
Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, editors. *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies*. Palgrave, 2015. Pp. xiii, 325. US\$109.99.

Travel literature studies gained scholarly interest after the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 and has since witnessed various critical approaches, including postcolonialist readings that critique the genre's imperialist ideology; attention to region-, time-, and author-specific narratives; and focuses on tourism, gender, and postmodern travel. The eighteen essays in *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies*, edited by Julie Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, represent the major critical methodologies applied to the genre and aim to "augmen[t] and complemen[t]" what is already available in the field (Kuehn and Smethurst 2).

The book develops travel writing studies within the emerging field of geohumanities through its "particular focus on the spatio-linguistic properties" of the genre (3). Part I, "Textuality," contains three essays that examine "the semiotics of travel"—the language travel writers employ (5). One essay compares the original and revised versions of the same text; one analyzes the often underestimated importance of language in tourists' cross-cultural accounts; and the third investigates the paratexts—titles, prefaces, footnotes, images, and epigraphs—of travel books to lay bare the complexity and instability of the genre. Michael Cronin's study of travel, language, and translation would be a valuable addition here because translation is at stake in cross-cultural contacts: he proposes to examine the traces of intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation in travel writing (Cronin 3).

Part II, "Topology," explores the concept of the "geocritical imagination" and includes three essays that place geographical environments at the centre of reading travel literature (Kuehn and Smethurst 6). This approach showcases the contradictions that can exist between a traveller's original sense of a place and his/her response to it while travelling there and questions the truthfulness of travel writing, seen in such scholarship as Nicholas Clifford's *"A Truthful Impression of the Country."* Charles Forsdick's essay in Part III, "Mobility," is particularly strong. It questions travel writing's excessive dependence on the visual and attends instead to texts produced by visually impaired travellers. This approach to the travel genre builds on David Spurr's critique of the excessive reliance on visibility articulated in *The Rhetoric of Empire*. Part IV, "Mapping," contains essays that examine the political, ideological, and commercial implications of either scientifically or imaginatively constructed maps and forms another dimension of the book's geohumanities focus.

Part V, "Alterity," examines representations of otherness in travel literature. Wendy Bracewell's essay focuses on texts produced by "travellers," or writers from within the countries that European travel writers visit. She admits that the term "travellers"—borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt—is "slightly awkward," yet Bracewell's approach does not reinforce the self/other binary that the term seems to suggest (Kuehn and Smethurst 216). I find it intriguing that her approach stages a cross-cultural dialogue and gives voice to the subject of the traveller. This voice is meaningful not only because it questions the authority of the traveller's report on the foreign country but also because it materializes his or her moments of critical self-reflection. For example, the eighteenth-century French travel writer Fleuriot de Langle's depictions of Spain are understood by the Spaniards as "sarcastic," "flippant," and inaccurate (221); the Spanish man-of-letters Antonio Ponz acknowledges that, although erroneous, foreign travellers' accounts of the country in the 1780s set a "most efficacious alarm to make us take account" (qtd. in Kuehn and Smethurst 221). He values the self-reflections elicited by the cross-cultural narratives. Bracewell suggests that putting the individual and the collective "I" in brackets and taking the others' perspectives into account make travel conceptually productive.

The volume ends with "Globality," a critical perspective that investigates the utopian dimension of travel writing and studies the forms of cosmopolitanism represented in the genre. In addition to the geohumanities approaches to travel writing, the essays included in this volume pertain to Japan, China, Mexico, Hong Kong, the Pacific, and Africa, and cover a time span that dates back to the 1500s. Thus, the collection provides a colourful tapestry of travel writing studies in its current stage.

Recently, Patrick Brown published a critical review of Alexandre Trudeau's *Barbarian Lost: Travels in New China*. Titled "The Orient Express," the review finds fault with Trudeau's "whirlwind, and sometimes cliché-rich, tour of China" (Brown 13). If put under the geohumanities critical lens *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* offers, Trudeau's travel account of China may manifest new readings. His focus on subject Ai Weiwei, for instance, transgresses the normative boundary of "the traveller." Representing Ai as an artist who knows how to please Western audiences also indicates Trudeau's critical view of the collective identity that "the Western" signifies. As I have indicated in a response to Brown's review, Trudeau observes that Vivian, another traveller who is also his translator and guide, has been humbled as a result of living away from her native country (Chen 32). Such an observation raises the question of how the traveller, too, has been humbled as a result of interacting with China. With the critical perspective illustrated in *New*

Directions in Travel Writing Studies, Brown's review would probably be able to attend to the ways in which the nuances of Trudeau's travel narrative conflict with its own Orientalistic rhetoric.

Leilei Chen

Works Cited

- Brown, Patrick. "The Orient Express: Alexandre Trudeau's Whirlwind, and Sometimes Cliché-rich, Tour of China." *Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 24, no. 7, 2016, p. 13.
- Chen, Leilei. "Re: 'The Orient Express' by Patrick Brown," *Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 35, no. 9, 2016, p. 32.
- Clifford, Nicholas. *"A Truthful Impression of the Country": British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880–1949*. U of Michigan P, 2001.
- Cronin, Michael. *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation*. Cork UP, 2000.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Pantheon, 1978.
- Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Durham, 1993.
- Trudeau, Alexandre. *Barbarian Lost: Travels in New China*. Harper, 2016.