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Graulund, Rune

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Travel Writing in the Age of Globalization

Rune Graulund

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Summary and Keywords

Globalization and global travel have existed for centuries. It is over the past century in particular, however, that travel has become truly global, in the sense that most and not just some travel can in some way or other be said to globalized. Indeed, with the invention and spread of new technologies of mobility (like jet travel), and new technologies of information (like the internet), as with the increasingly invasive impact of human activity on the planet at large (like global warming), it is difficult to conceive of travel in the 21st century that is purely “local.” Travel in the age of globalization, then, is at one and the same time both more widespread yet also more irrelevant than ever. As humans, goods, and information move around in ever-increasing quantities, and at ever-greater speed, it seems that mobility is at an all-time high in human history. On the other hand, as a rising number of people and places are interlinked through ever-faster travel and various forms of communication technologies, the local and the global are becoming harder and harder to distinguish.

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In this, travel *writing* has faced a range of challenges that are both old and new. With contemporary travel writers facing a global reality that is very different from the colonial legacy of a traditionally Eurocentric genre, travel writers in the age of globalization have been forced to radically reconsider the itineraries, the destinations, the purpose, and the identity of the traveling subject. Traditionally defined as a white (European) male, the global traveler of the 21st century can take on many forms in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. At the same time, however, a large number of contemporary travel writers have found it hard to break with the mold of old, desperately continuing to pursue the exotic adventure and the untouched “otherness” of the blank spaces of a map that, in the age of Google Earth, satellite navigation, jet and space travel, global warming, and an explosive growth in human population, are no more.

Keywords: travel writing, globalization, place, non-place, tourism, belatedness, mobility, global warming, global city, Anthropocene

Travel Writing in the Age of Globalization

As the world has become increasingly globalized, travel as well as travel writing have changed in practice as in theory. First and most obviously so, this is evident in the way in which the technologies of mobility have changed the manner and the speed in which people travel from one place to the other. With the invention and expansion in the use of cars, high-speed trains, jet travel, and space travel, travel has in the past century seen a development that has forever altered ideas of the distant, the exotic, and the faraway. Second, due to the rapid spread and change in communication and media technologies, the way in which reports and news of and from distant places are viewed has changed alongside travel itself. As the traditional travel-writing book has seen competition from television shows, documentary films, podcasts, blogs, and social media, the means of “writing” travel has therefore changed as well. Third, the physical territory traveled has transformed, and radically so. For as the human population has grown from under two billion people at the turn of the century in 1900 to over 7.5 billion at the time of writing, human activity has changed place locally as well as globally. Indeed, according to some theorists, “place” as it was once recognized no longer exists. Rampant urban growth and transport infrastructure like roads and railways envelop the globe. Forests and jungles are logged, swamps are drained and mountains strip mined, tundras and deserts drilled and fracked for oil, all the while temperatures and oceans are rising as the polar ice is receding. In such a world, it is questionable whether there is still a place left on the globe that has not undergone some sort of alteration by human hand.

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In what manner has globalization influenced the ideas, theory, and practice of travel writing through the ages, but particularly over the past century? While most of human history can technically be said to take place during some form of globalization process, travel and travel writing in the 20th and 21st centuries, during which globalization as known in the 21st century came to the fore.

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- First of all, in an increasingly *globalized* world—in which physical mobility is on the increase even as emergent technologies like Virtual Reality threatens/promises to annul physical travel altogether—does it even make sense to talk of distance, the foreign, travel, and travel writing anymore? If we are all becoming alike, and an increasing number of people can with ease be transported around the globe in a matter of hours, how does this affect the notion of travel as an encounter with difference?
- Second, in an increasingly *human* world, does the future hold out much hope for travel as a concept? If *everything, everywhere, and everyone* are more and more like 'us, where can we go in order to locate that which is different, foreign, exotic, and *not us*?
- Third, who exactly is this “we” that are getting more and more mobile only to bemoan that “they” are becoming more like “us”? In a global age in which inequality is on the rise and forced migration is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon, the question of who travels, and for what reason, is as important as ever.

Locating Travel in an Increasingly Globalized World

With several multinational companies currently in serious competition to offer extraterrestrial travel to circumnavigate Earth from space, and with billions of people having access to technologies that allow for instant communication, there can be no doubt that the world in the 21st century is thoroughly globalized.¹ Globe, global, planet, and planetary are invoked again and again in discussions of subjects as diverse as food, migration, tourism, urbanization, digitization, finance, and politics, even in as ordinary and seemingly commonplace a thing as the weather (which is now inadvertently tied up with discussions of climate). There is nothing left, it seems, that cannot in some way or other be contextualized through the global. In the 21st century, no matter where we go, and no how matter how we get there, we are somehow always reminded of somewhere else, a sensation that may lead to paralysis and inertia, even as it prompts us to keep on moving. As Zygmunt Bauman has remarked, “Wherever we happen to be at the moment, we cannot help knowing that we could be elsewhere, so there is less and less reason to stay anywhere in particular.”²

This is not to say that globalization is a recent phenomenon. As Amitav Ghosh argues in *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale*, jet travel, television, and the increasing spread of communication technologies certainly make the world more easily interconnected.³ Yet that is not the same as saying that people a hundred or five hundred years earlier did not possess a global awareness. For instance, to the Victorians, the very idea of what it meant (and means) to be British was (and is) tied up with the vast global network once known as the British Empire, renowned for being “the empire on which the sun never sets” due to the fact that it had colonies spread all across the globe. One of Ghosh’s central points of *In an Antique Land* is thus that we can go back centuries, millennia even, and still trace a lively exchange of ideas and trade strongly reminiscent of the global world we know today. What is more, Ghosh argues, globalization is not necessarily a phenomenon tied up with European colonial ambition. Indeed, one of the main points of *In an Antique Land* is to prove that a rich tradition of intercontinental trade between Africa and Asia existed long before European imperial powers ever dared send their ships beyond the Mediterranean.⁴

Ghosh has a point. Nevertheless, while it is certainly possible to trace early stages of globalization back thousands of years, perhaps even tens of thousands of years, it is with the supposed “discovery” of the Americas in the 15th century that globalization as we know it in the early 21st century established its first foothold.⁵ For while there had been trade and travel across and between the continents before, and humans had managed to cross both the Atlantic and the Pacific millennia before Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) sighted America in 1492, the following couple of centuries would establish the world’s first truly global rather than intercontinental network. Beginning with the Magellan-Elcano expedition (1519–1522), the world’s first circumnavigation, a global

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rather than a regional imaginary evolved that over time that changed the traveler's relationship with the world through which he (and later she) traveled in and now also *around*. As Joyce E. Chaplin remarks in *Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* (2012), the ability to circumnavigate and master the entire planet would radically shift humanity's vision of itself as of the planet they call home: "If Copernicus's news that the Earth was just another planet was still sinking in, round-the-world travelers made a similar point, and more dramatically. The globe had become, in its entirety, a place made important through human action, not because of its presumed or metaphorical place within the cosmos."⁶

It is however important to note that the travel undertaken by the likes of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), and Juan Sebastián Elcano (1476-1526) is hardly "travel" as it is understood by travel writers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. "Travel is very much a modern concept, signifying both commercial and leisure movement in an era of expanding Western capitalism."⁷ Hence to speak of Columbus, Magellan, and Elcano as "travelers" as we think of the term today is to speak of them in terms they themselves would not have recognized. Nevertheless, despite its roots in modernity, contemporary travel writing seems to often express a longing for an age in which none of these things existed. *Travel* as "a modern concept" may in practice be reliant on a global, modern transport infrastructure and the technologies provided by Western capitalism. Yet travel *writing* often remains stuck in an earlier era of colonial exploration even if it is blatantly anachronistic in a world that has become thoroughly globalized.

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William Dalrymple's *In Xanadu: A Quest* (1989)

The conflicted nature of contemporary travel writing is illustrated by William Dalrymple's *In Xanadu: A Quest* (1989). Dalrymple's travels in *In Xanadu* are explicitly modeled upon Marco Polo's travels some seven hundred years earlier, a twenty-four-year journey that would lead to so many, and such outlandish, discoveries of foreign lands that Polo's contemporaries found it difficult to believe him. Traveling in the footsteps of Polo seven centuries later, albeit it only for four months (and for the most part not literally in his footsteps but in various forms of motorized transport), Dalrymple is fully aware that he cannot hope to replicate either the magnitude or the novelty of Polo's discoveries. Nevertheless, this does not stop him from claiming a range of novel achievements that supposedly authenticate his travel experiences even during the age of globalization.

Surprisingly, though, seeing as the overall point of his journey is to follow in the footsteps of another traveler (Polo), hence by design relegating his traveling experience to a series of *rediscoveries* rather than *discoveries*, Dalrymple claims his travels to be a novel achievement. "Many had, like us, set off in his tracks but no one had ever managed to

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complete the journey," Dalrymple explains. In this, he deftly overrules seven hundred years of intervening travelers who, like himself, had been inspired by Polo and copied him, but had only completed the route in part. As Dalrymple concludes, "no one had ever been much more successful than us in following Marco Polo."⁸ Dalrymple is thus ingeniously if also a little forcedly *claiming novelty through replication*. Also, as he makes sure to remind us, in copying Polo he has committed himself "to travelling across twelve thousand miles of extremely dangerous, inhospitable territory," thus authenticating his travels through risk and hardship.⁹ Accordingly, Dalrymple seems to assure his readers, he is not a common tourist following a prepackaged itinerary, but a modern-day explorer proudly living up to an age-old tradition of intrepid travelers daring to go where no one (or at least very few) had dared to go before.

As Debbie Lisle argues in *The Global Politics of Travel Writing*, this poses ethical problems in that "contemporary travel writing continues in the colonial tradition: it reproduces a dominant Western civilisation from which travel writers emerge to document other states, cultures and peoples. . . . In short, travel writers maintain their relevance in a globalised world by mimicking their colonial forebears."¹⁰ Undoubtedly this is the case with Dalrymple, who not only models his overall itinerary around another journey undertaken seven centuries earlier, but also makes claims such as "Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* had done more than anything to lure me to Persia."¹¹

Dalrymple is also on occasion prone to make claims to some comparatively unremarkable achievements, for instance when he and his companions make their way to the Karakoram Highway in Pakistan, where he proudly claims that they were "among the first Westerners ever to see the highway."¹² In contrast to Polo, who could provide his readers with the truly novel wonders of the origins of rhubarb and the manufacture of silk, the invention of paper money and the manner of setting fire to stones (coal), Dalrymple offers his readers a highway.

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Set apart by seven hundred years of travels and technology, one traveler living in the age of discovery, the other in the age of globalization, Polo and Dalrymple offer examples of travel writing in the early and late stages of globalization. For if the early stages of globalization acted as lively stimulants of mobility and communication that would over time result in a deluge of travel-writing texts, globalization has threatened to make travel and travel writing extinct. Travel writers of the late 20th century have attempted to circumvent this in various ways, for instance by questing for authenticity and indigeneity as exhibited by Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* (1987), Monica Furlong's *Flight of the Kingfisher: A Journey Among Kukatja Aborigines* (1996), or Edwin M. Wilmsen's *Journeys with Flies* (1999), yet almost all such attempts invariably end with disappointment as the inevitable creep of globalization is seen to reach even the most remote and faraway places and peoples. As Lisle argues, if "all travel writing requires an important distinction between home and elsewhere," what are travel writers to do as "the forces of globalization" constantly work toward making the globe "a single homogenous place with no obvious hierarchies of difference"?¹³ Accordingly, as the age of discovery gave way to the age of empire and colonization, eventually to be replaced by the age of the postcolonial and the global, travel writing as a genre should perhaps cease to exist. Partly

so because the central premise upon which travel writing relies, namely difference, is made increasingly irrelevant by the homogenizing forces of globalization, thereby leading to the question “Why did I have to travel halfway around the world visit a place *I am already familiar with*?”¹⁴ But also because so much “contemporary travel writing reproduces the logic of Empire through a *colonial vision*,” meaning that “contemporary travel writing continues in the colonial tradition” long after such discourses should rightly have been dismantled. For practical as well as for ethical reasons, Lisle asks, can present-day “travelogues tell us anything relevant, let alone provocative, about contemporary global life?”¹⁵

Global Anxiety Disorder: Belatedness in a Constantly Accelerating World

The anxiety that globalization might spell the end of difference and therefore also of travel is, like globalization itself, hardly a novel phenomenon. As Ali Behdad points out in his landmark study *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (1994), a sense of “belatedness” set in at least two centuries ago, possibly even earlier. In examining a range of travel writers from Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855) to Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), Isabelle Eberhardt (1877–1904) to Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), Behdad argues that travel writing has long been plagued by a sense of closure and belatedness, which is to say a fear of arriving somewhere supposedly exotic and outlandish only to find that someone had been there before. What these 19th-century travelers feared most of all was therefore that they were perceived as mere tourists. In this is an anxiety that they are not perceived to be of the same caliber as travelers before them, true explorers like Columbus, Magellan, Elicano, and Polo. As Behdad concludes, there is therefore a tendency to construct narratives in which we see “Pain as opposed to pleasure, work in contrast to leisure, and hardship as against comfort are precisely what distinguish the orientalist adventurer from the tourist; these are the marks of ‘serious’ adventure that foreground the voyage of discovery within a heroic perspective. In short, the theme of hardship provides the very conditions of meaningfulness . . . evoking a Western heroic tradition whose allegorical function differentiates their travel from a leisure trip.”¹⁶ The irony being, of course, that such trips are undertaken, precisely, for leisure.

While the paranoia of belatedness is not a recent phenomenon, it does however become more marked in the 20th century. As Paul Fussell comments in *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (1980), the 20th century may well have been the century in which the traveler was so belated as to be eventually and terminally overtaken by the tourist. “In our day the industrialization of travel, its transformation into tourism, has employed not only the jet pilot and the baggage handler and the tout and the builder of box hotels at the seashore and the purveyor of uniform ‘international’ food,” Fussell

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remarks.¹⁷ This has made travel easier. Yet if it follows that “the traveler’s world is not the ordinary one, for travel itself, even the most commonplace, is an implicit quest for anomaly,” a world without anomalies is in a sense also a world without travel.¹⁸

By the 20th century into the 21st century, such anomalies become even more difficult to spot as globalization comes into full swing. “I am assuming that travel is not impossible and that tourism is all we have left,” Fussell observed in 1980. Yet if Fussell complained that the global world was dominated by “big places with big hotels and big airports served by big planes” in 1980, how would he rate the opportunities for travel forty years later?¹⁹ The Airbus A380, first used for commercial flights in 2007, seats close to 900 people, and the largest hotel in the world, the First World Hotel in Malaysia, sports over 7,000 rooms. Similarly, tourism has exploded to such an extent that citizens of popular tourist destinations like Venice and Barcelona are in the early 21st century actively and angrily opposing tourism.²⁰ Most striking of all, the world population has gotten very “big” indeed, increasing by roughly 3 billion since Fussell complained of the explosion of “pseudo-places, like airports” and the number of people who desire “calculated isolation from the actual.”²¹ In an increasingly globalized world, there are far more people, far more tourists, far more (and bigger) hotels and airplanes than ever before. Paradoxically, however, the more of us there are, the more we travel and the faster and easier travel becomes, the harder for us it seems to feel that we have in fact arrived anywhere.

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Non-places of the Instant Age: Airports, Hotels, Global Cities

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even as we are continually accelerating and speeding up. Yet to some, this is a promise rather than a loss. As John Kasarda and Greg Lindsay argue in *Aerotropolis: The Way We’ll Live Next* (2011), “in the age of globalisation, we choose cities drawing closer together themselves, linked by fiber-optic cables and jet, aircraft.” This is the so-called aerotropolis, a place that “represents the logic of globalization made flesh in the form of cities.”²² Built around transportation and mobility rather than the other way around, the aerotropolis is manifest acknowledgment of the fact that “Despite a decade’s worth of high oil prices, terrorism fears, and the airlines’ endless nickel-and-diming, we have never flown as far or in greater numbers than we do right now.”²³ While the aerotropolis is a physical place, it is therefore also the culmination of a global outlook that values closer and better connections to other, similar megacities (often referred to as “global cities”) on the other side of the planet than the countryside some ten or twenty miles distant. Indeed, as Lindsay muses as he finds himself in yet another airport, shuttling “between terminals, it struck me that they [airport terminals] offer a map of the last century, from the dawning of the Jet Age through the Net Age to our Instant one.” For as he concludes in a somewhat messianic tone, “Transportation is destiny.”²⁴

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Lindsay and Kasarda are thus fairly optimistic about the current and increasingly global state of the world, as of the effect a global mindset has had on physical space. The hyperconnected, hypermobile, and mega-urban future has arrived, and there is little we can do but embrace it. Others, though, are not so sure. In what is one of the most oft-quoted books of the increasing mobility and universalizing tendencies of globalization, anthropologist Marc Augé's *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1992) expresses concern over the increase of what he terms "non-place." As opposed to place, which is "relational, historical and concerned with identity," non-places "do not integrate the earlier places," hence they are governed by "the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral."²⁵ In *Non-places*, Augé is not directly concerned with travel writing. Yet it is telling that he employs the figure of the "traveller's space [as] the archetype of *non-place*," arguing that the "break or discontinuity between the spectator-traveller and the space of the landscape he is contemplating or rushing through . . . prevents him from perceiving it as a place, from being fully present in it."²⁶ Here, Augé clearly does not have in mind the sort of early 20th-century traveler envisioned by Fussell but more someone akin to Lindsay and Kasarda's aerotropolists, always in flight (often literally so) and with little time or care for "earlier places." Accordingly, Augé identifies places of transit, like the airport, and places of transitory behavior, like the hotel, as the archetypal examples of a world bereft of what he terms "anthropological place." Going from one airport to another that looks exactly like the one you left behind, checking in to a hotel of the very same brand that you checked out of sixteen hours prior, you may not feel you have traveled at all, despite the fact that airports as well as hotels may be located at the ends of two different continents, thousands of miles apart. In this, it is important to note Augé's training as an anthropologist. Traditionally, anthropology and travel writing shared similar concerns with the remote and the foreign, hence anthropology as a discipline has undergone anxieties of belatedness similar to that of travel writing. For if "[t]he question of the other is not just a theme that anthropology encounters from time to time; it is its sole intellectual object," a world without otherness is also a world without a need for anthropology.²⁷ Nevertheless, Augé argues, there is hope for anthropology in that we now "live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at."²⁸ In other words, the familiar and the well known have become foreign and strange, hence it is time that anthropology turns its sights from the forgotten tribes of the Amazon and the rituals of South Sea islanders and back to Europe itself. As Augé ponders, "It is not that anthropology has become bored with foreign fields . . . it is that the contemporary world itself, with its accelerated transformations, is attracting anthropological scrutiny: in other words, a renewed methodological reflection on the category of otherness."²⁹

A range of travel writers have come to the same conclusion as Augé, albeit viewing the non-place of the airport, the airplane, and the multinational chain-brand hotel from a more optimistic point of view. For while "airports can be considered as generic spaces, forgettable and often uncomfortable . . . airports are also enmeshed with matters of place, region, and slow time."³⁰ In *The Art of Travel* (2002), for instance, Alain de Botton tells of how, "When feeling sad at home, I have often boarded a train or a transport bus

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and gone to Heathrow, where, from an observation gallery in Terminal 2 or from the top of the Renaissance Hotel along the north runway, I have drawn comfort from the sight of the ceaseless landing and take-off of aircraft." Over the following pages, Botton recounts how his mind wanders all across the globe, imagining how a landing plane "took off from Singapore at dawn. It flew over the Bay of Bengal, Delhi, the Afghan desert and the Caspian Sea." Rather than despair over the rootlessness implied by being constantly in flight, Botton sees "the plane a symbol of worldliness, carrying within itself a trace of all the lands it has crossed; its eternal mobility offering an imaginative counterweight to feelings of stagnation and confinement."³¹ In *The Global Soul: Jetlag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home* (2000), Pico Iyer expresses a similar sentiment when he describes airports as liberating, "vertiginous places [where] we have nothing to hold our identities in place."³² The airport, Iyer argues, is the space in which we most clearly see exhibited that "everyone's from everywhere else," hence it is emblematic of what he terms the "Global Soul," a state of being in which the global cosmopolitan citizen is perhaps never quite at rest anywhere, but can therefore also "see everywhere with a flexible eye."³³

Yet the question then remains: what (and where) next? As "a number of major urban centers have emerged in recent decades that increasingly transcend their respective national city systems and have come to articulate localized economic, demographic and sociocultural processes to a broader, globalized configuration of capitalism," and as an every-growing number of not-yet global cities but so-called "globalizing cities are imbricated in the process of globalization," it is easy to envision a future in which for better or worse "the world is one."³⁴ As the Global Soul of the aerotropist travels from one global city to another that look more or less alike, swiftly transitioning from hotel to airport to plane to airport to hotel and back again, what then of the sensation of travel, or even of tourism? For if tourism "involve[s] the notion of 'departure,' of a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and the mundane," how can we locate even that in a world in which everywhere and everyone are alike?³⁵

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Travel in the Anthropocene: Nature Writing and the End of the Primitive

Travel writing in the age of globalization is a beleaguered activity, at least as it has traditionally been defined by Eurocentric practitioners and theorists of the genre. Plagued by ethical doubts and by the physical impossibility to perform the kinds of travel undertaken by early nonmodern explorers, it seems that travel writing as Fussell defines it is long past its due date. Indeed, in the 21st century, the quest for pristine and unspoiled places untarnished by other travelers seem positively quaint. For if 19th- and early 20th-century travelers mourned the gradual passing of the exotic and the authentic, and if 20th-century travelers and travel writers desperately attempted to ferret out whatever little was left to explore of the white blanks of the map, to be alive in the 21st century is to be increasingly aware that nowhere, however remote, can be said to be untouched by human hand. As waters and temperatures rise due to global warming, as bees are threatened with extinction, and a giant vortex of plastic thousands of miles across grows in the Pacific, how can travel writing be defined as “at some level a record or a product . . . of the negotiation between similarity and difference”?³⁶ Or to put it slightly differently, if “what travel books are ‘about’ is the interplay between observer and observed, between self and world,” what to do with such distinctions in an “era in the planet’s natural history in which humanity becomes a decisive geological and climatological force”?³⁷ If everywhere is “me” in that to “be standing in the remotest desert or ocean is now, in a sense, still to be breathing the enclosed air of a vast human crowd,” how am I, the observer and self, able to distinguish myself from the world?³⁸

Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan argued in *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (1998) that it is “clear that nature writing thrives, ironically, on the fear of natural cataclysm, and that its current boom can be attributed both to the threat of unprecedented extinction and to the need . . . to reinstate the myth of a ‘timeless world’ in an era when time, for so many who live in it, appears to be running out.”³⁹ According to Holland and Huggan, for over a century, travel writers had claimed that travel and travel writing were dying, but that *their* contribution is likely one of the last reports before globalization finally closes the book on true discovery.⁴⁰ Indeed, by the final decades of the 20th century, the already porous borders between the two genres begin to dissolve even further as a range of travel writers shift their attention from pristine and authentic *cultures* on to uncovering pristine and undiscovered *animals, plants, and ecosystems*.

Even so, the recourse of travel writing to the traditional territories of nature writing offered only a limited respite from the onset of an ever-pervasive global modernity that seemed to have reached its apogee as we have transitioned into the Anthropocene. Peter Matthiessen’s *The Snow Leopard* (1978), in which he spends two months in the remote regions of the Himalayas attempting (and failing) to spot a snow leopard, is an early example of this trend. Later examples include Barry Lopez’s *Arctic Dreams: Imagination*

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and Desire in a Northern Landscape (1986) and Sara Wheeler's *Terra Incognita: Travels in Antarctica* (1996) and *The Magnetic North: Travels in the Arctic* (2009). "In my grandmother's youth a restless spirit would probably have got her as far as Spain, then as exotic as Xanadu. The world has shrunk, and I was able, now, to go to its uttermost part," Wheeler remarks, acknowledging the impact globalization has had on "restless spirits" such as herself, yet nevertheless claiming that there is still time for adventure real travel.⁴¹ "The Arctic, overall, has the classic lines of a desert landscape: spare, balanced, extended and quiet," Lopez claims.⁴² Yet like the desert, which would in time yield to the invasion of oil companies, "Industrial changes have also come to the Arctic."⁴³ Try as they might, Lopez and Wheeler must however eventually concede defeat in their quest for the primitive and the primeval. "The Arctic has become a sink for globally migrating airborne mercury." Wheeler remarks in her later work, concluding that even here "the Anthropocene had arrived."⁴⁴ Lopez comes to the same conclusion, arguing that it is time we realize that while "we tend to think of places like the Arctic, the Antarctic, the Sahara, the Mojave, as primitive . . . there are in fact no primitive or even primeval landscapes."⁴⁵

Travel in the Anthropocene: Global Warming, Pollution, Migration

In the Anthropocene, travel writing can thus be seen to be doubly spent. For years struggling to assert its continued relevance in an increasingly connected, uniform, and globalized world, travel writing's last-ditch attempt at keeping the old tradition of discovery and adventure alive by turning to nature as the unexplored has proven to be only a quick fix. It therefore seems that the Anthropocene has finally managed to do what two centuries of belatedness never quite managed to achieve: soundly and conclusively close the door on the notions of the pristine and untouched that travel writing has for much of its existence been relying upon to create the tension between home and away, the familiar and the foreign. Globalization and the impact of the Anthropocene have had serious implications both practical and theoretical for travel writing as a genre, as for the physical act of mobility itself, regardless of whether we move a mile or a thousand.

Take, for instance, the question of weather and global warming. Until fairly recently, weather was first and foremost experienced as a local phenomenon as well as the one subject upon which most of us could agree. As eco-philosopher Timothy Morton argues, it used to be that conversations about the weather provided "a nice background to our daily affairs, nice to the extent that we don't pay too much attention to it." Yet as Morton asks, "what happens when global warming enters the scene? The background ceases to be background, because we have started to observe it."⁴⁶ Once we begin to realize that the weather is not simply out there, as an external force happening *to* us but a phenomenon we may ourselves be *part* of (in that our own private emissions help drive global warming up even further), the weather can no longer be perceived as the neutral background subject we could all once agree upon. As we become cognizant of our own, local contributions to shifting weather patterns and the global overall increase in temperature, we therefore become witness to "the strange effect of dragging weather phenomena into the foreground as part of our awareness of global warming."⁴⁷ In such a world, the weather is never just local anymore; it is tied to climate. It is always, like pretty much everything else in the Anthropocene, global.

What is more, even for those who deny, doubt, or simply do not care whether global warming is caused by human emissions, it is becoming difficult to ignore that our increasingly warmer world offers some serious practical challenges to travel. For instance, the *New York Times* article titled "Too Hot to Fly? Climate Change May Take a Toll on Air Travel" reports on how

American Airlines has been forced to cancel more than 40 flights in Phoenix. The reason: With daytime highs hovering around 120 degrees, it was simply too hot for

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some smaller jets to take off. Hotter air is thinner air, which makes it more difficult — and sometimes impossible — for planes to generate enough lift.

As the global climate changes, disruptions like these are likely to become more frequent, researchers say, potentially making air travel costlier and less predictable.⁴⁸

Add to this the impact of so-called peak oil, and the impediments to future mobility begin to look severe.⁴⁹ As oil gets scarcer, jet travel in its current form must be either curtailed or phased out altogether. Even if we manage to invent new forms of propulsion that neither generate carbon emissions nor are dependent on eventually obsolete oil-based technologies, the destinations available to future travelers may not offer much of an appeal anymore. Indeed, they may not even exist. The Maldives, currently a popular tourist destination, are threatened to disappear beneath rising seas caused by the gradual melting of the poles. Similarly, there is strong evidence Australia's Great Barrier Reef may not survive the next century due to bleaching of the coral caused by an increase in temperature. And while Mount Everest is unlikely to disappear beneath the waves anytime soon, or succumb to bleaching by the sun's rays, it is nevertheless believed to contain upwards of 26,500 pounds of human excrement from the roughly 800 people who try to reach its peak every year. Henderson Island, on the other hand, a lush, small, and remote island in the middle of the Pacific, was recently discovered to be covered in what is believed to be 38 million pieces of trash, with the "density of debris . . . the highest recorded anywhere in the world," and this despite the fact that it hardly receives any human visitors at all.⁵⁰

Moreover, in an increasingly Anthropocene world, those who are on the move often travel not for leisure but out of necessity. As human population continues to increase, so does tourism but also migration. In this, we see travel writing's age-old ethical dilemma of privilege rearing its ugly head once more. "Tourists dislikes tourists," Dean MacCannell claims in the first edition of his influential *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976), but there are some people they dislike even more.⁵¹ As MacCannell would presciently suggest in the preface to the 1989 edition of the book, if tourism was about to be replaced by "refugees, 'boat people,' agricultural laborers, displaced peasants and others from the periphery of the centers of power and affluence" at the time of writing, the future would have more of this in store.⁵² Hence the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015 sent millions of people on the move, leading to macabre situations in which tourists in Mediterranean hotspots were tanning on the beaches as waves of refugees both living and dead washed up on shore.⁵³ While some of these tourists admirably helped the refugees as best they could, others reportedly complained that these unwanted mobile bodies make holidaying "awkward."⁵⁴ In an Anthropocene world, shifting physical realities as well as new ethical imperatives demand a more acute awareness of global responsibilities as well as privilege than ever before.

Seeking Radical Alterity: Extreme Pursuits in Dark Places

Does travel writing have *any* future, let alone a present, in the age of globalization? If the very genre of travel writing is itself complicit, as argued by Lisle, in keeping alive colonial power structures that are now both ethically as well as practically vastly outdated, should we engage in such a practice at all, as writers, readers, and/or critics? Second, even for those who disregard the ethical implications of what may or may not be an imperialist genre, how do we perform travels of difference in a supposedly uniform, globalized, and increasingly human age?

One strategy is to challenge and reverse the subject position, trajectory, and traveled territory of traditional travel writing; to write “back” to the imperial center of Europe, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin’s *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice* (1989), an early and influential contribution to postcolonial studies. As explored in a range of essays in the edited collection *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), for instance, the contributors examine how a range of global travel writers like Caryl Phillips, Jan Morris, Charlotte Williams, Pankaj Mishra, and many others have offered travel writing that has subverted both the subject position of the white, traveling male, as of the traditional trajectory from imperial European center to global periphery, thus overturning former colonial, gendered and racial hierarchies.⁵⁵

The second strategy is to rethink the means by which one travels, and the manner in which one presents this in writing, thereby offering fresh perspectives on what would otherwise be considered familiar, on the ground as in text. Travel writing in the age of globalization can also be seen to present travel writers with a “self-conscious engagement with global modernity [that] has resulted in several new, or at least reinvigorated, forms of travel practice,” and this despite the fact that the territory traveled has been crossed and described in text many times before.⁵⁶ However, even when innovative methods of travel are employed, former travel texts and the colonial exotic continue to “haunt” contemporary travel writing in a seemingly eternal return to “a hegemonic geometry of center and periphery.”⁵⁷

As Graham Huggan puts it in *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/Writing in an Age of Globalization* (2009), travel writing in an age of globalization is, as so much else in our era, often extreme. The global age is the age of extreme weather, after all, as of extreme temperatures. It is the age of extreme records, too: of the Austrian skydiver Felix Baumgartner’s 24-mile jump from the stratosphere and back to earth, but also of the world’s “most toilet seats broken in one minute.”⁵⁸ And it is the age of extreme sports. A growing number of people watch (and increasingly participate in) Ironman competitions, mixed martial arts, rock climbing, and a range of other activities that Claudia Bell and

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John Lyall have termed “the accelerated sublime,” including high-risk activities like “tornado chasing, tsunami fascination, and storm-wave surfing.”⁵⁹

If mere tourists are engaging in high-risk “adventures,” this understandably puts some stress on the supposed elitism of the travel writer to deliver something even more risky. An early example of this trend is illustrated by Robyn Davidson’s *Tracks* (1980). Planning to trek across half of the Australian continent, most of it through desert territory, Davidson informs her readers she decides to do it with as few modern devices as she possibly can in order to make the trip as “authentic” as possible. In addition to striking out alone and with no means of communication to the outside world, she decides to also forgo modern forms of transportation, relying solely on her own feet and the help of two camels (and a dog). Davidson survived her trip, but as Huggan points out in *Extreme Pursuits*, increasingly extreme travel practices like these can lead to “self-destructive sources of touristic excitement,” such as attempting to climb Mount Everest with little training, for instance, or entering an active zone of war.⁶⁰ Less dangerously so, one can engage in various forms of so-called dark tourism/travel in which travelers are not necessarily putting themselves at risk, but visit places that have at some point or other been visited by death. These include “battlegrounds, sites of atrocities, massacres and genocides, natural and accidental disasters, slave fort and prisons, as well as the locations of murder and violent crime.”⁶¹ In visiting such sites, “tourists can feel that they have experienced a connection to these traumatic events and have gained a trace of authenticity by extension.”⁶² In both instances, the much coveted but always elusive “authentic” travel experience is thus ensured through endangerment and risk of the traveler/tourist’s own body, and/or by proximity to former traumatic events experienced by others. We see this exhibited in travel-writing books like Jon Krakauer’s *Into Thin Air: Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* (1997), Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair’s *Rodinsky’s Room* (1999), Anna Porter’s *The Ghosts of Europe: Central Europe’s Past and Uncertain Future* (2011), Andrew Blackwell’s *Visit to Sunny Chernobyl: Adventures in the World’s Most Polluted Places* (2012), and in the existence of guidebooks like Robert Young Pelton’s *The World’s Most Dangerous Places* (1997). In a world perceived to be otherwise starved of excitement, extreme risk and/or proximity to other people’s death can help alleviate titillate one’s sense of (morbid) excitement, thereby infusing locations that would otherwise be fairly unremarkable (a field in Flanders, the lower ninth ward in New Orleans) with the potential for adventure and discovery.

James Nestor’s *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science and What the Ocean Tells Us about Ourselves* (2014) offers a more recent, and even more extreme, example of extreme pursuits than *Tracks*. Nestor’s purpose in writing *Deep* is by his own admission ambitious: he wants to cover in full “a sporting event that few people have heard of: the world freediving championship,” to unearth the work of “dangerous – and often totally illegal” science performed by rogue researchers, to rediscover natural reflexes and skills of our bodies that the modern world has made us repress, and to learn how to communicate with a range of marine creatures.⁶³ Yet he goes further, for not only is he on “a personal

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quest” of self-development that he hopes will allow him to transcend the humdrum life of the bored global citizen, but he also wants to answer the grandest question of them all, namely: “*What are we?*”⁶⁴

In going both literally and figuratively “deep,” in the oceans as in human and natural history, Nestor promises his readers a journey that will range far and wide in terms of geographical locations as in the conceptual history of exploration. Traveling from San Francisco to Miami on to Los Angeles and Tokyo, from the Greek island of Santorini in the Mediterranean to the island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean and to Guam in the Pacific, Nestor is almost perpetually in motion around the globe rather than seeking the stillness of the deep. Indeed, as he is forced to admit near the conclusion to the book, his quest for the depths and the stillness of the ocean has in fact primarily consisted of “watching Tom Cruise movies on airplanes, brushing your teeth in gas-station bathrooms, sleeping in fleabag hotels.”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Nestor assures us, he has put in the time both in and out of the water in order to personally investigate, and invest in, one of “the most dangerous adventure sport[s] in the world.”⁶⁶ Hopping around the globe for fourteen months, he is therefore not only putting in a tremendous amount of work and effort, including learning how to freedive, as of going to places “that no human has ever seen” on board a private submarine.⁶⁷

Accordingly, Nestor combines aspects of the traditional (often masculine) explorer’s tale of discovery and danger with those of the global traveler who is at one and the same time belated as well as ethically concerned, yet continues to be excited about the potential of travel, exploration, and adventure. He repeatedly claims to be literally as well as figuratively entering unknown and often pristine territory (the depths of the sea, communing with marine animals, uncovering “renegade science”), just as he is at pains (sometimes literally so) to explain the risks and dangers of the act of freediving. Nestor thus adheres to the demands of traditional travel writing in that he promises to deliver adventure and discovery by means of turning to a nature that has apparently not quite given up all its secrets just yet. In this, *Deep* can be seen to reiterate the age-old tropes of the intrepid explorer. As a concerned global traveler in the Anthropocene, Nestor however also makes sure to inform us again and again of the damages we inflict on our planet’s ecosystems, while at the same time marveling at the discoveries made in previously unfathomed realms: the human body, animal intelligence, and the ocean depths.

In this, *Deep* offers us an illustrative example of a vision of the often ambiguous status of travel writing in the age of globalization and the Anthropocene. According to the biographical information on Nestor, he was formerly part of “a doomed surfing expedition to Norway and Russia, in which he and his team became the first to ride the breaks of the Arctic Circle.” Nestor therefore seems to actively and unapologetically identify with the “extreme measures” of extreme sports. Yet throughout *Deep* he is admittedly also skeptical of those who freedive simply to break records. Indeed, he insists that the real adventure lies in our relationship with the ocean and the planet at large, and that while we as humans need to actively take care of the biosphere, whatever we do we will always

be part of something larger and mysterious that no amount of human activity can ever truly diminish. Travel in the age of globalization is to Nestor not a belated activity at all, but a means to explore a planet that is to him forever full of wonder even as he laments the human tendency to irrevocably alter the environment, often to detrimental effects. Significantly, though, he continues to frame such “adventures” through extreme and dangerous behavior that seems intended to authenticate his journey through a mode of travel that is in many ways reminiscent of the traditional (white and male) exploration narrative even as he insists this is not the case.

Locating Difference in the Everyday: Microadventures, Slow Travel, and Place Hacking

Part DIY guide, part inspirational travelogue, Alastair Humphreys’s *Microadventures: Local Discoveries for Great Escapes* (2014) takes a different approach to adventure than Nestor’s *Deep*. In evoking the “local” in the title while also stressing the “discovery” of achieving “great escapes,” Humphreys offers a peculiar hybrid of the exploration narrative and a quotidian self-help book of how to make one’s everyday life slightly more extraordinary.⁶⁸ In the introduction, Humphrey writes that he has written the book as an attempt to open up the possibilities for adventure and exploration “close to home: cheap, simple, short, and yet very effective.”⁶⁹ Humphreys is repeatedly insistent that “it is vital not to consider a microadventure as a diluted, inferior version of an adventure,” which to many people might mean “crossing deserts and climbing mountains.”⁷⁰ Hence it is obviously important to him that adventure can be had everywhere and by everyone. Musing about the fact that he lives and performs such microadventures in Great Britain, a place where “landscape has been moulded by millennia of man’s activities that have destroyed or changed our original wilderness forever,” yet nevertheless claiming that adventure and exploration are still very much possible, Humphreys offers different strategies for locating a sense of difference and wonder in the everyday lives of people living ordinary and somewhat boring lives.⁷¹

Microadventures and *Deep* seem at first to be figuratively as well as literally (thousands of) miles apart. The former describes journeys that are at most a couple of hundred miles long as well as activities mostly reminiscent of childhood jaunts (go sleep in a field, swim a river, build a raft) in his native country; the latter globetrotting travels include encounters with sharks, trips on deep-sea submarines, and personal engagement with an extreme sport in which the risk of fatality is one of the highest in the world. Also, while Nestor decides to go where no human has ever gone before, Humphreys goes not only where plenty of people have gone before, but where they are right at this moment and in the millions too (*Microadventures* primarily describes travel around the suburbs and countryside around London, and also in the metropolitan city itself). Nevertheless, while

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there is an obvious difference between the extreme nature of the high-octane travels of Nestor and that of Humphreys' self-titled "Slow Adventure," the writers share a common vision and are motivated by some of the same concerns and convictions.⁷² Apart from what seems a genuine concern about the dramatic drop in biodiversity wherever we go on the planet, there is little sense of the doom and gloom of either late travel- or nature writing to be found. Indeed, belatedness as such is almost entirely absent. While both writers certainly regret the passing of what has been and is no more, Nestor and Humphreys seem as excited as any travel writer ever was regarding the possibility of difference, adventure, and travel.

In this, *Microadventures* and *Deep* are indicative of a trend of travelers/writers for whom place is not a distinct entity that can be "ruined" by outside influence. Whether one decides to go to extremes, as Nestor does in *Deep*, or one is content to keep it everyday and local, as it is the case of Humphreys' *Microadventures*, both strategies seem to confirm what Bradley L. Garrett suggests in *Explore Everything: Place Hacking the City* (2013), namely that place is forever changing. Much as it is the case with Nestor, Garrett's book is an attempt at uncovering the secrets of a fraternity otherwise closed to everyday normal people, albeit in this instance so-called urban explorers rather than freedivers. Hence, while *Explore Everything* examines some rather different territory from Nestor's deep-sea trenches and Humphreys' local countryside, it seems fair to assume that Nestor and Humphreys would both agree with Garrett's overall point when he claims that in urban exploration,

the primary use of a space—factory, house, asylum, hotel—may have passed, and therefore it could now be considered useless, [but] places do not "die." They are in transition, mutating in form and meaning. Explorers do not see wasted space, or non-places, just places cared for and remembered in different ways.⁷³

In effect, whatever one's chosen approach—freediving with dolphins in the Pacific, hiking in the highlands of Scotland, or exploring Battersea Power Station in London—all three seem to subscribe to the notion that "there will always be new places to explore, new experiences to be had" regardless of how early, or late, one arrives.⁷⁴ In this, we see how many travel writers of the global age are therefore also shifting their attention from the exotic and the faraway on to intimate and often quite familiar land- and cityscapes in recognition that such spaces are seen to contain the potential for a kind of adventure and excitement that travel farther afield in a global touristic world may not. In an increasingly globalized world, the local and the (seemingly) familiar continue to gain in reputation as places worth exploring and traveling.⁷⁵

To some extent, this is both a practical and ethical decision of responding to a global world that is not quite as fluorescently shiny as the most ardent of globalists believe. As Garrett remarks, urban exploration is "a reaction to an urban environment in the neoliberal city that increases our passivity and diminishes our capacities for empathy and meaningful engagement."⁷⁶ Indeed, while privileged aerotropolists may view the future as a bright and ever-mobile space, moving from one vast and uniform global city to

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another just like it without exerting themselves, the fact is that the present is more akin to being “a planet of slums,” as Mike Davis termed it in his 2006 book of the same name. “If megacities are the brightest stars in the urban firmament, three-quarters of the burden of future world population growth will be borne by faintly visible second-tier cities and smaller urban areas.”⁷⁷ What is more, Davis comments, “the cities of the future, rather than being made of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead constructed largely of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks and scrap wood.”⁷⁸ Like the increase of fecal matter on Mount Everest and the trash on Henderson Island, the increase and mobility of people and matter have not proven universally beneficial, nor are they by any means available to the majority of the world’s population. Accordingly, “globalization [has] operated in transnational, overlapping but geographically limited clusters, rather than evenly across the world.”⁷⁹

In this, a shift toward the quotidian, the everyday, and the contemplative in contemporary global travel is distinctly different from 19th- and early 20th-century travel writing. For whether it is in *Tracks*, *Deep*, *Microadventures* or *Explore Everything*, the focus here is consistently on mobile bodies as well as territories that are considered to be “normal” rather than exceptional. Finishing her thousand-mile journey across the desert, Davidson vents her frustration at how “a myth was being created where I would appear different, exceptional,” when what she wanted to prove was the very opposite, namely that what she did was not “outside the possibilities that ordinary people could hope for.”⁸⁰ And while Nestor remains intrigued about the talents and skill of divers exhibiting extreme behaviors, it is in the end the extraordinariness of the quotidian that fascinates him: to the extent that he ends up meditating on the marvels of ooze and concrete as metaphors of the great chain of being that ties all of us together.⁸¹ Finally, we have Humphreys, who directly addresses so-called normal people to: “Seek out short, interesting, rewarding adventures right on your doorstep.”⁸² Garrett, too, admits that even as though he and his fellow urban explorers seek extreme and sometimes fatal thrills, most can in fact be identified as people who “worked office jobs, [and who] agreed that ordinary life has at some point become dull.”⁸³ Like Humphreys’ *Microadventures*, Garrett’s *Explore Everything* can be seen as a guide and a call to arms for ordinary people to travel and explore right outside their doorstep.

While their methods to challenge normality and the daily grind of “normal life” are obviously different, all four books are thus in their very stress on normality rather than exceptions united in expressing a different sentiment to the elitist travelers of 19th- and early 20th-century travelers of the Fussell variant. What is more, rather than give in to despair, these are writers, and travelers, who do not necessarily subscribe to the view that sees “globalization as a negative and tragic phenomenon, productive of an irreversible loss of cultural diversity and so leading to the homogenization and banalization of the world.”⁸⁴ They recognize that globalization (and in particular global, corporate capitalism) may in part be to blame, but that there are strategies for circumventing and resisting the homogenization of place. While some of these arguably

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include retreating to the depths of the sea, as Nestor does, in order to locate pockets of heterogeneity and excitement, or take the shape of high-risk behavior, as described by Garrett's encounter with urban explorers who climb tall structures and BASE jump in order to generate "adventure," others take the exact opposite tack.

Sara Maitland's *A Book of Silence: A Journey in Search of the Pleasures and Powers of Silence* and Paul Bogard's *The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light*, for instance, are examples of contemporary travelers seeking silence, solitude, and darkness.⁸⁵ Maitland and Bogard's books are both written in response to the difficulty of locating not adventure and exploration but pockets of stillness that a modern, globalized life of continuous and hectic motion seems actively hostile to. In such a world, we are living in a state of "permanent illumination [that] is inseparable from the non-stop operation of global exchange and circulation," an onslaught of sensory impressions and information that inscribe "human life into duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning."⁸⁶

For all that, it is remarkable that texts like *A Book of Silence* and *The End of Night*, framed as damning responses to an increasingly loud, bright, and supposedly blandly globalized world, tend to conclude on surprisingly positive notes. Having traveled the world widely in search of silence and darkness, visiting remote deserts and mountainous terrain as well as a range of cities large and small on several continents, Maitland and Bogard agree that silence and darkness as we once knew it are gone. In this, they recognize a loss: of a form of life, and of a place (and a planet), that are no more. Yet they also seem to recognize that, as Ursula Heise puts it in her book of the same name, our "sense of place and sense of planet" are interconnected in a manner that does not necessarily diminish, and certainly does not eradicate, the former even as the latter grows in ascendancy.⁸⁷ We may live in an increasingly globalized world, but that does not mean that place is going to go away, or is somehow of less importance or interest than in former ages. It is simply different.

Privilege and Mobility: Inequality and Globality

Different as travel may seem in the age of globalization, it is however important to also realize that some things remain much the same as they ever were. Granted, globalization of the 21st century is to some extent less lopsided than globalization of the 20th century. China, India, Japan, and South Korea, to take but a few of the stronger players on the global market, have overtaken most European countries in terms of both financial and cultural output, and China is poised to challenge and perhaps even topple the former U.S. hegemony. Accordingly, if “globalization” would at the end of the 20th century almost always de facto mean “Westernization” or “Americanization,” this is by no means the case in the early 21st century. In this, “globalization” truly has meant a more even flow of goods, values, and people than it was the case fifty, or even twenty, years ago. Yet if privilege and mobility have become less Eurocentric, this is not to say that it has necessarily become more evenly distributed. Due to the explosion of the global oil economy, for instance, the average Saudi may have far more money to spend, and more ways (and places) of spending it, than his (with a stress on “his”) ancestor a hundred years ago. But the migrant workers who underpin the economy of Saudi Arabia have for the most part not benefited from the globalization process. They may arguably move over farther distances than migrant workers did on average a hundred years ago. But this does not mean they are necessarily more mobile, nor that they enjoy better rights and living conditions.⁸⁸ Similarly, in a country like Saudi Arabia, where women have only just been allowed to drive and still cannot obtain a passport or open a bank account without a male present to authorize it, globalization has not exactly meant increased mobility for all.⁸⁹ Race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and affluence continue to hamper the traveler who is not recognized as white, male, straight, and sufficiently affluent and “Western” (even if the latter two categories seem to be now converging into one and the same).

Liberating and sometimes intimidating, or even depressing, as globalization has been to some, one therefore needs to recall that the supposedly uniform tendencies of globalization rarely benefit all. While it is correct that global tourism is now a more even exchange between, for instance, Europe and Asia than it was the case a century ago, it is not necessarily easier to travel from, say, Ghana to Denmark if one holds a Ghanaian passport. Obviously, it is a lot faster and more convenient to fly from Accra to Copenhagen at the beginning of the 21st century compared to the week- or month-long journey by train and boat at the beginning of the 20th century. Yet for the average Ghanaian to be allowed on that plane in the first place (let alone beyond passport control once the plane touches ground in Denmark) is not necessarily easier or less arduous than for a Ghanaian following that same itinerary a century prior. Accordingly, while globalization over the past couple of decades have become more global in *geographical spread*, meaning that “cities in Africa, like Accra, have *not* been left out of globalization” and that it too can now be classified as a “globalizing city,” the *benefits* of globalization nevertheless remain unevenly distributed.⁹⁰ While Accra as a city—and Ghana as a

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country—is undoubtedly part of the globalization process in a manner that it was not a century ago, for the majority of its citizens, this has not led to an increase in mobility.

As Clive Hamilton warns us in *Defiant Earth: The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene*, the “astonishing force of consumer culture” and the manner in which it has so efficiently “swamped traditional customs, values, and aspirations, replacing them with a devotion to money, materialism and branded identities” should not lead us to fall under “the spell of the hydra-headed monster known as globalization.” For while it is true that global brands like “Disney, Facebook, Zara, McDonald’s, Apple, Longines, James Bond, Mr Bean, and *The X Factor* [do] shape consciousness and desire in the favelas, kampongs, and shantytowns as much as they do in the suburbs,” this does not mean that access to such products are equally distributed.⁹¹ On the contrary, while the positive spin on the narrative of the global market will have us believe that globalization will over time bring mobility and freedom to an ever-increasing number of people, it seems the opposite may be the case. Indeed, with homophobia, misogyny, and racism on the rise in a range of countries around the world due to a perceived or real threat from global forces run wild, it seems that the world may in the future may become more closed and less mobile than it is at present, paradoxically *because of*, rather than *despite*, globalization.

Writing on the Move/the Wall: Travel “Writing” in the Digital Age

Finally, a short comment on the written aspects of travel *writing* rather than the nature of travel “itself.” For if the 20th century saw radical changes in the manner in which we travel, and how we treat the planet on, under, over, and around which we travel, the means by which we mediate these experiences have changed too. The past century saw a rapid expansion in the use and influence of new media like radio, film, photography, and video. Yet it is unquestionably in the digital revolution of the late 20th century that we see a real revolution of the manner in which travel is “written,” as in who is being allowed to write it. “In a shrinking globe, everyone with a computer is a traveler,” postcolonial scholar and travel writing critic Bill Ashcroft remarks, contemplating how virtual travel has impacted upon our sense of travel and subjectivity.⁹² We may add to this statement by saying that if everyone with a computer is now a (virtual) traveler, it follows they are therefore also a potential travel *writer*.

Defining the “writing” aspect of “travel writing” has always posed a problem for critics of the genre. “Writing travel” in a variety of formats ranging from letters to postcards, photographs and articles, memoirs and travelogues, travelers traditionally became travel writers via the activity of recording “temporal and spatial progress” through a “generic admixture” of different forms and literary genres.⁹³ Yet if travel writing is historically notorious for being characterized by its heterogeneity and hybridity, surely that is even more so the case in the 21st century, when a seemingly never-ending stream of “travel

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writing” has emerged through documentary film making, television shows, video diaries, podcasts, blogs, various social media, and so on. In this, new media in general but the digital revolution in particular have simultaneously diminished and strengthened the role of writing/text. Whether it is on a personalized blog or on one of the major social-media outlets, for instance on Facebook and certainly on Instagram, whose primary focus is photography, text is competing with imagery and sound in a manner that traditional travel writing books did not.

Still, for all the opportunities to record, upload, and share imagery and sound offered by digital media and the internet, the digital revolution has also led to an explosion of text, with everyone texting, commenting, reviewing, blogging, etcetera, on pretty much any aspect between heaven and earth (and beyond). Going hand in hand with increased physical mobility, this democratization of writing in “the first-person era,” which is to say an age in which “[p]eople are well conditioned and inclined to tell personal stories, to testify to experience and to record it,” means that we are all (all of “us” who have access to digital means of communication, at least) travel writers now.⁹⁴ Hence, travel writing is as lively as it ever was, perhaps even more than ever. Yet as a genre it is increasingly difficult to pin down and define it, and make travel writing stay put. Travel writing, like its subject(s), continues to be on the move.

Discussion of the Literature

Popular critical surveys of the genre, like Casey Blanton’s *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*, Carl Thompson’s *Travel Writing*, or Tim Youngs’s *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, all include useful sections on globalization in the past as in the present.⁹⁵ For studies that offer sustained and particularly insightful analyses of travel writing in the age of globalization, one is however advised first of all to turn to the following handful of texts that deal explicitly with the question of travel writing and globalization. Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) is a classic of travel-writing studies in its own right, but also provides an excellent survey and an insightful analysis of the expanding “contact zone” engendered by the discovery of the Americas and the first circumnavigations of the world, leading to the birth of “a planetary consciousness.”⁹⁶ Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan’s *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (1998) offers an insightful perspective of the other side of this divide, looking back at how “those same globalizing processes that have helped make the world more accessible have also arguably made it less exciting, less diverse,” a theme taken up and expanded upon by Huggan in his later *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/Writing in an Age of Globalization* (2009).⁹⁷ Finally, for thorough if at times perhaps overly negative investigations of the ethical dilemmas of travel writing in the age of globalization, Caren Kaplan’s *Questions of Travel:*

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Postmodern Discourses of Displacement (1996) and Debbie Lisle's *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (2006) offer rigorous critiques of the genre.

For the so-called belatedness brought on by the globalization process, early and late, Ali Behdad's *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (1994) is an absolute must. For a more positive view on the possibility of travel writing in the age of globalization, one should turn to Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund's the edited collection *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations* (2011), in which the contributors offer a range of perspectives on travel writers writing "back" to the colonial and imperial center made possible by a more evenly distributed global exchange. Edwards and Graulund's *Mobility at Large: Globalization, Textuality and Innovative Travel Writing* goes even further, arguing that experimental textual practices have evolved in tandem with various globalization processes to provide new and exciting potentials for the genre.⁹⁸ Finally, for some short, general, yet thought-provoking introductions to the cultural aspects of globalization, one is advised to turn to Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Zygmunt Bauman's *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, or Anthony Giddens's *Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives*.⁹⁹ For studies on the relationship between globalization and literature, see Suman Gupta's *Globalization and Literature* or Paul Jay's *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*.¹⁰⁰

Links to Digital Materials

Studies in Travel Writing.

Journeys.

Further Reading

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 1995.

Behdad, Ali. *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

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Heise, Ursula. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

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Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Thompson, Carl. *Travel Writing*. London: Routledge, 2011.

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Youngs, Tim. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Notes:

(1.) Amazon's founder Jeff Bezos's *Blue Origin*, travel mogul Richard Branson's *Virgin Galactic*, and entrepreneur Elon Musk's *SpaceX* are all working to offer commercial space flights in the not-too-distant future.

(2.) Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010) 77.

(3.) Amitav Ghosh argues in *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale* (London: Granta, 1992).

(4.) For more on this, see Janet L. Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), in which she argues that globalization can be traced back far beyond the "European Hegemony" that would come to dominate global affairs. Similarly, Geoffrey C. Gunn's *First Globalization: The Eurasian Exchange, 1500-1800* argues that the global and "ultimate European hegemony was in many ways contingent on three centuries of negotiation and ideological contestation with the East" (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), x. As Robbie Robertson argues in *The Three Waves of Globalization: A History of a Developing Global Consciousness*, it is in fact possible to go bypass Europe altogether and go all the way

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back to Mesopotamia and the early beginnings of civilization some five millennia ago and still see “many of the features that we now regard as common to contemporary globalization” (London: Zed Books, 2003), 54.

(5.) For arguments on the global impact of specific ancient cultures, see for instance Tim Flannery’s *The Future Eaters* (Sydney: Reed New Holland, 1994) or Thomas Homer-Dixon’s *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity and the Renewal of Civilisation* (London: Souvenir Press, 2006). For arguments on the global environmental impacts of ancient human civilizations in general, see Brian Fagan’s *Floods, Famines and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) or Jared Diamond’s *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive* (London: Penguin, 2005).

(6.) Joyce E. Chaplin, *Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 65.

(7.) Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.

(8.) William Dalrymple, *In Xanadu: A Quest* (London: Flamingo, 1990), 11.

(9.) Dalrymple, *In Xanadu: A Quest*, 13–14.

(10.) Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

(11.) Dalrymple, *In Xanadu: A Quest*, 125.

(12.) Dalrymple, *In Xanadu: A Quest*, 198.

(13.) Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 24–25.

(14.) Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 272.

(15.) Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 3.

(16.) Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 104.

(17.) Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 71.

(18.) Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars*, 167.

(19.) Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars*, 41.

(20.) Elisabeth Becker, “Only Governments Can Stem the Tide of Tourism Sweeping the Globe,” Aug 6, 2017. Available online.

(21.) Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars*, 43–44.

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- (22.) John Kasarda and Greg Lindsay, *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 5–6.
- (23.) Kasarda and Lindsay, *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next*, 22.
- (24.) Kasarda and Lindsay, *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next*, 24.
- (25.) Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), 77–78.
- (26.) Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 84–86.
- (27.) Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 18.
- (28.) Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 35–36.
- (29.) Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 23–24.
- (30.) Christopher Schaberg, *The Textual Life of Airports: Reading the Culture of Flight* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 1.
- (31.) Alain de Botton, *The Art of Travel* (London: Penguin, 2003), 36–37.
- (32.) Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jetlag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 62.
- (33.) Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jetlag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home*, 43 and 24.
- (34.) Neil Brenner and Roger Keil, “Global City Theory in Retrospect and Prospect,” in *The Global Cities Reader*, ed. Neil Brenner and Roger Keil (London: Routledge, 2009), 5; Richard Grant, *Globalizing City: The Urban and Economic Transformation of Accra, Ghana* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 13; and Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jetlag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home*, 14.
- (35.) John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: SAGE, 1998), 2.
- (36.) Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 10.
- (37.) Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5; and Timothy Clark, “Nature, Post Nature,” *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. Louise Westling (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 79.
- (38.) Timothy Clark, “Nature, Post Nature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. Louise Westling (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 79.

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- (39.) Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2003), 185.
- (40.) For typical examples of this, see for instance Wilfred Thesiger's *Arabian Sands* (London: Penguin, 1959) and *The Marsh Arabs* (London: Penguin, 1964). In both books, Thesiger immerses himself in environments (the Arabian deserts and marshes) he claims to have been both the first European to discover truly, but also the last to document before the onslaught of modernity and globalization finally ruined them. For a belated postmodern version of the same, see Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (New York: Villard, 1995).
- (41.) Sara Wheeler, *Terra Incognita: Travels in Antarctica* (London: Vintage, 1997), 8.
- (42.) Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (London: The Harvill Press, 1986), xxiii.
- (43.) Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*, xxvi.
- (44.) Sara Wheeler, *The Magnetic North: Travels in the Arctic* (London: Vintage, 2010), 197 and 229.
- (45.) Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*, 411.
- (46.) Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 102.
- (47.) Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, 104.
- (48.) Zach Wichter, "Too Hot to Fly? Climate Change May Take a Toll on Air Travel," June 20, 2017. Available online.
- (49.) See for instance Kenneth S Defeyes, *Beyond Oil: The View from Hubbert's Peak* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Vaclav Smil, *Oil: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008); and John Urry *Societies beyond Oil: Oil Dregs and Social Futures* (New York: Zed Books, 2013).
- (50.) Ian Johnston, "Great Barrier Reef May No Longer Be Salvageable, Australian Experts Concede," May 29, 2017. Available online; Peter Holley, "Decades of Human Waste Have Made Mount Everest a 'Fecal Time Bomb,'" March 3, 2015. Available online; and Alessandra Potenza, "This Pacific Island Is Covered in 38 Million Pieces of Trash—Mostly Plastic," May 16, 2017. Available online.
- (51.) Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 10.
- (52.) MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, xxii.

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(53.) The Syrian refugee crisis was of course also suggested to be at least in part provoked by climate change in that it supposedly could have been one of the major factors triggering the war in Syria in the first place. See, for example, Mike Hulme, *Weathered: Cultures of Climate* (London: SAGE, 2017), 77–78.

(54.) Lizzie Dearden, “British Tourists Complain That Impoverished Boat Migrants Are Making Holidays ‘Awkward’ in Kos,” May 28, 2015. Available online.

(55.) *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).

(56.) Graham Huggan, *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/Writing in an Age of Globalization* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2012), 6.

(57.) Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 19.

(58.) “Most Toilet Seats Broken by the Head in One Minute,” September 1, 2007. Available online.

(59.) Claudia Bell and John Lyall, *The Accelerated Sublime: Landscape, Tourism, and Identity* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 62.

(60.) Huggan, *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/Writing in an Age of Globalization*, 104.

(61.) Justin D. Edwards, “Dark Tourism,” in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (London: Routledge, 2016), 308.

(62.) Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 11.

(63.) James Nestor, *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science and What the Ocean Tells Us about Ourselves* (London: Profile Books, 2015), 1 and 19.

(64.) Nestor, *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science and What the Ocean Tells Us about Ourselves*, 10 and 232.

(65.) Nestor, *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science and What the Ocean Tells Us about Ourselves*, 179.

(66.) Nestor, *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science and What the Ocean Tells Us about Ourselves*, 4.

(67.) Nestor, *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science and What the Ocean Tells Us about Ourselves*, 143.

(68.) Tellingly, Humphrey also offers a companion piece to *Microadventures* called *Grand Adventures* (London: Harper Collins, 2016), proving that the desire for exotic and remote travel is still not entirely dead.

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- (69.) Alastair Humphreys, *Microadventures: Local Discoveries for Great Escapes* (London: William Collins, 2014), 14.
- (70.) Humphreys, *Microadventures: Local Discoveries for Great Escapes*, 14.
- (71.) Humphreys, *Microadventures: Local Discoveries for Great Escapes*, 16.
- (72.) Humphreys, *Microadventures: Local Discoveries for Great Escapes*, 92.
- (73.) Bradley L. Garrett, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City* (London: Verso, 2014), 33.
- (74.) Garrett, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City*, 48.
- (75.) As Iain Sinclair remarks it in *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire* (2009), quoting his own editor's decision to let him publish a five-hundred-page travelogue of decidedly "slow travel" on his local neighborhood despite that fact that he had already published over twenty books on London alone: "The London heritage stuff still plays. We'll squeeze you into the travel sections." Iain Sinclair, *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire* (London: Penguin, 2009), 16.
- (76.) Garrett, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City*, 162.
- (77.) Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2007), 7.
- (78.) Davis, *Planet of Slums*, 19.
- (79.) Andreas Huyssen, "Introduction: World Cultures, World Cities," in *Other Cities, Other Worlds*, ed. Andreas Huyssen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 15.
- (80.) Robyn Davidson, *Tracks* (London: Picador, 1998), 236-237.
- (81.) Nestor, *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science and What the Ocean Tells Us about Ourselves*, 198-199.
- (82.) Humphreys, *Microadventures: Local Discoveries for Great Escapes*, 14 and 17.
- (83.) Garrett, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City*, 12.
- (84.) Carl Thompson, "Travel Writing Now, 1950 to the Present Day," in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 204.
- (85.) Sara Maitland, *A Book of Silence: A Journey in Search of the Pleasures and Powers of Silence* (London: Granta, 2008); and Paul Bogard, *The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light* (London: Fourth Estate, 2013).
- (86.) Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2014), 5 and 8.

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- (87.) See Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- (88.) Virginia N. Sherry, "Saudi Arabia: Foreign Workers Abused," July 15, 2004. Available online.
- (89.) Ben Hubbard, "Saudi Arabia Agrees to Let Women Drive," Sept 26, 2017. Available online.
- (90.) Richard Grant, *Globalizing City: The Urban and Economic Transformation of Accra, Ghana*, 7.
- (91.) Clive Hamilton, *Defiant Earth: The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2017), 82–83.
- (92.) Bill Ashcroft, "Afterword," in *Travel Writing, Form and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*, ed. Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (New York: Routledge, 2012), 240.
- (93.) Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1 and 6.
- (94.) Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas, "Travel Blogs," in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2016), 304.
- (95.) Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011); and Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- (96.) Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 29.
- (97.) Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 2.
- (98.) Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund, *Mobility at Large: Globalization, Textuality and Innovative Travel Writing* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2012).
- (99.) Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998); and Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives* (London: Profile Books, 1999).
- (100.) Suman Gupta's *Globalization and Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2009); and Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

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Rune Graulund

University of Southern Denmark



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