

# explorations



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## REVIEW

**Grzegorz Moroz. 2020. *A Generic History of Travel Writing in Anglophone and Polish Literature*. Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi.**

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Despite a debate that may revolve about the moment of establishing a new academic discipline, independent travel writing studies have already confirmed their position in the world of academia. With such seminal publications in the field as *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (2013), *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing* (2016), *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019), and, among others, the first issue of *Studies in Travel Writing* journal released in 1997, scholars and instructors have found platforms to disseminate their research results documenting the development of travel writing from different perspectives. In the wake of the aforementioned surveys showing various directions into which the studies have traveled, Grzegorz Moroz's *A Generic History of Travel Writing in Anglophone and Polish Literature* (2020) enriches the historical analysis of travel writing frequently scrutinized from the Western eye, proffering a publication that broadens scholarly horizons on literature produced in a different European corner.

By employing the metaphor of the bridge that skillfully illustrates the scholar's assumed position from which two literary landscapes can be seen, Moroz scrutinizes the generic developments of travel writing in Anglophone and Polish literary traditions. The researcher's main argument is that in literature written in English and in Polish, "there have been non-fiction travel narratives the developments of which can be best analysed, understood, and compared if they are regarded as genres: the genre of the travel book in Anglophone literary tradition and the genre of the *podróż* (journey) in Polish tradition" (2020, 1). Thus, Moroz offers an original researching approach in the field by merging two methods of analysis, generic and comparative.

With travel writing treated by Moroz as a supra genre in the footsteps of Jan Borm and Bożena Witosz, the generic analysis states that the travel book and the *podróż* (journey), although not the only ones examined in the study, are the most appropriate genres to showcase the concepts characteristic of the travel texts penned in English and in Polish. By conducting the comparative scrutiny of the selected works by Anglophone and Polish writers, Moroz not only points out the similarities and differences between the chosen compositions but also clearly displays how over the centuries the genres have

developed in the studied literary traditions due to various historical, economic, and social variables.

*A Generic History of Travel Writing in Anglophone and Polish Literature* is divided into two main parts, with the former comprising four chapters and the latter consisting of Chapters Five and Six. Beginning with the survey of the taxonomies classifying the family of genres in Anglophone and Polish travel writing, Moroz (2020, 35) further follows Michel Mollat du Jourdin's and other critics' theoretical reasoning and infers that in order to systemize Pan-European traditions "On the one hand then, we have 'literary' which could be grouped together with 'sentimental', 'Romantic', 'poetic', 'subject oriented', 'travel writers'. . . . [O]n the other, we have such labels as: 'realist', 'scientific', 'Enlightenment', 'utilitarian', 'object-oriented', 'traveller writer'."

Marking a starting point of the comparative study in the Renaissance, Chapter Two presents how Neo-Latin writing conventions exerted a stronger influence on Polish rather than on English literature, mainly due to the fact that the English language was much better developed at that time. It also showcases Polish and English contributions to *ars apodemica* literature, depicting a set of established guidelines to be followed by travelers, frequently referred to as "Humanists" in the past (Moroz 2020, 59), and provides early examples of Grand Tour accounts, which later replaced *ars apodemica* texts. The second chapter ends with a discussion of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Polish and English travel writings published in the vernacular.

Chapter Three presents the middle-eighteenth-century crystallization of the Anglophone travel book as a separate genre fundamentally introduced in Henry Fielding's preface to his *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1755), although in that period the travel book remained generically tied to the novel to a considerable extent. Well exemplified by Jan Potocki's *Podróż do Turcji i Egiptu (Travels to Turkey and Egypt, 1787)*, the Polish *podróż* (journey) genre, in contrast to Anglophone writing, was still to be developed in the following decades with its emphasis on an author's celebrity status and narration exhibiting the feelings and experiences of the self.

In the fourth chapter, Moroz centers the perusal on Romantic and Victorian periods, broadening his comparative research by remarking on French and German literary perspectives. Here, the scholar argues persuasively that although the travel book and the *podróż* (journey) shared noteworthy similarities in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the second half the genres began to diverge. Whereas British literature saw the continuation of the travel writing trends, in Polish literature there happened a generic shift. The *podróż* (journey) started to be replaced by shorter journalistic forms, *kartki z podróży* (postcards from a journey) and *listy z podróży* (letters from a journey) issued in newspapers, magazines, and periodicals, subsequently followed by *reportaż* (reportage), an outcome of the press's growing importance and the book market's weakening significance in the then partitioned Poland.

The second part of *A Generic History of Travel Writing in Anglophone and Polish Literature* comprises two case studies of the travel narratives penned in the twentieth century. Employing the metaphor of a parallax, grasped as the perception of the same object seen from two different perspectives, Moroz shows the similarities between selected narratives written by Patrick Leigh Fermor and Ryszard Kapuściński. Chapter Six skillfully showcases how Aldous Huxley's *Along the Road* (1925) and Jarosław Iwazkiewicz's *Podróże do Włoch (Travels to Italy, 1977)* are inscribed in the literary heritage of Grand Tour writings, although they belong to two different literary traditions.

One of the greatest assets of Moroz's scrutiny is that it makes pivotal historical aspects of Polish travel writing research approachable to English-speaking academia. Whereas one may be familiar with genre-based views expressed by leading travel writing academics such as, for instance, Carl Thompson, Tim Youngs, and Charles Forsdick, *A Generic History of Travel Writing in Anglophone and Polish Literature* submits a comprehensible survey of Polish scholarly criticism of travel writing discussing different travel genres. Moroz extends or rejects, bringing up solid argumentation in both cases, the generic analyses as presented, among others, by Czesław Niedzielski, Leszek Zinkow, Dorota Kozicka, Beata Nowacka, Zygmunt Ziątek, Stanisław Burkot, Roman Krzywy, Jolanta Sztachelska, Magdalena Piechota, and Artur Rejter. When scrutinizing the proposed genre taxonomies propounded by the researchers, Moroz (2020, 203) points to a "generic confusion" resulting from the lack of a relatively stable genre like the travel book in Anglophone literature. Thus, he aims to clarify the concepts employed by the Polish scholars, advocating a more careful generic classification in the future. Given that, reading Rejter's *Kształtowanie się gatunku reportażu podróźniczego w perspektywie stylistycznej i pragmatycznej* (*The Development of the Genre of Travel Reportage from the Stylistic and Pragmatic Perspectives*, 2000), which puts forward the artistic versus utilitarian dichotomy, Moroz (2020, 26) argues convincingly that such an approach may raise even more issues of concerns than the fictional versus non-fictional division in travel writing, as clearly illustrated in "Truth, Lies, and Travel Writing" by Daniel Carey discussing repetitively used techniques applied by writers to authenticate their travel accounts.

*A Generic History of Travel Writing in Anglophone and Polish Literature* constitutes an indispensable reference in every discussion focused on the aforementioned literary traditions when its topic broaches taxonomies necessary to avoid confusion in the generic classification of a text, or any other. Researching the generic aspects of the representative travel accounts, Moroz also showcases his erudition. With his well-balanced argumentation, he leads the reader through the meanders of travel writing theories, skillfully illustrating his inferences with a wide scope of the analyzed texts, stopping over nuances precisely explained. The only want the reader may feel is that the eponymous hint at Anglophone writings would perhaps make one expect to read more about texts representing other English-speaking literary traditions, although it is understandable that a volume format structurally limits the number of included exemplifications. Otherwise put, since "genre innovation and development are inevitable, given historical and social evolution" (Burton 2019, 102), *A Generic History of Travel Writing in Anglophone and Polish Literature* paves a way for the composition of other literary bridges, from which different landscapes could be seen.

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