



Tim Youngs. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xi + 240 pp. \$30.99, paper, ISBN 978-0-521-69739-2.

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Tim Youngs's *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (2013) provides a comprehensive and lucid discussion of travel writing from the medieval to the contemporary period. Even though this book is an introduction to the genre, it is not only aimed at people who are new to travel writing but is also of interest to those already familiar with many of the key discussions in the field.

The first part of the book gives a historical overview of travel writing from the medieval period to the twenty-first century. Youngs is always careful to situate the genre in relation to political, historical, and economic developments—to give readers a sense of how texts are shaped by their contexts while also offering an analysis of key themes and works in each period. For example, the author traces the genre's roots to medieval travelers' accounts while foregrounding its debt to other genres, such as factual records, mythical and legendary accounts of people and places, and ancient epics, thus emphasizing travel writing's situatedness between fact and fiction since its inception. Another key aspect of this early travel writing, especially in its early modern manifestation, is its link with, and intervention in, politics, which is a relationship that Youngs returns to throughout his book.

In his discussion of eighteenth-century travel writing, Youngs identifies the picaresque, the Grand Tour narrative, and Romantic writing as key elements of this period but he also highlights the emergence of female travel writers, which he illustrates through the example of Mary Wollstonecraft's work. In the nineteenth century, travel writing was not only shaped in terms of how people traveled—with an increased number of middle-class people having access to transport and migrations between the metropolis and the colonies—but also in the ways in which books and narratives circulated. Combined with improved literacy rates, this latter phenomenon resulted in more people having access to travel accounts. Moreover, this period was marked by a focus outward but also a turn inward, as Youngs notes: "The Romantics furnish an example of individuals finding themselves reflected in the landscape and turning to nature for social and political criticism. The correspondence between mood, thought and nature signifies a deep relationship between the figure and the environment that distinguishes the subject from the tourist who passes unseeingly, and unfeelingly, through it" (p. 54). Apart from foregrounding the important relationship between travelers and their environment, this discussion also foreshadows the contemporary distinction between the traveler and the tourist. Due

to the expansion of empire, this century also saw the revival of the character of the “explorer-hero” (p. 59), which was often based on heroes from earlier periods. The advent of “modernity,” the development of intellectual and aesthetic movements, two World Wars, and the decline of empire in the twentieth century led to a break with many of the conventions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the hero figure and the picturesque and the sublime. Another key feature of the twentieth-century travel account is a sense of narrators and travel writers being “not at home in their current setting, or indeed, in the places they have left behind” (p. 78), often accompanied by a sense of loneliness, which can either be felt as negative or as positive in an increasingly busy world.

This historical overview of travel writing is complemented by an in-depth discussion of the genre’s thematic concerns in the second part of the book, including the quest and inner journeys. The most interesting chapters in this second part, especially for readers already familiar with the travel writing genre, are those on postcolonial travels and on gender and sexuality (including gay travel writing), especially the ways in which these types of travel writing complicate engagements with otherness. The book concludes with chapters on writing and reading travel writing before discussing the challenges of the genre in the twenty-first century. Key developments in the contemporary period include the advent of blogs and easier access to self-publishing, which mean that travel accounts reach a wider, and potentially more global, audience. However, as Youngs notes in a previous chapter, one of the limitations of travel writing as a field of inquiry and as a genre of writing is that there are very few opportunities for working outside of major European languages. Nevertheless, he argues that “the Internet provide[s] a new mental geography; it alters one’s reading of the external world” (p. 179). Apart from this altered perspective, the author also draws attention to the possibilities for collabora-

tive writing that the Internet offers. He concludes by identifying further avenues for study within travel writing, which include age and travel writing, further innovations in transport and mobility, and indigenous perspectives, including the dissemination of nonwritten travel accounts.

The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing impresses through its historical and thematic scope and the wide range of texts it covers as well as its discussion of the issues that preoccupy the field in the twenty-first century. In a different format, there would have been more space for extended discussions of specific texts and potentially longer chapters on what Youngs sees as key developments in the field, such as postcolonial and gender and sexuality perspectives. However, as this book is part of the Cambridge Introduction series, it fulfills its brief by providing a clear and wide-ranging introduction to the field of travel writing, which combined with a few in-depth case studies gives readers a good overview of the history of travel writing and its challenges and opportunities in the twenty-first century.

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