The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing

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1 Introduction: the global imaginary of contemporary travel writing

As literary representations of journeys across the globe, travelogues express political commitments that are barely visible beyond their received status as a minor literary genre. This book politicises travelogues by revealing their connection to the ‘serious’ business of world affairs, and their significance to the study and practice of global politics. It argues that the quasi-fictional genre of travel writing is at least as useful for understanding issues of international importance as the policy documents, government press releases, parliamentary debates and media stories that are usually privileged in this context. In fact, travelogues have a distinct advantage because they are read widely by a number of people, and thus provide valuable information about how artefacts of popular culture produce common assumptions about power relations at the international level. Historically, travel writing participated in the international realm by disseminating the goals of Empire: stories of ‘faraway lands’ were crucial in establishing the unequal, unjust and exploitative relations of colonial rule. While many post-colonial scholars have examined the role of travel writing during Empire, I am particularly interested in how contemporary travel writing is addressing its colonial legacy by engaging – or not engaging – with wider intellectual and cultural debates about global politics.¹

The contemporary travel writer's efforts to abandon his/her colonial heritage is understandable: it mimics the efforts of statesmen, diplomats, civil servants, journalists, researchers and scholars who are currently searching for more equal and just ways of arranging our post-colonial world. In other words, we are all dealing with the legacy of Empire, whether in popular stories of travel or in policy documents on Third World debt. For this reason, many critics have argued that it is 'virtually impossible to consider travel writing outside the frame of postcolonialism'.

Why, then, are travelogues still being written in our supposedly 'enlightened' age? And why are they still so popular? If the Empire that sustained travel writing was dismantled with the various decolonisation movements of the twentieth century, why hasn't travel writing itself disappeared? To address those questions, this book examines popular travelogues written in English since 1975. This time period is significant not only because it encompasses the modern 'renaissance' of travel writing inaugurated by Paul Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train through Asia*, but also because it reveals how travelogues are currently addressing their colonial past in a context of rapid globalisation. However one wants to interpret the vast debates over globalisation (e.g. as new or old, as good or bad, as killing the state or saving it), there is no doubt that the enormous changes in technology, economics, politics and culture in the last thirty years have been reflected in, and produced by, travel writing. This is not to say that the historical forces of globalisation have never made themselves felt in travel writing.

Indeed, as Ali Behdad argues in his excellent book *Belated Travelers*, travel writing was crucial to the late nineteenth-century dissolution of Empire and Orientalism. Rather, this book is concerned with how contemporary travel writing participates in, and responds to, the anxieties created by late twentieth-century globalisation. For example, how is travel writing coping with the embarrassment of its colonial past while also recognising that there are no undiscovered places left to explore? Given this precarious position, can travellers tell us anything relevant, let alone provocative, about contemporary global life?

This book examines how travel writing is currently resuscitating itself in the face of globalisation by pursuing two simultaneous strategies. Firstly, travel writers alleviate the anxieties created by globalisation by recalling the assurances of Empire. As travel writer Robyn Davidson explains:

'It's as if the genre has not caught up with the post-colonial reality from which it springs. One would think it should collapse under the weight of its paradoxes, but quite the opposite is happening. There is a passion for travel books harking back to a previous sensibility when home and abroad, occident and orient, centre and periphery were unproblematically defined. Perhaps they are popular for the very reason that they are so deceptive. They create the illusion that there is still an uncontaminated Elsewhere to discover, a place that no longer exists, located, indeed, somewhere between fiction and fact.'

As Davidson suggests, it is easy to see how 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 this sense, travel writers continue to secure their privileged position by categorising, critiquing and passing judgement on less-civilised areas of the world. As Joanne P. Sharp argues, 'Western travellers have tended to adopt a colonialist style of writing which assumes the superiority of the traveller's cultural and moral values and which leads to this figure taking possession of what he [sic] sees in a voyeuristic gaze.' In short, travel writers maintain their relevance in a globalised world by mimicking their colonial forebears. This book argues that contemporary travel writing reproduces the logic of Empire through a colonial vision. This is not, however, an unreconstructed version of Orientalism. Rather, the post-colonial framework

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2 Brian Musgrove, 'Travel and Unsettlement: Freud on Vacation', in Clark, *Travel Writing and Empire*, p. 32. Musgrove goes on to say that 'the revival of critical interest in travel writing was co-incident with the rise of postcolonial theory'.

3 Paul Theroux, *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train through Asia* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976). Critics Paul Fussell argues that *The Great Railway Bazaar* is one of the few good travelogues to emerge from our age of mass tourism: see *Abroad: British Literary Travelling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 39-40. Introducing Fussell at the 1999 'Writing the Journey' conference at the University of Pennsylvania, David Epsey echoed these comments and signified *The Great Railway Bazaar* as the origin point for the renaissance of modern travel writing: for a transcript of his comments, see http://www.english.upenn.edu/Ytravel99/Fussell.html.


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about the kinds of values, norms and understandings upon which a global cosmopolitan democracy should be based. My point is that the cosmopolitan vision embedded in contemporary travel writing and espoused by many liberal thinkers is not as emancipatory as it claims to be; rather, it is underscored by the remnants of Orientalism, colonialism and Empire. In effect, travel writers currently articulating cosmopolitan visions of the world do not avoid the ‘embarrassing’ attitudes of their colonial predecessors — they actually produce new forms of power that mimic the ‘previous sensibility’ of Empire. I want to subject the certainty of this cosmopolitan vision to Jacques Derrida’s questions: ‘Where have we received the image of cosmopolitanism from? And what is happening to it?’

By drawing on more critical understandings of cosmopolitanism, this book reveals how contemporary travel writing operates in a contested, antagonistic and uncertain political terrain that is haunted by the logic of Empire.

This book argues that contemporary travel writing engages most profoundly in the wider debates of global politics through its structuring tension between colonial and cosmopolitan visions. These two visions cannot be understood separately; it is not enough simply to chart how travel writing reproduces the categories of Empire in an effort to ward off the homogenising forces of globalisation, nor is it enough to argue that travel writing has successfully resolved its irrelevancy by championing the principles of global civil society and cosmopolitanism. Rather, these two visions exist in a complex relationship with one another — sometimes antagonistic, sometimes symbiotic, sometimes ambiguous. In examining this relationship, this book asks whether the cosmopolitan vision is merely a blander mutation of the colonial vision, or if it really


Steve Clark, ‘Introduction’, in Travel Writing and Empire, p. 3. Indeed, the post-colonial approach at work here draws explicitly from the Clark text, as well as from the work of Behdad, Mills and Pratt.


The cosmopolitan ideal informs all of Held’s work, but the most succinct formations of it can be found in ‘Democracy and the New International Order’, in Daniele Archibugi and David Held, eds., Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 96–120 and ‘Cosmopolitan Democracy and the
does allow for difference, heterogeneity and contingency in the global realm. To what extent do the Western values of recognition, equality and tolerance embedded in the cosmopolitan vision carry traces of their colonial heritage? Is contemporary travel writing able to encourage a radically diverse global community unconstrained by Enlightenment notions of civilisation and progress? At the heart of these questions is the production of difference in the global realm. It is not that difficult to see how superior Western subjects employing a colonial vision construct inferior ‘others’ in order to justify the continuation of hierarchical global relations. Likewise, it is not that difficult to see how a self-proclaimed international community employing a cosmopolitan vision articulate universal standards of civilisation by which they judge all cultures. But what is difficult to see — and what this book seeks to illustrate — is the extent to which these competing productions of difference both fuse together and fall apart in contemporary travel writing.

Double vision: the production of difference in Paul Theroux and Bill Bryson

In order to illustrate how colonial and cosmopolitan visions operate, it is useful to see how two masters of contemporary travel writing — Paul Theroux and Bill Bryson — utilise conventional geopolitical categories to produce difference in the global realm. In _The Old Patagonian Express: By Train through the Americas_ (the follow-up to _The Great Railway Bazaar_), Theroux makes an epic train journey from Boston to Patagonia and back again. Early on in the book, he crosses the border from Laredo, Texas into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and makes the following observation:

> the garlic seller was the personification of Latin America. He was weedy and wore a torn shirt and greasy hat; he was very dirty; he screamed the same words over and over. These attributes alone were unremarkable — he too had a counterpart in Cleveland. What distinguished him was the way he carried his merchandise. He had a garland of garlic cloves around his neck and another around his waist and ropes of them on his arms, and he shook them in his fists. He fought his way in and out of the crowd, the clusters of garlic bouncing on his body. Was there any better example of cultural difference than this man? At the Texas end of the bridge he would have been arrested for contravening some law of sanitation; here he was ignored. What was so strange about wearing bunches of garlic around your neck? Perhaps nothing, except that he would not have done it if he were not a Mexican, and I would not have noticed it if I hadn’t been an American.12


What is remarkable about this passage is the way Theroux uses the category of modern statehood to produce, interpret and judge the difference he encounters. In other words, his observations about the garlic seller are made meaningful to the extent that they draw upon already established oppositions between Mexico and America. Theroux and the garlic seller are different because they come from different countries (e.g. ‘he would not have done it if he were not a Mexican, and I would not have noticed it if I hadn’t been an American’). Theroux’s colonial vision is quite explicit here: he uses the border between Mexico and America to invoke a series of cultural, political, economic and structural differences whereby Mexico is always inferior to America. As geographer Doreen Massey explains, Theroux ‘does not seem to doubt for a minute his right to pass the sweeping judgements he records’, and those judgements always reinforce a hierarchical relationship between Mexico and America.13 Theroux’s marking of difference through a colonial vision not only provides moral justification for the geopolitical border between Mexico and America, it also legitimates the wider cultural, political, economic and structural inequalities that exist between these two states. Theroux’s loaded description of the garlic seller is exemplary in this regard: the weedy, dirty, screaming Mexican could not be more opposed to the rational, observant American travel writer. Theroux’s judgement of the garlic seller resonates with readers because it calls upon many other shared interpretations of the unequal relationships between Mexico and America (e.g. developed and underdeveloped, civilised and primitive, First World and Third World). Suddenly, the heavy security presence at the US border begins to make sense to Theroux’s readers — America needs to be protected from those hordes of filthy characters symbolised by the garlic seller. By augmenting the Mexican-American border with descriptions of cultural difference inherited from a colonial past, Theroux invites his readers to sanction the structures of power that justify America’s most militarised and violent national border.

Conversely, Bill Bryson’s travelogue _Neither Here Nor There: Travels in Europe_ is an effort to celebrate diversity rather than judge it according to a colonial vision. Just after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Bryson sets forth from his home in England to see the major European cities between

13 Doreen Massey, ‘Imagining the World’, in John Allen and Doreen Massey, eds., _Geographical Worlds_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Open University, 1995), p. 40. Massey’s critical reading of Theroux is more compelling than the formal critique offered by Fussell in _Abroad_, p. 159, where he argues that _The Old Patagonian Express_ is a ‘failure’ because of an ‘absence of sufficient resonance, and allusion and nuance’. In other words, it is badly written.
Stockholm and Istanbul. What follows is an affectionate reaffirmation of the minute foibles and national stereotypes of Europe. But Bryson is keen to distance himself from the negative judgements that colonial travel writing encouraged, and therefore represents European stereotypes in positive and humorous ways. This allows him to celebrate the differences that make Europe unique, and counter the ‘American habit of thinking of Europe as one place and Europeans as essentially one people’. Thus, the rudeness of French waiters is reassuring (and waning under pressure from the French Tourist Board), the crazy Italians are chaotic and wonderful (especially when they park their cars on top of each other) and German cities are admirable for their order and efficiency. Unlike Theroux, Bryson rejoices in the differences he encounters:

One of the small marvels of my first trip to Europe was the discovery that the world could be so full of variety, that there were so many different ways of doing essentially identical things, like eating and drinking and buying cinema tickets. It fascinated me that Europeans could at once be so alike — that they could be so universally bookish and cerebral, and drive small cars, and live in little houses in ancient towns, and love soccer, and be relatively unmaterialistic and law-abiding, and have chilly hotel rooms and cozy and inviting places to eat and drink — and yet be so endlessly, unpredictably different from each other as well. I loved the idea that you could never be sure of anything in Europe.

The differences that Bryson documents in Europe are not threatening or damaging; rather, they are precisely what make the place worth visiting. What is interesting in this passage is how Bryson translates particular characteristics through a cosmopolitan vision; he assumes that everybody the world over eats, drinks and buys cinema tickets because these are universal habits. The challenge for him as a travel writer is to show how these universal activities are performed differently (and thus humorously) in each particular nation of Europe. Like Theroux, Bryson is keen to mark out difference — it’s just that Bryson’s cosmopolitan approach seems much more benign. While Theroux despises the ‘poverty and degradation’ of Mexico, Bryson thinks the states of Europe are ‘nifty’ discoveries. They are not better or worse than his English home — they are simply different. By focusing on the diversity of Europe — from their ‘little houses’ to their ‘love of soccer’ — Bryson articulates resistance to the visible signs of cultural homogenisation (e.g. the ubiquity of McDonalds, Starbucks and Gap).


15 Bryson, *Neither Here Nor There*, p. 40.

Bryson’s cosmopolitan vision of the world does not mean homogenisation; rather, it means encouraging, celebrating and securing cultural differences. This makes the travelogue the perfect vehicle for Bryson’s message, and *Neither Here Nor There* inaugurates his bumbling efforts to learn about, appreciate and celebrate difference rather than judge it negatively.

What is significant in these passages is that while Theroux and Bryson articulate competing global visions — one colonial and the other cosmopolitan — both rely on stable geopolitical boundaries to locate difference and secure identity. Both narratives assume that there are ‘natural’ boundaries separating different cultures — it’s just that in Theroux’s narrative those boundaries are necessary to protect privileged identities from uncivilised others, and in Bryson’s narrative those boundaries simply indicate diverse cultural traditions. Neither author thinks much about, let alone interrogates, the givenness of these categories, and both assume that boundaries operate as simple markers of difference rather than complex and contingent formations of power. While Bryson’s cosmopolitan vision may offer a more palatable approach for these ‘enlightened’ times, he relies on the same logics of differentiation and demarcation embedded in Theroux’s colonial vision. The problem here is that while travel writers spend much of their time crossing cultural and national borders, they fail to address the intricate and ambiguous power relations at work in these sites. In Theroux’s narrative, his judgemental production of difference ignores the everyday transgressions that occur along the Mexican-American border — the physical struggles between illegal Mexican immigrants and American law enforcers, the transfer of capital between international banks and multinational corporations, the interactions between female workers, union activists and wealthy entrepreneurs in Maquiladora factories, and the constant installation and maintenance of American surveillance technology. Similarly, Bryson’s more optimistic production of difference ignores the contingency of Europe as a political entity — the mobility of Europe’s eastern border during the different phases of enlargement, the continuing antagonisms in Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Bosnia, and EU decisions that consolidate elite power and exclude disempowered groups across the continent (e.g. migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees). So while Theroux’s colonial vision depicts the Mexican-American border as an effective mechanism for protecting the ‘civilised’ Americans from the ‘uncivilised’ Mexicans, and Bryson’s cosmopolitan vision depicts the borders of Europe as essentially benign containers of quirky cultural differences, neither writer questions how his simple depiction of crossing a border hides a number of problematic
assumptions about power, culture and difference. To enter into this kind of epistemological interrogation would place the position of the travel writer in doubt: how could Theroux produce and judge difference if the boundary securing his home and his identity were to be questioned? How could Bryson celebrate the differences of Europe if he began to doubt the very boundaries he cherishes?

If the colonial and cosmopolitan visions of Theroux and Bryson are similar in their uncritical reproduction of geopolitical boundaries, they differ in their political urgency. Because Theroux’s colonial vision allows him to make negative judgements about the places he visits, it is easy to see how his texts reproduce the prevailing ideologies of his time. Indeed, many of my engagements with Theroux’s texts are efforts to reveal his conservative outlook and privileged position within the status quo. But it is the travel writers who enact a cosmopolitan vision who are most alarming, for they smuggle in equally judgemental accounts of otherness under the guise of equality, tolerance and respect for difference. While cosmopolitan travel writers might be part of a larger cultural effort to critique colonial power relations, I want to argue that they simultaneously rearticulate the logic of Empire through new networks, structures and boundaries. Travel writers like Bryson might refrain from making the negative judgements that characterise Theroux’s writing, but his playful celebration of difference can be picked up and mobilised in the construction of new global hegemonies. For example, cosmopolitan travel writers fail to recognise the privileged conception of global mobility embedded in the genre. Much of this writing would have us believe that the increase in mobility brought about by globalisation results in the equal movement of people, goods and ideas around the world. But there is an enormous difference between a wealthy Western travel writer like Bryson bumbling his way across Europe funded by a healthy advance from his publisher and, say, a teenager from Macedonia forced through the organised prostitution networks of Rome, Paris and London in order to ‘work off’ her debt and buy back her freedom. The idea that ‘everybody moves freely’ in a globalised world is a fallacy: only those who can afford to move, or those who are willing to take the risks associated with migration, are able to cross established geopolitical borders with ease. While travel writers might be aware of these global inequalities, they are often unaware of how the act of writing about travel itself engenders contemporary power formations that are as unequal, unjust and exploitative as those forged during Empire. While Bryson’s efforts to reveal the funny side of difference might seem like a step in the right direction, I want to argue that even

those ‘benign’ efforts can be used to justify and legitimate new forms of global exclusion, domination and violence.

In the departure lounge: discourse, power and materiality

Travel writing shapes and influences the way we understand the world. Historically, our knowledge of the world has come to us, in part, through the famous travel stories of figures like Marco Polo, Magellan and Lawrence of Arabia. In short, we know there are faraway lands on the other side of the world because certain travellers have made journeys there and recorded them in travelogues. But travel writing has not remained static over the years – it is also shaped by the very world it seeks to document. Think of how the genre has changed in line with significant global shifts: while eighteenth-century travelogues happily categorised foreign plants, animals and peoples into ordered taxonomies, that Enlightenment confidence had dissipated by the late nineteenth century, and many travel writers expressed fear and anxiety as the structures of Empire began to collapse. The difficulty with this formulation – texts shaping reality and reality shaping texts – is that it reproduces a ‘correspondence’ understanding of representation. In other words, it assumes there is a single, incontrovertible reality awaiting documentation by travel writers, and each travelogue can be judged for how accurately it represents this reality. For example, Theroux’s The Old Patagonian Express could be considered a vehicle for the seamless transmission of ‘real’ cultural difference and inequality from the world, to the author, to the text, and finally to the reader. The book’s subsequent success with the public could then be understood as testament to the truth and accuracy of Theroux’s interpretation of Latin America. But representation is never a simple literary event: reading, writing and interpretation are political acts that involve complex power relations between readers, writers and the social worlds they inhabit. To argue that travel writing is connected to the world it documents in a more complex way than simple correspondence, it is necessary to examine the forces and structures that shape the text/reality relationship. This book argues that stories of travel are connected to the social worlds inhabited by readers and writers by a number of competing discourses.

16 See Pratt, Imperial Eyes, ‘Part I. Science and Sentiment, 1750–1800’, pp. 15–107, for an excellent account of the relationship between taxonomies of knowledge and eighteenth-century travel writing; see Behdad, Belated Travellers, for a detailed account of the travelogue’s participation in the nineteenth-century dissolution of Empire.
Although discourse is a difficult and contested term, it is most easily understood as a set of images, vocabularies and material conditions that expresses prevailing truth claims about the world and positions subjects and objects accordingly. As the work of Michel Foucault makes clear, discourses attach all texts, utterances and representations to the social, political, cultural and economic forces that give rise to their production, circulation and value. His method of discourse analysis examines how power arranges certain subjects, objects and meanings into an incontrovertible reality and excludes other possible ways of being and knowing. This is not a ‘correspondence’ understanding of representation at all; indeed, discourse analysis resists the idea that we are handcuffed to a stable and single reality that we can somehow ‘get wrong’ by not being accurate enough in our representations and interpretations. This is precisely why Foucault explains that the world does not ‘turn a legible face towards us’ that we can decipher according to a transcendental framework. Acts of writing and speaking are given meaning through prevailing discourses and actually do violence to the world because they are an imposition of ordered meaning on an otherwise ambiguous reality. Travel writing is no exception: it organises the world through a number of prevailing discourses, and sediments that world into a seemingly incontrovertible reality. Travelogues are politically interesting texts because they mask that process of discursive ordering and offer their observations as neutral documentations of a stable, single and ordered reality. In order to identify and reveal the prevailing discourses at work in contemporary travel writing, it is necessary to track the continuity of statements and meanings that come to be understood as true and real. Indeed, Foucault argues that discourses become hegemonic when the gathering of statements and


meansings around various truth claims continues uninterrupted until it sediments into a ‘clear’ picture of reality.18

With this in mind, The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to identify the prevailing discourses shaping contemporary travelogues and illustrate how the same discourses are at work in the study and practice of global politics. With this discursive approach, power is never situated wholly within the travelogue text, the travel writer, the reading audience or the ‘reality’ that is being documented. Rather, power is always located in the discourses that connect texts, subjects and realities. Foucault’s point is that this connection is never neutral — which is why we need discourse analysis to trace hegemonic discursive formations and reveal their political effects. With respect to The Old Patagonian Express and Neither Here Nor There, we can see that discourses locate subjects, objects and meanings in differential positions. The discourses at work in The Old Patagonian Express ensure that the myriad of possible relationships between Mexico and America are jettisoned in favour of a superior/inferior relationship that is rendered ‘natural’ and therefore placed beyond question. This hierarchy is secured every time Theroux reinforces his superiority as a rational and objective American travel writer against objectified others such as the dirty, weedy, Mexican garlic seller. Conversely, the discourses at work in Neither Here Nor There insist that every country in Europe is different, and that happy coexistence is Europe’s ‘natural’ mode of being. Unlike Theroux’s strategy, Bryson’s ‘quirky’ and unthreatening observations are less about judging difference, and more about contrasting the marvellous Europeans with his own infantile, shambolic and ungainly self. But this humour does not neutralise Bryson’s travelogue; rather, it helps to place his production of difference beyond question, for how can the playful celebration of difference be a bad thing?

What differentiates Foucauldian discourse analysis from the more over-determined ideological examinations of culture offered by the Frankfurt School (amongst others) is its claim that resistance is embedded in all discourses. While a Foucauldian approach locates the truth claims reinforced by discourses, it also reveals the discontinuity of all discourses and their failure to completely exclude other subjects, objects and meanings. In this way, discourse analysis uncovers and gives voice to that which is made silent within the discursive imposition

18 In The Archaeology of Knowledge, Foucault explains that discursive continuity occurs through the following practices: a continuing reference to the same object, a common style in the production of statements (e.g. the vernacular of science), a constant usage of the same concept and a repeated referral to common themes (pp. 31–9).
of order: it reveals the ambiguities, ruptures and repetitions that are covered over every time we agree to interpret the world according to a single and incontrovertible reality. For example, what possibilities are precluded and silenced by the confident, authoritative voice of the travel writer? What would the Mexican garlic seller make of Theroux’s observations? How do the Spanish and Portuguese feel at being excised from Bryson’s European odyssey? Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe build on Foucault’s arguments about the discontinuity of discourse by explaining that resistance is located precisely in the failure of discourses to achieve hegemony and totality. We understand the failure of hegemony primarily because history is full of powerful struggles against various discursive totalities. If discourses were completely successful at organising meaning into a hegemonic bloc, there would be no struggle, no antagonism and no debate. In short, there would be no politics. If we accepted all truth claims as the foundation for an incontrovertible reality, there would be nothing to hegemonise and no continual need for discourses to repeat themselves. So while the superior/inferior relationship between America and Mexico structures the narrative of The Old Patagonian Express, it never completely silences the history of political and cultural antagonism between these two states—a history that includes the nineteenth-century Mexican-American War, Cesar Chavez’s creation of the United Farm Workers Union in the 1960s, various anti-NAFTA movements all across North America in the early 1990s, and the Zapataist resistance movement led by Subcomandante Marcos. Likewise, while Bryson depicts Europe as a diverse and happy family of nations, his humour never completely silences the horrors of European history. In other words, Bryson’s shambling tour of ‘little houses in ancient towns’ and ‘cosy and inviting places to drink’ is haunted by the battlefields of the Somme, the Allied cemeteries in Normandy and the memorials at Auschwitz and Birkenau.

Laclau and Mouffe make a further political intervention in Foucault’s work by explaining how discourses achieve continuity and permanence by continually changing their boundaries over time. When discursive limits are questioned and transgressed by counter-hegemonic forces (i.e. when moments of resistance are revealed), new limits and new mechanisms of regulation must be formed and repeated to hold truth claims in place. Laclau and Mouffe explain this malleability of discursive limits through the Gramscian idea of assimilation: discursive hegemony continues because it is able to assimilate and neutralise the forces of resistance it encounters. This is precisely what is occurring in contemporary travel writing as authors make efforts to distance themselves from the genre’s complicity in Empire. It might seem that Bryson’s harmless and unthreatening depictions of cultural difference are better than Theroux’s explicit neocolonial judgements. But as this book argues, the shift from a colonial to a cosmopolitan vision is profoundly depoliticising because it smuggles in the logic of Empire under the banner of universalism. In other words, messages of global harmony and international unity are being trumpeted by a genre that claims to have jettisoned its colonial past, but all the while is casually producing new forms of colonial power. Because many contemporary travel writers fail to address the powerful influence of the genre’s colonial history, they end up imposing values they believe to be universal (e.g. equality, tolerance, cultural diversity) without realising the particular Western heritage of those values. My point is that by assimilating certain messages of ‘political correctness’, travel writing actually perpetuates an unreconstructed colonial vision while claiming to celebrate equality, tolerance and cultural diversity.

If we assume that discourses are only about textual and linguistic matters, then this analysis of travel writing would be limited to the formal, aesthetic and stylistic questions of whether or not a particular travelogue is well written. To maintain the political edge of discourse analysis, it is necessary to pursue one of Foucault’s most troubling and enduring insights, that discourses are actually material things. While discourses are certainly a function of language and its orders, they also have very real effects—on our bodies, in our homes, in our institutions, in our minds. One of the most serious misunderstandings of Foucault is that his work is purely theoretical, linguistic and historical, and that his concern with discourse is simply an obsession with language and thought. But the strength of Foucault’s work—especially his early research on prisons and clinics—is its empirical richness and historical detail. For Foucault, discourses are never just about language and texts—they make the crucial political link between representations and their material effects. And this is precisely the argument that causes the most anxiety, for while we are able to accept the discursive construction of meaning according to a grid of power and knowledge, we are much less willing to accept that discourses shape our material world. As Foucault argues, the inclusion of materiality is exactly what the struggles for discursive hegemony are designed to do away with: ‘in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and

\[19\] As Laclau and Mouffe argue, ‘the two conditions of a hegemonic articulation are the presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of the frontiers which separate them…without equivalence and without frontiers, it is impossible to speak of hegemony’; see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radically Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985), p. 136.
redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role it is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.\textsuperscript{20} Laclau and Mouffe are even more explicit than Foucault in arguing for the materiality of discourse. For them, there is nothing at all outside of discourse — not even material objects — because the discursive field is infinite. In other words, discourses cover both linguistic and non-linguistic spheres.\textsuperscript{21} Suggesting that ‘nothing is outside of discourse’ is, by logical extension, a suggestion that material artefacts such as tables, mountains and guns do not actually exist without discourses to articulate them. These artefacts are somehow animated by our language and meaning, but prior to that encounter they are not entities at all. While Laclau and Mouffe accept that objects do, in fact, exist externally to our thinking about them, they also deny that objects ‘could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence’.\textsuperscript{22} As they explain, ‘as a member of a certain community, I will never encounter an object in its naked existence — such a notion is a mere abstraction; rather, that existence will always be given as articulated within discursive totalities’.\textsuperscript{23}

If material objects are as discursively constructed as language, then the discourse analysis at work in this book necessarily invokes the ‘real’ world of global travel just as it invokes the ‘literary’ world of travel writing. To claim that travelogues are ‘just books’ is to ignore their participation in wider discursive structures, and the material effects that are produced within those structures. For example, the discourses invoked by Theroux in his judgement of the Mexican garlic seller are the same discourses used by American law enforcers when they apprehend illegal immigrants at the Mexican-American border. Likewise, the discourses embedded in Bill Bryson’s text are the same discourses used by EU bureaucrats as they redefine the role of NATO in a globalised world. Insisting on a discursive field that is infinite — that is material as well as linguistic — is the best way to foreground the possibility of resistance within even the most oppressive discourses. For example, lurking within the discourses that frame Theroux’s judgement of Mexico are alternative formations of power that require more just and equitable relationships between people located on either side of the border. Likewise, embedded within the discourses that Bryson draws upon to frame Europe as a ‘friendly’ collection of cultural differences are alternative formations of power that reveal longstanding political antagonisms and public memories of violence and bloodshed. By foregrounding an infinite discursive field characterised as much by resistance as it is by oppression, it is possible to show how travel writing enables the reproduction of global hegemonies, but also has the potential to disrupt and transform these logics of rule.

The road not taken: disciplinary starting points

There has been considerable debate in a number of areas over how best to apply discourse analysis to cultural products.\textsuperscript{24} All discursive approaches start from the premise that cultural products both reflect and produce their social contexts; that is, a cultural product cannot be understood in isolation from its social and political environment. This means that any formal appreciation of, say, a painting (e.g. the perspective, the brushstrokes) must be supplemented by an account of how that painting reflects, comments on and contributes to its social and political environment (e.g. what does the painting mean? What is its message?). Beyond this starting point, however, scholars diverge on the locus of analysis. One direction, inspired explicitly by the work of Foucault, pursues a ‘content analysis’ of particular cultural texts (e.g. advertisements, novels, photographs, magazines, films, paintings, fashion, architecture) and reveals how hegemonic constellations of power/knowledge are both articulated and challenged. This is very much the spirit of discourse analysis that guides this book. However, these arguments are not divorced from ‘institutional’ approaches that widen the focus from the text itself and examine the producers (e.g. artists, writers, directors, curators), institutions (e.g. galleries, museums, the film industry, the publishing industry) and audiences (e.g. readers, listeners, viewers) that interact with specific cultural products. While this book is certainly attuned to the producers of travel writing (e.g. travel writers) as well as its consumers (e.g. readers), its primary focus is

\textsuperscript{21} Laclau and Mouffe claim: ‘This totality which includes within itself the linguistic and the non-linguistic, is what we call discourse.’ They provide a very clear explanation of this relationship through the example of building a brick wall: see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, ‘Post-Marxism without Apologies’, New Left Review, No. 166, Nov./Dec. 1987, p. 82. A helpful translation of Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe’s work in political is David Howarth, Alenta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis, eds., Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
\textsuperscript{22} Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{23} Laclau and Mouffe, ‘Post-Marxism without Apologies’, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{24} Although focusing on visual culture, Gillan Rose provides the most compelling account of these debates; see Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 135–203.
to examine the variety of discourses embedded within travelogues themselves and ask what those discourses tell us about competing colonial and cosmopolitan visions. This is not to ignore the claims of travel writers and readers; indeed, I am very concerned with how prevailing discourses constitute the subject positions of ‘the reader’ and ‘the writer’. But the focus of this book does not extend to a detailed taxonomy of reading groups, or an ethnography of popular travel writers. While there is much work to be done on the cultures of production and consumption surrounding contemporary travel writing, I am concerned here primarily with the colonial and cosmopolitan visions that are currently shaping the genre itself.25

The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing is not a detailed examination of global politics, nor is it an exhaustive study of contemporary travelogues. Rather, it contributes to the academic debates about travel writing by situating the genre in the interdisciplinary space between International Relations and Cultural Studies. It is perhaps unorthodox to ask what contemporary travel writing can tell us about the serious business of global politics—about borders and states, about cultures and conflicts, and about security and order. After all, these are books written to amuse, entertain and possibly to educate. It is not surprising, then, that travel writing, or ‘Trip Lit’, has become one of the new and fashionable areas for literary criticism. As one commentator suggested, travel writing is ‘the most recent darling of the trendy humanities and lit-crit set, who scour travel books, both well known and hopelessly obscure, for evidence of postcolonialism, postimperialism, patriarchy and other evils’.26 However, this ‘new’ area of criticism has, for the most part, been content to focus on travel writing from the colonial era, which has left contemporary travel writing relatively free of critical analysis. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan’s 1998 book Tourists with Typewriters corrects this oversight—and sets the stage for my own analysis—by examining how colonial power relations continue to inform contemporary travel writing. Their work is framed around the various historical claims that travel writing, as a separate literary genre, is over. As they argue, ‘[travelogues] have a habit of justifying their own limitations by anticipating their own decline’.27 Literary and social critic Paul Fussell has made the most powerful case for the demise of the genre, arguing that with the emergence of post-1945 mass tourism, the age of ‘real’ travel—and thus ‘real’ travel writing—had ended.28 What Holland and Huggan provide is a powerful refutation of Fussell’s claim, and a broad study of why the opposite has occurred—why travel writing has actually flourished with the onslaught of mass tourism. When six major publishing houses established new lines dedicated specifically to travel writing at the end of the 1980s, one publisher commented: ‘We are in the midst of a great and somewhat unexpected boom in travel writing. Authors borne by air are exploring distant corners of the globe with an ease unimaginable 25 years ago... And publishers are rushing to jump on the bandwagon... The whole subject has exploded’.29

In examining the increasing popularity of travelogues in the context of mass tourism, Holland and Huggan argue that these texts remain ‘a refuge for complacent, even nostalgically retrograde, middle-class values’.30 In other words, travel writing remains popular because it feeds on images of otherness utilised by colonial writers and, as such, provides a sanctuary from contemporary ‘politically correct’ attitudes about race, gender, sexuality and class. Holland and Huggan trace how contemporary travel writers recapture the sense of discovery that was central to colonial travel writing by creating new and original ways to make the familiar world seem strange. This is what accounts for the powerful sense of nostalgia that pervades contemporary texts: ‘travel writers... hearken back to their precursors, seeking solace for a troubled


27 Holland and Huggan, Tourists with Typewriters, p.1.

28 Fussell, Abroad, p.vii. Gary Krist argues that ‘much of [Fussell’s] hatred for the age of tourism results from the fact that even his mail carrier can now afford to take the seat next to him on the plane to Zanzibar’ (‘Ironic Journeys: Travel Writing in the Age of Tourism’, Hudson Review, Vol. 45, No. 4, Winter 1993, p. 594).


30 Holland and Huggan, Tourists with Typewriters, p. viii.
present in nostalgic cultural myths.\footnote{Holland and Huggan, \textit{Tourists with Typewriters}, p. xi.} With this in mind, we might say that Holland and Huggan are also concerned with the articulation of a colonial vision in contemporary texts. However, while \textit{Tourists with Typewriters} is critical of the colonial ethos that continues to contaminate contemporary travelogues, it is equally concerned with re-imagining travel writing in a more ethical and non-reductive manner. Thus, Holland and Huggan explain that travel writing endures because otherness can be transformed and enveloped within larger ideas about global unity. Instead of signalling the demise of travel writing, globalisation and mass tourism have led to its ‘democratisation’. Not only are different kinds of people now writing travelogues (including those who were previously colonised), but the readership is also becoming more global and democratic. Thus, we might also say that Holland and Huggan examine how a more cosmopolitan vision is developing in contemporary travel writing.

\textit{Tourists with Typewriters} is an important text because it uses literary and post-colonial criticism to reveal both the exclusionary and the emancipatory possibilities of travel writing. Holland and Huggan argue that travelogues can be a positive influence when writers and readers use images of otherness to reflect on their privileged cultural assumptions:

\begin{quote}
[this study] deviates, for example, from the commonly held view that travel writing upholds freedom, arguing instead that it can be seen — though not exclusively — as an imperialist discourse through which dominant cultures (white, male, Euro-American, middle-class) seek to ingratiate themselves, often at others' expense. Travel writing, though, has another side... [it] can be seen as a useful vehicle of cultural self-perception; as a barometer for changing views on other ('foreign', 'non-Western') cultures; and as a trigger for the informational circuits that tap us into the wider world. Travel writing... may yet show its readers the limits of their ambition and remind them of their responsibilities.\footnote{Holland and Huggan, \textit{Tourists with Typewriters}, p. xiii.}
\end{quote}

By revealing the possibilities of critique and reflection, Holland and Huggan make a compelling case for the endurance of travel writing in a globalised world. While they are keen to illustrate the continuing colonial legacy of travelogues, they are not wholly preoccupied with the ‘evils’ of the genre. Given the arguments made by Holland and Huggan, it should be clear that I am sympathetic to \textit{Tourists with Typewriters}, not least because it is the most comprehensive and critical academic engagement with contemporary travel writing produced so far. However, because it is the first sustained critique of these texts, I see it as a starting point for the questions, issues and difficulties under scrutiny in my own analyses. While I share the ethical imperative of \textit{Tourists with Typewriters} — to politicise contemporary travel writing and reveal its continuing colonial ethos — I am specifically interested in how travel writing aligns with the changing debates and practices of global politics. Let me be clear: I agree with Holland and Huggan that these texts are powerful statements on the legacy of colonialism, but I want to extend their analysis outside of literary criticism and connect it to the interdisciplinary concerns currently being articulated by International Relations and Cultural Studies.

Although scholars working in International Relations — from realists to post-structuralists — have not dealt with travelogues explicitly, the latter have certainly engaged with the underlying theoretical concepts that make it possible to understand travelogues as significant to the study and practice of global politics. By focusing on power relations across global space rather than sovereign arrangements of authority, post-structural scholars have made powerful critiques of the statist ontology of the discipline.\footnote{Significant post-structural texts in International Relations include Richard Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, eds., \textit{International Studies Quarterly} (Special Edition), Vol. 34, No. 3, 1990; David Campbell, \textit{Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) and \textit{National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity and Justice in Bosnia} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, \textit{International/Interethical Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics} (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989); Jim George, \textit{Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations} (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994); Michael J. Shapiro, \textit{Reading the Postmodern Policy: Political Theory as Textual Practice} (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1992); and R. B. J. Walker, \textit{Inside/Outside: Political Theory as International Relations} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).} More importantly, these scholars have established a much wider interdisciplinary context for research by insisting that culture is a crucial site of global power relations.\footnote{I am not referring here to the argument made by Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil in \textit{The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory} (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997). Their framework is unhelpful in politicising travel writing because it fails to make a sufficient critique of the prevailing statist ontology. For Lapid and Kratochwil, the sphere of culture is understood as secondary to International Relations — it is something that reflects the more fundamental and natural limits of sovereignty. David Campbell’s essay ‘Violent Performances: Identity, Sovereignty, Responsibility’ stands out as a critical voice in this collection because it deconstructs the foundations of culture and identity that the book fails to problematise adequately. Campbell’s work is part of a more critical approach to culture first articulated in International Relations by Michael Shapiro’s \textit{The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography and Policy Analysis} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). More recent examples of this body of research include a special issue of \textit{Millennium: Journal of International Studies} entitled ‘Images and Narratives in World Politics’, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2001; David Campbell, ‘Salgado and the Sabel: Documentary Photography and the}
Not surprisingly, this has led to productive interdisciplinary connections with Cultural Studies, which has always foregrounded how power shapes our cultures, identities and communities in both local and global sites. While scholars in Cultural Studies accept that power may be wielded most effectively by the state and its institutions, they are keen to show how issues such as identity (e.g. race, class, gender and sexuality) participate in that process and in some cases challenge the state's legitimacy.

With this interdisciplinary departure in mind, Holland and Huggan's claim that contemporary travel writing involves the continuation of colonialism alongside more positive and democratic possibilities is worth pursuing. If the genre is indeed being democratised, at what point does the expansion of democratic ideas become an imperial project? In other words, will travel writers - no matter where they are from or what experiences of oppression they have - always interpret their encounters with difference through some kind of colonial vision? If travelogues written during globalisation focus on cosmopolitan messages of equality, tolerance and dialogue, how do those ideals play out in areas radically different from the West? And if travel writers employ a cosmopolitan framework of dialogue, inclusion and tolerance, what happens when they confront subjects who are intolerable - who do not accept the basic values of liberal democracy? These questions are foregrounded in many other cultural products - in Hollywood films like Black Hawk Down, in periodicals like Time and Newsweek, in newspapers like the Washington Post and in television shows like The West Wing. It is easy to see how these products of popular culture exert a powerful influence on the way global politics is understood and practised. This book argues that contemporary travel writing is an equally important cultural voice in these debates because it reveals how previously colonised, marginalised and silenced groups are engaging and struggling with the hegemonic power relations currently shaping the global sphere. While Holland and Huggan certainly introduce the tension between colonial and cosmopolitan visions in contemporary travel writing, their disciplinary framework does not include an examination of how those visions align with and draw from current debates in global politics. Therefore, The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing should be seen as an effort to extend the arguments made by Holland and Huggan in such a way that travel writing is positioned at the heart of debates between globalising forces and various forms of cultural resistance.

The proposed route: mapping the discourses of contemporary travel writing

Given the methodological and interdisciplinary concerns of this book, my focus on the discursive construction of contemporary travel writing develops simultaneously in two directions. Firstly, it argues that the discourses through which colonial and cosmopolitan visions are articulated become politically interesting when they achieve hegemony, that is to say, when they are repeated in such a way over time that they acquire the authority of truth. The second direction of my study is more complex: it is an attempt to show how these discourses - even the most powerful ones - are incomplete articulations of power that offer compelling moments of resistance. This 'double narrative' strategy unfolds through a detailed examination of the four main discourses that shape contemporary travel writing. Chapter 2 uses the discourse of literary genre to open up the object of study under scrutiny. It examines the literary regulations of travel writing by asking 'what is and what is not a travelogue'. Because travelogues must negotiate the contradictory authorities of fact and fiction, they are best understood as a strange collection of other genres (fiction, autobiography, memoir and history). By exploring the indistinct generic boundaries of travel writing through the work of Tzvetan Todorov and Jacques Derrida, it is possible to
reflect upon the larger question of how objects of knowledge are disciplined — in both senses of the word — in the humanities and social sciences.

Chapter 3 outlines the most explicit political question of travel writing by examining how the colonial vision is being transformed through a discourse of liberal subjectivity. While travel writers like Theroux continue to repeat colonial tropes, a new hegemonic position has emerged with writers like Bill Bryson and Michael Palin who pursue a cosmopolitan vision through bemusement, tolerance and understanding. This position has been fostered by a democratisation of the genre; indeed, travelogues are now written by previously excluded subjects (e.g. women, Asians, gays and lesbians, African-Americans, people with disabilities). What is interesting about the discourse of liberal subjectivity is the extent to which it is able to cover over its own complex and difficult exclusions. In other words, by making it possible for anyone to write a travelogue, the discourse of liberal subjectivity effaces the powerful discriminations enacted by all travel writers — no matter what age, race, gender or sexual orientation. Travel writers still need other places and people to visit and write about — which means that travel writers must always engage in the production of difference. The political issue at stake here is how travel writers produce, project and pass judgement on this difference. This chapter works against the liberal travel writer’s insistence that the cosmopolitan ethos of inclusion and acceptance resolves the logic and legacy of Empire. Instead, it argues that the subject position of the travel writer is a contested site that encourages competing visions of both the genre’s colonial heritage and the travel writer’s cosmopolitan desires.

The following chapter examines how the forces of globalisation are not only democratising the subject position of the travel writer, they are also transforming his/her chosen destinations. It argues that all travel writing requires an important distinction between home and elsewhere, and thus draws upon a discourse of modern cartography. The travelogue’s geographical distinction of home/elsewhere relies on underlying assumptions about civilisation and security: there are civilised places on the globe that are safe, and there are uncivilised places that are dangerous. Contemporary travelogues are full of the desire to escape the clutches of the ‘safe’ tourist circuit and rediscover the authenticity of elsewhere. In order to get away from the ever-encroaching tourist gaze, travel writers like Robert Kaplan are being forced into inhospitable places where tourism is not allowed — war-zones, ghettos, deserts, glaciers and shantytowns. As the all-consuming tourist gaze swallows up exotic destinations, travel writing has become polarised in its search for difference. Travel writers are either searching out sites of global atrocity and danger (e.g. new ‘hearts of darkness’ like West African slums), or sites where nothing ‘political’ ever happens (e.g. suburbia, Antarctica, the desert). By drawing on critical scholars in International Relations and Geography, this chapter re-imagines the discourse of modern cartography that underscores the polarisation of travel writing and asks whether the genre can address the logic of Empire embedded in its cartographic history.

Chapter 5 argues that the spatial assumptions encouraged by liberal travel writers are secured by a linear understanding of history. Travel writing locates the objects of its gaze (i.e. foreign places and people) farther back in the queue of history, whereas those who are actively writing are placed at the apex of the present. As Heather Henderson argues, ‘the pervasive desire to reimagine the past leads to one of the central preoccupations of travel literature, the search for the lost innocence of a Golden Age’. My point is that travel writers long to ‘reimagine the past’ because their linear understanding of temporality is constantly being threatened by the forces of globalisation. If the rest of the world is ‘catching up’ with the West, then the world is becoming a single homogeneous place with no obvious hierarchies of difference, and no guaranteed cultural superiority for Western writers. To re-establish the teleological historical queue, travel writers produce a powerful discourse of nostalgia in order to cultivate a longing for the past. At least during colonialism people knew their place — ‘they’ were elsewhere, and ‘they’ were behind ‘us’, dutifully marching along the road to civility, progress and emancipation. The difficulty, of course, is that these ‘backward’ places now reveal signs of modernity and Westernisation — they are just as globalised, cosmopolitan and sophisticated as home. The discourse of nostalgia is crucial in travel writing because it provides a retreat into an air-brushed past which allows both readers and writers to avoid the anxieties and difficulties of a post-colonial and globalised present.

Given these insights on knowledge, identity, space and time, The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing ends with the problem of how to judge contemporary travel writing in a context of globalisation. How can we adjudicate between travelogues on political grounds rather than simply on formal, aesthetic and stylistic grounds? To what extent can those judgements be informed by critical interdisciplinary research that takes questions of power, difference and mobility seriously? In a genre so predicated on setting down limits — between self and other,
2 Between fact and fiction: the generic boundaries of travel writing

I don’t believe in coming clean.  
Bruce Chatwin to Paul Theroux

How had he travelled from here to there? How had he met this or that person? 
Life was never so neat as Bruce made out.  
Paul Theroux on Bruce Chatwin

Before Bruce Chatwin died in 1989, he and Paul Theroux discussed whether travel writing was legitimised primarily by fact or fiction. Although both authors routinely drew from the intellectual fields of literature, science, anthropology, poetry, politics and history, Theroux believed that travel writers ‘record what the eye sees’, whereas Chatwin – who hated the term travel writer – preferred to ‘embroider’ his adventures with fictional embellishments. Chatwin was much happier concealing the mundane aspects of his own journey in favour of more fantastic literary descriptions, whereas Theroux believed that the challenge of travel writing was including the ‘how’ of travel – the minutiae about how you get from one place to another – alongside personal observations and descriptions of foreign cultures. Chatwin and Theroux never doubt these twinned authorities, they simply disagree.

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1 This discussion was made public at the Royal Geographic Society in London when the two authors gave a combined lecture about their respective books on Patagonia – Chatwin’s *In Patagonia* (1977) and Theroux’s *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979). Chatwin argued that the talk ‘completely bewildered types like Lord Hunt, as we took the audience breathlessly through a literary excursion to the Antipodes’, whereas Theroux argued that Chatwin was ‘something of a myrmecomaniac and had a screaming laugh and bizarre conceits that provoked him to such behaviour as monologuing to the mountaineers Lord Hunt and Chris Bonington about great climbs he had made’; see Nicholas Shakespeare, *Bruce Chatwin* (London: Harvill Press, 1999), p.534. Theroux gives a more detailed account of the evening in ‘Chatwin Revisited’, *Granta*, Vol. 44, 1993 (*The Last Place on Earth*), pp.213–21, as well as in an interview with George Plimpton at The Poetry Centre in New York in 1988; see Casey Blanton, ‘“Lying Travelers”: Bruce Chatwin’, in *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.102–3.