

Published in:
Nineteenth-Century Prose

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal

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The Victorian period was one of transition in travel. The tourist industry boomed as modes of transportation became quicker and more affordable and as new transit networks developed rapidly. These were the decades of the expanding railway – that technology which contributed so dramatically to the nineteenth-century compression of space and time. But Victorian travel took many forms. If it was an age of tourism, it was also an age of exploration. This was an era of intensified expeditionary travel, as the last so-called ‘blank spaces’ on the globe were surveyed according to the protocols of European geographical knowledge.

This diversity of Victorian travel emerges as a feature of Barbara Franchi and Elvan Mutlu's recent collection, *Crossing Borders in Victorian Travel: Spaces, Nations and Empires*. The essays touch on varied modes of travel including train journeys, cycle trips, ocean voyages, agricultural tours, and exploratory expeditions. But the volume is also notable for its commendable effort to address different modes of narration. Operating with an inclusive understanding of travel writing the book engages ‘multiple forms of Victorian travel literature’ (p. 4), by offering chapters on guidebooks, newspaper poetry, correspondence, postcards and fiction. The editors are alert, moreover, to the fluid generic boundaries of travel writing; they argue, on the one hand, that ‘relating a journey…in the written form comes to intersect with the arts of fiction’ and, on the other, that prose fiction has often ‘made of travel, mobility and the tensions generated by cross-cultural encounters a key theme’ (pp. 2-3)

The book’s ambitious thematic focus is the ‘representation of empires, nations, and individual identity in travel accounts (real and fictional) covering areas such as Europe, Asia, Africa and Britain’ (p. 5). By addressing these wide-ranging geographies, the collection aims to investigate how Victorian travellers ‘defined and challenged’ the idea of empire and how travel literature served to ‘shape perceptions of imperial and national spaces, in the British context and beyond’ (p.4). Ultimately, Franchi and Mutlu argue for the complex imbrication of empire and travel literature. While travel texts were crucial in constructing the territories of empire for domestic audiences, they could also critically question ‘the fixity of boundaries’ and the very ‘imperial spaces they contribute to shaping’ (p. 10).
The book’s first section tackles questions of ‘gender, ethnicity and empire’ in works that both participate in and complicate the tropes of orientalist discourse. The first chapter, by Silva Antosa, revisits the explorer, soldier, linguist, and colonial administrator Richard F. Burton. Antosa identifies the complications of Burton’s attitudes, noting that he ‘supported the colonial project’ but also ‘contested imperial authorities’ and ‘defied the normative sociocultural rules of his country’ (pp. 14-15). Particularly interesting is Antosa’s assessment of Burton’s afterlife; Burton’s complexity, Antosa argues, has allowed him to be alternatively ‘celebrated or criticised’ by later scholars as ‘a representative of British colonisation and as an anti-imperial subversive rebel’ (p. 17). The diverging representations that Burton has generated in biography, portraiture and caricature highlight the ‘tensions characterising his life and work’ and show the ‘multifaceted’ nature of British Orientalist representation (pp. 30-31).

The following chapter by Barbara Franchi moves in an unexpected direction for a book about travel writing by taking up the detective classic, *The Moonstone*, through the lenses of queer theory. Franchi, however, extends anti-colonial readings of Wilkie Collins’s novel by interpreting it as one where ‘mobility between goods, people, citizens, colonial subjects, created by the imperial enterprise, become crucial narrative drives’ (p. 40). The book, in other words, is directly engaged with travel and, Franchi argues, deploys it subversively as ‘an anti-imperialist strategy’ (p. 42). This chapter revisits some of the key characters: Betteredge and Cuff are ‘armchair traveller[s]’ who raise questions about British masculinity and the imperial enterprise (p. 49). Blake and Jennings, by contrast, are actual travellers; the former embraces an ‘international attitude’ that takes him ‘beyond the border of Britain’ (p. 56), while the latter is directly associated with opium, a symbolic substance with the ‘transformative power to subvert the power structures and hierarchies of the empire’ (p. 59). The plot, moreover, centres on the mobility of an object: the stolen diamond disrupts social, racial and sexual norms, and operates as the novel’s primary ‘symbol of anti-imperial discourse’ (p. 61).

In Chapter three Asli Kutluk reads *The City of the Sultan* by Julia Pardoe, one of the few women in the early nineteenth-century to travel to the Ottoman Empire. Where Antosa’s analysis of Burton emphasised his ambivalence, Kutluk seeks to disclose the Orientalist and Eurocentric tropes that pervade Pardoe’s work. The chapter discusses Pardoe’s use of ‘ethnomasquerade’ (taking on Turkish dress) (p. 77), and the access that her gender granted to otherwise inaccessible places: the harems and the hamams (Turkish baths) (pp. 74, 79). Although Pardoe revised some conventional images of the
Ottoman Empire, she ultimately produced 'a romanticised, sublimated and exoticised
piece of writing’ (p. 74).

The two pieces collected in the second section focus on the representation of
African space. The fourth chapter, by Lara Atkin, does so through an oblique approach.
Her compelling argument is that H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* invokes *In Darkest Africa*
by the journalist-explorer, Henry Morton Stanley. As in other works of nineteenth-
century travel and anthropology, Stanley represented his African expeditions as journeys
into the past, ‘to a more primitive socio-evolutionary era’ (p. 91). In *The Time Machine*
argues Atkin, Wells takes up the ‘motif of the explorer as time-traveller’, but adapts it in
order ‘to construct a sustained critique of the socio-evolutionary discourse’ through
which imperial travellers represented Africa and African peoples (p. 88). Atkin finds
explicit allusions to Stanley’s work, arguing convincingly that Wells’s Eloi and Morlocks
are derived from the explorer’s representation of central African ‘pygmy’ races (p. 93).
Wells, however, does this strategically in order to problematise ‘the barrier between the
“primitive” and the “civilised”’ and critique ‘Eurocentric assumptions of socio-cultural
superiority’ (pp. 101-02)

The following chapter, by Elizabeth’s Rawlinson-Mills, redirects the discussion
from fiction to poetry. Her terrain is the British newspaper poetry of the South African
War (1899-1902). Rawlinson-Mills makes a persuasive case for the value of newspaper
and periodical verse, even if written by ‘anonymous and untraceable’ figures (p. 107).
Such material should not be dismissed simply as ephemeral; it was widely read and could
circulate ‘nationally and globally’ through multiple publications (p. 109). Rawlinson-
Mills’s piece is in part a recovery project, unveiling some previously unknown poetic
engagements with the Anglo-Boer War and the South African landscape. These, she
argues, ‘offer valuable insights into British and South African experiences of, and
responses to the war’ (p. 110). This poetry, moreover, is not simply jingoistic. Rawlinson-
Mills makes the interesting discovery that newspaper editors often printed poetry that
‘articulates a more troubled assessment of Britain’s imperial activity’; in verse, poets had
‘the freedom to dissent in a voice which may or may not be their own, and the freedom
to sustain a complex, uncomfortably equivocal position’ (p. 127).

In the third section, *Crossing Borders* travels from Africa to Europe to discuss the
interaction between modern travel and the development of national identities. Heidi
Liedke opens this section by assessing the function of Victorian railway guides. Leidke
reads the guidebook in the context of the Victorian ‘industrialisation of time and space’
and contemporary ‘ambivalences’ about modern travel (pp. 134, 132). Guidebooks, she contends, served to ‘eliminate the uncertainties (either actual or perceived) of travel and tackle the dangers of unoccupied time’ (p. 132); they regulated and ordered the travel experience, providing passengers with minute details and even advising on the use of leisure time. Reading The Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints and Basil Montagu’s Railroad Eclogues, Liedke argues that Victorian guidebooks reflected and attempted to resolve the ‘traumatic effects’ produced by the rise of the railway (p. 145).

If domestic travel impacted the British sense of self, so too did travel in continental Europe. In the seventh chapter, Rebecka Klette examines Jerome K. Jerome’s German travel novel, Three Men on the Bummel, for its ‘imagogical insights into how the English viewed the German (standardised hetero-stereotypes) and how they viewed themselves (standardised auto-stereotypes)’ (p. 152). More specifically, Klette argues that Jerome interweaves landscape and nationhood, depicting the German natural environment as a reflection of German identity – and particularly the German ‘love of authority and uniformity’ (p. 159). Situating the novel in the context of Anglo-German relations at the turn of the century, Klette argues that Jerome – and other travel writers – construct a ‘nationscape, namely a landscape that is perceived to be embodying, mirroring, shaping and shaped by national character’ (p. 153).

While Klette looks at a British traveller in Germany, the eighth chapter takes up a German visitor to Britain. Here, Laura Nixon’s subject is Carmen Sylva (the pseudonym of Elisabeth Pauline Ottalie Luise zu Wied), a German princess, Queen of Romania by marriage, and the author of a considerable body of poetry and fiction. Nixon’s concern, however, is Sylva’s appropriation by the British tourist industry following her visit to Britain in 1890. As a celebrity traveller, Sylva became commemorated in postcards associated with the locations she visited and was transformed into a ‘commodity of British travel’ (p. 173). For Nixon, however, Sylva’s touristic commemoration may have had an impact on her later reputation. Since the postcards primarily emphasised her royal status and domesticity, they obscured her literary significance. Beyond the specific case of Carmen Sylva, Nixon’s chapter (as with Rawlinson-Mills’s piece) extends research into ‘ephemeral artefacts’ as repositories of cultural and historical significance (p. 173).

The book’s last section examines the interconnections between the local and global in two well-known authors of imperial romance: H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling. The two final chapters, however, address works that have often been neglected in scholarship. In her chapter on Haggard, Elvan Mutlu focuses not on the canonical
African adventures but rather on the ‘rural England’ works. Mutlu’s argument is that these writings – *A Farmer's Year* and *Rural England* – are travel narratives, bound up with the ‘construction of English national identity’ (p. 198). As Mutlu points out, Haggard’s descriptions emphasise ‘the interconnectedness of different locations and places in rural England’ and the ‘multiple historical representations of one place’ that can develop over long periods (pp. 207, 213). Since Haggard’s cultural and historical commentary valorises the diversity of national roots and refuses homogenous notions of English identity, Mutlu contends that his rural writing is unexpectedly ‘cosmopolitan’ in perspective (pp. 214-15).

The volume’s final chapter also turns to neglected work: this time by Rudyard Kipling. Rather than revisiting his Indian fiction or imperial poetry, John Anders examines the body of letters that Kipling wrote in 1889 while sailing on a Cook’s tourist ticket from India to Britain via China, Japan, and the USA. This tour introduced Kipling to widely different cultures and communities and marked a ‘turning point in his writing career’ (p. 219). For Anders, Kipling’s travel correspondence registers ‘an increasing engagement with the world system’ beyond the British Empire and the ‘decentring’ influence of intercultural experiences (pp. 221). The journey tested ‘some of his assumptions of British superiority’ and compelled Kipling to reflect on Anglo-Indian life in the light of ‘non-anglicised societies and alternative modes of cultural interaction’ (pp. 225, 229-30). Anders’s engagement with the complexity of these travel documents makes a valuable contribution to Kipling scholarship, while also extending the parameters of the collection to include the epistolary form.

While this volume is to be commended, there are several issues worth noting. First, the introductory chapter finishes by reflecting on ‘nomadic’ travel, understood in Rosi Braidotti’s terms as a form of mobility offering ‘the essential counterpoint to the imperial system of divisions and separations’ (p. 9). The editors’ emphasis on nomadism, however, is only implicit elsewhere in the collection and might have been picked up more explicitly in the various chapters. Second, although the book does well to range widely in geography and genre, it is somewhat uneven in coverage. Since different locations receive varying amounts of attention, the book would have been strengthened by a clearer rationale for its geographical emphases. Readers might spot omissions in terms of travel genres too. For instance, although missionaries were among the most important sources of information about the non-western world in the nineteenth century, the vast missionary literature of the period is not discussed. Nevertheless, it
should be noted that the volume already accomplishes a lot. It does not aim for comprehensive coverage, but adopts a case study approach that invites further work. Finally, the book has a number of inconsistencies and typographical errors that might have been caught by closer copyediting on the part of the publisher.

This engaging volume is a welcome addition to scholarship. With its attention to canonical and non-canonical authors, and to familiar and neglected literary texts, there is much to attract readers with interests in travel writing and Victorian studies. The book’s contributors offer valuable insight into the diverse ways in which the Victorians imagined and narrated travel, the self and the other in an age of empire.

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