

## INTRODUCTION

*Ilha do Desterro* usually publishes articles and reviews in English. This, however, is a different issue: it gathers essays about travel writing, about voyages to other lands and other languages. One usually thinks of travel writing as by observers from a “center” encountering the wonders of the “periphery,” of a “self” encountering an interesting, fearful (what a wonderful, two-edged word!), exotic “other.” Yet several of the articles in this collection also examine accounts that reverse the direction of travel, or that overturn the definitions of what is “self” and what is “other,” affirming a self that questions the “othering.” Many—though not all—of the essays address accounts in English about Brazil, and those that do not still engage those same questions. It seems therefore appropriate that, in this case, the contributors should feel free to use either of the two languages, English or Portuguese. It is—is it not?—in the spirit of the enterprise.

Travel writing brings to the fore fundamental and unresolvable contradictions: it records (but at times simply imagines) how geographic dislocation confirms and destabilizes the self, whether that is understood culturally or psychologically. It records conquest and the imposition of the cultural self on a cultural other, but it also records exploration and the opening of the self; it glamorizes the dangers of both. It probes, discovers, and misunderstands. It caters to irrepressible needs for movement and for stories, and explores the tension between the

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restlessness of dislocation and the quiet needed for stories. These stories, in turn, derive their strength from the incompatible tasks they set themselves: to make sense of a swiftly grasped present that cannot be understood without a past, to discover meaning with insufficient language, to explain otherness while caught up in a self that makes communication back “home” possible and at the same time constitutes an obstacle to the apprehension of its object. Finally, travel writing can offer both justification and sharp critique of self and the culture where it was formed—that same self that marks its allegiance to its cultural origin in the act of leaving it.

Writing about others is old: twenty-five hundred years ago Herodotus, historian and ethnographer, set out, as he explains, to record the deeds of Greeks and non-Greeks, and how the two came into conflict, sounding the notes of sympathy, wonder, and opposition that echo through the genre. Pliny relates wonders; Marco Polo brings the fantasies of Mandeville and St. Brendan back to solid ground—at least for a while; Columbus tries to convince himself that he might have found Polo’s Cipango, which would help convince the Spanish crown to finance further expeditions to what he did find; Jean de Léry’s *Historie d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* is an ethnological trove of information about the original—cannibal!—inhabitants of the Brazilian coast and an indictment of cannibalism and other atrocities committed by Europeans during the French wars of religion; Hans Staden’s account of imprisonment among those same Brazilian peoples popularized images of barbecued Europeans—with wood-cut visuals—for sensation-hungry readers; von Humboldt’s thirty-plus volumes of observations from his voyages to the New Continent are a monumental contribution to science, while Richard F. Burton’s account of infiltrating the Hajj to Mecca thrills the reader with news of the secret and dangerous places of the world. Travel literature is both a literature of finding solace in foreign natural scenes and common ground with strange and sometimes “barbarous” people and a literature of dangerous exploits and survival against challenges from a hostile environment and unfriendly “others.”

Taken together, the essays in this volume explore the various facets of this protean genre, and make clear the difficult but inevitable interconnections among all parts of the world as well as the interfaces of the literature of travel with other genres and disciplines: history and histories, fantasy, anthropology, natural history, the novel. Above all, they place reading and writing at the center of the very possibility of knowledge.

These essays are grouped in three sections that explore, as the title for this special issue of *Ilha do Desterro* evokes, the many possible ideologies that inform travel discourse on foreign land. The first section, entitled “Who Gazes on Whom,” sets the terms of the discussion, with the opening essay by Mary Louise Pratt, and comprises essays that reveal the interconnections among different gazes, which rely heavily, of course, on the locus of enunciation and the often ambiguous position of the traveler.

Mary Louise Pratt’s “Na neocolônia: modernidade, mobilidade, globalidade” examines the writings, fictional and other, of Latin American authors (Horacio Quiroga, Mario de Andrade, Alejo Carpentier) as they confront two problems: one is what one could call the internal exotic—those parts of their own countries that form a periphery of the periphery, thus mapping a “neocolony” which, in places like the “Misiones”—remnants of the Jesuit villages in a territory now part of Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina—have become a “parody of cosmopolitanism on the periphery” and at the same time constitute a center of the “neo-colonial order.” The other problem is that of the “other” side of travel reports, the observed, the people who constitute the subjects (or objects) of the account—or, in other words, the question of how to make of the destination of travel writers in search of “otherness,” a home for the self. This question reverses the usual meanings, in travel writing, of “self” and “other,” and deflects back to the travel report the usual direction of its attention. A dramatic example of this reversal, in travel literature itself, is Alejo Carpentier’s essay on the American *real maravilloso* (which became known as “magical realism” in English); as Pratt reminds us, it is in fact a travel account that directs the attention of an American (in the broad sense) writer whose

land is usually the object of travelogues, toward Europe, usually the source of the accounts. This not only shuffles the usual relations between the origins of observer and observed but also calls attention to the inevitably mediated nature of any knowledge acquired and transmitted: one knows the other by reading what others have written. Carpentier has not read about China, but Prague speaks to him, mediated by his having read Schiller, Kepler, Kafka: cognition is actually recognition.

On the basis of correspondence and other written material, Marisa Lajolo's "Monteiro Lobato: um brasileiro em trânsito" traces the trajectory of a well-known Brazilian novelist and essayist (and the author or some of the best children's books around as well as of the still controversial, if perhaps ultimately prophetic novel *O presidente negro*—The Black President—set in the U.S.) as commercial attaché to the Brazilian consulate in New York. His appointment, in itself, marks his Brazilian difference: the granting of government positions to writers and other artists is as common in Brazil as it is rare in the U.S. Lajolo's essay illustrates not, as one might expect, Lobato's effort to explain the US to Brazil through an organized account, but rather the effort to make Brazil known and respected in a U.S. that is not paying a lot of attention: the story of a visit by Miss Brazil, completely ignored in NY but touted as a great success abroad in the Brazilian press is but one example. More significantly, the essay traces the political convergences and divergences between Brazil and the U.S. as well as those between the writer-diplomat and his own country and employer, in a game of power relations seen from the point of view of the less powerful entity—relations that most of the time are only implicit in the literature of travel.

Renata Wasserman's "Exotic Science and Domestic Exoticism: Theodore Roosevelt and J. A. Leite Moraes in Amazonia" follows two voyages into Amazonia, by J. A. Leite Moraes, on completing his appointment by the Brazilian Emperor D. Pedro II as president of the province of Goiás, and by the American ex-president Theodore Roosevelt on his last daring adventure to trace the course of a recently discovered river in the Amazon forest. Leite Moraes chose to return to his native São Paulo by boat, via Amazonia, in order to avoid another

episode of the hemorrhoids that the horseback portion of his travel to Goiás had caused. Roosevelt is in search of danger, which assails him in various manifestations of the natural world—waterfalls and rapids; mud and decay; wild animals, ferocious ants, and bacteria that almost kill him—to say nothing of human evildoers; and in the form of the hardships of heat, hunger, an incessant rain that dissolves the very skin of the explorers. But he is also in search of knowledge about the natural world, which would help him contain and control it and also serve the visitors and curators of the New York Museum of Natural History where he sends the specimens he and his expedition have collected. The two accounts raise a gamut of problems in what Mary Louise Pratt has called the contact zone, from the macropolitics of relations between the Emperor's central power and the internal periphery of Brazil, to those of relations between a former U.S. president with Brazilian authorities eager to honor and help him, distrustful of his good will and stamina, and worried about their responsibility for his safety, and from the micropolitics of how to manage the consequences the central government's neglect of infrastructure to the problems of dealing with murder on the expedition where the ex U.S. president is a guest, but is controlled, after all, by a Brazilian military man.

The following section, "Foreign Gazes on Brazil," includes essays that focus on the many travel accounts by visitors to Brazil, beginning with the first travelers in the early nineteenth century to more contemporary ones.

In "On Coming Home: Ensuring the Validity of the Traveler's Discourse on Brazil," Myriam Ávila directs our attention away from the accuracy or bias of accounts toward the strategies through which the writers made them believable to their audiences. After all, they were telling wonders about fabled lands, and intended those to be taken as truth, not products of the imagination, distinguishing them from the fictions that would prompt Percy G. Adams to title his book on travel literature *Travelers and Travel Liars: 1660-1800* ([1962] New York: Dover, 1980), or lies behind the skeptical German saying (appropriate, since two of the travelers Ávila deals with are German-speaking as are their

readers): “Wenn einer eine Reise tut, denn kann er was erzählen” that is, “when someone has traveled, he can tell things”; the implication is that those things are not necessarily true, but are not verifiable by the listeners. The three writers travel to Brazil at different times between the beginning and the end of the nineteenth century, and account for it from when it was first opened to foreign economic activities after the Portuguese royal family and government moved to Rio de Janeiro and the second third of the century, when the then independent Brazil was trying to define itself as a nation and find its way into the world scene. Ávila traces the discursive models according to which the three travelers addressed their audiences, whether those were the prince whom Eschewege served or the general novel-reading, science-believing public that read Tschudi or Wells and that was familiar with Burton and Goethe. At the center of her argument is the insight that, though the accounts did not circulate widely, they are valuable not only for the information they give but also for how they document the gradually developing separation between scientific texts and all others, and the differing degrees of credence each kind grew to command. Related to that is her examination of changes in travel writing in relation to developments in more general habits of reading and writing, like the growth and increasing popularity of the novel. It is a useful reminder of the formal aspects of travel writing and of its place within a system of literary production that can appear more clearly in little-read works.

In “Judging from the Eye: Representation of Women in Alexander Caldcleugh’s *Travelogue*,” Julio Jeha addresses from the start, not the psychological or cultural implications of travel writing about what Pratt calls the “periphery,” but its insertion in the prevalent economic system: the description and recognition of “otherness” are part of the flow of information that facilitates and naturalizes a system of exploitation in which the contemplation of nature shades over into the accounting of natural resources, raw material for manufactories. Jeha notes the course, clear in the travelogue, that leads away from the dream of finding a tropical paradise to be regained or a “natural” man to be admired or converted to a true religion, toward the search for hitherto untapped

markets. Alexander Caldcleugh, writing about Brazil shortly after the Portuguese colonial power opened it to foreign commerce and investments, sees a vast landscape of opportunities for England, which has a natural right to explore, or exploit it. To further his purpose of explaining Brazil so that the English will find it easier to profit from their enterprises there, Caldcleugh, as Jeha shows, tries to find the more general characteristics of the land and its population; his account is full of sentences that start with “the men are...” or “the women are...” The result is a lack of individuation and a blindness to nuances of personality and landscape and, Jeha argues, these characteristics of his stance are most evident in his comments about Brazilian women, consistently seen as producers of goods and workers rather than as persons, in a commodification that eventually covers both the human and the physical landscapes.

Sandra Almeida’s “The Politics and Poetics of Travel: The Brazil of Elizabeth Bishop and P. K. Page” discusses these two contemporary women travelers and poets as they visited Brazil (and lived here, as is the case of Bishop) during the first half of the twentieth century. Although both writers traveled around the country about the same time and wrote poetry, diaries, letters, and other pieces about their perception of the country, they never met. Their foreign gazes, however, confirm the inevitable ideology that informs most travel accounts: a blindness and bias towards the country, and especially, against the people—a gaze that reproduces the familiar trope of the uncivilized native. While evoking their fascination with the country’s natural landscape, the writers also replicate the age-old impressions of the “new world” that have dominated the European imagination since the Portuguese colonization and the first documents about the country, such as Pero Vaz Caminha’s “letter of discovery.” The article discusses how both writers create an experience of the country that is aestheticized and thus objectified for the benefit, not only of the foreign gaze but also of the eyes (“I”s) of the poet and artist.

“Elsewhere” is the last section of this volume and presents essays that discuss travel literature from different perspectives and a variety of possible gazes.

Laura Izarra's "John Banville's Haunted Journeys to a Prague of the Mind: Portraits of the Invisible Side of a City" addresses an instance of contact between a Dublin Irishman and the city of Prague—both cities are, at the time, subject to an outside power and both appear to the rest of the world overwritten by towering literary and artistic figures (Joyce, Kafka). What kind of relation can be set up between them without the intimacy provided by contact in the context of a power inequality? Banville, in writing the account of that encounter, then takes on the role not only of chronicler but also of accomplice, smuggling out a collection of photographs that turn out, at the same time, to frame his view of the city and make the city real, thus grounding his understanding of it and his account.

While confirming Ávila's point that the novel institutes its own, and distinct brand of accuracy and truth-telling, Sandra Guardini Teixeira Vasconcelos, in "Wavering over Borderlines: History and Fiction in Walter Scott," shows that the concept of "travel" is elastic and that the displacement and estrangement that traveling entails can be created when the "here" and the "there" of the traveler border on each other geographically but are distant in time and in culture. In her reading of the *Waverley* novels by Walter Scott, Vasconcelos sees many of the phenomena addressed in other essays of this collection. Yet Scott's account is fiction and the clashes in purpose and culture happen between an Englishman and the Scotsmen among whom he moves, or rather, moved in what was already a remote past for both writer and readers. Nevertheless, as in other accounts of the exotic, questions of identity are central and intimately connected with questions of political and cultural power and domination. The identities, however, are those of peoples who, from the point of view of the "objects" of accounts about Brazil, do not have to work at their own assertion or definition. In the word of the travelers to the exotic world, it is the Brazilian or "American" identity that is undefined and that needs to be formed—a perception that, as one sees in Pratt's account—bleeds into the exoticized self. Caldcleugh, as Jeha notes, observes that the "Venus" dancing in a performance at the opera house in Rio did not have a European "hue"; in that context it is, one might say, amusing to read in Scott, as Guardini



reports, that the Highlands population “conveyed to the south country Lowlanders as much surprise as if an invasion of African negroes, or Esquimaux Indians had issued forth from the northern mountains of their own native country.”

Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins’s “Ricardo Sternberg and ‘This Dreamt Departure to El Dorado, the Indies, the Island of Hy-Breasil’” analyzes Sternberg’s book of poems *Map of Dreams* and his tale of discovery of new maps and destinations as he weaves myth and history and produces a literary account rooted in the ideology of travel literature. As it focuses on the search for the mythological island of Hy-Breasil, “an enchanted floating island off the coast of Ireland,” the poems disclose, through a myriad of voices, the politics of travel literature by reproducing with a critical gaze the many voyage narratives and chronicles from the perspective of the imperial eyes/Is. Discussing the intertextual connections explored by Sternberg, Martins lays bare the longstanding reliance on “the seen” as the conveyor of valuable truth so frequent in narratives of discovery and exploration. The poems, Martins argues, question and problematize several images and metaphors associated to traditional travel writing, such as endowing the land to be conquered with feminine attributes, thus presenting a relentless account of historical travels and cultural crossings.

This issue closes with Marcelo Ribeiro’s review of Johannes Fabian’s *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*, a critical work that discusses a broad corpus of travelogues—from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, focusing on “passage from exploration to occupation as the dominant aspect of Europe’s relationship with Africa” to highlight and critique what he and several other critics have referred to as the biased European perspective of travel writing. Throughout the work, Fabian ties his argument to the discourse on hygiene (especially “tropical hygiene”) as a regime of control, revealing the world of science as an essential tool of control. He also delves into interesting aspects of travel literatures such as the discourse on eroticization of the tropics and the Africans; the occurrences of humor and laughter both from the locals’ and the

colonized's perspectives; the material culture of exploration and the European obsession for collecting; the role of language in the colonial enterprise; the readings of illustrations in travelogues. Ribeiro affirms that Fabian performs a relevant double critique of the myth of exploration, as an abstraction, questioning the role of representation; and as an extract, revealing important "ingredients" for ethnographical research; and also a critique of myth of exploration and a critique of reason. Fabian's thesis relies on the relevant premise that "the myth of exploration has been a centerpiece among the images of Western rationality" and thus "it follows that a critique of that myth should and could be ... a critique of reason." By doing so, Fabian chooses to foreground the chaotic, the incongruities and the contradictions in travel narratives through an analysis of ecstasis as the pragmatic and existential negation of control.

Thus do the essays in this collection, as well as the texts they examine, end up speaking to each other. This is the reason and the purpose for having them all here, together, ordering and reordering into patterns of intelligibility the questions of identity, culture, and power that arise whenever two human groups come together with interest in each other. And this interest matters, in the end, more than its origin; it is when this interest is absent, when "otherness" is rejected, when the imagination capable of apprehending this "otherness" atrophies that one witnesses the greatest instances of brutality of one group against another. This is why travel accounts, even lying, wrong-headed ones, even those that want to foster exploitation, have their own kind of redeeming value, if they acknowledge, in some way, that it is first necessary, even if it is impossible to do it fully, to know and understand the other.

**Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida**

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

**Renata Wasserman**

Wayne State University