

EDITORS' NOTE

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Keep moving! Steam or Gas or Stage,
Hold, cabin, steerage, hencoop's cage –
Tour, Journey, Voyage, Lounge, Ride, Walk,
Skim, Sketch, Excursion, Travel-talk –
For move you must! 'Tis now the rage,
The law and fashion of the Age.

– Coleridge, “The Delinquent Travellers”
(qtd. in Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century” 108)

Coleridge's acute sense of the shifting cultural landscape or emergence of a new zeitgeist characterized heavily by the motif of travel was prophetic. The “rage, [...] law and fashion” of Coleridge's “Age” have not only reinforced and cemented themselves, but have also taken new and varied forms in contemporary times. Though the motif of travel goes back to the earliest recorded history of human civilization, “[b]y 1800, travel writing was well established as a central branch of print culture” as well (Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century” 110). The 19th century witnessed “dramatic effects on travelling” by facilitating speed and convenience in the wake of the development of railways and motor cars, which was further radicalized in 20th century with the massive development in commercial airways transportation (109). The traditional as well as modernist experimental forms of travel writing flourished during the years between the two World Wars (Thompson, *Travel Writing* 58). In the globalized 20th century, travel writing, which many thought would cease to exist and interest, has ironically diversified and expanded into new avatars, and the genre continues to be produced and consumed in ever increasing commercial numbers in the 21st century.

The meaning and purposes of travel as well as travel writing have also changed drastically over the centuries, alongside their varying forms. Eric Leed points out that “Ancients saw travel as a suffering, even a penance; for moderns, it is a pleasure and a means to pleasure” (7). If for ancients, travel signified a befallen necessity or a determined undertaking, the interpretation of travel in terms of “an experience of freedom and the gaining of autonomy” is characteristically modern in its emphasis and orientation (12). Going beyond travelling for penance, pilgrimage, conquest, trade, or to seek better pastures, the modern world allows for travelling, without any reason “except to escape a world where all things are a means to an end, [and] travel, in modern circumstances, is prized less as a means of revealing ungovernable forces beyond human control than for providing direct access to a new material and objective world” (14). Leed perceptively writes, “The celebration of travel as a demonstration of freedom and means to autonomy becomes the modern topos” (13).

Through these changes in form and purpose, what remains consistent is that travel as an experience of movement engenders a change in the perception of the self, for the traveller renegotiates their presence and positionality with every new experience. Attempts to assimilate different cultures, encountering strange realities, and living through anonymity render a certain aspect of alterity which questions the very conceptions, perceptions, and worldview of the traveller. Writing about these experiences does not merely entail describing and reporting an unfamiliar world traversed, but also an interaction of the self with the world and its culturally diverse inhabitants. Travel narratives are then attempts at articulating the unfamiliar and the other, and, in this attempt, the traveller turns inward to seek the authenticity of one's self.

The dialectic of the familiar and the estranged receives dynamism as travel narratives either reassert situatedness or introduce the new to discursively and narratively form the self and the other. Such narratives influence the diverse ways of perceiving, classifying, knowing, and identifying with places and peoples. In contemporary times, travel and travel writing have thrust the world towards globalization and cosmopolitanism. A cosmopolitan vision promotes a harmonising agenda through its dominant rhetoric of transculturation. As it ministers to a new vigour for integrated cultural experiences, it promotes the notion of hybridity over displacement. Travel writing has been able to carve a niche by presenting narratives which create an interaction between global identity and a sense of difference.

However, discourses of travel still retain a tendency to deploy gestures that produce authoritative knowledge about the other, as mechanisms of exerting power and control. Travel writing, therefore, has also been seen as one of the “discourses of colonialism” by way of which “one culture comes to interpret, represent, and finally to dominate another” (David Spurr, qtd. in Holland and Huggan 47). Reading colonial ambitions in the production of travel writing in colonial India, the Issue presents Ahana Maitra's research, titled “Becoming Sahibs: Bengali Bhadrakol Travel Cultures and a Colony in *Paschim*, c. 1850–1911,” which brings to light how a strand of travel writings in Bengal, in nineteenth century were not only complicit with the colonial gaze but also attempted to mimic the “colonial master” in reproducing the colonizing rhetoric. The paper traces the shifting contours of travel from the precolonial times when travel was mainly undertaken for religious and trade purposes to the West influenced travel culture which gave rise to leisure and health tourism. In doing so, the paper argues that Bengali Bhadrakol discursively produced the space of “*Paschim*” as a counterpoint to the health resorts, like Darjeeling, that were developed by the British. Studying the narratives of leisurely travels of the Bengali Bhadrakol to *Paschim*, the paper demonstrates how their travel narratives followed the colonial logic of appropriation in representing the region of *Paschim* as *terra nullius*.

In the Special Submissions section of this Issue, Rachid Toumi's “Locating Innocence in Sexual Difference: Problematized Masculinity in Hemingway and Baldwin” reads Ernest Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* to explore the loss of the idyllic innocence with respect to gender and

sexuality in the post-First World War Western society. Both these novels problematize the typical masculinity of a patriarchal Western society by dramatizing the crises of the protagonists which, the paper argues, is tied to the inability of these individuals to embrace gendered fluidity in the changing world. The next paper in this section, titled “‘Bhānusingha Thākurer Podābolī’: A Study of Vaiṣṇava Aesthetics in Tagore’s Poetry” by Ujjaini Chakrabarty focuses on the characterisation of Rādhā, the consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa, in both religious and secular literary traditions of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* in Bengal. This paper studies the influence of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, as well as the literary and aesthetic traditions that followed, in Rabindranath Tagore’s portrayal of Rādhā in his collection of poems, “Bhānusingha Thākurer Podābolī.” The final paper of this Issue, titled “Reifying, Reinscribing, and Resisting Manicheanisms in Representations of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda” by Lauren van der Rede, reads the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 as a text using its three different literary and cultural representations: Uwem Akpan’s short story “My Parent’s Bedroom,” the documentary *Let the Devil Sleep: 20 Years after Genocide in Rwanda*, and the Netflix series *Black Earth Rising*. In showing how these texts literarily trope the genocide through the logic of Manicheanism, by reifying, reinscribing, and also resisting the categories of victim and perpetrator, it seeks to challenge the twofold assumptions undergirding the popular representation of the Rwandan Genocide: a) genocidal violence is temporally and spatially bound and b) Hutus are perpetrators and Tutsis are victims.

This Issue, with the theme of Travel Narratives, is the third instalment of Volume 5 of *LLIDS*, which broadly deals with the topic of Life Writing. While the previous two Issues covered the introduction to Life Narratives and narratives of trauma, the upcoming Issue will explore the ethos, positionality, and structures of narrating life stories. Each Issue of *LLIDS* is a statement of commitment by the authors towards creating discourses which bridge the lacunas of research in their respective fields. This attempt cannot be complete without the earnest contributions of the peer reviewers and the advisory editorial board, the consistent support of our readers, as well as the determined efforts of the editorial team. We would like to thank each person associated with *LLIDS* for their steadfastness in making *LLIDS* a platform worthy of its purpose.

Works Cited

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