

Introduction

OUT OF THE spatial displacement through time, the literature of travel is made, has been made in the English language ever since Beowulf, en route to the mere, "suddenly . . . found mountain trees leaning out over hoary stone, a joyless wood: water lay beneath, bloody and troubled." But the academic study of this genre has had a far shorter history. Because most curricula were fashioned by university departments of literature during the reign, or in the wake, of High Modernism's academic disdain for all but a few genres, study of the one that gave birth to the English novel and some forms of poetry has languished. A good thing, too, opined Jan Morris, perhaps the most widely read contemporary travel writer, at the Olympic Games Writers Festival in Calgary two years ago.

This issue of *ARIEL* essays to redress the neglect, and if Ms. Morris deserves an apology for our doing so, she may consider one granted. It is a fitting time for this journal to offer such a discussion because 1990 marks the tricentennial of the travels of Henry Kelsey, the explorer who authored the first English-language account about the lands that are, today, the Canadian prairies, and home of *ARIEL*. The issue opens with an essay about Kelsey's ninety lines of verse, a form not uncommonly employed by travelers in the age of the encyclopedists: Hakluyt, Purchas, and their successors.

During the course of the issue's other essays and its poems, the genre receives extensive study; some of its most prominent traits and changes are examined and debated, and some of the problems it raises for theoretical discussion are identified. An effort has been made, to the extent that it is possible within the limitations of one issue (and these have been generously permitted to expand some-

what for the occasion), to represent the centuries in which the parts of the globe about which travel literature in English has been written. Similarly, the essays collectively examine the forms which the genre has taken — the decasyllabic couplet, the discontinuous field note, the journal, the diary, the narrative, the report, the letter, the history, the ethnography, the novel, and combinations of them — as well as the types of traveller who have written it — imperial explorers, merchants, professional writers of prose and poetry, anthropologists, immigrants, tourists, academics, refugees, women and men. Race is a somewhat different matter. British men and women have been writing about travel to colonies and territories for a much longer time than the colonized and colonists have been writing back in this genre. The British have travelled much more; travel literature is largely a Western genre. There is not yet, therefore, an extensive body of travel literature by, for example, Black Africans. One essay in this issue shows one way in which Blacks have responded to what is for the most part a foreign genre bearing oppressive symbolic values and displaying an obviously substantial First-World economic underpinning. That their response has sometimes taken the form of fiction — the anthropological novel — is perhaps no surprise, but two of the poems in this issue represent another form of response.

Because travel narratives often reflect their authors' awareness of where they departed from as well as where they travelled to, the identity of a writer's audience is a keenly considered matter by those who study this genre. For whom, in the first instance, are accounts written? In what ways are accounts shaped for their intended audiences, and on what ideological grounds and under whose pen do words written "in the field" metamorphose from mediations of experience into marketable narratives? (Is there a greater symbol of imperialism than the book of travel?) Do we or ought we to read a document just as we would a published narrative of travel? Where do reports end and tales begin: as soon as pencil is put to paper? before? later on, back at the publishing centre? En route to England in 1921, Stephen Leacock was asked, "immediately on [his] arrival in London — or just before it —" to write three columns worth of traveller's impressions: on the genius of the English, on the spirit of London, and on a chat with

Lord Northcliffe. Leacock demurred, stating, in the grand tradition of the tale-telling traveller: "This contract I was unable to fulfil except the personal chat with Lord Northcliffe, which proved an easy matter as he happened to be away in Australia."

The very encouraging response to the call for submissions to this special issue has meant that several essays on the genre have spilled over into subsequent issues. It remains for me to thank Dr. Victor Ramraj, and the Editorial Board of *ARIEL*, for having extended me the invitation to prepare this issue.

I. S. MACLAREN

