from illness or sudden death" or "rubbing the turquoise glass beads to keep the plane from falling out of the sky" (3). She links all these habits to both her Jewish and Cuban ancestry. And although she calls herself a professional traveler, she also describes herself as "an anthropologist who specializes in homesickness," which perfectly reveals the contradictions related to the notion of traveling. As a relatively new phenomenon, available and affordable to few, traveling can be an exciting, desired, and adventurous experience that opens us up to diversity and enriches us. At the same time, since it involves meeting with the Other, it can be a threatening and exhausting incident that causes nostalgia for home. Hence, the journey is an existential experience including the change, the philosophical exploration of oneself, the search for and dissemination of knowledge, and a sense of discovery (actual of places and communities and symbolical of cultural values and ideas). In this paper, I am going to analyze Behar's writings as narratives representing fictitious fragments of experienced or/and imagined realities (*Letters from Cuba* 2020) vs. the non-fictional dimension of memoir or travel writing (*Traveling Heavy* 2013). Still, what joins the two types of narratives is the issue of memory – how/what do we remember? How are our memories changing depending on the time and person we relate them to?

Keywords: diaspora, home, travel, feminist memoir, memory, vulnerable anthropology

Bio: Grażyna Zygadło is an Associate Professor in the Department of American Studies and Mass Media and an affiliate in the Women's Studies Center at the University of Lodz. Her major research areas include the marginalization of minorities in the US, specifically Latinx diaspora; women of colors feminism and literature; postcoloniality; the existence of borderland territories; and the relations between knowledge and power. She was a guest lecturer at the universities in Spain, Finland, Sweden, and Florida International University in Miami. She is a member of the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa (SSGA) and HispaUSA Asociación de estudios sobre la población de origen hispano en EEUU. She is the author of two monographs (*Culture Matters: Chicanas' Identity in Contemporary USA*. Frankfurt am Maine: Peter Lang: 2007; *Zmieniając siebie – zmieniam świat" – Gloria E. Anzaldúa i jej pisarstwo zaangażowanego rozwoju w ujęciu społeczno-kulturowym*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019), two edited books and over 40 articles or chapters in edited volumes. Her most recent book – *Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Feminist Body Writing and Borderlands* – came out in autumn 2023 with Routledge.

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Grażyna Zygadło
University of Łódź, Poland

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THE LAND OF HEATHENS VERSUS THE LAND OF LIBERTY: MARK TWAIN'S *THE INNOCENTS ABROAD* AND UBEYDULLAH EFENDI'S TRAVELS

S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş
Hacettepe University, Türkiye
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7730-6601

In 1867, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain (1835–1910), traveled on the steamship *Quaker City* on a route that was similar to the classic "Grand Tour," a traditional long journey dating back to the seventeenth century, taken through Europe, mostly by wealthy and aristocratic young men as part of their education. Twain's journey also included a number of stops in the Holy Land, and his travelogue was first published as a series of letters in the newspaper *The Daily Alta California*. These reports were published two years later as a collection titled *The Innocents Abroad* or *The New Pilgrims' Progress* (1869). This episodic narrative challenges established interpretations of previously traveled routes, criticizes the pretentious reverence of travelers while visiting celebrated sites, and provides dissenting opinions. Unlike Twain, Ubeydullah Efendi (Mr. Ubeydullah, 1858–1937) traveled in the opposite direction—from the Ottoman Empire to the United States—and painted a positive picture of American progress and urban life, while maintaining a critical eye. Ubeydullah Efendi spends most of his time at the World's Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, which he describes in detail. Since the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating at the time and educated citizens were open to European ideas such as democracy and freedom, Ubeydullah Efendi's descriptions of his American voyage were written in a progressive tone that reflects this historical juncture.

Both narrators were around the same age when they traveled to each other's lands. Both were reporters by profession and their intention with their travel writing was to report their observations of unfamiliar territories to their readers. The newspaper sponsored Twain's travels, while Ubeydullah Efendi had to secure his own funds by finding jobs

to cover his expenses. The publication dates of their travel writing differ, since Ubeydullah Efendi composed his impressions at a much later date than his actual voyage. Their dissimilar perspectives and ideological outlooks are also revealed in their narratives. While Mark Twain employs a predetermined orientalist approach with his unique sense of humor, Ubeydullah Efendi's straightforward depictions and occasional witty remarks mirror his personality and offer a more realistic portrayal of the late nineteenth-century American urban landscape.

By comparing and contrasting Twain's and Ubeydullah Efendi's reactions to and depictions of the geographies, cultures, and people they encountered, this article will expose their divergent sociopolitical approaches and, in particular, Twain's orientalism, which stands in stark contrast to the less prejudiced outlook of his counterpart. Twain's descriptions of Istanbul (Constantinople) and Izmir (Smyrna) and Ubeydullah Efendi's portrayals of New York, Chicago, and Washington DC articulate how urban centers located in different continents were viewed in the late nineteenth century from the perspective of a tourist and/or traveler. Here, Stuart Hall's ideological framework of "conceptual maps" can be deployed to unpack the writers' experiences. Hall views "conceptual maps" as an outcome of one's cultural identity, where a "shared culture of meanings" can be understood in a particular environment (*Representation* 18). He also recognizes language as a signifying practice in the meaning making process and discusses how semiotic and discursive practices are influential in representing the others in a culture (*Representation* 13–64). Thus, the use of language and the travelers' suppositions in *The Innocents Abroad* and in Ubeydullah Efendi's narratives can be viewed as cultural representations of the era that supplement their individual accounts.

Mark Twain's and Ubeydullah Efendi's outlooks also resonate with Daniel Boorstin's tourist and traveler categories. For Boorstin, a tourist is a passive entity, consuming predetermined sites as they appear, whereas a traveler possesses agency over the journey. Tourists are taken to sites and wait for experiences to arise, as opposed to travelers, who seek and find, and try to be involved rather than guided. In contrast to the "sophisticated pleasures" of earlier eras, tourism has become "diluted, contrived, prefabricated" (79) and a "spectator sport" (84). By pointing out the historical transition from "travail" (trouble, effort, struggle) to "travel" (journey), Boorstin conveys how tourists came into existence, a phenomenon that coincides chronologically with Twain's journey. At the time, overseas excursions were expensive and it would have been unaffordable for Twain had he not convinced his employers to sponsor his travels. Twain saw

S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş
Hacettepe University,
Türkiye

the whole venture as an adventure and considered himself an observer, rather than a tourist. According to Dean MacCannall, the modern tourist is often criticized for "being satisfied with superficial experiences of other peoples and places" (10), a concern expressed in Twain's accounts. Yet, Twain's narrator intentionally embraces a tourist identity, but for a purpose, and disapproves of his fellow traveler's reactions when they are based on preconceived notions. On the other hand, Ubeydullah Efendi views himself as a traveler from the beginning, stating that he has embarked on the journey "to search for grandness" ("büyüklük aramak ibtilâsıyla"; my trans.; Alkan 97).

John Urry and Jonas Larsen analyze the gaze involved in the act of viewing new places away from home. Interest and curiosity, together with social organization, play a role in these first-hand encounters. The significance of tourist sites is determined by previous texts or by stories associated with places; thus, the scene is already framed and shaped before the visit. By referring to John Berger's seminal book *Ways of Seeing*, Urry and Larsen assert that "People gaze upon the world through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education. Gazing is a performance that orders, shapes and classifies, rather than reflects the world" (2). The traveler's gaze (or performance) naturally differs since viewing is a cultural act. Consequently, Twain's and Ubeydullah Efendi's travel accounts display cultural variations on how attention and validation are distributed.

As this study will also argue, Twain's adopted persona allows him to assume the double role of the fool and intellectual, while channeling a peculiar type of humor intended for his middle-class audience. Thus, the intended readers at the time played a determining factor in the creation of his travel accounts. By emphasizing certain experiences and detesting other aspects of his travels, Twain's narrator seems naïve on the one hand, but a savvy social critic on the other. His account of the streets of Istanbul (Constantinople), Turkish coffee, and Turkish baths become farcical descriptions of the Ottoman Empire. His choice of words—such as "the rustiest old barn in heathendom" (264)—presents his sentiments about the places and inhabitants he observes, while confirming his western stereotypical ideological outlook concerning Ottoman lands. In contrast, Ubeydullah Efendi's travel writings were composed about thirty years after his actual experiences, and during the early years of the Turkish Republic when western clothing, the Latin alphabet, and education were officially encouraged. A shift in his readership also impacted the final composition of his narrative. His memoir reveals an awareness of how others viewed

him—as an amusing Ottoman gentleman with outdated clothing, language, and manners. His depictions do not stem from an internalized Orientalism; rather, they are the result of informed observations based on his cultural and personal experiences and place in a changing world. Examining Twain's and Ubeydullah Efendi's voyages through their divergent gazes not only exposes their opinions as tourists and/or travelers, but also underscores the prevalent ideas of their respective cultures during the second half of the nineteenth century.

OTTOMAN LANDS IN *THE INNOCENTS ABROAD*

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Grand European Tour followed a certain path of leisurely cultural travel, often designed for young English aristocrats. In the nineteenth century, other inquisitive travelers also traced these much-traversed paths, which made this previously exclusive learning experience more accessible and popular (Ouditt 19). The end of the American Civil War is considered the beginning of the Tourist Age for the United States, when a considerable number of people became interested in traveling to create a diversion for themselves after the war and its social and political effects (Melton 58). In some ways, their "national pride was refreshed and reaffirmed in the process" as a result of this trendy activity (Steinbrink 280). Twain was delighted to participate in this fashionable traveling experience, although his narrative voice downplays the excitement of the traveler, claiming that he was merely "drifting with the tide of a great popular movement" (9). The subtitle of *The Innocents Abroad*, *The New Pilgrim's Progress*, is a reference to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the allegorical account of a Christian's physical journey symbolizing the journey from Earth to Heaven. Bunyan's and Twain's accounts are written in the first-person point of view, and the journey itself is at the center of both texts. However, the travels in *The Innocents Abroad* are not allegorical, and the writer does not convey such an intention. Yet, the travels include sacred and holy sites; thus, the "pilgrim" reference is appropriate, because at the time the idea was expanding to include anyone who had the money and means to travel. In the preface of *The Innocents Abroad*, the narrator states that the book is not "a solemn scientific expedition," but "a record of a pleasure trip," with "a purpose, which is to suggest to the reader how he would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who traveled in those countries before him" (Preface).

S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş
Hacettepe University,
Türkiye

According to Tom Quirk, Twain's narrator "is not a condescending guide on this pilgrimage but a companionable presence whose peculiar way of seeing the world combines with a sense of humor that never seems forced or artificial" (56). Therefore, the readers are invited to pity, but also feel superior to, needy people in other parts of world, while criticizing the artificial behavior of affluent new world pilgrims, since they cannot recognize or understand the "real" nature of sites they visit. As Eleftheria Arapoglu remarks, travelers erroneously view preexisting texts about the places they visit as dependable sources, which adds to their false impressions: "For those travelers, textual cities precede their experiences of the actual cities, therefore the real—the topos—is 'seen' through the textual, the fictional, the represented—the logos" (105). Twain's narrator does not trust previous textual knowledge and sets off to create his own version. Satirizing travelers who rely on guidebooks or on what they are told, Twain embraces a specific narrative identity. He adopts a condescending eye not only towards the places he visits, but also towards his fellow travelers and the American socio-cultural way of life. His intended readers are middle-class Americans who cannot afford to travel leisurely, but love to laugh at the gullibility of other travelers who are ready to accept uncritically whatever package is offered.

As stated in the preface, the authorial voice claims, "I make small pretense of showing anyone how he ought to look at objects of interest beyond the sea—other books do that, and therefore, even if I were competent to do it, there is no need" and continues, "I offer no apologies for any departures from the usual style of travel-writing that may be charged against me—for I think I have seen with impartial eyes, and I am sure I have written at least honestly, whether wisely or not" (Preface). The claim of telling the truth consists of descriptions of what is missing and trying to arrive at alternative ways of seeing the world (Beidler 38). In his depictions, Twain's narrator repeats certain jokes, such as the "Ferguson" anecdotes—the generic nickname given to the travel guides by the travelers. Thus, he assumes a less cultivated, innocent gaze, that turns into a white male gaze that de-aestheticizes what was romanticized by previous travel writers. Although he presumes that his observations are different from earlier travelers, he is also marginalizing, orientalizing, and judging without a speck of tolerance.

Edward Said describes Orientalism as an essentializing binarism between the constructed concepts of "Orient" and "Occident." These concepts are cultural rather than geographical, and have acquired consistency in the West over the centuries. He adds that "[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination,

of varying degrees of complex hegemony" (5). Said also gives literary examples of how Oriental characters never speak for themselves, but are always spoken about. Consequently, Orientalism is not only a "created body of theory and practice," it is also a "system of knowledge" for creating hegemonic "positional superiority" (6–7). He is especially interested in how textual and media representations have disseminated Orientalism over the course of time, contributing to created knowledge. Similarly, Stuart Hall speaks about the inclination to categorize and represent with certain images. Since ideas function like a language and become "a system of representation" while providing a "modal for comparison," they develop into "criteria of evaluation" where privileged and unprivileged categories are clarified within a binary system. The West is associated with "good" and "developed," while the East is associated with the "unwanted" and "underdeveloped" ("The West and the Rest" 57). This binary discourse and its associated discursive practices produce reality through repetition, thereby giving the West the upper hand. Obviously, such an approach leads to the perpetuation of racist, dehumanizing, and cultural stereotypes. Said includes Mark Twain in the list of writers who engage in Orientalist practices (157).

According to Fatin AbuHilal and Ayman Abu-Shomar, American travel narratives not only reveal other cultures and geographies, but also the traveler's historical and cultural background. According to them, Twain's narrative—based on the self/other binary—is an indication of the emerging American identity at the time, which is closely tied to power and authority relations. Twain's travels coincided with the aftermath of the Civil War, when a redefinition of American national identity was necessary. This new identity had to be asserted by "the consciousness of the superiority of the self and the inferiority of the Other" (17). Twain's narrative employs "exclusion, expulsion, rejection, dismissal or denial" when the others are described (17). *The Innocents Abroad* places the narrator in a positional superiority by giving him the upper hand to provide judgments. Through this hegemonic privileged position, the narrator's American "self-affirmation" is confirmed. He is further absolved from searching "knowledge for other cultures and locales" (17), which defies the aim of traveling for learning and mind expansion.

Disappointment over tourist attractions consumes the majority of Twain's text and becomes a recurrent theme. Yet, he is also ready to reconsider his outlook and recreate a romantic vision in his mind for select "civilized" places, such as Venice. On the other hand, his attitude towards Ottoman lands is fixed from the beginning, and Istanbul becomes the most lampooned place. In his descriptions, satire

and humor completely vanish with the apparent self/other dyad, devoid of any tolerance or acceptance. He disdainfully notes, "If you would see the very heart and home of cripples and human monsters both, go straight to Constantinople" (263). Ottomans are "fantastic pagans" clad in ridiculous clothing; they are grotesque beggars, and whirling dervishes. In the narrow and crowded streets, men wear "outrageous, outlandish, idolatrous, extravagant" clothes with "awful turbans, but the grand mass of the infidel horde wore the fiery red skull-cap they call a fez" (262). The beggars are "distorted out of all semblance of humanity," (262) "the three-legged woman," "the man with his eye in his cheek," "the dwarf with seven fingers on each hand, no upper lip," and "the man with fingers on his elbow" (264) are enough to repulse him. The Grand Bazaar is another grotesque freak show, always smelly and crowded with "dirt, beggars, asses, yelling peddlers, porters, dervishes, high-born Turkish female shoppers, Greeks, and weird-looking and weirdly dressed Mohammedans" (267). Moreover, the Ottoman sultan Abdulaziz is described as "weak, stupid" and "filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive, superstitious" (82–83). Thus, Twain's narrative reflects stereotypical representations of grotesque figures and a despotic Sultan, who banned newspapers and denied the freedom of the press.

Clearly, the narrator has made up his mind about every aspect of the Ottoman life. His experiences in the Turkish baths, drinking Turkish coffee, smoking the narghile (water pipe), and observing food preparations are described as absurd and ridiculous. Wearing traditional wooden clogs, he trips and falls while trying to walk inside a Turkish bath; he complains that the washers peel his skin off while scrubbing him; that the complimentary Turkish coffee is tasteless with muddy sediment; that narghile makes him cough; and the cook uses unsanitary utensils for food preparation. Except for the initial picturesque scene from the ship, he cannot find one good reason to stay in Istanbul. The people and their manners disgust him. There are plenty of mosques and churches, "but morals and whiskey are scarce. The Koran does not permit Mohammedans to drink. Their natural instincts do not permit them to be moral" (268) and "it comes natural to them to lie and cheat in the first place, and then they go on and improve on nature until they arrive at perfection" (269). Thus, everything and everybody he observes is uncivilized, inferior, and part of a strange spectacle.

Twain's narrative also includes some general historical information and cultural details regarding the city's attractions. Nevertheless, St. Sophia is nothing more than the "rustiest old barn in heathendom." The building, once a church but used as a mosque at the time, makes

the narrator uncomfortable, as he is forced to remove his shoes to enter the structure. He complains about the cold and shabby situation: "Every where was dirt and dust and dinginess and gloom; every where were signs of hoary antiquity, but with nothing touching or beautiful about it . […] Nowhere was there anything to win one's love or challenge his admiration." He is appalled that the building contains a "monstrous inscription in Turkish characters, wrought in gold mosaic, that looks as glaring as a circus bill," and beneath these inscriptions are "ragged Turks" engaged in Islamic style prayer, "bowing and straightening up, bowing again and getting down to kiss the earth, muttering prayers the while, and keeping up their gymnastics till they ought to have been tired, if they were not." He concludes that those who admire the site are merely repeating what has been taught to them. He decides that "[t]he people who go into ecstasies over St. Sophia must surely get them out of the guide book" (264–265). Twain's narrative also describes the whirling dervishes he watches with disdain. His prejudices are revealed through his comments on "dancing dervishes" and the "priest" of the ceremony, and his refusal to use the proper designations of "sufi/whirling dervishes" and "Head of Ceremonies" or "Sheikh." This "barbarous […] exhibition" includes "spinning pagans" with their robes "like a balloon" moving to "rude" music (266).

Twain's account of Ottoman lands is briefly interrupted by his visit to the Black Sea region and Russian territory. The ship returns to Istanbul for a second time to load coal and continues to Izmir (Smyrna) for a visit to Ephesus. The Izmir port reminds him of the *Arabian Nights* with its covered shops, narrow streets, camels, and attractive, smiling (Christian) Armenian girls, whom the narrator finds "a shade better than American girls." However, as an American pilgrim, he feels ashamed for uttering such a remark, since they "are treasonable words I pray may be forgiven me" (302)—and neither pious nor patriotic. In the city, Muslim Turkish homes are described as dark and located on crooked streets, whereas Christian Armenian homes are large and luxurious. Thus, the narrator does not hide his sympathetic feelings towards Christian believers, once more revealing his prejudices and orientalist gaze. In the three chapters on Ephesus and its history, the narrator's contempt for anything Turkish is revealed once more when tour guides take the group on a three-hour donkey ride to Ephesus in hot weather, making everybody suffer under the sun.

According to James Cox, "Mark Twain's burlesque has its roots in indignation, it moves the reader not toward guilt but toward a laughter arising from recognition of the absurdity of the world; and the laughter is not an acceptance of, or a guilt toward, but a relief

S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş
Hacettepe University,
Türkiye

from responsibility" (44). On the other hand, according to Jeffrey Melton, Twain showed signs of tourist fatigue from traveling extensively and "foreignness" was losing its charm (68). Regardless of whether or not Twain's description of Istanbul was a deliberate attempt at provoking laughter or whether or not travel was starting to lose its initial appeal, the writer's style and language can be viewed from the lens of poststructuralist and postcolonial studies. Stereotyping and discrimination is an exercise of power in the production of knowledge; whether the reader laughs or not is inconsequential. Twain may use comic exaggeration and parody to entertain his audience, but he also has clear preferences and preconceptions about the places he visits, irrespective of whether or not he was tired, as Melton claims. In short, Twain's orientalist gaze prevents him from accepting and engaging with another culture in a meaningful manner, and it functions as a major undercurrent in his narrative.

THE UNITED STATES IN UBEYDULLAH EFENDI'S *TRAVELS*

Mehmet Ubeydullah Hatipoğlu or Ubeydullah Efendi, as he is mostly known, is described as a politician and an adventurous person of intellect. This description is limited, since his life writing presents a colorful and unusual individual, whose risk-taking personality defies these identity markers. Without a doubt, he is a man of contradictions, as his acquaintances observe. He is just as likely to fiercely defend a political position as he is to criticize comrades on their shortcomings. Thus, his friends—often confused by the nature of his intentions—fail to understand his motives. He prefers to live frugally, requiring little to eat (Ubeydullah Efendi). His existing photos seem to prove his contradictory nature. A photo taken right after his travels to America shows a young bearded man in western style clothing with no headgear. Another full body shot shows him with a fez, a popular hat during the Ottoman Empire.[1] His western attire consists of a three-piece suit and leather shoes. His official Turkish House of Representatives photo, taken in 1908, shows him wearing an Ottoman style turban with white cloth wrapped around the fez. Moreover, the mandarin collar of his shirt is not suitable for a western tie. His more mature photos with graying

1 In 1826, the fez became mandatory in the army during the time of Sultan Mahmud II. In 1829, this covered everybody except women and the clergy, and the fez became the symbolic headgear of the Ottoman Empire. The fez was initially adopted from Morocco, probably originating in the city of Fez, although several Arab countries also use it as their official headgear. The fez was abandoned following the 1925 Hat Revolution during the early years of the Turkish Republic.

hair and beard present him either with a turban and jubbah (a type of kaftan), the usual dress code preferred by high-ranking officers or hodjas during the Ottoman Empire, or just the opposite: a three-piece suit with a tie. His clothing, much like his identity, was a fluid mixture of East and West, one that changed based on the demands of the situation. In a group photograph taken during an official London visit, Ubeydullah Efendi is immediately noticeable, as he is the only delegate wearing a kaftan and turban. A later photo as the registrar of marriages shows him immersed in examining documents, dressed in western attire suitable for the job he is performing during the early Turkish Republic.

Several members of Ubeydullah Efendi's immediate family were known for their intellectual contributions to society. His family observed Bektashi traditions, an Islamic sect known for their tolerant attitudes compared to other Sufi traditions. His father, a revered Hodja, and mother were known to possess a substantial number of books, a sign of their devotion to scholarly activities and education. After his early education in Izmir, Ubeydullah Efendi went to Istanbul to attend medical school; however, he decided to travel to Egypt, Syria, Paris, and Rhodes rather than completing his studies. In 1891, he became a member of the Union and Progress Party, known for adopting an oppositional stance on political issues.[2] He traveled to Europe and the United States in 1893 and stayed abroad for four years before returning to Istanbul. In 1897, he decided to support the Ottoman Sultan, Abdulhamid II, but, as a result of his questionable political involvements, he ended up being exiled to Taif, located in the Sahara Desert. After five and a half years, he escaped and returned to Anatolia. He was elected into the House of Representatives three times consecutively as a member of the Union and Progress Party. During World War I, he was officially appointed to Iran and Afghanistan to gather troops, but was captured by the British before he could reach Afghanistan, and imprisoned in Istanbul. Upon his release in 1919, he was exiled to Malta for another two years. After the Turkish Republic was established, he was elected to the House of Representatives twice

2 The Union and Progress Party (Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) was a political movement initiated in 1889, which rose to prominence on the political scene from 1908 to 1918. Once the Ottoman Constitution was adopted during the Second Constitutionalist Era, they started discussions on democratic elections, political parties, military coups, and dictatorships. Some members took part in the Independence War after the party was dispersed. They were called the Young Turks (Jön Türkler), although this term was also adopted for all politically oppositional individuals at the time.

S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş
Hacettepe University,
Türkiye

as a member of Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) (Ubeydullah Efendi, Feyizoğlu, Yücel).

During his travels to America, Ubeydullah Efendi tries various labor-intensive jobs including cooking, selling vegetables and sweets, opening a restaurant, creating hand-made accessories, and reporting for *The Chicago World's Fair* newspaper. Previously, he had worked for several publications including İzmir's first literary magazine, *Nevruz*, and the newspapers *Sada* in Paris, *Gayret* in Filibe, and *Doğru Söz* and *El Arap* in Cario (Ubeydullah Efendi). His Arabic, Farsi, and French translation skills became handy during his travels to the United States. After receiving a reporter's pass to the Chicago World's Fair, he recounts, "What made me very happy in Chicago was earning my life with my pen. This was the first time I was able to achieve this. I had not experienced this generosity in my country. During the times of despotism, even Namık Kemal or Abdülhak Hamid could not earn their lives by writing in my country" ("Benim Chicago'da en ziyade zevkime giden şey, kalemimin maişetimi temin etmesiydi. Dünyada birinci defa olarak kalemimle hayatımı kazanıyorum. Kendi memleketimde ben bu mürüveti görmedimdi. Devr-i istibdadda kalemiyle değil benim gibi bir aciz, hatta Namık Kemal yahut Abdülhak Hamid bile bizim memketimizde kendini geçindiremezdi"; my trans.; Alkan 151).[3]

For Ubeydullah Efendi, traveling was a natural activity, probably because of the rootlessness he experienced earlier in life. Reporter, writer, and politician Mehmet Asım Us describes him as a "traveler without a road" ("yolsuz yolcu"; my trans.; Elmas) meaning that he did not predetermine the route, but followed his instincts or seized presented opportunities. Another reporter and writer, Hikmet Feridun Es, characterizes him as a chameleon, having a thousand and one faces when referring to his multifaceted experiences. He depicts him in the following manner:

> One day he would be having a conversation with the emperor in Buckingham Place, the next day you would see him selling stuffed eggplants in the streets of New York. The wholesale vegetable sellers in Cuba would attack him. He would work as a porter and sleep in parks on an empty stomach for days. Then, you would see that he would be appointed to Afghanistan as the ambassador and revered by twenty-seven thousand on his way. Even the shops would

3 Namık Kemal (1840–1888) is considered to be the national poet of freedom with his elaborate and condescending style. Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan (1852–1937) is often known as the great poet of Turkish literature. He is credited as introducing western literary conventions to the Turkish canon. Ubeydullah Efendi mentions them while remarking on the necessity of supplementary income even for established writers who became famous during their lifetimes.

be closed because he was going to pass through that particular route. ("Bugün bakarsınız Buckingam Sarayı'nda imparatorla sohbet eder. Başka bir gün onu New York sokaklarında zeytinyağlı patlıcan dolması satarken görürsünüz. Küba'da sebze halinde zerzevatçıların hücumuna uğrar. Hamallık eder, günlerce aç olarak parklarda yatar. Bir müddet sonra bakarsınız ki büyük elçi olarak Afganistan'a giderken yirmi yedi bin kişi tarafından bir şehirde istikbal edilir ve o geçecek diye şerefine bütün dükkânlar, çarşılar kapanır."; my trans.; Elmas)

Although many people from the Ottoman lands traveled to the United States during the nineteenth century and even earlier, their travel writing is rare. From a cultural perspective, writing about one's experiences is connected to the European Enlightenment, where reason and individualism had precedence over tradition, and people were encouraged to share their personal experiences. Reported observations by western travelers or missionaries to Ottoman lands were in abundance compared to Ottoman travel writers. The traditional lifestyle of subjects of the Ottoman Empire did not emphasize individual experience, and talking about oneself was often viewed as inappropriate, since it was considered bragging. Ubeydullah Efendi was sixty-seven years old when he gathered the courage to compose his memoirs, mostly at the insistence of friends who had enjoyed his stories over the years. Although thirty years had passed since the events took place, his travel writing starts in an apologetic tone, stating that his intentions are far from boasting.

Ubeydullah Efendi begins his narrative by listing his motives in a series of rhetorical questions. He asks if he should target those who wish to learn from experienced individuals, if he should give an account of a restless and a fluctuating life, and if he is making a bold move, just to be favored by his readers. He humbly deduces that he is a coward and a lazy person, too sluggish to even give an account of his life, and continues to say that geography classes were limited in his time, but that he loved reciting poetry and writing. After providing his audience with background information about his family, he describes his "escape" from Istanbul in 1893. He writes that he was interested in attending the Chicago World's Fair, which coincided with the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's "discovery of the new world." He secures the necessary money and hires a small boat to board the ship waiting in Bosporus that would take him to Europe. He boards the ship without luggage, because he fears that the Ottoman authorities will realize his intention to leave and detain him (Alkan 91–100). He travels to Marseille, then to Paris, and finally to Liverpool, where he boards the White Star Line ship, *Germanic*, to New York.

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Hacettepe University,
Türkiye

Ubeydullah Efendi gives detailed information about his fellow travelers on the *Germanic*, and how he was viewed as an eccentric foreigner on board since he wore a kaftan and a fez. Other passengers want to talk with him, although he does not speak English but French (Alkan 104), the preferred foreign language in the elite Ottoman education system. Ubeydullah Efendi's social side is also revealed during the time of the voyage. When fellow travelers approach him, he does his best to converse with them and adapts nicely to this new environment. One traveler in particular, a young English woman, Miss Anni Meysın (the spelling belongs to Ubeydullah Efendi, but is most likely Annie Mason), who is also traveling to attend the Chicago World's Fair on behalf of her employees, befriends Ubeydullah Efendi. Because she can speak French, Miss Meysın is able to converse with Ubeydullah Efendi. When Ubeydullah Efendi is asked to give a speech to the other passengers, he translates his Ottoman to French and Miss Meysın acts as the English interpreter. Their friendship continues after they arrive at New York and they travel together to Chicago where they eventually become romantically involved. They enjoy each other's company, exchange sentiments of love, and meet every day until they part when the Chicago World's Fair ends six months later. Ubeydullah Efendi remains in the United States and attempts to open a restaurant in New York but fails. He then works at an ethnic fair in Washington, DC and later in Pittsburg, selling cotton candy in his native costume. He also travels to Cuba where he makes and sells metallic hand-made jewelry and accessories, until he is attacked by vegetable sellers who are unhappy with the location of his makeshift workbench. This hostile incident, and an earlier encounter with an Ottoman government official who encourages him to return, convince him to make the journey back to Istanbul. The details related to his homecoming are not specified, although it is known that he spends some time in Europe before returning to Istanbul (Feyizoğlu).

Ubeydullah Efendi's search for grandness is immediately fulfilled as soon as he lays eyes on the Statue of Liberty. He is quite impressed by the size and the symbolic meaning of "Statue of Mrs. Freedom" ("Hürriyet Hanım'ın Heykeli"; my trans.), thinking that such a grand statue would be suitable to represent the founder of Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Alkan 140–141). This reference is in fact anachronistic, since the Turkish Republic, established in 1923, did not exist at the time of his travels. As previously stated, Ubeydullah Efendi composed his travel accounts much later and was drawing connections with the current state of affairs. In his accounts, he talks about technological developments that were nonexistent in Istanbul

at the time. He is fascinated by New York streetcars moving on electrified tracks, a ferry carrying a train with passengers while crossing the Great Lakes, and sprinklers operated by a button during the opening ceremonies of the Chicago World's Fair. He also comments on the ease of trading and earning money in the United States, together with the necessity of advertising and distributing samples to ensure better profits. Moreover, he does not shy away from criticizing his own actions. For example, he talks about how he worked on the publication of an Ottoman newspaper during the Chicago World's Fair, but did not save a single issue because he had written favorable words about the Sultan without meaning them (Alkan 162).

Ubeydullah Efendi also talks about his encounters with the opposite sex in the United States. Besides Miss Meysın, there are a number of other women who are curious about him, flirt with him, or even coerce him into dancing. He tries to be cordial while observing the etiquette of the era and does not present these encounters as male conquests, although he obviously enjoys the attention he receives. The stories in which women are portrayed as actively displaying their interest were attractive for male readers of the early Turkish Republic, since the cultural and religious convictions of the time restricted relationships between sexes. The (male) readers probably enjoyed such descriptions and may have even lived vicariously through Ubeydullah Efendi's adventures.

Although there are some gaps and omitted details in Ubeydullah Efendi's account, he also confesses his shortcomings and misfortunes. He admits that since the events happened years ago, he cannot remember all the details, but tries to recount as much as possible, as in the case of reconstructing the opening speech at the Chicago World's Fair (Alkan 185). Such intervals could be intentional or simply caused by the effect of time on memory. He also makes a few historical and geographical errors, such as calling Michigan Detroit, saying, "Detroit is the name of one of the States in the United States of America. In this state, there is a city with the same name," ("Detroit dediğim bir Amerika Eyâleti müttehide-i cumhuriyetini teşkil eden eyaletlerden birinin ismidir. Ve bu eyalette, bu isimde bu şehir de var"; my trans.; Alkan 146) or referring to Frederick Douglass as "from Haitian people of color" ("Haiti adası zencilerinden"; my trans.; Alkan 157). Actually, the government of Haiti had appointed Douglass to serve as a representative at the Chicago World's Fair due to his earlier position as United States Minister Resident (Hautzinger). Ubeydullah Efendi's mistake in judgment was probably caused by his observations at the fair. These small inaccuracies are partially due to composing his experiences much later than

the actual events as well as the unavailability of specific information due to time and distance. He states, "I do not remember all as I did then. […] I do not have an available map to consult and find it. […] I am only recounting what is left in my mind" (". […] bugün herşey o günkü gibi hatırımda değil. […] Yanımda harita yok ki ona müracaat edeyim, bulayım. […] Ben ancak hatırımda kalanları yazıyorum"; my trans.; Alkan 146). He defends his position by stating, "Those experts should know that meticulously planned travel writing is not hard to compose. Such narratives can be easily compiled by consulting books and filling it with lies rather than reality" ("erbâb-ı mütalaaca mâlum olmalı ki, o yolda dikkatli yazılmış seyahatnameleri yazmak zor bir şey değildir. Onu insan kitaptan pek kolay yazabilir ve baştan aşağı gerçek yerine yalanlar doldurabilir"; my trans.; Alkan 146). In this respect, both Ubeydullah Efendi and Mark Twain seem to agree that travel books written according to specific formulas or preconceptions do not represent reality, although the two authors have different outlooks about the lands to which they travel.

Despite the gaps and omitted events, Ubeydullah Efendi's conscious interpretive readjustment reveals his outlook. Unlike Mark Twain's narrator, he is more tolerant towards religious and cultural differences and praises ethical acts. For example, he appreciates Christian travelers for uttering blessings in God's name before eating (Alkan 112). He comments favorably on their civilized manner of waiting their turn when necessary and promptness in thanking others (Alkan 114), and compliments their friendly manner and their readiness to communicate with him. When his fellow travelers shorten his name and mistakenly call him "Mr. God" ("Mr. Allah"; my trans.; Alkan 126), he is amused rather than being offended. Although he is aware of other passengers' tendency to objectify him as a stereotypical Eastern person, he is not bothered by their inquisitive stares. He does not feel alienated when others observe his kaftan and fez with interest, when they notice his unwillingness to consume alcohol due to his religious beliefs, when they hear him speak in his native tongue, or when they comment on his manners. In short, he can adapt easily to any situation without feeling the need to justify himself or assert a privileged position.

CONCLUSION

After the success of *The Innocents Abroad*, Twain wrote *Roughing It* (1872) about the American West, and *A Tramp Abroad* (1880) about his European travels with his family. He also published the account of his experiences as a steamboat captain during the American Civil

War in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) and his travels to Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand, India, and South Africa in *Following the Equator* (1897). Likewise, Ubeydullah Efendi traveled to other parts of the world and continued to write about his experiences. In *The Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain's travels lasted five months, while Ubeydullah Efendi stayed in the United States for a couple of years. Mark Twain followed the predetermined routes of historical and cultural places established by tour companies, as opposed to Ubeydullah Efendi's spontaneous travels that were governed by possibilities and opportunities along the way.

Mark Twain's and Ubeydullah Efendi's journalistic travel accounts to each other's countries cannot be separated from their cultural and ideological perspectives, which affect their comparable gazes: Twain accepted the role of a questioning tourist whose inquisitive eye searches for untold interpretations, while Ubeydullah Efendi tries to give wholesome descriptions of events and places, together with an awareness of how he is viewed as an Eastern person. Twain's narrator's peculiar humor and narrative attitude were obviously influenced by the political events of the time, and his views were tainted by his orientalist approach and its power dynamics. Despite his biases, towards the end of *The Innocents Abroad* he writes, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things can not be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime" (495). Ubeydullah Efendi's accounts are affected by the lapse of time between traveling and writing, which sometimes causes details to be blurred. He also seems worried about how his readers are going to respond to his travels. He remarks that traveling has expanded his knowledge and changed his perceptions. In the section that explains his aim and the outcome of his ventures, he says, "[readers] will suppose that while searching for grandness, I have actually become smaller. […] an individual matures by becoming smaller" ("[okuyucular] benim büyüklük ararken küçüldüğüme zâhip olacaktır. […] insan küçüldükçe büyür"; my trans; Alkan 98). Figuratively speaking, "becoming smaller" in the eyes of the readers indicates a concern with the readers' expectations as opposed to what he actually experiences. Ubeydullah Efendi is trying to underline the significance of any experience contributing to his learning process while preemptively warding off the readers' reactions.

As Berger articulates, "we only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach […] we are always looking at the relation between things

S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş
Hacettepe University,
Türkiye

and ourselves" (8–9). The travel narratives display the narrators' native and personal outlooks as they observe and compare sights and people they encounter. While Twain's narrative portrays Ottoman lands in a hostile or condescending manner, with negative descriptors, Ubeydullah Efendi's accounts are neither negative nor particularly positive. Twain's travel chronicles are "dominant, formulaic, rigid and fixed" (AbuHilal and Abu-Shomar 18). The citizens of Istanbul are depraved of their humanity through unpleasant markers, such as ugliness, shabby outfits, filth, and loudness. These disagreeable features are set opposite of naïve, if not positive traits of the American travelers. *The Innocents Abroad* treats all Arab and Islamic territories with a similar disdain, yet the Ottoman cities of the time receive the strongest denigration. On the other hand, Ubeydullah Efendi's travel accounts do not create divisions or suggest power imbalances between the viewer and the object of interest. He favors interaction and tolerance in his relationships and his depictions of unfamiliar regions and people are as neutral as possible compared to Twain's narrator's demeaning markers. The act of traveling impacts both narrators' lives and their responses to what they encounter demonstrate their differing ideological discursive formations.

Abstract: Mark Twain's (1835–1910) literary travelogue, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), remarks on and/or subverts previously established interpretations of places and objects. Twain's adopted persona allows him to assume the double role of a fool and an intellectual, simultaneously, by deploying a peculiar type of humor. By openly distaining and emphasizing certain aspects of his travel experiences, Twain's narrator seems naïve on the one hand, but a savvy social critic on the other. Twain's account of Istanbul (Constantinople) streets, drinking Turkish coffee, and Turkish bath experience become farcical descriptions of the Ottoman Empire. His choice of words—such as "the rustiest old barn in heathendom"—also confirms his ideological viewpoint of Ottoman lands.

Unlike Twain, Ubeydullah Efendi (1858–1937), who travels in the opposite direction, to the United States from the Ottoman Empire, paints a positive picture of American urban life. He spends most of his time at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, which he describes in detail. One could argue that since the Ottoman Empire was on the cusp of becoming the Turkish Republic, Ubeydullah Efendi's descriptions of his American voyage were naturally written in a progressive tone. Yet, a closer inspection reveals subtle criticism, as well as an awareness of how others viewed him as an Ottoman gentleman. Thus, his portrayals do not stem from internalized Orientalism; rather, they are the result of informed observations based on his cultural experiences.

Neither Mark Twain's nor Ubeydullah Efendi's journalistic travel accounts to each other's countries can be separated from the ideological and rhetorical dimensions of the era's travel writing. This article will focus on both narrators' approach and gaze in a comparative manner. While Twain portrays Ottoman lands in a hostile or condescending manner, with descriptors such as "filthy,"

"brutish," "ignorant," or "unprogressive," Ubeydullah Efendi's accounts are not so one-dimensional. Twain's peculiar humor and narrative attitude were obviously influenced by the political events of the time, and his views were tainted by his orientalist approach. Conversely, Ubeydullah Efendi's straightforward depictions and occasional humor are connected to his personality and offer a far more realistic portrayal of late nineteenth-century America.

Keywords: Mark Twain, Ubeydullah Efendi, *The Innocents Abroad*, Orientalism, travel writing

Author's bio: Assoc. Prof. S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş is a faculty member of the Department of American Culture and Literature, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Türkiye. Her areas of interest include American folk music, cultural studies, literary theory and criticism, contemporary American novel, and life writing. She has published several journal and book articles on related subjects and presented papers in international conferences. She has also edited and served on editorial and advisory boards of academic journals including the departmental journal, *The Journal of American Culture and Literature* of Hacettepe University (1993–2001), *Interactions* (2005–2021), and *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* (2007, 2008, 2022). Her published monograph is titled *Geçmişin Öyküleri, Öykülerin Geçmişi: Çağdaş Amerikan Romanlarında Tarihin Sorgulanması* (The Stories of the Past, The Past of the Stories: Questioning History in Contemporary American Novels). She received a Fulbright scholarship and conducted research on contemporary American women's life writing at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor during the academic year 2010-2011. Currently she is working on a book project on autographics by American women artists/writers.

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A. K. RAMANUJAN'S INSIGHTFUL OBSERVATIONS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: LOOKING BRIEFLY AT THE DIARY ENTRIES

Jolly Das
Vidyasagar University, India
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8751-0067

"A place may seem quite simple until you start noticing things."
(Lawrence Buell, Writing for an Endangered World 62)

INTRODUCTION

In their joint Editors' Note to the published anthology of some of Attipat Krishnaswamy Ramanujan's (16 March 1929–13 July 1993) diary entries titled *Journeys: A Poet's Diary* (2018), Krishna Ramanujan and Guillermo Rodriguez succinctly describe him as "the writer who wrote with all he had in his 'travel bag,' who traversed temporal, intellectual and cultural spaces with a natural ease" (Ramanujan, *Journeys* IX)—a man who noticed even the minutest matters which drew his immediate attention, and jotted assiduous notes about them in his diary/journal.

A. K. Ramanujan, recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri Award (conferred by the Government of India) in 1976, and the MacArthur Fellowship (sponsored by the John D. and Catherien T. MacArthur Foundation of the USA) in 1983, is widely known as poet, translator, linguist and folklorist. He belonged to the class of intellectuals who were cosmopolitan and interdisciplinary in their approach. After he completed his MA from the University of Mysore, he spent a few years teaching English in different colleges in India while carrying on with his passion for collecting folktales from the oral traditions (including dialects) of rural people in South India.

On receiving the Fulbright Travel Fellowship during 1959–1962 and the Smith-Mundt Grant, to continue with his studies in linguistics, he undertook a transnational voyage across half the globe, leaving Bombay on 1 July 1959, and arriving in the United States on 28 July 1959.

He subsequently received his PhD in Linguistics in 1963 from Indiana University. A year earlier, in 1962, he joined the University of Chicago as Assistant Professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilization, where he worked for the rest of his life, and played a key role, as an Asian American, in developing the South Asian Studies program there. Other institutions in the US where he taught include Harvard, University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of California at Berkeley, and Carleton College.

This article looks at the early travel memoirs of his tryst with the United States of America, written in the style of disjointed diary/journal entries in prose and verse—which may be considered as an important documentation of an outsider's (during the early years of his stay in the USA) perception of the country, along with jottings on his discovery of elements which forged his future academic journey. The article is roughly divided into two sections: (1) the first will cast a brief glance at his observations recorded during 2–27 July 1959, during his maiden voyage from Bombay to New York (including a small land-trip through France), (2) the second will take a longer look at the early entries on his travels, interactions and observations as a scholar and teacher, on the United States of America, following his arrival on 28 July 1959.

In addition, it should be noted that, henceforth, A. K. Ramanujan shall be referred to as AKR, since this is how he was commonly known, and it will also help us avoid confusion of calling him by his first name, 'Ramanujan,' as though it were his surname. In the name of a Tamil man, the first of the two initials stands for the place of origin of his family, and the second is his father's first name. His first name comes last. The method firmly established the principle of rootedness in the place of one's origin besides tracing his genealogy. This practice imbues the person with a sense "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (Eliot 44), in concurrence with T. S. Eliot's idea of the "historical sense" (44). This sense of being grounded in one's tradition propelled AKR's immediate engagement with the USA on his arrival there. His inner self, with whatever knowledge it had accumulated, responded to the outer environment in which he found himself.

As a result, although the purpose of his travel to and across the USA was primarily academic, he made plenty of observations on different aspects of the country, many of which serve as pointers towards the development of his attitude to the country where he would spend a major part of the rest of his life. The fundamental operative principle for him in these observations was the *akam-puram* paradigm, with which he was comfortably familiar. To put it briefly, this complementary

Jolly Das
Vidyasagar University, India

pair provides the functional distinction between the inner world of the individual and the world without the individual. It is extensively employed in classical Tamil poetry, which AKR already knew and some of which he translated into English later on in the two anthologies, *Hymns for the Drowning* (1981) and *Poems of Love and War* (1985). In a broader sense, this paradigm establishes a distinction between the mother-tongue tradition, which is used in the *desi*, or domestic/local/regional sphere, and the father-tongue tradition (used for communication with the world outside this domain)—which may be the *marga*, i.e., the national/interregional world, and/or the *videsi*, i.e., the international world. This has always been AKR's lens for observing affairs in the USA. His early life in India, his multicultural (mainly Tamil, Kannada, Sanskrit and English) childhood, education, hobbies and work shaped his Indian way of thinking, about which he wrote in "Is there an Indian way of thinking? An Informal Essay" (1999).

The article shall focus on AKR's diary entries in English to explore his observations on and experiences of life in the US. Some of these entries have been published in *Journeys: A Poet's Diary* (2018); and others, still unpublished and preserved, are in the archives (Regenstein Library, University of Chicago). This ununiform record of his journeys, both literal and psychological, creates intersections which invite its reader(s) to shared experience(s) of intercultural transaction, with AKR playing the role of the 'hyphen,' as he forged a bridge between two cultures: eastern and western, ancient and modern. The meeting of his inner self, the *akam*, with the new country he entered, the *puram*, followed by the interface and intermingling of the two, forms a major part of his diary. These travel writings go beyond mere descriptions of what he observed—they are cultural artifacts left behind by a transnational traveler, literally and metaphorically.

An individual's first experience is naturally estimated with the help of the extant knowledge at his disposal which serves as a toolkit. Without exception, the same process is markedly noticeable in the diary entries made by AKR—his 'Indianness' serving as the kit to observe and measure America. On this note, a look at the diary entries—the non-fictional records of his observations and impressions—may be undertaken.

DIARY ENTRIES EN-ROUTE TO THE USA

On 1 July 1959, AKR boarded the *Strathaird* in Bombay, with the ocean liner calling at Aden, Port Said, Malta and Marseilles. He also undertook a land-journey through France to reach

Southampton, where he boarded the SS *Queen Elizabeth*, which took him to New York on 28 July 1959. He wrote in detail about experiences and observations during this journey in his "Travel Diary, 2 to 27 July 1959, Bombay to New York" (*Journeys* 46–76).

The first-ever travel overseas, and also to the USA, the land which promised, among other things, academic flourishing, was full of excitement as well as anxiety for the young man of thirty, who was aware of his shortcoming in this matter—that a 'modern' Indian was "not modern enough to be entirely abreast of Western ideas, because books d[id] n't come too fast to India" (*Journeys* 58). This maiden voyage, which Rodriguez describes as "his landmark passage to America, as an insecure Fulbright scholar in 1959, discovering all that a new world could offer to a young ambitious writer and scholar from India" (*Journeys* XXVII), was his passage of initiation to the culture of the country he was to inhabit for the rest of his life—a transition from the familiar world he knew and loved (his interior landscape, *akam*) to the initially unfamiliar country which he was to encounter, explore and experience (the world outside his self, the *puram*). The first voyage brought forth this dialogue between the *akam* and *puram*, about which he wrote: "But then, every journey is a disentanglement, a flutter of adieus among the mast ropes. […] As one is disengaged from the family, the familiar, everything puts on the stranger-look of a symbol […] a ship is a floating island. It's self-sufficiency disturbs you: it has everything except a cemetery (there is always the sea)" (*Where* 117).

His premonitions surfaced once more in the entry of 26th July, a couple of days ahead of his arrival: "I hope I'll not find myself in a 'cultural' vacuum, without artists and writers who know other artists and writers and are busy with creation and criticism. I'd run into an air pocket if I did, and gasp" (*Journeys* 75). He also has his share of anxieties about finding his way in a new place: "Everyone has introductions to people in the US; only I don't" (*Journeys* 75–76). With these apprehensions he set foot on US soil.

For as long as he was voyaging from Bombay to the USA, the worlds of the two ocean liners, *Strathaird* and SS *Queen Elizabeth*, were the foci of his observations. One could conveniently refer to this experience as a trailer of what he expected to see when he arrived in the US.

DIARY ENTRIES IN THE USA

The entries which AKR made after he arrived in the country are varied and unorganized ('ununiform,' as already pointed out)—

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Vidyasagar University, India

an assortment of quick jottings, incomplete sentences, longer descriptive writings, an occasional poem, diagrams, anything he found 'note'-worthy. These reflect his eagerness to record his impressions about everything he found to be new and different. It must be remembered that AKR's experience of field-surveys for collecting different folk-literature in the oral tradition in South India had come alive during his interface with the highly diverse range of experiences he had in the USA, and his diary entries were like field-notes for future reference. These stand in distinct contrast to the method adopted by another alumnus of Maharaja's College in Mysore, R. K. Narayan (1906–2001), nearly thirty-three years older than AKR, who at the age of fifty visited the USA for about nine months in 1956 for the first time, and made journal entries about his travels there. These travel writings were later edited and published in a book-form titled *My Dateless Diary: An American Journey* (1964), in which R. K. Narayan recorded in a linear manner a primarily chronological documentation of his personal experiences, observations and interactions with different individuals in the USA. Still, AKR's range was certainly wider in scope, as he put down everything he found interesting—big or small, personal or public, local or national, academic or extra-curricular, and so on.

In his Note to the section of the diary titled "A Young Poet-Scholar in America," the editor of *Journeys* comments on the entries made from 30 July 1959 onwards, saying, "Some of his first writings in America are amusing – and critical – reflections on a culture that exhibits its material wealth and progressive ethos, and displays very different ways (for an Indian of the time), of understanding human relationships and time" (*Journeys* 79). R. K. Narayan wrote in the "Foreword" to his travelogue: "America and India are profoundly different in attitude and philosophy, though it would be wonderful if they could complement each other's values. Indian philosophy stresses austerity and unencumbered, uncomplicated day-to-day living. America's emphasis, on the other hand, is on material acquisition and the limitless pursuit of prosperity" (n.p.). While negotiating this difference which he, too, experienced, AKR continued to make notes in his diary about the various topographies of the USA he could trace, some of which are the geographical/temporal, cultural and the intellectual topographies (as indicated by the editors of *Journeys* and mentioned in the introductory citation of this article), which shall be closely looked at.

Geographical Topography: The terrain would certainly draw his first attention. So, in two days' time since his arrival in Bennington College, AKR made a diary entry on 30 July, titled "Geography & Am. Life" (Diary n.p.), using the technique of measuring the *puram*

by contrasting it with the *akam* to analyze the geographical features of the USA. He understood that the physical geography had formed the background for the colonial incursion therein, resulting in the foregrounded political geography he found on his arrival. Three pages of entry also take into account riverine and railway transport, lakes, mountains, soil conditions, commerce and industry, urbanization—the amazing range of observations and jottings points towards his methodical and meticulous perception of the outcome of European domination over the so-called wilderness. Contrary to the Indian tendency to evade documentation, he had developed an enthusiasm to put almost everything down on paper. Here is an excerpt: "Lakes—canals + main – railroad. Entrances developed in colonial days—another entrance up the Mississippi from Florida to the twin cities of St. Paul + Minneapolis. All 3 converge in lakes near Chicago" (Diary 30 July 1959 n.p.). Right from the beginning, therefore, AKR's mind played an inevitable mediatory role between the *akam* and *puram*: between what he already knew from his Indianness and education, and what he gradually discovered in America (possibly he was trying to trace similarities/ dissimilarities between European colonization in India and the USA).

What emerged from this interface is his cosmopolitanism, which interrogated the impulse behind the famous/infamous 'Frontier'. The Frontier has been the focus of much academic writing, a very important work being a book written by Frederick Jackson Turner, an American historian, titled *The Frontier in American History* (1962), whose first chapter is his 1893 speech "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," which was delivered at the conference of the American Historical Association. In this chapter, Turner writes about the expanding Frontier: "This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character" (2–3). Almost seventy years later, AKR wondered: "In most countries a frontier is a place where you stop, where there are guards and govt.: exc. in America, here it meant new land and no govt. Claiming new land by homesteading" (Diary n.p.). He seems to question the "Frontier Thesis" of Turner, who maintained that "The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics" (37). Turner opined that the present America could be possible because it took up the challenge of taming a wilderness and allowed the American spirit to flourish. This has been pointed out by Henry Nash Smith in the final chapter, "The Myth of the Garden and Turner's Frontier Hypothesis," of his

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Vidyasagar University, India

book, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950), where he analyses Turner's inspiring speech in this manner:

> We have been transferred from the plane of the economist's abstractions to a plane of metaphor, and even of myth—for the American forest has become almost an enchanted wood, and the image of Antaeus has been invoked to suggest the power of the Western earth. Such intimations reach beyond logical theory. They remind us that the wilderness beyond the limits of civilization was not only an area of free land; it was also nature. The idea of nature suggested to Turner a poetic account of the influence of free land as a rebirth, a regeneration, a rejuvenation of man and society constantly recurring where civilization came into contact with the wilderness along the frontier. (296)

Almost at the same time as AKR was questioning the role of the burgeoning Frontier, Rachel Carson, the American biologist and conservation activist, wrote an influential work *Silent Spring* (1962), warning the world about the disastrous effects of endangering nature by anthropocentric interventions.

Yet another outstanding human intervention in nature involved mining, about which AKR observed: "Mining craze for gold + silver in the west. MT's [Mark Twain] trip to Nevada made him a writer. It was the sense of the vastness + freedom of the west which made him a writer" (Diary n.p.). AKR's concerned diary entry seems to anticipate what the environmental critic and author, Lawrence Buell puts forth in his 2001 book, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Focusing on "the rapidity and vastness of the scale of this country's environmental transformation" (9), Buell says that the change in the place was to "a degree of modification so profound that we shall never again encounter a pristine physical environment" (3). This anxiety stemmed from the feeling that "[t]he more a site feels like a place, the more fervently it is so cherished, the greater the potential concern at its violation" (56).

The concern with the 'settlement' engendered 'violation' of the "pristine physical environment" (Buell 3) has led to environmental activism. AKR wrote about one such engagement in an 18 August 1959 entry titled "A Garden Club Meeting in New England" (*Journeys* 82–83)—about how the redwood tree got its name 'Sequoia' after a brave Cherokee chieftain, and adds information about the anthropocentric encroachment upon the redwood trees, which he calls "fairy-tale botany" (*Journeys* 82), across the planet, except in the Sierras of the California coast, and how the Club was trying to save and protect them by associating with the Save the Redwoods League, which was an old organization.

Taking a quick look at a different entry (a personal experience), one finds that on 8 November 1959 he documented his first experience of winter snowfall, on his way to "Alpha House to register for a driving lesson" (*Journeys* 109). In a graphic paragraph on human reception of the annual natural phenomenon, he says that he "walked through a chilly wet day. Came out to see the air filled with ashen flakes and the ground covered with an even spray of white snow" (*Journeys* 109). One may wonder about how AKR, a man from a humid tropical part of South Asia, felt about the experience. So, here is what he writes:

> I look at things avidly, feel insensitive and rage at my insensitivity that cannot register for ever all the designs, the colour contrasts, the masses with their veins showing. The world looks like a woman, beautiful and inviting, but already someone else's wife. (*Journeys* 109)

The typical ring of AKR's voice is evident in this piece, serving as an excellent example of the *akam-puram* paradigm, which enabled him to recognize and acknowledge the beauty of other (extra-self) presences. AKR's records of these different aspects express an acknowledgement of plurality which celebrates cultural liquidity.

Cultural Topography: In his book *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (2011), Zygmunt Bauman, a sociologist and philosopher, puts forth the idea that "The universality of humanity does not stand in opposition to a plurality of forms of human life: the touchstone of a truly universal humanity is its ability to accept such plurality and to make it a force for good, enabling, stimulating and maintaining an 'ongoing discussion about a common conception of welfare'" (66). AKR's 'notes' evince his personal approach of "universality of humanity" (Bauman 66) towards the American cultural milieu. However, at the same time, his writings express his awareness of and concern about an opposing tendency among most Americans to bring about a uniformity in matters related to culture, which goes against Bauman's proposition about "a common conception of welfare" (66). America was caught between a tendency to celebrate and uniformly establish a typically 'American' culture (which was that of the powerful white-skinned settlers), and an impossibility to realize it owing to interfaces with other vibrant and different cultures, e.g., the Native American, African American and Asian American cultural presences.

One of the things he soon discovered about America (which has also been reiterated by R. K. Narayan) was that life was fast and mechanization made this speed possible. He wrote a long account, "On the Road to Albany," on 23 August 1959 (*Journeys* 84–87), which included his

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Vidyasagar University, India

observation on electronic devices having entered the public domain and Americans being comfortably accustomed to them. Conversation had resorted to long distance communication, both ways *via* telephone, and one-way *via* television. He thought that the television had killed the art of conversation. In his signature style, following his close observations of American life, he wrote:

> America, they say, is oriented towards the future – hence the ulcers of the ambitious, the psychiatric beds that number more than all the other sickbeds, filled with people who saved time for a future – it's like the hire-purchase system, a beautifully leased-out future, built up out of whole bricks of the present, building up a wall and not a house. (*Journeys* 85)

In the same entry, with his fine sense of humour, he also writes about the Americans' so-called fascination with the past, which, he says, they enshrine in "splendidly window-dressed" museums (*Journeys* 85), also chipping in that these "*ancient monuments* [were] twenty-five years old" (*Journeys* 85, emphasis added). Putting the two together, the linguist concludes that "Americans love the past as much as the future – apologize aggressively to the Oriental for their lack of it; every Indian feels an antiquity before them" (*Journeys* 86). Albany seemed to put forth a message which made him apprehensive. So, he put it in this way:

> […]The way Americans are preserving every bit of the past, and even every bit of any present that promises a future – we'll soon have a country cluttered with monuments, yesterday will swallow up the day before, and between yesterday and tomorrow there may be no today at all.
>
> They are proud to have a strain of Indian blood in them – it's the Gulf Stream in their Atlantic; they are eager to preserve Indians for anthropologists and linguists who have done a great deal for them. (*Journeys* 86)

The lack of a sense of the past (what T. S. Eliot called the "historical sense" 44) has, according to AKR, a damaging effect on the American mind, which he analyses in this way in the same entry:

> This is what the American's sense of a lack of the past is doing to his past; he either writes minute and ten-volume histories about Abraham Lincoln, and the two big wars in all of America's history, or goes away to Europe or Africa or the Tahiti in search of the sophisticated or the primitive past. Or he takes all past as his past and loses America to find a (cosmic) memory. (*Journeys* 87)

According to him, "Americanism is Europeanism meeting a challenge of a new environment" (Diary 5 August 1959 n.p.), which is the exact

opposite of the condition of the American in Europe. But the theme of both is the same: an expatriate trying to achieve himself.

He sums up the American approach to history in this way:

> Americans as historians—[mns] general sense of history—linear, not cyclical … moving in a line towards an opener end. Unlike Gk. Roman or Eastern conception of time.
>
> 
>
>
> The depth of their sense of the past varies acc. to backg. The country is not of a uniform age. […] (Diary n.p.)

In another entry of 5 August 1959, he wonders whether an "American historian" is "an American who's a historian, or a historian of America" (Diary n.p.). He thinks that the USA is a country without any uniform age. About five days later, in an entry dated 10 August 1959, AKR wrote:

> The "old world, new world" idea has an arrogant provincial ring, ignoring other worlds. The Americans "have little sense of history, little sense of continuity with the past". Still a basic + continuing image in Am[n] thinking. The old world belongs to the past, its problems + injustices; America belongs to the future where the errors of the past can be wiped – this simple idealized picture of Am[m] widespread. i Continuing immigration, ii the long continuance of the open frontier: both keep this image valid. To the Imm., Am was the land of opportunity. The second generation of the non-Eng speaking imms, realized the Am[n] promise as they lost their backg. Am as a country of the future, to the later genera[n]s who cut themselves off from their own family + trad[n]s. (Diary n.p.)

So, according to AKR, they have to be taught history—historical knowledge—not as a historical way of thought, but as an academic discipline. Just as AKR, Jean Baudrillard documents his impression from his travels in *America* (1988, particularly the West): "The form that dominates the American West, and doubtless all of American culture, is a seismic form: a fractal, interstitial culture, born of a rift with the Old World, a tactile, fragile, mobile, superficial culture – you have to follow its own rules to grasp how it works: seismic shifting, soft technologies" (10). A majority of intellectuals have concluded that the Americans (particularly, the descendants of the European Americans) are caught in a fragmented notion of history.

Moving away to another set of observations, one finds him jotting down about the structure of the federal state of the USA. In a 12 August 1959 entry, he writes about the structure of the American government, the *modus operandi* of the Presidential election, bills of law, etc. Thereafter, he makes a striking comment: "It's ironical – Am[n]s are now

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doubting their constitution, when foreigners are beginning to respect it. Misguided Amⁿs want to dock it out for export" (Diary n.p.).

Thereafter, he puts down his observations on the American idea of the economic value of land, which he learns to be different from that found elsewhere. AKR jots on 13 August about "Skyscrapers not as symbol or monument but for commerce – (land has no symbolic use, as in London Buckingham Palace – symbolism + tradition control the use of land) – a dense centre. […] Buildings don't last very long – the land is speculated on" (Diary n.p.). Materialism continues to play a significant role in predicating political and economic matters in the mid-twentieth century and AKR notes that racism continues to manifest itself in the degradation and exploitation of colored persons, especially African Americans, who were still called 'Negro.' About the position/exploitation of the African Americans, AKR writes three things on 13 August 1960:

(i.) Politics – "One party put up a Negro for Presidency of Manhattan, so other parties had to—so 5 Negros running for it – now Negro monopoly for Manhattan – till Negros move into other pol. positions – balancing diff. interests, …".

(ii.) Economic life – "The most painful, dirty ill-paid jobs done by Newcomers – but the immigrants moved up – after 1924 immigration stopped. So, distribution of Negro populⁿ for the dirty work."

(iii.) Culture—"Amⁿ culture has no roots, as in a homogeneous country like France. […] Behind every Amⁿ there lies another country – of Europe or Africa." (Diary n.p.)

AKR was able to discern the cultural plurality amongst the Americans, which resisted the tendency towards uniformity, which imposed the viability of Bauman's theory of culture in a liquid modern world, and which leads us back to the idea of cosmopolitanism. It must also be remembered that these jottings were made a little over a month ahead of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s phenomenal speech on 25 September 1960, which was titled "The Negro and the American Dream," in which he said:

> [T]he primary reason for bringing an end to racial discrimination in America must not be the Communist challenge. Nor must it be merely to appeal to Asian and African peoples. The primary reason for uprooting racial discrimination from our society is that it is morally wrong. … It relegates persons to the status of things. (web. n.p.)

It is noteworthy that AKR had noticed the complicated nuances of racial exploitation so quickly, as well as the cultural plurality of the American population, comprising mostly immigrants who had arrived

from different parts of the world for different purposes. Racism was something as clear as daylight and something unacceptable to both AKR and King Jr.

Intellectual Topography: The British-American philosopher and writer, Kwame Anthony Appiah, wrote in his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), "And the one thought that cosmopolitans share is that no local loyalty can ever forget justifying that each human being has responsibilities to every other" (Appiah xvi), as though Appaiah was echoing the responses of AKR's intellectual set-up to its counterparts in the USA. Appaiah explains, "People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences. Because there are so many human possibilities worth exploring, we neither expect nor desire that every person or every society should converge on a single mode of life" (Appiah xv). Therefore, AKR took cognizance of the variety while jotting them down in his diary, which includes famous Americans, meeting whom exposed him to the intellectual world of the USA. There are different entries on his meeting Howard Nemorov, the American poet, in one of which he wrote: "He walked with me for a full hour in the sun-drenched woods among dry yellow and red leaves. He made ironic perceptive tough remarks all the time from his tallness … and I was grateful he let me meet him" (105). He also met Marcel Marceau, the French pantomimist, and Eleanor Zelliot, writer and South Asian studies scholar, among others (different Diary entries n.p.). He put down insightful notes on the work of Henry Adams and Henry James, pointing out that "HA not quite the artist that HJ was" (Diary n.p.). About Pre-Civil War poets, he makes a couple of short notes. On Emerson, his Diary entry was "Accept your genius + say what you think". On Thoreau, he wrote "I'd rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself than be crowded on a velvet cushion" (Diary n.p.). Whitman, for him, was "The gt egotist, expansiveness of the ego" (Diary n.p.). Commenting on Whitman, he wrote: "urbanite who is attached to the pastoral dream – takes to the woods, and transfigures the city into a Utopia, sees it as an ideal, never held by the reality of the city – the only real democrat – 'goes beyond good and evil'" (Diary 31 July 1959 n.p.). Harping on this, Keith Harrison wrote in his Preface to the *Uncollected Poems and Prose* of AKR that "The poet and critic, Karl Shapiro, once remarked that the only true American poets are Whitman and Williams. It was no accident that Raman was drawn to both" (x. AKR was fondly called 'Raman' by his friends). He made pertinent observations on two important modern American poets, Pound and Eliot. In a November 1976 entry AKR wrote about Ezra Pound's

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poetic practice, "His translations become new modern poems and his own cantos have the look of translations" (191). On 10 November 1981, he wrote about Eliot: "Eliot is a thinking poet, but he thinks in voices. It is through them he creates concepts; they develop on the page" (245).

AKR makes minute observations on the system of higher education in America in a diary entry dated 4 August 1959 (Diary n.p.). He found that it was diversified and decentralized with a non-national department of education with only a national office except in agricultural education. However, there was the American Council on Education which was a voluntary association of Deans and Presidents. AKR identified nine major types of institutions: Ivy League Universities (with heavy endorsements), State universities, Urban universities, Tax-supported (Cincinnati, etc.), Liberal Arts colleges (started as religious; different for 1. men and 2. women), Religious (Catholic – Society of Friends), Technical Colleges (Institutes of technology) and Teachers' Colleges. He compares the "extreme decentralization" of the American system with that of the French ("central control"), the English ("the older system imitated by the younger") and the German ("some control"). There were "Elements of uniformity"—outside the legal control, there were state grants and obligations like teacher-training, equipment and library related matters. Thereafter, he embarks on a detailed entry on further observations.

His visits to different libraries in the University of Chicago unraveled unexpected treasures from India archived there, which almost awaited his coming across them for further study and research. One of these was an anthology of Tamil classical poetry, made by U.Ve. Caminataiyar, which AKR found in the basement of Harper Library. It triggered his engagement with these great poets, who came to have an indelible influence on the formation of his own poetic and critical sensibility founded on the *akam-puram* paradigm. His translations into English facilitated access to these poems for a large number of readers. He gradually adopted the role of a mediator between the Indian and American cultures.

A short excerpt will be pertinent here, from a long poem of 186 lines, "A First Flight to New York," dated 13 April 1960, in which this famous Indian poet writes about his first-ever air-plane ride, where the collage of geographical, cultural and intellectual topographies manifests itself:

New York – lines of fire, like
an electric heater and
green dot configurations –

vast – ocean of stars of
red yellow green, sparse,
clustered and guided into
lines, with caravans
slowing through them –
gradually plotted into
squares – as if somebody's
nerve impulses were diagrammed
and translated into flickers
and paths and ganglions –
a ship on the wharf with
green
and yellow lights smeared
into long bars on the water.
Liberty statue in a ring of
uneven lights, names in
pretzels of neon – a forest
full of blinking green
eyes. (*Journeys* 96–97)

Written in the style of Sangam poetry, this poem highlights an Indian's impression of the USA, the Statue of Liberty being one of the foremost features of this land, which promises comfort to immigrants as it stands 305 feet high on Liberty Island with Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus" engraved on its pedestal.

CONCLUSION

It may be said that AKR mapped in his diary entries minutiae about the United States of America, which might have been overlooked by the cursory onlooker, but are important for a worthwhile understanding of the country for an alert mind like his. The diary opens vistas beyond the immediate observation towards a much deeper acquaintance with the country. The observation by Harrison is one of the best ways of positioning AKR in the Indo-American scenario as a transnational traveler: "Though not without a certain vanity, for most of the time he wanted not to stand out but simply to be there, breathing, telling stories, cutting an orange, laughing outrageously, a person, an American, an Indian, both and neither. Just there" (Ramanujan, *UPP* x–xi). AKR was a traveler in the USA, for both academic and extra-academic purposes, making field-notes from his precocious observations of the geographical, cultural and intellectual topographies of the country. These 'notes' he called his diary/journal entries. Today, they serve as an outsider-turned-insider's perspective of the country. The points of entry to cross-cultural dialogue

(in a structured way, not in a free-flowing conversation), therefore, "do not need to be universal; all they need to be is what these particular people have in common. Once we have found enough, we share, there is the further possibility that we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not yet share. That is one of the payoffs of cosmopolitan curiosity. We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting" (Appiah 97). A. K. Ramanujan may be cited as a traveler, literally and metaphorically, who witnessed and participated in the cultural and intellectual hybridity of America. He also made extremely significant contributions as an academic to the study of Indian literature (both classical and folk) in the South Asian Studies program of the University of Chicago.

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Vidyasagar University, India

Abstract: Attipat Krishnaswamy Ramanujan (16 March 1929–13 July 1993) traveled extensively in peninsular India, collecting folktales from rural regions. Since he was already on the move, as a folklorist and as a teacher who taught in several colleges in South India consecutively, it was not difficult for him to set sail for the United States of America when he received the Fulbright Travel Fellowship and Smith-Mundt Grant in 1959, to continue with his studies in linguistics. On 1 July 1959 he boarded the *Strathaird* in Bombay and undertook a land-journey through France to reach Southampton, where he boarded the SS *Queen Elizabeth*, which took him to New York on 28 July 1959. He wrote about experiences and observations during this journey in his "Travel Diary, 2 to 27 July 1959, Bombay to New York," in the anthology *Journeys: A Poet's Diary* (2018). The first-ever travel overseas, to the US, was full of excitement and anxiety for the young man of thirty. This journey was the initiation for his passage to the country which he was to inhabit for the rest of his life, as a teacher at the University of Chicago—a transition from the familiar world (his interior landscape, *akam*) to the unfamiliar country (the world outside his self, the *puram*). The article shall focus on *Journeys: A Poet's Diary* and A. K. Ramanujan's unpublished diary to explore his observations and experiences of life in the US. These reveal the way in which his inner self met the new space he entered, followed by his expressing, through his creative and critical self, the interface and intermingling of the two. These travel writings go beyond mere records of observations—they are cultural artifacts left behind by a truly transnational traveler—a man from a South-Indian milieu, who had been exposed to the British system of education; who was exceptionally intelligent, a poet and critic, and a keen observer. Theories that engage with the akam-puram paradigm, the environment (Buel), culture in a liquid modern world (Bauman) and cosmopolitanism (Appiah) will be employed as analytical tools to examine and evaluate the selected texts.

Keywords: *akam*, *puram*, environmentalism, culture, cosmopolitanism

Bio: Jolly Das, M.Phil., Ph.D., is Associate Professor in the Department of English Literature, Language and Cultural Studies, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore, West Bengal, India. Travel writing by Indians, within and outside the country, is one of her areas of study. She has published articles on the traveling mendicant saints, Kanakadasa and Purandaradasa, who belong

to the Bhakti tradition of Karnataka, as part of her research on A. K. Ramanujan (who published translations of their songs) and Girish Karnad (who made a documentary film on them). Her present research interests include A. K. Ramanujan as a traveler in India and the United States of America, which has stemmed from her research in the discipline of English Literature focusing on Girish Karnad and A. K. Ramanujan's intimate academic and creative bonding. Diverging from here, in a broader sense, she is interested in drama, travel writing, folklore, environment and literature, and revisionist mythmaking. She has published monographs on T. S. Eliot (*Eliot's Prismatic Plays: A Multifaceted Quest*. Atlantic, 2007) and Girish Karnad (*Tracing Karnad's Theatrical Trajectory*. Paragon, 2015) besides 22 peer reviewed articles in listed journals and eighteen chapters in anthologies. She translates fiction from Bengali to English, with special focus on the representation of Adivasi/Tribal life in the writings of Bengali authors. She has delivered 25 invited talks in academic fora. She has been the Chief Editor of the UGC-CARE listed *Journal of the Department of English*, Vidyasagar University, for three successive issues (2020–2022) and is a member of editorial boards of listed/reputed journals.

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Vidyasagar University, India

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EL AMAZONAS DE TRES VIAJEROS CARTÓGRAFOS: ENTRE LA EXPERIENCIA Y LA IMAGINACIÓN GEOGRÁFICA

Daniel Esteban Unigarro
Universidad de La Salle
Colombia
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6310-0223

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Una vez establecido que el río Amazonas es el más largo del mundo resulta interesante preguntarse sobre su representación como fenómeno geográfico. En los mapas este no siempre ha tenido la misma extensión ni se ha mostrado con las mismas formas, además, su entorno ha sido cargado con contenidos figurativos, producto de la imaginación más que de la realidad geográfica. Esto es notorio en las representaciones cartográficas de los primeros periodos de conquista y dominación colonial, entre inicios del siglo XVI y mediados del XVII. Dos grupos de cartógrafos son responsables de las imágenes del río que empezaron a reproducirse junto con los imaginarios cartográficos que fueron generándose y transformándose: los de sillón, que esperaban la información de las expediciones y la publicación de las crónicas para incorporar los hallazgos geográficos en sus mapas, y los viajeros, que al servicio de los imperios coloniales, se embarcaron en la travesía transatlántica para visitar el Nuevo Mundo y terminaron representándolo todo o en parte según su propia experiencia.

Se pretende relevar la experiencia de tres viajeros cartógrafos como aporte a la historia de la cartografía amazónica interesada en superar el análisis de las disputas coloniales y nacionales por el territorio (Zárate) y trascender el estudio científico contemporáneo de las técnicas de producción y representación cartográfica del pasado (Cintra), para centrarse en la construcción colonial de los imaginarios cartográficos sobre la región. En especial desde los cartógrafos como sujetos inmersos en contextos espaciotemporales concretos que desde inicios del siglo XVI se encargaron de dar forma a los descubrimientos y actualizar el conocimiento geográfico puesto en los mapas, recurriendo

tanto a los saberes prácticos de la navegación como a los referentes propios de la imaginación europea. Esto bajo el entendido de que los mapas, los procesos de mapeo y las imágenes del espacio son representaciones físicas y figurativas de la "imaginación geográfica", es decir, la forma en que los ojos de mentes espaciales imaginan y representan la dinámica de poder, las conexiones entre identidad y espacio, la producción de significados y los mitos de los espacios, así como los lugares literales y metafóricos de los sujetos en el mundo (Gregory).

Dado que el conocimiento geográfico se construye en el vínculo entre realidad y percepción, que en el pasado incluía un conjunto de procesos distintos más o menos relacionados, como el contacto sensible, la experiencia y la organización del conocimiento a través de imágenes (Capel), se propone que los mapas de los tres viajeros cartógrafos Diogo Ribeiro, Sebastián Caboto y Bento da Costa muestran la evolución en la imaginación geográfica colonial de la Amazonia al representar espacios y lugares tanto imaginarios como reales a partir de la lógica, la emoción, la dinámica de poder y su significado en el momento específico. En este sentido, los mapas se conciben como textos culturales con un poderoso significado ideológico y metafórico que los convierte en imágenes retóricas y fuentes para la historia sociocultural (Harley), los cuales pueden ser leídos e interpretados como objetos culturales a partir del método cartográfico de investigación que incluye el análisis comparativo de mapas de diferentes épocas para el mismo territorio y las transformaciones en la representación cartográfica (Salitchev).

Parte de la historia de la cartografía amazónica se ha ocupado de comprender mitos, imaginarios y representaciones del pasado en función de la construcción y denominación de la región, así como de las estrategias coloniales de apropiación material y sobre todo simbólica del territorio imaginado y representado. Las descripciones de los viajes de exploración, con las rutas e itinerarios que siguieron algunos de los primeros cronistas y cartógrafos, revelan un vínculo directo con la producción cartográfica al tenerlas como fundamento (Cuesta, "Pinzón"; Fernández-Salvador). La imagen del Amazonas fue producto del colonialismo europeo y la idea de un Nuevo Mundo para ser conquistado (Fernández-Armesto), por lo que para el imperio español cobró sentido la actualización cartográfica constante en un gran mapa denominado padrón real (Cuesta, "El Padrón"). De este se encargó la Casa de Contratación de Sevilla, que impulsó una "ciencia secreta" entre sus pilotos, cosmógrafos y cartógrafos (Portuondo), destacándose entre ellos el portugués Diogo Ribeiro (Vigneras; Davies) y el español Sebastián Caboto (Rabelo).

Daniel Esteban Unigarro
Universidad de La Salle
Colombia

Tanto Ribeiro como Caboto y el también portugués Bento da Costa hacen parte de este análisis por ser cartógrafos cuyas representaciones destacadas fueron posteriores a su experiencia de viaje al Nuevo Mundo, además de ser recurrentes en atlas y compendios cartográficos de mapas en los que aparece representada la Amazonia durante el periodo inicial de conquista y dominación colonial europea entre los siglos XVI y XVII. Para cada uno de los tres viajeros cartógrafos y su representación amazónica se intenta, en principio, reconstruir el contexto histórico y sociocultural de producción cartográfica, incluyendo la experiencia de viaje y su papel como cartógrafo; luego, describir la información geográfica relevante incluida en el mapa y, finalmente, analizar el contenido representacional que permite dar cuenta de las transformaciones en la imaginación geográfica del Amazonas.

2. LA PEQUEÑA DESEMBOCADURA EN LA COSTA ORIENTAL SURAMERICANA

Si bien es posible cuestionar "el descubrimiento" en la medida en que el territorio encontrado en la última década del siglo XVI no solamente tenía una larga historia de asentamiento y ocupación, sino que estaba habitado por incontables grupos poblacionales originarios con una organización social establecida y un conjunto de prácticas culturales y saberes técnicos adecuados para sus formas de vida, sin duda la existencia de ese Nuevo Mundo desconocido implicó una serie de retos en los planos político, epistemológico, religioso y militar para los reinos europeos, principalmente ibéricos. Las acciones que estos emprendieron para dominar el nuevo espacio tuvieron como base las informaciones de los diarios y relatos de navegantes y viajeros, que en ocasiones se acompañaban de dibujos, todo lo cual se fue incorporando en la cartografía de los descubrimientos y la conquista.

Los mapas de aquel momento funcionaban como cartas de marear diseñadas para navegar con brújula siguiendo la red de rumbos trazada por la confluencia de líneas unidas desde los puntos centrales de las rosas de los vientos (Nieto). Esta forma de representación conocida en Europa desde el siglo XIII como mapas portulanos se caracterizaba, además, por sus decorados coloridos y detalles figurativos de banderas, embarcaciones e imágenes míticas. Con este estilo, el Nuevo Mundo fue prontamente representado sin ninguna denominación en 1500 como una inmensa mancha verde (Vignolo). El responsable fue el español Juan de la Cosa, navegante en el primer viaje de Cristóbal Colón y cartógrafo del segundo, piloto mayor de la expedición de Alonso

de Ojeda y explorador en otras ocasiones, por lo que puede afirmarse que fue el primer viajero cartógrafo.

Las representaciones iniciales del Nuevo Mundo se corresponden con el estilo portulano cercano a navegantes y pilotos como Diogo Ribeiro. Este viajero cartógrafo de origen portugués estuvo al servicio de la Casa de Contratación desde 1518 hasta su muerte en 1533, periodo durante el cual elaboró mapas para las expediciones al Mar del Sur y participó en las actualizaciones y copias del padrón real, acorde con las funciones asignadas en 1523 como cosmógrafo real y maestro de hacer cartas, astrolabios y otros instrumentos de navegación, aunque en 1526 reemplazó a Sebastián Caboto como piloto mayor del reino (Vigneras; Paladini; Cuesta, "El Padrón"). Sus mapas y padrones incorporaron los datos de la primera circunnavegación entre 1519 y 1522, capitaneada por Fernando de Magallanes hasta Filipinas y continuada por Juan Sebastián Elcano rumbo al oeste por el Índico y bordeando África hasta Sevilla.

El éxito de esta expedición se debió a la suficiente preparación y soporte científico con que contó: el destacado piloto jefe y supervisor de mapas e instrumentos Ray Falero, los reconocidos Pedro y Jorge Reinel como consejeros cosmográficos y Ribeiro como cartógrafo oficial (Sánchez). Producto de su experiencia directa atravesando el mundo e inscrito en la tradición empírica de la Escuela de Sevilla, que proponía solo representar los espacios claramente reconocidos por los exploradores (Martín-Meras), el portugués se permitió en su carta universal de 1529 delinear toda la costa oriental del Mundus Novus, el cual figura como una entidad geográfica dividida en regiones con topónimos que, precedidos de la palabra Tiera, rinden homenaje a descubridores como Solis, algunas provincias con características del lugar como Castilla del Oro o de Patagones y otras áreas que se convertirían en países como Perú y Tera Brasilis (Figura 1).

A pesar de verse una masa de tierra incompleta e indeterminada y no haber registros del cartógrafo en el interior subcontinental, se visualizan algunos parajes verdes, un par con árboles solitarios y la mayoría con vegetación y fauna exótica de diversos tamaños, especies con características humanoides y otras fantásticas, tres figuras al parecer humanas por la postura erguida y la manipulación de elementos como una lanza con punta y un cuchillo, imágenes generadas a partir de las descripciones de otros exploradores. Sin embargo, la delineación completa de la costa atlántica con dimensiones más realistas evidencia su reconocimiento por parte del viajero cartógrafo, cuya carta resultó un dispositivo funcional y práctico para la navegación astronómica, promovida sobre la tradicional, como cosmógrafo

Daniel Esteban Unigarro
Universidad de La Salle
Colombia

Figura. 1. Detalle del Nuevo Mundo en la Carta Universal de Diogo Ribeiro, 1529, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53023022k/.

y fabricante de instrumentos en la Casa de Contratación (Davies). Esto evidencia la autoridad científica preponderante para el momento que, sin contar con instrumentos de medición de la longitud, logró imponer una imagen del mundo.

En cuanto a la representación amazónica, llama la atención el trazo de la costa que corresponde a Tera Brasilis, en especial porque hace pensar en una península desde las amplias bocas del Río de la Plata en el sur hasta la entrada del río Marañón, hidrónimo marcado al norte en rojo justo encima del topónimo. Esa pequeña desembocadura en la costa oriental suramericana puede entenderse como la primera localización del río más largo del mundo en un planisferio, por lo que se constituye en un ícono representacional del fenómeno geográfico en un mapa que sin ser preciso demostró la importancia de la cartografía para definir

los contornos del mundo en expansión. Así, el Amazonas emergió en la imaginación geográfica cosmográfica superando la América amorfa e insular de Waldseemüller en 1507 y retomando elementos figurativos del mapa de los consejeros cosmográficos Reinel de 1519, aunque en algunos mapas de 1540 se continuaría obviando el trazado detallado de la costa atlántica.

3. UNA FIGURA SERPENTEANTE QUE ATRAVIESA EL SUBCONTINENTE

Los recorridos tempranos por la costa oriental del subcontinente permitieron a exploradores y viajeros el avistamiento de varias desembocaduras de grandes ríos, entre ellos Santa María de la Mar Dulce, primer hidrónimo asignado al Amazonas por el navegante y descubridor español Vicente Yáñez Pinzón en su expedición de 1499 (Varela; Cuesta, "Pinzón"). Desde ese momento diversas denominaciones del río aparecieron en algunos intentos por representarlo en la cartografía, pero su entrada al interior solo es notoria en el planisferio de Ribeiro con el hidrónimo Marañón en rojo. No obstante, fue su azaroso encuentro en 1542 por parte de la expedición que al mando de Francisco de Orellana se apartó de la emprendida desde Quito y logró salir al Atlántico, el hecho que trascendió como descubrimiento del gran río de las Amazonas, como se enuncia en el título de la crónica del fraile dominico español Gaspar de Carvajal, quien acompañó este primer recorrido y cuya obra se publicó hasta el siglo XVIII, aunque la información circuló prontamente dado que el mismo Orellana viajó a Santo Domingo y, luego, a España (Rabelo 66–67).

La novedad de un gran río interior que atravesaba el subcontinente desde los Andes hasta el Oceano Occidentalis causó el interés de cosmógrafos y cartógrafos por representarlo como parte del Nuevo Mundo. Por esta razón, tan solo dos años después de su descubrimiento apareció en el mapamundi de Sebastián Caboto —explorador, cartógrafo y marino de origen veneciano e hijo de un navegante genovés— que estuvo al servicio de España en la Casa de Contratación como capitán hasta 1518, cuando fue nombrado piloto mayor de su majestad hasta ser reemplazado por Ribeiro en 1526. Ese año se le encargó dirigir la segunda expedición marítima hacia el Mar del Sur, llegar a las recién descubiertas islas Molucas y dar la vuelta al mundo, aunque finalmente se quedó en la costa suramericana para explorar y cartografiar con éxito la desembocadura del Río de la Plata (Portuondo 68).

La experiencia de este viajero cartógrafo como navegante y explorador se manifiesta en su mapamundi de 1544, cuya producción, dadas las dimensiones y el tamaño de la plancha, se cree que empezó tres

Daniel Esteban Unigarro
Universidad de La Salle
Colombia

años antes para lograr completar el aspecto general del orbe y el contenido de las tablas laterales con las diez notas referidas al Nuevo Mundo, entre las cuales no se hace mención ninguna al río Amazonas, por lo que su inserción, al parecer, solo se produjo en el formato visual (Rabelo 73). Esto implica que el mapamundi fue preparado un año antes del hallazgo amazónico, pero tan pronto Caboto tuvo conocimiento de este, probablemente a través del cardenal Pietro Bembo a quien fray Gaspar de Carvajal había enviado un resumen de su crónica en 1543 (Fernández-Armesto 757), el curso del río fue insertado en la representación cartográfica con la forma serpenteante oeste-este y la inscripción con la atribución de su descubrimiento por Orellana (Figura 2).

La figura serpenteante colorida encaja muy bien con la lógica

Figura 2. Detalle del río de las amazonas en el mapamundi de Sebastián Caboto, 1544, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55011003p?rk=64378;0.

del estilo y la representación portulana, que por su orientación hacia la navegación práctica privilegiaba el trazo de todas las costas del subcontinente con los respectivos topónimos, superando la indefinición al oeste en la carta universal de Ribeiro. Sin duda, en la primera representación del Amazonas la forma del río resulta destacable, llamativa y sobresaliente, puesto que se muestra como una enorme serpiente ondulante que atraviesa el subcontinente de lado a lado coincidiendo la cabeza del reptil con la desembocadura. También parece dividir las provincias de *Tito* (léase Quito) al norte y *Peru* al sur. Es una representación esquemática del río en toda su extensión adornada

con algunas de las características que Orellana describió: vastas islas, ciudades ribereñas y amazonas guerreras (Fernández-Armesto 757).

Esta imagen del río se constituyó en un hito para la representación cartográfica de la Amazonia por cuenta de varios elementos figurativos, los cuales se replicaron posteriormente: las cinco ciudades con edificaciones medievales y cristianas que se posicionan en ambas orillas, la fauna exótica y desproporcionada con un loro casi del mismo tamaño de un pequeño jaguar y, especialmente, las dos mujeres guerreras de piel y rasgos típicamente indígenas, vestidas con mantas y con sus arcos listos para lanzar las flechas, conteniendo el avance de dos invasores provenientes de las montañas andinas con sus armaduras, escudos y espadas desenfundadas. La imaginación geográfica mítica fue justamente el producto del enfrentamiento entre exploradores y amazonas, que pasó de la descripción de Carvajal a la representación de Caboto.

La escena de lucha y resistencia recogió la mentalidad mítica europea de las mujeres guerreras "que terminará por nombrar la vasta zona geográfica que comprende el río más grande de América del Sur" (Lara 119). El viajero cartógrafo basado en el cronista ilustró el mito ateniense de las amazonas que siempre estaban dispuestas para la guerra y habitaban el límite del mundo conocido, aquellas fronteras literal y metafóricamente entre la civilización y el salvajismo (Tyrrel 114–116). Sin embargo, también se muestran otros indios con actitud pasiva y dócil dispuestos para el trabajo esclavo. Ambas imágenes de los pobladores nativos, así como la misma representación serpenteante del río, fueron producto de la fantasía colonial, mezcla entre la fabulosa imaginación europea y la realidad que empezó a ser parte del imaginario visual y especialmente cartográfico de la región (Unigarro 27).

4. EL PRIMER CURSO COMPLETO DEL RÍO AMAZONAS

Para finales del siglo XVI tanto el río como su entorno hacían parte de las representaciones cartográficas del Nuevo Mundo y su conquista se tornó relevante para la Unión Ibérica, alianza dinástica y territorial de los reinos peninsulares, que funcionó entre 1580 y 1640. Durante este periodo los imperios español y portugués evitaron la presencia de otras potencias coloniales como Francia, Holanda e Inglaterra en la región, pero los lusos lograron mantener y expandir sus conquistas *de facto* al norte sin mayor confrontación o protesta. Así las cosas, las tensiones siempre estuvieron presentes y la llegada a Belén de un pequeño grupo proveniente de Quito alarmó tanto a las autoridades portuguesas que en octubre de 1937 emprendieron una expedición para remontar el río en sentido opuesto.

Daniel Esteban Unigarro
Universidad de La Salle
Colombia

Antes disso, em 1636, haviam baixado o Amazonas dois leigos franciscanos e cinco soldados castelhanos, induzidos por um marinheiro português, Francisco Rodrigues, que estivera no Pará e a todos acenara com a esperança de encontrarem o lago Dourado. Os dois franciscanos chamavam-se Domingos de Brieva e Andrés de Toledo, o primeiro dos quais regressou a Quito com a expedição de Teixeira. (Cortesão 402)

Antes, en 1636, dos franciscanos y cinco soldados castellanos habían navegado por el Amazonas, animados por un marinero portugués, Francisco Rodrigues, que había estado en Pará y había dado a todos la esperanza de encontrar el lago de El Dorado. Los dos franciscanos se llamaban Domingo de Brieva y Andrés de Toledo, el primero de los cuales regresó a Quito con la expedición de Teixeira. (Nuestra trad.)

La búsqueda del fantástico Dorado contrasta con la versión según la cual los franciscanos en su huida de un ataque de indios bajaron por el Napo y siguieron el curso del Amazonas hasta su desembocadura de manera accidental (Junquera 9). No obstante, la respuesta portuguesa fue contundente y el experimentado militar Pedro Teixeira como capitán mayor fue "el primero en navegar el río desde el Atlántico en dirección a los Andes en el siglo XVII, dirigió una expedición de más de 9.000 km en canoa y a pie" (Pizarro 62). El piloto encargado de esta hazaña fue el también portugués Bento da Costa, de quien poco o nada se sabe salvo por las menciones en los informes que se rindieron al respecto.

De la misma forma en que los portugueses se preocuparon por la llegada de los franciscanos, en junio de 1638 las autoridades españolas fueron sorprendidas por el arribo de la expedición de Teixeira, quien tuvo que preparar un informe para la Audiencia de Quito, que firmó el 2 de enero de 1639. Se trata de un documento breve y sencillo cuyo objetivo era justificar la expedición militar como acción defensiva, aunque también destacó el potencial de la región, las principales características físicas y demográficas recogidas y las medidas estratégicas que debían tomarse para garantizar la conquista. Sin mayores detalles sobre las direcciones precisas de los tributarios del gran río o los pueblos nativos contactados durante el viaje, "Teixeira se excusó por la falta de información con la justificación de que el piloto mayor Bento da Costa proporcionaría más detalles" ("Teixeira excused the lack of information with the justification that further details would be provided by the major-pilot, Bento da Costa"; nuestra trad.; Bacellar 44).

Como la jurisdicción de Quito hacía parte del virreinato del Perú, el informe sobre la expedición, al parecer acompañado de un mapa, causó un gran revuelo político.

Com a documentação que recebera em Lima, viera um desenho feito por Bento da Costa, primeiro piloto da expedição, em que o rio Amazonas figurava num

mapa esquemático. Para melhor compreendê-lo, procurou coligir maiores informações sobre o feito, que certamente considerava impressionante e, para obter maior conhecimento sobre as inusitadas circunstâncias, reuniu cosmógrafos, pilotos e navegadores experientes no percurso das costas do Brasil, em mais de um encontro. Bento da Costa foi convocado a Lima, para participar das reuniões e dar maiores explicações. De tudo o que foi levantado, inclusive as declarações do piloto português, Chinchón mandou lavrar um auto notarial e o enviou a Madri, com cartas explicativas, em que é mencionada a intensa troca de correspondência sobre o assunto com o presidente da Audiência de Quito, primeiro anfitrião dos expedicionários em terras de Castela. (Lima y Coutinho 111–112)

Con la documentación recibida en Lima llegó un dibujo realizado por Bento da Costa, el primer piloto de la expedición, en el que figuraba el río Amazonas en un mapa esquemático. Para comprenderlo mejor, se buscó recopilar más información sobre la hazaña, que ciertamente se consideró impresionante y, para obtener un mayor conocimiento sobre las inusuales circunstancias, se convocó a cosmógrafos, pilotos y navegantes experimentados en la ruta por la costa de Brasil, en más de una reunión. Bento da Costa fue citado a Lima para participar en las reuniones y dar mayores explicaciones. De todo lo planteado, incluidas las declaraciones del piloto portugués, [se] hizo levantar un acta notarial que se envió a Madrid, con cartas explicativas, en las que se menciona, en primer lugar, el intenso intercambio de correspondencia sobre el tema con el presidente de la Audiencia de Quito, primer anfitrión de los expedicionarios en tierras de Castilla. (Nuestra trad.)

Todo lo acontecido respecto de la expedición portuguesa fue documentado, copiado o parafraseado en un manuscrito anónimo finalmente atribuido al español Alonso de Rojas, célebre predicador jesuita y rector del Colegio de Quito, cuya obra pareció concebirse para orientar la lectura del mapa esquemático al que en varias oportunidades se hace mención que fue elaborado por Bento da Costa (Pedro 65), viajero cartógrafo de quien debe destarcarse su importante trabajo no solo como piloto mayor, sino creador del primer mapa del curso completo del río Amazonas desde sus bocas hasta los Andes (Figura 3).

La experiencia y tal vez el deseo del piloto portugués por tener una representación que posibilitara o incluso sirviera como guía para la navegación por el río, avivó la imaginación geográfica del viajero cartógrafo para generar esta vista superior con algo de perspectiva hacia las montañas. Aparecen las dos ciudades cercanas a cabeceras y bocas, Quito y Belén, algunos afluentes con sus hidrónimos y las provincias indígenas: "Desde las orillas del mar, hasta las tierras de Quito por [u]na y otra parte son innumerables las Provincias que [h]ay, que por ser tantas y no saberse los nombres de todas no se ponen aquí", reza su cartela. En cuanto a información geográfica relevante, llama la atención que se marca el ecuador con una línea roja; cerca a esta se indica el ancho del río; en las bocas, las distancias en leguas

Daniel Esteban Unigarro
Universidad de La Salle
Colombia

Figura 3. Planta del río Amazonas de Bento da Costa, c. 1638, Biblioteca Nacional de España, http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000199147.

entre los afluentes; junto a los hidrónimos, los grados de latitud y, en el medio del curso, las profundidades en brazas (Fernández-Salvador 76; Cuesta, "Pinzón" 134).

Si bien puede pensarse que los datos puestos en el mapa se corresponden con los registros de la expedición y, en consecuencia, resultan importantes para la navegación práctica por el río, no es así:

> Malgrado as novidades de nomenclatura, a indicação de algumas distâncias intermédias e de sondagens, o mapa não corresponde, quer às exatas informações sobre o curso dos grandes afluentes amazônicos, colhidas durante a viagem da boca dos indígenas, quer às observações matemáticas feitas pelo piloto e outros membros da expedição. (Cortesão 414–415)

> A pesar de las novedades en la nomenclatura, la indicación de algunas distancias intermedias y de las profundidades, el mapa no se corresponde ni con las informaciones exactas sobre el curso de los grandes afluentes amazónicos, recogidas durante el viaje de boca de los indígenas, ni con las observaciones matemáticas realizadas por el piloto y otros miembros de la expedición. (Nuestra trad.)

Es en este sentido que el mapa del piloto portugués Bento da Costa es una muestra de la imaginación geográfica pragmática, dado que fue preparado para acompañar un informe militar que debía entregarse y presentarse a las autoridades españolas, por lo que probablemente la información que se dispuso fue inventada para mantener en secreto los datos verídicos que sí permitirían la navegación de los lusos por el río.

Finalmente, la expedición portuguesa retornó a Belén en 1639, solo que los españoles exigieron el acompañamiento de los jesuitas Andrés de Artieda y Cristóbal de Acuña. Este último fue el encargado de registrar todo cuanto aconteció en el viaje y su crónica Nuevo descubrimiento del Gran Río de las Amazonas se publicó en 1641. Además de una descripción sociocultural completa de la región, detallada con información útil para la producción y el trabajo, resulta sobresaliente lo referente a la navegación y logística militar, siendo esta vez precisas las coordenadas geográficas que permitirían conquistar el territorio y evangelizar a sus pobladores. Por esta razón, la obra de Carvajal fue la base para la proyección cartográfica y el trazado del curso del río desde ese momento.

5. UN CIERRE REVELADOR: LAS IMAGINACIONES GEOGRÁFICAS COLONIALES DE LA AMAZONIA

Los estudios comparativos en la historia de la cartografía en general y amazónica en particular han privilegiado el análisis de contenido en cuanto a lo que aparece y desaparece en las representaciones,

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o en lo técnico respecto de las mediciones, la precisión o las proyecciones de acuerdo con las herramientas o posibilidades del pasado. Sin embargo, los contextos de producción y las retóricas de las representaciones cartográficas suelen ser analizadas de forma independiente. En las páginas anteriores se ha tenido como pretexto, para comparar tres mapas referentes del Amazonas, la condición común de Diogo Ribeiro, Sebastián Caboto y Bento da Costa como viajeros cartógrafos. Por tanto, sus representaciones estuvieron mediadas por la experiencia de percibir una realidad hasta ese momento desconocida cuya imagen contribuyeron a configurar y reproducir como parte del Nuevo Mundo.

Los tres viajeros cartógrafos también eran funcionarios reales ibéricos, incluso Caboto y Ribeiro ocuparon los mismos cargos como cosmógrafos y pilotos de la Casa de Contratación, por lo que tuvieron acceso a e hicieron parte de esa "ciencia secreta" que guardaba con celo el conocimiento geográfico sobre el Nuevo Mundo, solo disponible para los intereses del imperio español (Portuondo). También da Costa fue piloto mayor y tuvo una destacada participación en el debate político que suscitó la llegada de la armada lusa a Quito y en la composición de su dibujo del curso del río. Pero, a pesar de estos contextos semejantes, y dado que en principio la imaginación es un proceso mental individual, las imaginaciones geográficas de los tres viajeros cartógrafos les condujo a crear representaciones diferentes, aunque basadas en los referentes y términos culturales europeos.

> Los ojos imperiales lo veían todo con lentes europeas, tanto de manera real como metafórica. […] Sus representaciones eran poderosos elementos para enviar conocimientos de los países exóticos "distintos" a los centros imperiales que elaboraban y reforzaban las geografías imaginativas del imperio. (Cosgrove 87)

La experiencia perceptual de observación de las bocas del río Amazonas, que probablemente tuvieron Ribeiro y Caboto al navegar por la costa subcontinental, determinó sus posibilidades representacionales. El primero siguió fiel el principio de su escuela cartográfica y decidió solamente situar la desembocadura del río Marañón, esto implicó darle una posición en el mapa del mundo a un fenómeno geográfico de gran envergadura que prácticamente se desconocía para ese momento. Por esto es posible y válido hablar de imaginación geográfica cosmográfica, es decir, la generación de la idea e imagen de un río que se ubica en la representación del mundo en transformación por cuenta de los descubrimientos y las exploraciones, aunque podría pensarse también en la emergencia de Suramérica como región por cuenta del trazado de su costa oriental.

Por su parte, Caboto se atrevió a recrear y poner en su mapa del mundo una imagen figurativa serpenteante para representar el río y la escena de confrontación entre los españoles y las míticas guerreras amazonas, en correspondencia con las descripciones del primer recorrido que permitió su descubrimiento. La aceptación e incorporación del referente cultural propio de la mitología griega clásica por parte del viajero cartógrafo, es una muestra de la imaginación geográfica mítica, la cual ha logrado sobrevivir y mantenerse hasta la actualidad por cuenta tanto del hidrónimo como del topónimo para la región que abarca la gran cuenca del río Amazonas. También debe mencionarse la imagen que aún pervive respecto de los habitantes originarios como guerreros salvajes por defender su territorio como lo hicieron desde cuando se sintieron invadidos y vulnerados por vez primera.

En contraste con Ribeiro y Caboto, la experiencia de Bento da Costa en el Amazonas fue vivida directamente. Si bien los datos consignados en su dibujo son errados, según las declaraciones de otros miembros de la expedición, el piloto mayor recogió y registró toda la información necesaria para la navegación práctica por el complejo y sorprendente río en el trayecto que lo remontó hasta los Andes. Así, la riqueza de las descripciones, detalles y datos en relación con la expedición que brinda en su crónica Cristóbal de Acuña, quien solo hizo parte del viaje de regreso a Belén, se deben a que este conoció y usó el documento escrito en Quito, mientras Teixeira estuvo allí, y el contenido se derivó de lo informado por Bento da Costa (Edmundson 36). La representación del curso completo del río evidencia la imaginación geográfica pragmática en tanto responde al ejercicio práctico del piloto y, además, sirvió como referente para la cartografía amazónica posterior.

Finalmente, mediante el análisis de tres representaciones generadas por experimentados viajeros cartógrafos, se ha intentado revelar la emergencia de tres imaginaciones geográficas, las cuales pueden enmarcarse en momentos representacionales propios de la cartografía amazónica colonial también en correspondencia con lo cosmográfico, lo mítico y lo pragmático. Esta mirada comparativa es una alternativa metodológica para un estudio profundo de las transformaciones simbólicas de los mapas como imágenes retóricas de la Amazonia, generadas durante el periodo de dominación colonial.

Resumen: Desde la primera mitad del siglo XVI el río Amazonas empezó a ser representado cartográficamente, en principio, por el avistamiento de sus bocas y, posteriormente, por los recorridos que se emprendieron. El primero de estos se dio por azar en 1542 cuando una expedición española que partió de Quito, llegó al Atlántico. Un siglo más tarde, los portugueses remontaron el gran río desde su desembocadura hasta los Andes. Los registros de ambos viajes

Daniel Esteban Unigarro
Universidad de La Salle
Colombia

sirvieron como fundamento de algunas descripciones y representaciones europeas de esta parte del Nuevo Mundo. Este artículo da cuenta de la experiencia de tres viajeros que atravesaron el océano, pero, además, fueron cartógrafos que legaron mapas recurrentes en atlas, compendios y trabajos historiográficos sobre la región que probablemente más haya despertado la curiosidad y también la imaginación en América. Mediante la reconstrucción del contexto de producción cartográfica y la observación de la información geográfica y el contenido representacional, se analizan tres mapas que muestran desde el bosquejo de una desembocadura en la costa atlántica hasta una vista aérea del curso del río, pasando por una figura serpenteante. Finalmente, se concluye que las tres representaciones son producto tanto de la experiencia de los viajeros cartógrafos, con diferentes formas de percibir y acercarse a la realidad, como de la imaginación geográfica que transita entre lo cosmográfico, lo mítico y lo pragmático.

Palabras clave: Amazonas, cartografía antigua, historia de la cartografía, imaginación geográfica, representaciones, viajeros

Nota bio-bibliográfica: Daniel Esteban Unigarro es doctor en geografía, magíster en ciencias del hábitat, magíster en antropología y politólogo. Desde el 2016 es profesor de tiempo completo de la Universidad de La Salle, adscrito a la Facultad de Arquitectura, Diseño y Urbanismo, donde coordina el Laboratorio de Diseño para las Transiciones. Es investigador asociado reconocido por el Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación de Colombia (MinCiencias) como parte de los grupos de investigación Territorio, Hábitat y Paisaje (ThaP) y Geografía y Ordenamiento Territorial (GeOT). Ha sido ponente, conferencista y profesor invitado en diferentes escenarios académicos relacionados con sus temas de interés y trabajo: la Amazonia, antropología y etnografía, construcción de paz, dinámicas y territorialidades rurales, fronteras, historia de la cartografía amazónica, imaginarios geográficos y cartográficos. Es autor del libro *Los límites de la triple frontera amazónica: encuentros y desencuentros entre Brasil, Colombia y Perú* (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2017) y de varios artículos de investigación, entre ellos "Los campesinos de la Amazonia noroccidental colombiana: entre la coca, el conflicto y la construcción de paz" (*Antípoda: Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, n.° 40, 2020, pp. 175–200, https://doi.org/10.7440/antipoda40.2020.08) y "De la serpiente ondulante al curso del río: representación colonial e invención cartográfica del Amazonas" (*Fronteras de la Historia*, vol. 29, n.° 2, 2024, pp. 19–42, https://doi.org/10.22380/20274688.2633).

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TRAVEL AND THE SELF IN MAGGIE SHIPSTEAD'S *THE GREAT CIRCLE*

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2011-6202

In this article, I analyze Maggie Shipstead's *The Great Circle* (2021), a novel in which travel represents the nexus between the two female protagonists, fictional aviator Marian Graves and Hollywood actress Hadley Baxter. Marian's attempt to fly a great circle around the world doubles as an inner journey of self-discovery, while Hadley interprets Marian in a biopic and, through this experience, identifies with her and finally overcomes her internal conflicts. The two women have similar tragic family histories and, though living half a century apart, are both oppressed by a patriarchal society that deprives them of agency and condemns the transgression of gender roles. By close reading the novel, I therefore argue that Shipstead deploys travel and travel writing to ask what it means to be a woman in the United States and to explore the contribution of physical and metaphorical journey to the discovery of both other people and the self. I also maintain that Shipstead reworks the conventional symbolism of the circle evoked by the novel's title to further complicate her epistemological inquiry by betraying expectations about completion and unity.

TRAVEL AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE SELF

Jan Borm defines travel writing, or travel literature, as "a collective term for a variety of texts both predominantly fictional and non-fictional whose main theme is travel" (13). As such, the term accommodates the "travel book" or "travelogue" – which, as Carl Thompson remarks, "professes to be a representation of a journey, and of events on that journey, *that really took place*" and might be read as much for pleasure as for the useful information it provides (15, original emphasis) – alongside a wide range of narratives, as different in form, genre, and/

or style as in the way they relate to travel. As a novel deeply concerned with ontology, epistemology, and the interaction of the two, *The Great Circle* fits under this broad heading by deploying travel – intended as a movement through space that also entails a metaphorical inner journey of self-discovery – to raise questions about the possibility of knowing anything, especially people. To this purpose, Shipstead combines information from multiple sources, which represent just as many examples of travel literature, to tell the story of aviator Marian Graves. This information intertwines with Hadley's first-person account of her own research and discoveries on Marian's life in preparation for impersonating her on set. The novel thus acts as a meta-narrative that fosters reflections about the inevitable artificiality of storytelling, both in general and with particular reference to travel writing.

In so doing, *The Great Circle* also highlights the fact that, as Susan Lee Roberson points out, "[t]he reasons women travel may be similar to the motivations that drove men to journey, but the degree to which their choice of travel is free, the kinds of experiences they relate, and the metaphysical roads they travel can be quite different" (214). Additionally, Roberson remarks, "even though women have shared in experiences of travel with men, much of the critical attention to travel has focused on the male traveler or a male paradigm of travel" (214). Shipstead's novel engages both these aspects of the relationship between travel writing and gender, exposing the differences and similarities between past and present forms of women's discrimination. For example, as I explain in more detail later, Marian repeatedly violates social norms from a very young age to cultivate her passion for flight or exploit her piloting skills for work. Even after women's contribution to WWII, these norms do not significantly relax and, similarly to the feats of other (real) women aviators (who were never as celebrated as their male counterparts), her epic flight around the world is soon forgotten after its tragic epilogue. Hadley remembers reading about it as a child:

> After I returned the book, I pretty much forgot about Marian. Almost all of the brave ladies of the sky are forgotten, really. There was the occasional spooky TV special about Marian in the '80s, and a handful of die-hard Marian enthusiasts are still out there spinning theories on the internet, but she didn't stick the way Amelia Earhart did. People at least *think* they know about Amelia Earhart, even though they don't. It's not really possible. (Shipstead 9–10, original emphasis)

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK

By the end of the novel, both Marian and Hadley have reached the conclusion that total knowledge cannot be achieved, but its pursuit remains important, if not irresistible, because the journey is what really matters. Their understanding of the personal and cultural value of travel thus progressively shifts from the dominant, typically male paradigm of travel as a search for wholeness or as an epic quest for some absolute truth to a more feminine epistemological framework that remains inclusive, flexible and open-ended.

Shipstead's narrative develops this alternative feminine worldview within the socio-cultural context of the United States, where according to Wendy Martin, travel literature, perhaps more than any other genre, provides us with a means for understanding how the nation-state was historically imagined (252). In fact, travel – along movement in general – is a central element in several of the US foundational myths, such as the myths of discovery, of the Promised Land, and of the West (the frontier). Anglo-European men, however, have been the undisputed heroes of these narratives. By deploying travel to connect the stories of two American women to one another, to their relative social and historical contexts and, implicitly, to US culture, Shipstead addresses the marginalization of women in hegemonic accounts of US national identity and experience. Marian's and Hadley's thus become examples of women's travel stories that, to borrow from Roberson, "relate spatial practices of mapping the self and [...] provide a way for us to examine how women [think] of their mobility and position in the world" (215). In Shipstead's novel, this mapping exposes the constraints that have historically oppressed women in the US and that continue to operate, changed in form but not in purpose, to attempt to shape them into patriarchal ideals.

Marian (born in 1914) is an aviator from Missoula, Montana, who in 1950 attempts a flight "around the world north-south, over the poles" (Shipstead 510) – the titular great circle. The enterprise, pointlessly dangerous from most perspectives, is not dictated by ambitions to glory, fame or success, but by the fact that, since childhood, the "belief that she would fly saturated her world, presented an appearance of absolute truth" (97). According to official records, Marian disappears – hence presumably dies – during the final leg of her flight between Little America III, Ross Ice Shelf, Antarctica, and Auckland, New Zealand. In 2014 Los Angeles, Hadley is a Hollywood actress in her early twenties involved in a sex scandal that threatens to destroy her career. In the attempt to exploit the situation to reinvent herself, she accepts to play Marian in an indie biopic. However, the main reason she is interested in the part is not money or professional prestige but the connection that she feels

with Marian. As she explains, they are "both products of vanishment and orphanhood and negligence and airplanes and uncles" (216). In fact, both women were raised not by their parents – who were either dead or absent – but by a negligent uncle who dies when they are in their late teens/early twenties. More significantly, Hadley's parents died by crashing with their Cessna into Lake Superior. Since neither their aircraft nor their bodies were found, Hadley used to wonder whether they had really died or simply abandoned her. The debris of Marian's airplane was never found either and, because of these similarities in their stories, Hadley thinks that by interpreting Marian, she can finally find closure, as well as her own way in life.

However, having worked first in TV commercials and become a movie star at a very young age, Hadley never learned to understand her desires or make independent decisions. She wants to be courageous and free, but admits, "I didn't know what that meant—I only knew how to pretend to know, which I guess is acting" (Shipstead 13). Similarly to Marian, it is difficult for her to find her place in the world, but contrary to the aviator, Hadley does not have a clear – a manifest – idea of what her destiny is. My use of the term "manifest" is not accidental, but is a reference to the US myth of manifest destiny that Hadley evokes also while describing her attempts at self-discovery:

> *Manifest*, my trainer said. *Manifest*. I was supposed to look in the mirror and manifest, in my mind, the body I wanted. … "Engage your core," my trainer said. … I had a shrink, briefly, who told me to imagine a glowing tiger every time I doubted myself, to imagine the tiger was my source of strength, my essence. (163, original emphasis)

The manifest is offered to Hadley as a "form of becoming," a means for turning her inner strength and power into an actual body. The strategy, however, proves to be elusive and ineffective, since Hadly concludes, "The tiger was preposterous. The tiger was me. The tiger was everything but me" (163). Despite her efforts, the person that exists underneath her fictional roles, or that she is destined to become, refuses to manifest – to herself and to others. This engenders in Hadley a constant conflict of feelings, knowledge, and truth, which also translates into a conflict between body and mind.

Flight offers an opportunity to articulate and overcome this friction, symbolized by Hadley's friend Hugo's belief that playing Marian will "*elevate* [her]" (Shipstead 168, original emphasis). Challenging the conventional dependence of knowledge on rationality and abstraction, the body is presented as key in this process. While trying on clothes

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK

for playing Marian, Hadley mentions: "I'd once heard a costume designer say the best actresses didn't even look in the mirror; they *felt* a costume" (253, original emphasis), suggesting that the ability to know something relies not – or not exclusively – on cognitive skills but on physical sensations, too. As a child, Marian curiously mentions clothes in a similar analogy to express her disbelief that, while she felt destined to become a pilot, "others did not see her for what she would become, that she did not wear the fact of her future like some eye-catching garment" (97). Listening to the body is also the mantra of Marian's first flight instructor, who tells her that to survive in the air you need to "train yourself not to follow your instincts but to build up new instincts instead" (155) and "fly by the seat of your pants" (173). By welcoming the sensorial as a means for knowing, these examples draw attention to the disparity between epistemological processes conventionally considered second-class and associated with femininity, and hegemonic (male) meaning-making paradigms.

On the one hand, flying requires theoretical knowledge as much as the ability to physically become one with the airplane. It therefore provides Marian and (through her performance) Hadley with a subversive activity that allows them to celebrate and even foreground bodily experience – and its impact on individual identity – in a technical, scientific, and ultimately masculine discipline. On the other hand, however, its soaring effect can also easily appear as a means for escaping the weight of existence and the social expectations/gender norms that oppress both Marian and Hadley. If inspired by fear, it thus becomes a movement that separates from the body. As Marian writes in her logbook:

> When you are truly afraid, you experience an urgent desire to split from your body. You want to remove yourself from the thing that will experience pain and horror, but you are that thing. You are aboard a sinking ship, and you are the ship itself. But, flying, fear can't be permitted. To inhabit yourself fully is your only hope and, beyond that, to make the airplane a part of yourself, also. (Shipstead 538)

Hadley initially thinks that by playing Marian she would "get to be someone who wasn't afraid" (488). One of the first lessons that she learns from impersonating the aviator, then, is that, in reality, to master the role of Marian as Marian mastered flying implies respecting and embracing fear, instead of treating it "like a god to be

appeased" (488). In this regard, it is emblematic that Hadley refuses to use a stunt for the scene in which Marian plunges her plane down toward the sea and insists on shooting it herself, as a means for finding closure for her parents' death.

THE ILLUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

However, the fact that Hadley's and Marian's stories intersect and merge on a Hollywood set – the quintessential place where imitations of life are created – exposes the novel's key concern with the fraught relationship between narrative and truth. From this perspective, it is possible to consider *The Great Circle* a work of metafiction in Patricia Waugh's terms, that is, "fiction writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (2). As she researches Marian's life to support her performance, Hadley is increasingly uneasy about the way the movie *Peregrine* ignores or distorts the few certain facts that are known about it. Hadley describes this version of Marian as "a game of telephone" (Shipstead 491), because the movie is only the last in a series of narratives that progressively distance themselves from the real person that they profess to portray. The most reliable source of information on Marian is *The Sea, the Sky, the Birds Between: The Lost Logbook of Marian Graves*. The book was published by Matilda Pfeiffer, who also paid for Marian's flight, and is based on Marian's travel journal, unexpectedly recovered in Little America III in 1958. Matilda declares having left the manuscript unchanged, in order not to shape and prettify Marian's spontaneous thoughts (171). The logbook thus highlights a central preoccupation with travel literature: the extent to which it is explicitly written or edited for publication. As Clare Broome Saunders argues,

> Truth is at the heart of … generic distinctions [among different forms of travel writing]: the assumed authenticity and greater honesty of a personal diary or correspondence which records personal experiences, when in fact these forms can easily be manipulated with omissions and elisions to meet the agenda of the writer; the veil of untruth that covers the "fictional" literature of travel, which often reports actual facts and events, disguised as fiction to suit the author's purpose. (1)

While Marian accepts Matilda's invitation to keep a record of her journey, she also expresses ambivalence about turning it into a book, reinforced by the claim in the last entry of her logbook that "No one should ever

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK

read this. My life is my one possession" (Shipstead 8). Nevertheless, Marian eventually leaves the journal behind, which suggests that she might have wanted her story to survive.

The responsibility for any possible manipulation of her manuscript thus falls completely on the publisher (Matilda), whose disclaimer the reader is free to decide whether to believe or not. It is worth noticing that Matilda's interest in Marian's journal is not, or at least not completely, conventional for a commercial publisher: she tells Marian to write "what you see, what you think, what happens … The experience is the thing. You. Not some imaginary line on the globe" (Shipstead 511–12). Her advice to Marian is to focus on what flying a great circle means to her, and not on the conventional meaning that this imaginary line has as a symbol of human mastery on the world. Matilda continues, "Don't tie yourself in knots over it. Just write down what happens, and you can decide later what to do with it … You must do everything you can to remember. Not just what you see, but what it means. To *you*" (513, original emphasis). These words clearly frame Marian's journey as a quest for self-discovery and identity building, and travel literature as a genre in which life writing (here in the diary form) inevitably encounters and merges with the scientific approach of great geographical explorations.

However, *The Great Circle*'s fragmented structure and metafictional content frustrates the possibility for the reader – of Matilda's edited book as well as of Shipstead's novel – to access Marian's thoughts. Whereas passages from *The Sea, the Sky, the Birds Between* are signposted with bibliographical references, the source of the information presented in the other chapters about Marian's life is not explicitly mentioned. Consequently, readers are led to question their reliability, since it is impossible to establish who the omniscient extradiegetic narrator is. This aspect of the novel highlights another similarity between Marian and Hadley: the fact that both women are systematically objectified and appear to Shipstead's readers as public figures constructed by others. As far as Marian is concerned, the movie *Peregrine* adapts not the content of her logbook but the novel *Wings of Peregrine*, which is only loosely based on it. The author, Carol Feiffer, is the wife of a descendant of Matilda Feiffer. Carol declares that she felt inspired and liberated by Marian's story, which helped her survive her difficult marriage. In her attempt to regain control of her own life, it is evident that she made order in Marian's story, too, romanticizing, reinterpreting, or inventing some of its core aspects. Unsurprisingly, the novel's Hollywood adaptation partakes in the same attempt to make Marian more relatable while simultaneously turning her into a mythical figure,

an epic example, as Hadley puts it, of "plucky girl power or the tragedy of biting off more than you can chew" (Shipstead 364).

The progressive shortening of the titles of all these texts about Marian is emblematic of a process of compression that, while inevitable and common to all forms of storytelling, the movie *Peregrine* brings to an unnecessary extent. Hadley describes the process as "tak[ing] Marian's life and dropp[ing] it from a great height onto something hard, and every day we picked up different pieces and pressed them into place" (Shipstead 488). The artificiality of the movie script is a perfect example of "the veil of untruth that covers the 'fictional' literature of travel" (1) mentioned by Saunders, introduced in this case not by the author/traveler but by third parties. As Hadley observes, "[i]t's impossible to ever fully explain yourself while you're alive, and then once you're dead, forget about it – you're at the mercy of the living" (Shipstead 500). Eventually, the constructedness of *Peregrine*'s Marian is fully unmasked when Hadley secretly receives a box of letters and objects that Marian bequeathed to her brother's daughter, Adelaide. While sieving though them, Hadley wonders whether she is just "trying to insert [herself] into an inscrutable, long-concluded drama" or if the past has something to tell her in particular (544). From the letters complex relationships emerge that confirm Carol's account of Marian's love life as a pure conjecture. For example, in the novel (and the movie), Marian is in a romantic relationship with her navigator, Eddie, whom at some point she betrays with her childhood friend Caleb. The letters reveal that Eddie was gay and the paper husband of Ruth, Marian's lover during WWII. Hadley is grateful to receive this information when the movie is practically done, because "now the truth about Marian seemed too big, too amorphous for me to gather" (566). To disguise it to her audience, she would have had to act on too many levels.

The fact that romantic relationships are the most distorted aspect of Marian's life aligns with the function that sexuality has historically played in women's oppression and objectification. Significantly, Marian is not the only victim of this process. The revelations brought about by her letters mirror the dynamics and implications of Hadley's sex scandal: by cheating on her real-life partner, who is also the actor who plays Hadley's lead character's lover in the *Archangel* movies, Hadley has "punctured the romantic illusion" (Shipstead 62–63) and exposed the person underneath her character. This worries the movie studio because fans want to believe in the merging of fiction with reality. As a Hollywood star, therefore, Hadley is as objectified and "constructed" by others as Marian: she cannot enjoy any privacy and her person(ality) is constantly (re)invented by journalists, paparazzi, and fanfiction

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK

fantasies inspired by her cinematographic roles. On the red carpet, she feels dissolved by the flashes of the cameras around her and wishes that she could leave her body and vanish in that light – a desire that she shares with Marian and to which I return later.

The social dynamics that subject both Marian and Hadley to oppression and objectification resonate with Roberson's observation that sexuality is an area where men's and women's travel experiences and narratives strongly differ. If, on the one hand, the traveling woman is at sexual risk compared to a man (that is, at risk of sexual abuse), on the other hand, she is also viewed as "a threat to patriarchy and social order" (223) for exercising a freedom of movement that social norms, depending on the specific historical and cultural context, either limit or completely foreclose. Moreover, as Thompson observes, particularly with reference to pre-1800 US literature,

> [i]f the female traveller contravenes the patriarchal ideology of separate spheres by quitting her home and venturing out into the world, the female travel writer, or at least, the woman who *publishes* a travel account, contravenes that ideology twice over. Not only does she travel, she then positions herself a second time in the public sphere, as an author. (180, original emphasis)

While Thompson provides a further explanation to the widespread use of the epistolary or diary form by women travel writers as a means "to suggest that their observations were never originally intended for publication" (180), his argument also draws attention to the importance of sexuality and the transgression of gender roles in Marian's story. As an adolescent, Marian used to disguise as a boy to find jobs and save money for her flying lessons. This is how she meets Barclay Macqueen, who uses flight as a bargaining chip to trap her into marriage: while he initially pays for her lessons and employs her as a bush pilot for his smuggling business, giving her the illusion of independence and freedom, after the wedding he forbids Marian from flying and (unsuccessfully) attempts to relegate her to the roles of wife and mother. Marian escapes in her airplane and settles in Alaska, where she supports herself, initially under false name, thanks to her piloting skills. A similar situation allows Hadley to unveil the mystery of Marian's disappearance: when Adelaide encourages her to visit the man that Caleb adopted in the 1970s, Hadley discovers a newspaper article with a picture of Marian, disguised as a shepherd man. The picture is evidence that Marian did not die. Her plane crashed but she survived and decided to temporarily change identity to start a new life.

Marian's disappearance, therefore, does not coincide, as it often occurs, with her literal death, but is a fissure in the circle of her story that leads to a new beginning and, ultimately, to open-endedness. Her incomplete flight is a "broken" great circle that in its opening contains all the possibilities and all the truth about Marian that any attempt at reconstructing her story will always inevitably fail to encompass. This opening represents a difference between reality and fiction comparable to the inevitable difference "between where [you] are going and where [you] mean to go" (Shipstead 525) when you fly. Marian describes it as the "wedge of discrepancy" where life is (525). Her flight was supposed not only to trace a complete circle, but also to help her achieve a sense of self-determination and independence. Instead, in the last entry of her logbook, she writes,

> Circles are wondrous because they are endless. Anything endless is wondrous. But endlessness is torture, too. I knew the horizon could never be caught but still chased it. … It isn't how I thought it would be, now that the circle is almost closed, the beginning and end held apart by one last fearsome piece of water. I thought I would believe I'd seen the world, but there is too much of the world and too little of life. I thought I would believe I'd completed something, but now I doubt anything can be completed. I thought I would not be afraid. I thought I would become more than I am, but instead I know I am less than I thought. (11)

By then, Marian has finally made peace with the impossibility of knowing, or completing, anything.

The implications of her "broken circle" can be fully appreciated only if contrasted with the conventional symbolical association of circles with wholeness. According to Donald Wood Winnicott,

> [t]he diagram of the healthiest conceivable human being could be thought of as a sphere or more simply as a circle, and immediately it will be necessary to put a line down the centre. The individual with this degree of health is capable of containing all the conflicts that arise from within and without, and although there must always be war or potential war along the line in the centre, on either side of the line there become organized (by the integrative forces that belong to human development) groupings of benign and persecutory elements. (222–23)

Marian's journey – geographical and metaphorical – is an attempt at closing the circle of her personal fulfillment, while flight is the means through which she tries to manage and contain the conflicts generated by (the clash between) internal and external forces. These include her solitary childhood, the difficulty

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK

of understanding her sexuality, her marriage with and separation from Barclay, the way women pilots were treated in the US army during WWII (relegated to inferior roles despite their skills and experience and considered a logistic problem – a temptation to men – in camps and bases) and, afterward, their difficulty to be hired by commercial airlines that wanted them only as models of American womanhood, always perfectly dressed, coiffed, and made up, at home and on the workplace. By embracing the impossibility of fitting in the roles that society prescribes for her and leaving her circular journey incomplete, Marian embodies an alternative approach to epistemological quests that shows disillusionment with the ambition for total knowledge emblematized by the encyclopedia's circle of knowledge.

Furthermore, by unexpectedly deciding to level her plane and parachute out instead of crashing into the ocean, Marian also overcomes another imperative that has accompanied her throughout her life: her attraction for disappearance and dissolution or, in other word, her death drive. Similarly to Hadley, who feels dissolved by the spotlights of success, Marian is lured by the promise of freedom that accompanies annihilation, which in Shipstead's novel primarily takes the form of a fear of/pull toward great depths. Several times Marian reminisces about the dark crevasse over which her airplane stalled in one of her earliest solo flights – and toward which she felt attracted in her mourning for her recently passed flight instructor. The memory occurs firstly when Caleb warns her that, if she let him, Barclay will swallow her up in his attempt to control her and Marian replies "It's not the end of the world, being swallowed up," while conjuring up the mental image of the crevasse (Shipstead 299). Secondly, when her brother dies and "[t]he only impulse she could identify was to be drowned in the ocean. … The water was what she sought, the expanse and oblivion. … She was over the crevasse again" (481–82). Thirdly, in Antarctica, where her plane lands on the brink of a cliff – "A few feet of vertical ice glow blue in the crevasse; below that is a familiar darkness" (552), and finally when, guilty for surviving her plane crash, "[s]he catches herself remembering Eddie falling into a crevasse, though it had not happened. Or perhaps it had, later" (586).

A similar pull is exercised by the ocean in Marian's last flight, when she promises herself "My last descent won't be the tumbling helpless kind but a sharp gannet plunge – a dive with intent, aimed at something deep in the sea" (Shipstead 7). These inscrutable depths symbolize what the ancient Greek called the primordial Void, or Chaos,

"a dark emptiness, where nothing is visible. A realm of falling, of vertigo and confusion – endless, bottomless" from which all life originally arose (Vernant 3). As Donald Campbell argues,

> [t]he suicide fantasy represents a solution to the conflict which results from the wish to merge with mother, on the one hand, and the consequent primitive anxieties about annihilation of the self, on the other. By projecting the hated, engulfing or abandoning primal mother on to the body and then killing it, the surviving self is free to fuse with the split-off idealised, desexualised, omnipotently gratifying mother represented by states of oceanic bliss, dreamless eternal sleep, a permanent sense of peace, becoming one with the universe or achieving a state of nothingness. (77)

Unsurprisingly, Marian wonders whether she has inherited her death drive from her mother (who suffered from severe depression), or it is the call of the abyss that should have shallowed her and her brother when they were just a few months old, on board of the sinking *Josephina Eterna* (which their mother refused to leave, thus committing suicide). By surviving the breaking of her great circle, Marian eventually learns to distinguish between the freedom offered to her by solitude and flight and the desire to die, and accepts the impossibility of achieving any state of totality – through knowledge or otherwise.

Similarly, even if stunting Marian's "dive with intent" on set was supposed to transform her into a confident person by revealing to her some essential truth about her parents' death, once she learns that Marian survived, Hadley understands that the metaphorical inner journey on which she embarked by performing Marian will never bring her to the expected destination either. Concluding that closure, like the *Peregrine* movie, is just another illusion (Shipstead 13) and that "[n]o story is ever whole" (577), Hadley reorganizes her existential quest as a broken/open circle in which endlessness (intended as eternal repetition) is replaced by a form of continuity that involves a certain degree of change. In this system, the interruption/opening of a circle thus becomes the premise for the beginning of a new, interconnected one. This strategy for coping with the impossibility of closure merges with Hadley's fantasies of dissolution and manifests especially in the attempts to process her parents' death. While watching a documentary on the boat-like objects that Adelaide let sink along the Californian coast and that became "[g]radually … obscured by coral and sponges, encrusted with tiny creatures" (484), Hadley wonders "Were my parents bones? Or were their bones gone? Was their plane encrusted with tiny mussels, furred with algae?" (484). The landscape where their Cessna crashed evokes a similar image

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK

in a younger Hadley, who ponders that mountains once as big or bigger than the Himalayas have been "eroded away to nothing, time kicking down that particular sandcastle, glaciers scraping the rock bare and then disappearing, too" (70). Finally, remarking the fact that Hadley is the only one who knows about Marian's survival, physical decay and environmental cycles are also used in the closing chapter of Shipstead's novel to imagine Marian's real death, fifty-six years after her disappearance, while leaving it endlessly open, too:

> She's in the ocean now, as she was always meant to be. Most of her has come to rest, scattered, on the cold southern seafloor, but some of her smallest, lightest fragments, floating dust, are still being carried along by the currents. Fish ate a few tiny motes of her, and a penguin ate one of those fish and regurgitated it to his chick, and some infinitesimal speck of her was back on Antarctica for a while, as guano on a nest of pebbles, until a storm washed her back out to sea. (581)

Hadley's attempt to contend with death by conceiving of it not as finality but as metamorphosis leads her to embrace a vision of life and death as an endless series of circles that, instead of closing back on themselves, always merge with or generate other circles. By involving the whole of creation, this mechanism allows her to imagine ways in which, from a certain perspective, people never completely disappear, and individual limits and imperfections are always lost to and redressed in the grand scheme of things.

Shipstead's novel reinforces this revised symbolism of the circle by mirroring it in its macro-structure. Marian's phrase "a dive with intent," which clearly evokes Muriel Spark's *Loitering with intent* (1981) and its metafictional exploration of female writing and authorship, appears right on the first page, thus drawing attention to the fact that *The Great Circle* itself is a series of interlooping narratives with different relationships with reality. After opening with the last page of Marian's logbook and a brief account of Hadley's last day on set, the novel moves back and forth between fragments of Marian's story in the third person, from her birth to her last flight, and of Hadley's first-person narration of the months of the shooting, constellated with flashbacks. Instead of concluding by returning to its opening point (Marian's alleged death and Hadley's shooting of the corresponding scene), the novel continues by reporting what happened after Marian and her plane disappeared in the Southern Ocean. This short final chapter, too, has a circular structure: it begins with the image of Marian's ashes dissolving into the sea quoted earlier, jumps back to her plane crash, and finally leads to Marian's second, actual death in a farm in New Zealand. The reader can accept it as truth offered by the anonymous

omniscient narrator or consider it either another unreliable conjecture on the end of Marian's life or a hopeful reconstruction of it.

Through Hadley's and Marian's interconnected, open-ended journeys of self-discovery, *The Great Circle* thus argues that incompleteness and imperfection are inherent qualities of any quest for knowledge and presents women's travel writing as a spatial and metaphorical practice of mapping the world and the self characterized by these same qualities. This epistemological framework is summarized by Shipstead's map of Marian's flight, on which an imperfect, incomplete circle around the world illustrates the aviator's final observations about her journey: "I wish the line [that we traveled] were a smooth meridian, a perfect, taut hoop, but our course was distorted by necessity: the indifferent distribution of islands and airfields, the plane's need for fuel" (Shipstead 7), "[i]Inevitably we will omit almost everything . . .nly cover one track as wide as our wings, glimpse only one set of horizons" (530). The map, like Shipstead's novel, not only subverts the significance of the cartographic great circle and the interrelated symbology of the circle in general. By offering a representation of the world in which the Americas do not appear (except for the easternmost part of Alaska), it also draws attention to women's exclusion from or marginalization in processes – and narratives – of national identity construction. By foregrounding untold or skewed stories of travel and self-discovery, *The Great Circle* emphasizes the importance of retrieving women's experiences and ways of knowing and offers their travel writing as a powerful site for the exploration and understanding of gender discrimination in US society.

Abstract: This article presents travel as the nexus between the two protagonists of Maggie Shipstead's *The Great Circle* (2021): aviator Marian Graves, whose passion for flight and physical travels double as, and intensify, an inner journey of self-discovery, and Hadley Baxter, a contemporary Hollywood actress who interprets Marian in a biopic and, through this experience, identifies with her, expanding her consciousness and constructing herself as woman. Marian and Hadley have similar, tragic family histories and, despite living a century apart, are both subject to the violence and constraints of a patriarchal society that deprives women of agency and condemns the transgression of gender roles. Consequently, the novel deploys multiple forms of travel and travel writing to ask what it means to be a woman in the United States and explore the contribution of physical and metaphorical journey to the discovery of the self, other people and the world. While close in scope to canonical male travel narratives, I argue that *The Great Circle* juxtaposes different stories (Marian's logbook, a novel and a biography based on it, and Hadley's movie) and, therefore, different accounts of Marian's life, to raise questions about the very possibility of knowing anything or anybody. The novel simultaneously denounces women's objectification by presenting both Marian and Hadley as public fig-

Elisa Pesce
University of Glasgow
Scotland, UK

ures constructed by others: Marian's logbook is fictionalized and published without her consent, while Hadley exists only in the characters that she plays and the image that the tabloids project of her. Shipstead's ambiguous use of the symbolism of the circle further complicates the novel's epistemological inquiry by betraying expectations about continuity and closure. All circles and journeys in the novel remain open-ended and merge with one another, connecting people and experiences across space and time.

Keywords: travel in American fiction, *The Great Circle*, travel as self-discovery, women and travel writing

Bio: Elisa Pesce (she/her) is completing her PhD in English Literature at the University of Glasgow. Her project investigates the reasons underlying the omission of women from maximalist models by assessing the scope and implications of this narrative mode in the framework of contemporary cultural production in the United States. She is therefore interested in the interrelation between standards of genre formation and literary merit and questions of power. Elisa is Early Career Fellow of the International American Studies Association. She has presented her research outputs at various international conferences and published in international journals such as *JAm It!* (Journal of American Studies in Italy) and the *European Journal of American Studies*. In addition to academic research, she also works as an independent translator and EFL teacher.

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FROM SUPERHIGHWAY TO HYPERREALITY: THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF "ASTRAL AMERICA"

Maxime McKenna
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4859-1968

During a series of road-trips undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s, the French theorist Jean Baudrillard encountered an American Southwest that had become a laboratory of "hyperreality." What was real and what merely represented the real had become indistinguishable from one another, so much that the very environment appeared to conform to myths of US American destiny, and not the other way around. This "Astral America" extended to the deserts, suburbs, and sprawling metropoli of the former frontier, and was to be found in the "marvelously affectless succession of signs, images, faces, and ritual acts on the road" (Baudrillard 5). Ostensibly in the US in an academic capacity, Baudrillard proudly forewent libraries and lecture halls in favor of his private automobile, which he piloted through the desert at high speed, taking in the swirling housing tracts, strip-malls, motels, and other roadside simulacra of the American dream. Not being native to them, Baudrillard could see in these spaces what otherwise eluded his American colleagues, who had turned their backs on them "as the Greeks turned their back on the sea" (63).

Baudrillard's observations about Astral America were published in 1986 as *Amérique* (trans. 1988 as *America*). Throughout this work of travelogue-theory, Baudrillard claims the perspective of an outside observer, but he exhibits an enthusiasm for the road that is characteristically American, if not at-times stereotypically so. Baudrillard's philosophizing from behind the wheel has become a touchstone in automobility studies. Cotten Seiler approaches *America* as a deliberate engagement with the "capacious, supranational, even imperial subjectivity organized by the apparatus of automobility"— that is, the discourses and infrastructures that aligned the fact of driving

a car with a hegemonic idea of what it meant to be a "free" American (Seiler 9). Meanwhile, John Urry turns to Baudrillard for evidence of automobility as a system that "coerces people into an intense flexibility" (Urry 28). Marcin Mazurek and Justin Michael Battin (2021) introduced a recent special issue of this journal, on car cultures, with a quote from *America*. Despite the palpable pleasure Baudrillard takes in driving, his book remains a crucial early entry in the critical literature on automobility and its relationship to the spatiotemporal regimes of postmodernity or late capitalism.

America also serves as an important text to begin interrogating a problem that has gone less understood: the relationship between postmodern theory and automobility's infrastructures as such. Postmodernism as a Western cultural movement is roughly coeval with the construction of the grand edifice of the postwar American automobilization project, the Interstate Highway System, 1956 to 1992. Perry Anderson (1998) traces the term "postmodernism" back to the fifties, while Fredric Jameson (1991) publishes his treatise on "the cultural logic of late capitalism" shortly before the interstate is declared complete. Another major account, by David Harvey (1990), dates the emergence of postmodernism/postmodernity to 1973–74. One of the major inflection points that Harvey considers, the OPEC oil embargo, catalyzed capitalism's restructuring around flexible and global forms of accumulation. Furthermore, in the US in particular, it brought the ideal of the petroleum-powered good life into crisis, just as the interstate highway was solidifying the private car's supremacy. The largest public infrastructure project in American history, the 75,000-kilometer interstate bound the nation in a vast network that, in addition to making large swaths of the continental US traversable by private automobile, helped literally to concretize a national auto-*mobile* character. Being American became synonymous with adapting to and participating in the transport regime enshrined in the proliferation of freeways and expressways. At the time Baudrillard was conducting his motorized fieldwork, American culture was confronting a reality of petroleum scarcity amidst the continued growth of a monumental superhighway system that projected confidence in the automotive future. The US's hyperreal self-production was suddenly nowhere more salient than aboard the nation's highways.

A critical infrastructural approach invites a reconsideration of *America* and its contribution to automobility studies through the lens of another major theme of the book: energy. Baudrillard's text opens inroads into understanding post-structuralism as a form of what Timothy Mitchell calls "petroknowledge" (Mitchell 139),

Maxime McKenna
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

an episteme that hinges on cheap and abundant fossil fuels. Although fuel shortages, green technologies, and ecological movements have challenged this episteme, petroknowledge continues to structure a broad notion of modernity and its privileges, from cosmopolitanism to representative democracy. Theory itself might be said to be a petroknowledge, an analysis that *America* encourages with its exuberant descriptions of highway driving. Rereading Baudrillard's *America* against the discursive and material conditions of the period in the history of American automobility in which it appears proposes an infrastructural account of the postmodern moment.

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America begins in the Southwest: "not social and cultural America, but the America of the empty, absolute freedom of the freeways, not the deep America of mores and mentalities, but the America of desert speed, of motels and mineral surfaces" (5). Baudrillard moves quickly between several desert sites, which are, in practice, quite far away from one another: San Antonio, Salt Lake City, the Salk Institute in Torrey Pines, which Baudrillard incorrectly identifies as "Torrey Canyon," the name of the BP tanker that ran aground off the southwestern coast of England in 1967. Conflating Europe's worst oil spill with the research institute named for the discoverer of the polio vaccine, Baudrillard makes the kind of error that the global petroleum trade renders inevitable: a ship built in the US, registered in Liberia, but bearing the name of a characteristically American geological formation, transporting oil extracted in Kuwait, which ultimately contaminates French beaches.

The topic of energy haunts *America* from the beginning and forms what might be called, following Dominic Boyer, the text's "epistemic infrastructure" (Boyer 238). Specific regimes of energy consumption and extraction make possible the hyperreality that Baudrillard analyzes, as well as his means of analysis. Adriana Michele Campos Johnson and Daniel Nemser have recently called for an infrastructural critique that expands "what it might mean to conjugate reading and infrastructure: reading as infrastructure, reading infrastructure, and readings of infrastructure" (Johnson and Nemser 4). *America* makes for a compelling case study with which examine these conjugations. Its reading of the American road has become, in its way, an infrastructure of reading—that is, a point of departure that has helped structure a field of inquiry. Furthermore, the semiotic abstraction and circulation that characterize hyperreality are presented in *America* as processes that are best theorized from within their infrastructural environments. The theorist E. Cram proposes to think infrastructure as "land lines" that

mark "entrenched social beliefs about how to *make* and *convert* energy for proper, productive use" (Cram 7, italics in original). In *America*, the insatiable consumption of energy required by the communities of the Southwest is counterbalanced by Baudrillard's own enthusiastic burning of fossil fuel toward what is imagined to be a more productive end—reaching the physical and intellectual velocity at which one can perceive Astral America for what it is.

Destinations are secondary in *America*. The site that first interests Baudrillard is the intermediary space of the automobile highway, whose uncanny combination of "desert speed" and roadside mundanities becomes the starting point of his investigation into Astral America. Baudrillard pushes past the frontier wilds that delimited Alexis de Tocqueville's journey a century and a half earlier and drives onto "the flat, empty, perpetual-motion surface of the desert" (Diani 76). The flatness of the desert turns the highway into a runway, creating an almost limitless sense of speed. "Speed creates pure objects," writes Baudrillard. "[…] Speed is the triumph of effect over cause, the triumph of instantaneity over time as depth, the triumph of the surface and pure objectality over the profundity of desire" (6). American hyperreality is the outcome of a particular disarticulation of signifier and signified, in which images, myths, and signs outrun the reality they ostensibly refer to. In Baudrillard's analysis, it is as much a geological as technological phenomenon. Later, he declares: "The natural deserts tell me what I need to know about the deserts of the sign. They teach me to read surface and movement and geology and immobility at the same time" (67). The conjunction of automobile infrastructure and natural landscape renders the plains of the American west legible as a kind of plane of immanence.

What sets Baudrillard's account of the US apart from those by other French thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Cau, and George Duhamel is "his refusal to condemn: fascination wins in the end," notes Jean-Philippe Mathy (Mathy 279). Indeed, Baudrillard emphasizes firsthand experience over and above critical distance. "Driving is a spectacular form of amnesia," he riffs. "Everything is to be discovered, everything to be obliterated" (9). The "excessive, pitiless distance" (9) of the road enables a velocity that is at once physical and cognitive, and in the driver's seat, one comes to inhabit the late-capitalist American psyche—all the better to theorize it. For Baudrillard, driving a car is foremost a means of confronting "the form that dominates the American West, and doubtless all of American culture": "a fractal, interstitial culture, born of a rift with the Old World, a tactile, fragile, mobile, superficial culture—you have to follow its own rules to grasp how it works: seismic

Maxime McKenna
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

shifting, soft technologies" (10). Such cultural rules are given immediate expression in the rules of the road. Traffic signs—with their directive that drivers "must exit"—"read like a litany," he writes (53). When one learns the litanies of the road, one participates in an "unspoken agreement on collective driving" that tells you "more about this society than all academia could ever tell you" (54). To fixate on the forms of coercion on the road is to miss the way that automobile infrastructure remediates unfreedom into a profound new feeling of liberty, the "empty, absolute freedom of the freeways" (5). It is no surprise that Baudrillard's road should be the "freeway," one of several possible translations for the more capacious *autoroute*.

Throughout *America*, physical mobility becomes a sort of intellectual mobility, which drives Baudrillard's journey away from a world of binaries and out onto the open road of post-structuralism. Baudrillard first became interested in the automobile for the way it penetrated postwar French society, swiftly becoming "inscribed in everyday society as an object or appliance" (Cofaigh 208). France's roads were slow to adapt to *la auto*. Meanwhile, American automobility was better configured to activate driving's emancipatory affect. As many critics have observed, the private motorcar enables the quotidian commute and its escape at the same time. In her groundbreaking cultural study of automobility, Kristin Ross argues that Baudrillard became enamored with this latter, liberating form of driving that haunts its domesticated counterpart. The speed that one could more reliably attain aboard American highways had "the effect of propelling the driver off the calendar, out of one's own personal and affective history, and out of time itself" (Ross 21). Both forms of automobility—the commute and the escape—are present in *America*, without much distinction. Passages of traversing the desert blend with scenes of navigating developed areas, such as Los Angeles. Unlike European motorways, which are "places of expulsion," Los Angeles's "freeway system is a place of integration": "There is something of the freedom of movement that you have in the desert here, and indeed Los Angeles, with its extensive structure, is merely an inhabited fragment of the desert" (Baudrillard 53). Even amidst the urban traffic of Southern California, the motorist in the United States retains some kind of freedom; if not the freedom to get around as speedily as you like, then the more rarified freedom to be integrated into a circulatory system.

America demands a reassessment of theory's emancipatory ambitions *via* the infrastructures, be they transport or institutional, that make theorizing possible in the first place. Petroleum-powered desert speed may be a means of approaching the abstraction that defines post-

modern American culture, but it comes at the expense of any interest in embodied experience other than Baudrillard's own. Baudrillard's America "is a country without persons—not one is introduced—and for that matter without people, these having been absorbed into his theories of hyperreality and simulation," noted one critical review of the book's translation (Poirier). In the Southwest, humanity registers in references to "Mexicans who have crossed the border clandestinely to come and work here" (2) and "the extermination of the desert Indians" (6). Baudrillard's brief account of New York City unfortunately dwells on "the sexual stimulation produced by the crowding together of so many races" (15), before the much-mocked observation: "There are no cops in New York" (22). Meanwhile, the broad category of "Americans" is invoked to mean a group of noble savages whose ignorance of the hyperreality in which they live make them ideal subjects for the European theorist. Americans "are the ideal material for an analysis of all the possible variants of the modern world. No more and no less in fact than were primitive societies in their day" (29).

The literal deterritorialization and reterritorialization of people in service of the US's violent westward push is grist for the mill of Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality. Just as it did in different periods of settler-colonial expansion, the continental United States offers a telos, which strikes Baudrillard as prophetic. The monumental verticality of New York City gradually gets dismantled as one moves west and alights on the delirious horizontality of the desert metropolis of Los Angeles. The cities of the future, he predicts, will have no place left to go but underground, a "subterranean implosion" of the skyscraper ambitions of the early twentieth century, in which "[e]verything will become infrastructure bathed in light of energy" (21–22). Baudrillard is hardly the first to note the American Southwest's uncanny interpenetration of the hostile and the up-to-the-minute. Architects were fascinated by the vernacular building styles emerging in Los Angeles (Banham) and Las Vegas (Venturi et al.), while Andy Warhol once said, recounting a cross-country road-trip: "The further west we drove on the highway, the more Pop everything looked" (qtd. in Avila 122). Rachel Adams (2007) has argued for the importance of the Southern California region for thinking postmodernism as an international, even global phenomenon. LA's swift transformation, from the *noirish* metropolis of Hollywood cinema to what Edward Soja calls "the centrifugal ur-Exopolis" (239), evinced a social organization that seemed ready to spin out of the basin and run roughshod over the world. Although Baudrillard also speaks of centrifuges in *America*, the motion that he associates with hyperreality is more often like the desert itself.

Maxime McKenna
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

His Astral America is a dry zone creeping irreversibly and indifferently into previously verdant regions.

Desert-like creep describes at once the spread of American cultural hegemony and the climactic effects resulting from the processes of extraction and infrastructure development that make the American Southwest a laboratory of the hyperreal in the first place. A series of infamous energy crises had precipitated the publication of *America* and exposed the fragility of a way of life predicated on unsustainable material entanglements. The so-called Arab oil embargo, which sent gas prices skyrocketing in late 1973, created the first modern crisis of American automobility by attaching a previously unthinkable price tag to the freedom to get around whenever and however you chose. The embargo opened the door to fresh fears about individual and national sovereignty. One political misstep, and OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) could bring the American automotive transportation system to its knees; one irreparable link in the infrastructure, and the middle-class utopias of the Southwest reverted to a wasteland.

As Matthew Huber (2013) argues, the energy crises of the 1970s called into question a mode of social reproduction that had relied on an oil-fueled mastery of an oil-fueled landscape of production and consumption. The gas station lines and outbreaks of violence during the 1973–74 embargo and its sequel, the Oil Shock of 1979, dramatized the nation's hegemonic decline in its perceived inability to bring Arab nations to heel. Meanwhile, the sudden restriction in mobility that many Americans faced revealed a grim limitation to the midcentury production of space: modern life depended utterly on one kind of vehicle powered by resources extracted beyond American borders. Huber contends that the finitude and fixity of petroleum as a resource caused a crack up in conventional economic wisdom, and anti-New Deal (or neoliberal) ideologues exploited the climate of suspicion born from the energy crises to push an anti-statist agenda that took centerstage with the election of the first openly hyperreal president, Ronald Reagan.

Over the 1970s, the relationship that many middle-class Americans had with gasoline consumption was upended, prompting a national reckoning with the United States' image of itself. In February 1974, at the height of the embargo, US Senator Ted Kennedy posed the following question during hearings on the automotive industry held by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary: "Are all the problems [Americans] are facing today merely the result of an Arab oil embargo? Or shouldn't we, in a country that is unsurpassed in technological

expertise, have been able to develop alternative means of transportation which would contribute to the safety, health, and the well-being of our citizens as well as our economy?" (United States. Cong. Committee on the Judiciary. 1775). The hearings led to policies aimed to encourage reinvestment in mass transit and the purchasing of more fuel-efficient automobiles; but the construction of the interstate proceeded largely in accordance with its then two-decade-old plan. Nothing like the robust alternatives imagined by Kennedy came to pass, and the nation was caught off guard again a few years later.

Kennedy's bewilderment helps crystallize the infrastructural dimensions of American hyperreality. American narratives of innovation, expertise, and technological progress fail to square with a fundamentally constraining mobility system and an unsustainable regime of energy consumption. The ideological crisis provoked by material crises gets resolved by cleaving self-image from reality and plunging society into hyperreality. Such cleavage is a form of "hysteresis": "the process whereby something continues to develop by inertia, whereby an effect persists even when its cause has disappeared" (Baudrillard 115). Hysteresis certainly describes the autopoietic quality that Urry ascribes to the system of automobility—that is, the material-cultural car complex's ability to generate the conditions for its own global expansion. It likewise describes how infrastructures help abstract and circulate cultural values while protecting them from the crises that these same infrastructures produce. Astral America is a place where cultural systems are not undone by contradiction but fueled by them, while hyperreality grows and takes hold thanks to infrastructural systems that have become as naturalized as the deserts they traverse.

The energy infrastructures that pique Baudrillard's curiosity are often those that give dimension to the relationship between the US's utopian self-presentation and its attitude toward energy. New York City's brazen daily consumption of electricity "protects it, like a galvanic dome, from all external threats—though not from internal accidents like the black-out of '76" (Baudrillard 22). Of course, the massive blackout Baudrillard has in mind occurred in 1977, although the fact that America's metropolis could ever be under repeated *internal* threat on or around the nation's bicentenary, whether by power failures or by serial killers like the Son of Sam, is yet another of the deliriums that Baudrillard writes into being.

Back in the Southwest, he observers a similar, always-on-quality to American life: neon-signs along the highway, TVs left on all night, air-conditioning blasting in empty Las Vegas hotels, skylines lit up for whoever may be awake in the middle of the night. "The glory

Maxime McKenna
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

of American power is most often described as an effect of freedom and its exercise," Baudrillard writes. "But freedom does not of itself generate power" (89). American freedom as the inalienable right to consume cannot generate its own conditions and rather depends on military might and various degrees of overt and covert coercion: oil secured through war and dispossession, infrastructures that serve capital first and foremost, a way of life strapped into the commodity of the private automobile. As Baudrillard notes later in the book, American culture produced its own "virgin territory" (99) when it exterminated the indigenous populations of the continent and covered up the crime, effectively rendering space "infinite by the destruction of its center" (99). The audacious using-up of energy speaks to the same ambition: the desire to water the desert until it somehow sprouts grass, or to escape the drudgery of the daily commute—in one's car, of course.

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Over the course of *America*, Baudrillard's melodrama of seduction by Astral America stages the power of hyperreality. A world of freely circulating myths can offer shelter from unpleasant circumstances; at the very least, it might be intellectually stimulating for the right kind of European theorist. At the same time, Baudrillard's eager love affair with the automobile speaks to the extent to which questions of material history all too easily took the backseat, so to speak, in the postmodern intellectual moment. In 1979, Baudrillard's contemporary, Jean-François Lyotard, proposed an infrastructural periodizing of modernity: "It is reasonable to suppose that the proliferation of information-processing machines is having, and will continue to have, as much an effect on the circulation of learning as did advancements in human circulation (transportation systems) and later, in the circulation of sounds and visual images (the media)" (Lyotard 4). This genealogy—transport, then media, then computers— subordinates industrial infrastructures to post-industrial ones, all while overlooking the massive and even accelerated expansion of transport infrastructures happening concurrently. In France, for instance, the 1970s were a period when the nation's *autoroute* system was taking shape and when the SNCF was developing its high-speed TGV trains. As the circulation of images and information comes to dazzle, the energy-intensive circulation of people and goods sinks into the space of epistemic infrastructure.

Baudrillard's project is, of course, not to historicize the hyperreal climate of the late-capitalist United States, but to hystericize it, to paraphrase Diane Rubenstein (597). Nevertheless, his own apparent desire to propel himself out of history in his car has an unsettling foil in the terminal quality of American transport infrastructure,

which currently appears unlikely to be superseded by any potentially greener, rail-based alternative. In the words of Stephanie LeMenager, "petroleum infrastructure has become embodied memory and habitus for modern humans" (LeMenager 104). Automobility continues to bind Americans to a vision of the good life whose central claim to liberty must weather ever more challenges: traffic, public divestment, gasoline shortages, climate catastrophe.

Might Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality still have relevance for this state of affairs? In many ways, the leveling of cause and effect, of simulation and reality, that is the basis of an analysis of the hyperreal likewise encourages a leveling of culture and infrastructure. Built infrastructure ceases to be a backdrop against which social dramas play out but instead enters into question in its own right. Michael Truscello argues that "forms of deterritorialization and reterritorialization must be part of resistance to infrastructural brutalism"—that is, the policies of maintaining and expanding the extractive infrastructure driving the planet to mass extinction (Truscello 31). The novelty with which Baudrillard treats the infrastructural environments he traverses in *America* might be carried forward in a critical project that highlights what is strange, estranging, and contingent about the material systems that help produce our reality, whether hyper- or otherwise.

Abstract: During a series of road-trips undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s, the French theorist Jean Baudrillard encountered an American West that had become a laboratory of hyperreality. In his observations about "Astral America," Baudrillard claims the perspective of an outside observer, but he exhibits a fascination for the space of the road that is characteristically American, if not at-times stereotypically so, begging the question: what is the link between postmodern theory and automobile infrastructure? This article interrogates the material and discursive relations between Baudrillard's *Amérique* (1986; trans. 1988) and the period in the history of American automobility in which it emerges. Just as the Interstate Highway was solidifying the private car's supremacy, the OPEC oil embargo brought the petroleum-powered, automobile ideal of the good life into crisis, opening intellectual inroads for thinking the US's hyperreal self-production while aboard the nation's superhighways. Baudrillard's classic work of travelogue-theory invites an infrastructural account of the postmodern moment that would situate concepts from French theory and their uptake in the American academy within a context of transnationally mediated transport infrastructures.

Keywords: Infrastructure, automobility, postmodernism, hyperreality, French theory

Author's bio: Maxime D. McKenna is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School of North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. His scholarly writing has been published in *AmLit – American Literatures* and *The Journal of Modern Literature*, with other essays appearing in *PopMatters*, *Chicago Review*,

and *The Millions*, among others. His dissertation project, entitled *Interstates: Infrastructure in California Fiction and Film, 1956–92,* examines popular cultural responses to the space of the superhighway in the age of the American interstate highway.

Maxime McKenna
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

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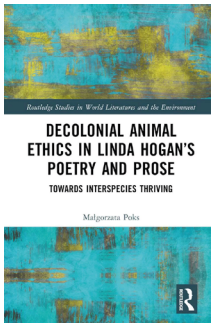
DECOLONIAL ANIMAL ETHICS IN LINDA HOGAN'S POETRY AND PROSE. TOWARDS INTERSPECIES THRIVING BY MAŁGORZATA POKS

(Book Review)



Ann-Sofie Lönngren
Södertörn University, Sweden
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3151-7083

This book starts with a preface and an introduction in which Poks sketches the relationship between the modern, hierarchical, anthropocentric view of non-human animals, and the traditional, relational view in Indigenous ontologies. In dialogue with, for example, human–animal studies, decolonial studies, ethno-science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), the study provides an in-depth engagement with the authorship of Chickasaw poet and novelist Linda Hogan. The point of departure for the study is the assertion that the perception of non-human animals has a significant political and ethical dimension, and its overarching purpose is the sympathetic one of responding to Robin Wall Kimmerer's imperative to dance for the renewal of the world (vii).

The book is divided into two parts, with the first investigating Hogan's poetry, and the second dealing with her prose. The chapters follow a decade-wise chronology throughout which Poks asks questions about the significance of Indigenous knowledges for the Anthropocene, how they connect to the extinction of species and environmental grief, and what insights Indigenous ethics can offer to activists and decision makers. Hogan is a highly relevant author to focus on in this context, given her long-standing engagement with discussions on the subject through the medium of fiction and essays, as well as argumentative and scholarly texts. Despite the scope of Hogan's production, Poks notes, there is not much written about her literary production, and even less so of the representations of the human–animal relationship in it. Thus, before an adequate evaluation of her work can be undertaken,

there is a need for a deeper inquiry into its premises. Moreover, there is a tendency among critics and scholars to charge fiction written by women of color with historical inaccuracy, and to define them as containing magical realist elements (30). This tendency points to a reductive understanding of history as a coherent and singular entity.

These are the main motivations for Poks' study, which aims to perform a decolonial reading of the human-animal relationship in Hogan's authorship. In order to do so, she states the aim to place it within the work of "re-minding," a decolonizing method that Hogan proposed in her book of essays *The Radiant Lives of Animals* (2020). It takes as its point of departure the ongoing sixth mass extinction and human cruelty to animals, in face of which we need to be "re-minded" of the ontological primacy of relationships and recover the attitude of respect and gratitude. This is a process of re-learning, which is based in knowledges generated while walking the land, watching the animals, and listening to the landscape (13). Another important point of departure for Poks' study is "re-story-ation," a term that was coined by Robin Wall Kimmerer to signify a category of "healing stories" that allows for the imagination of a non-abusive relationship to the non-human world (17). In keeping with Indigenous storytelling traditions, re-minding allows the use of imagination to access the deeper truths which mere facts can never reveal (30). Hogan believes in the power of stories in creating change and her writings are "healing stories," Poks claims (17).

The introduction provides the reader with a clear and rich overview of the field in which Poks' project is situated, as well as the main theoretical and methodological concepts she works with. However, this is also the part of the book which raises concerns on my part. Poks starts out with a sketch of the ways in which the modern, Western view of non-human animals as the Other facilitates a large-scale capitalist meat industry, which in practice means the killing and torturing of immeasurable numbers of non-human individuals. This is a description that I fully agree with, but I think that the idealizing ways in which this view is contrasted against Indigenous conceptualizations of non-human animals as teachers and kin are problematic, as can be exemplified by the following fragment: "In the beginning, when everything was in a state of transformation, there was no clear distinction between human and other-than-human beings: animals could become humans and humans animals; everyone lived in peace and spoke one language, bound by ties of kinship and ceremonial treaties. Traditional societies still honor these treaties, respecting the ties of kinship with all life. But modern societies have broken the ancient pacts, betrayed the trust, and transformed the common lifeworld into a deathworld." (10)

Ann-Sofie Lönngren
Södertörn University,
Sweden

As Poks states, the intersection between decoloniality and animal studies is a very recent one (8–13). I have been active in literary human–animal studies for more than 15 years, and I am convinced that Indigenous ontologies have much to offer in this field, and, in extension, to modern Western philosophy in general. I also believe that the marginalization and neglect of these beliefs and worldviews have been, and continue to be, motivated by racist values and capitalist concerns. In Sweden, we see very similar tendencies and processes in the relationship between the Northern-European nation-states and the indigenous Samí-people to those which Poks describes in an American context. There is no doubt that the usage of non-human animals in modern capitalism is highly destructive for basically everything: the environment, human health and morals, equality, justice and, of course, the creatures who are forced into or produced by the meat- and dairy industry. Consequently, there is a pressing necessity to acknowledge alternative modes of thought and living, as well as a necessity for a reinvigoration of narratives, truths and ontologies – and I do think that Poks proves that Hogan's authorship provides a kind of re-storying and re-minding that is much needed in this process. Still, it appears as counterproductive to sentimentally look towards another worldview as a "paradise lost," which seems to be the case in the quote above.

One of the pit-falls with this kind of thinking becomes apparent when Poks writes: "Traditional peoples (…) embrace cyclical notions of time, which enables them to remain hopeful, believe in renewal, and work toward survivability" (22). Another example is this: "The Indigenous people of North America believe that the animals that once roamed the continent did not simply become extinct" (60). Here, it seems that Poks has abandoned the discussion about different ontologies, and even about cosmology and mythology, in lieu of presumptions regarding what a certain ontology makes people believe and embrace, and how it effects their emotional life and political struggles. Of course, there is no such clear relationship between cause and effect in this case, and this is a gross simplification. Nevertheless, as Poks progresses in her analysis, it becomes evident that she holds a high regard for Indigenous cultures (nothing wrong with that). However, the discussions largely refrain from an idealization of these cultures and from hasty conclusions regarding the potential effects they may have. Instead, we get a detailed, in-depth, theoretically sophisticated analysis of the collected literary works of Hogan as regards the relationship between human and non-human animals.

In the debut collection of poetry *Calling Myself Home* (1978), Hogan recollects her Oklahoma childhood with its animals and trees, her family and ancestors, and everyday work. Poks acknowledges the ways in which she discusses frogs, fish and turtles in this context, and comes to the conclusion that *Calling Myself Home* as a whole functions as a correlate of the painful story of Indigenous America in the intense political debates of the 1970's. The 1980's poetry collections *Eclipse* (1983), *Seeing through the Sun* (1985) and *Savings* (1988) were, Poks claims, inspired by the author's residence in Colorado. They engage portrayals of crayfish, coyote, elks, horses and crows in an ecofeminist context, thus acknowledging the potential in what comes across as a fundamental, entangled relationship between animality and femininity.

In 1990, Hogan made her debut as a novelist with *Mean Spirit*, which was nominated to the Pulitzer prize, and, as Poks states, it imaginatively engages the traumas of human and non-human people Indigenous to North America. During this decade, she also wrote the novels *Solar Storms* (1993), which investigates the concept of wildness and the un-tamed, and *Power* (1998), in which sacrifice and the shared world of human- and non-human animals are portrayed. As Poks notes, there was one collection of poetry published in this period of time, *The Book of Medicines* (1993), which contributed to making Hogan's authorship publicly known, and in which, apart from writing about buffaloes, bears and crows, her interest in aquatic elements and the notion of wildness manifests itself. After the turn of the 21st century, Hogan published her last novel, *People of the Whale* (2008), in which she continues to explore the topic of marine biology and sketches an Indigenous people–whale continuum, which Poks productively discusses with Mary Louise Pratt's concept "contact zone." The interest in the whale is developed in Hogan's 2008 collection of poetry *Rounding the Human Corners*, in which the merging of humans and whales is thematized along with a celebration of life. In the ensuing collections of poetry, *Dark. Sweet* (2014) and *A History of Kindness* (2020), Poks notes that Hogan foregrounds mercy and compassion in relation to insects, birds, horses, whales and marine organisms, but also mourns the nonhuman victims of human-induced environmental disasters and human cruelty.

It is fascinating to follow Poks' narration of the aesthetic development of Hogan's rich authorship through the decades. Poks' choice to present prose and poetry decade-wise yet apart proves to be a constructive one, since it allows for an in-depth analysis that takes into account the specificities of both these genres. In particular, it is interesting

Ann-Sofie Lönngren
Södertörn University,
Sweden

to see the ways in which the engagement with Hogan's literary *oeuvre* provides a detailed overview of the potential and quality of the flat and relational ontology in Indigenous cultures as it comes to human-animal relations. Also, the variety of ways in which the human–animal relationship is entangled with the role of women in the Indigenous traditions is striking. According to Poks, Hogan's personal experiences and life are impossible to detract from her philosophy and politics, therefore she includes discussions about the author's life in the analysis of the texts. Although the author's biography is painted with broad strokes, and it is uncertain how effective this perspective is in the literary analysis, it nevertheless gives an impression of the indispensable connection between life, literature, politics and knowledge, which characterizes Indigenous literature. Through Hogan's own experiences in life, places such as Oklahoma and Colorado gain both material and metaphorical qualities in her literary works. This is also the case with the landscapes and the non-human animals who inhabit them and who become agents in their own right in a constant yet shifting and transformative relationship to the human, who is thus decentered in effective ways.

On an overall level, Poks' study is well-written, well-argued, detailed, respectful and coherent. The project that Poks carries out is much needed, as it apparently fills a gap in the previous research regarding representations of non-human animals in Indigenous literature in general, and in Hogan's authorship in particular. It also contributes to a justful canonization of Hogan as a writer of fiction. Moreover, the study displays the normativity of history writing, and proves that the past can be constructed in many different ways. Finally, *Decolonial Animal Ethics in Linda Hogan's Poetry and Prose. Towards Interspecies Thriving* demonstrates the great potential for indigenous studies and human–animal studies to engage in a fruitful dialogue that benefits both fields.

Abstract: Małgorzata Poks' *Decolonial Animal Ethics in Linda Hogan's Poetry and Prose: Towards Interspecies Thriving* (2023) focuses on the relationship between the modern, hierarchical, anthropocentric view of non-human animals, and the traditional, relational view in Indigenous ontologies. In dialogue with human-animal studies, decolonial studies, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), the study provides an in-depth engagement with the literary authorship of Chickasaw poet and novelist Linda Hogan. The questions that Poks asks are: What is the significance of Indigenous knowledges for the Anthropocene? How do these knowledges relate to the extinction of species and environmental grief? What insights are offered by Indigenous ethics to activists and decision makers in this regard? Despite the scope of Hogan's production there is not much written about her literary production, Poks claims,

even less so about the representation of the human-animal relationship in it. This is a lack which Poks makes up for in a thorough investigation of Hogan's prose and poetry from the 1970s until today. In Hogan's works, themes like mercy, compassion, wildness, grief, and the connection between femininity and animality are in constant dialogue with the painful story of Indigenous America. Through Hogan's own experiences in life, her description of places such as Oklahoma and Colorado gains both material and metaphorical qualities. This is also the case with the landscapes and the non-human animals who inhabit them and who become agents in their own right in a constant yet shifting and transformative relationship to the human, who is thus decentered in effective ways.

Keywords: literature, indigenuous studies, human–animal relations

Bio: Ann-Sofie Lönngren is a full (appointed) professor in literature at Södertörn university, Stockholm, Sweden. Her main research interests include Northern-European nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first century literature, animal studies, queer studies, posthumanism, new materialism and literary theory.

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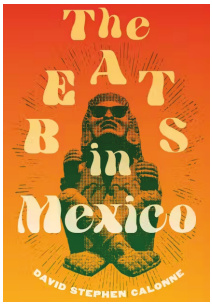
THE BEATS IN MEXICO BY DAVID STEPHEN CALONNE

(Book Review)



Nathaniel R. Racine
Texas A&M International University, USA
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1431-8629

The place that Mexico occupies in the literary imagination of foreign visitors, particularly those from the United States, is a question that receives periodic attention from a range of disciplinary standpoints and approaches. While it is not uncommon for scholars to focus on a specific period within the long history of cultural relations between Mexico and the US, including the postwar era, such studies tend to limit their considerations of the Beat generation to a chapter or two within lengthier works. In *The Beats in Mexico* (2022), David Stephen Calonne aims to correct that trend by presenting an extended study of the influence Mexico had on the Beat generation, including several previously neglected writers whose inclusion adds nuance to the popular understanding of the place of the Beats in twentieth-century US literature.

From the very first page, Calonne situates his study within the broader framework of literary history and scholarship—and the reader should place his book on the shelf next to the many others to which it is indebted, from early studies such as Drewey Wayne Gunn's *American and British Writers in Mexico* (1974) and Cecil Robinson's *Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest in American Literature* (1977),[1] to more recent entries such as Helen Delpar's *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican* (1992). As Gunn and Robinson both take a long historical perspective from the Spanish Colonial era to their present moment, Calonne's book is more akin to Delpar's, whose focus is confined to the US-Mexican

1 Originally published in 1963 as *With the Ears of Strangers: The Mexican in American Literature*.

cultural exchange during the interwar period. The very subject matter of *The Beats in Mexico* requires Calonne to draw similar historical boundaries in defining his approach to the postwar era, but more important is the way he contributes to an understanding of the commonly held ideas, or *topoi*, of Mexico in the foreign imagination. Delpar borrows this concept on the rhetoric of travel writing from Susan Noakes, who defines *topos* as "a commonly held notion about someone or something which is accepted as true virtually without question and carries rhetorical weight because of this special status accorded it by a particular audience" (qtd. in Delpar 1992: 200–201). The *topos*, then, "is intelligible because it embodies an *old* idea, although it may be embedded in a text the thrust of which is to present ideas or facts which are *new*" (Noakes 1986: 141). In the context of this discussion, the old ideas about "Mexico" find their way into the new writings of a new generation in a new era. The interpretation of any country by any foreign writer will almost always engage with prejudice and stereotype in one way or another—and Calonne's book provides insight into how the Beats simultaneously embraced, perpetuated, and reshaped the *topoi* of Mexico's representation by US writers. This pattern of old ideas embedded in new forms characterizes the interwar period as much as it does the postwar period—and these *topoi* remain visible today in the still customary descriptions of Mexico as having a uniquely 'authentic,' 'colorful,' or 'picturesque' character. Calonne recognizes the "clichéd view" of Mexico "which the Beats extol" (Calonne 2022: 222), while also illustrating the contrasting ways in which Beat writers also engaged with Mexico—its culture, literature, history, traditions, archaeology and ancient mythology—in thoughtful, productive ways, underrecognized contributors to the larger history of cultural relations between the two countries.

Although Mexico has long been a destination for foreign writers across generations, its relevance to the Beats—and to the US counterculture more generally—is deserving of further study (Calonne 2022: 1). It should be added that, when the Beats are mentioned in such discussions, scholars almost always limit their focus to well-known figures such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. While Calonne does not ignore these prominent figures, he dedicates himself to emphasizing the influence of Mexico on a wider range of Beat writers, most notably women. He frequently returns to this point, emphasizing that "While the male Beats are well represented in a variety of anthologies, histories of Beat literature, and university course offerings on the American counterculture, female members of the movement have been marginalized" (2022: 90). Even a cursory glance at the table of contents

Nathaniel R. Racine
Texas A&M International University, USA
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief

will reveal that a full third of the book's nine chapters are dedicated to female authors—and they are not relegated to a separate section of the book, but listed alongside their male contemporaries. Arranged in "roughly the order in which the Beats each arrived in Mexico across the decades" (Calonne 2022: 17), the chapters introduce readers to, in order of appearance: Lawrence Ferlinghetti, William S. Burroughs, Philip Lamantia, Margaret Randall, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Bonnie Bremser, Michael McClure (with a guest appearance by Jim Morrison), and Joanne Kyger.[2]

Calonne readily admits that the Beats "have rightly been accused of excluding women from their 'club' and of misogyny" (2022: 99), but the inclusion of Randall, Bremser, and Kyger is important not only for their role as women among the Beats, but also for their larger contributions to the cultural exchange between Mexico and the US. Kyger and Bremser, for example—alongside Burroughs and McClure (and Morrison)—incorporated indigenous shamanism into their works. Even more importantly, Bremser emphasized the role of the *curandera*, or female shaman, a figure who "has often been obscured in histories of shamanism" (Calonne 2022: 168). Although certainly not the final word on any of these customs, such examples illustrate how foreign visitors do sometimes play a role in the recovery and preservation of such "important spiritual tradition[s]" (Calonne 2022: 226).

Randall, on the other hand, is remembered for her role in founding the influential, bilingual Mexican literary journal, *El Corno Emplumado* (1962–1969), and one immediately thinks of the many other women throughout literary history who played critical roles in conveying an understanding and appreciation of Mexico to a US audience in similar ways. One thinks of Katherine Anne Porter and her *Outline of Mexican Arts and Crafts* (1922), as well as Frances Toor, who founded the journal *Mexican Folkways* (1925–1937), or perhaps Margaret Shedd, who was among the founders of the Centro Mexicano de Escritores in Mexico City in 1951.

One of the strengths of Calonne's book is that he maintains his focus on his chosen subject matter while simultaneously providing frequent opportunities for his readers to contemplate the much longer history to which his study belongs. There is a lengthy list of writers shuffled among the pages of *The Beats in Mexico*, including: Rudolfo

2 Another work which overlaps with—and merits some comparison to—*The Beats in Mexico*, is Glenn Sheldon's *South of Our Selves* (2004), which focuses on poetry written by US writers in Mexico during the 1950s, containing chapters on William Carlos Williams, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and Robert Hayden.

Anaya, Gloria Anzaldúa, Homero Aridjis, André Breton, Ernesto Cardenal, Carlos Castaneda, Stewart Chase, Robert Creeley, Diane di Prima, Édouard Glissant, Graham Greene, Langston Hughes, Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence, Denise Levertov, Malcolm Lowry, Charles Olson, Nicanor Parra, Octavio Paz, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, John Steinbeck, John Lloyd Stephens, Lew Welch, and William Carlos Williams, among many others. Whether or not the reader is an admirer of the Beats, their writings, or their worldview, Calonne suggests the many ways in which these nine writers are inextricably linked to the broader movement of literary history whether in Mexico, the US, or the world. The extensive endnotes provided by Calonne invite one to consider the myriad possibilities for future research, allowing the reader to make connections beyond the pages of his book. For that reason, *The Beats in Mexico* rewards careful reading and scholarly imagination.

Furthermore, the narrative Calonne provides is well organized, accessible, and very readable. Each one of his chapters begins with an introductory outline and ends with a summary conclusion, an approach that readers will recognize from his earlier book, *The Spiritual Imagination of the Beats* (2017). Although Mexico certainly contributed to that "spiritual imagination"—and the country is therefore mentioned almost out of necessity in that earlier study—here, the project's focus is on the importance of "Mexico" both as an idea and as a place: "The *border* with Mexico for the Beats signifies not just an imaginary line on a map but rather entry into the Other, the unknown," while simultaneously remembering that "The Beat response to Mexico was by no means monolithic" (Calonne 2022: 15, 16), an important balance that Calonne maintains across the nine chapters of his book.

That very same idea of the border, however, is also frequently the source of the "clichéd view" of Mexico that Calonne critiques elsewhere. Just as the Beat response to Mexico was not "monolithic," neither is Mexican culture. Calonne is well aware of this, noting that the Beats "traveled widely throughout Mexico—from Baja to Mexico City to Oaxaca to Chiapas to San Miguel de Allende to the great archaeological sites of the Yucatan—and the country became an inspiration for their literary creativity" (Calonne 2022: 16). These several places mentioned, alongside the dozens more where the Beats and others have travelled before and since, represent a vast diversity amid the regional geography of "Mexico" and, perhaps, a way of helping readers see through the old *topoi* and into the new perspectives the Beats offered to their own era.

Nathaniel R. Racine
Texas A&M International University, USA
RIAS Co-Editor-in-Chief

Given that many readers are likely unfamiliar with the regional variations within Mexico, however, *The Beats in Mexico* would have benefitted from the inclusion of a map to indicate the overlap and divergence of places visited and routes traveled. Left implicit in the various chapters, Calonne could have done more to emphasize the importance of the different landscapes and peoples encountered by travelers within Mexico, as the local settings of the Beats' experiences undoubtedly played a role in their representations of Mexico and would surely add to the reader's understanding of them, both individually and collectively.

In the end, however, what *The Beats in Mexico* offers is an important standpoint from which to revisit the place of "Mexico" in the literary imagination of foreign visitors to that country. In his concluding chapter, Calonne reminds his readers that "Mexico still has many things to teach us. Given the threats posed by the often ignorant, reactionary political climate in the United States, it is essential to emphasize our sense of kinship with this great country and its people, and to celebrate the humanitarian values which the Beats—not always perfectly—sought to affirm" (Calonne 2022: 226). Any book that contributes to that endeavor is of great value.

Abstract: *The Beats in Mexico* (2022) by David Stephen Calonne is reviewed here in terms of its contribution to the larger body of academic studies that explore the representation of Mexico in US literature. Calonne's study distinguishes itself by emphasizing the importance of overlooked female writers among the Beat generation, including Bonnie Bremser, Joanne Kyger, and Margaret Randall, who appear alongside more familiar names such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. In doing so, Calonne expands the discussion of the Beats in important ways and, furthermore, offers a welcome contribution that enriches the conversation around the understanding (and misunderstanding) of Mexico by US writers and intellectuals. Given the continued tensions between the two countries, it should be of great topical interest as well.

Keywords: Beat Generation, Mexico in Literature, book review, David Steven Calonne

Bio: Nathaniel R. Racine is an assistant professor of English in the Department of Humanities at Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Texas, and the Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Review of International American Studies*. He holds a PhD in English from Temple University in Philadelphia and a professionally-accredited Master's degree in Urban Planning from McGill University in Montréal, Canada. In 2018–2019 he was a Fulbright Postdoctoral Scholar to Mexico. His recent work draws from the fields of geography and urbanism to understand the cultural exchange between the US and Mexico from the interwar period through midcentury.

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CONTACT INFORMATION
rias@iasa-world.org
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CONTACT INFORMATION
University of Silesia Press
University of Silesia in Katowice
ul. Bankowa 12 B
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Poland
wydawnictwo@us.edu.pl
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