

## Journeys Real and Imagined: Social Values, Identities & the Rights (and Wrongs) of Passages

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The cross-cultural, trans-national and interdisciplinary focus of much of contemporary humanities scholarship is arguably due in part to contemporary global realities. We live in a world where confluence is the norm rather than the exception, and geographical, cultural and ideological boundaries (to name but a few) have become ever more flexible. Within both the real-world and the scholarly context, therefore, the notion and practice of *journey* has taken on greater resonance from the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. We live travel-orientated lives, and those of us who dedicate ourselves to thinking and writing about people who lived before us and the documents that bear testimony to their realities, do so more and more from that perspective, as we seek not only to illuminate further their potential experiences through theory, but connect more deeply with them as human beings. Such a loosely thematic approach as *viajes*<sup>1</sup> has allowed me to read a broad range of studies as I prepared this volume, travelling as it were beyond my own areas of primary interest and expertise. The process, a journey in and of itself, has evoked surprising and rich connections that I otherwise would have not have discovered, which has illuminated my own intellectual terrain much as a physical journey to somewhere new enriches—albeit in a different way and on a different level. Since I wish the same experience for those who read the articles here presented, I offer no theoretical or textual guideposts of my own choosing, anticipating that scholar-readers will develop their own “maps” as they enjoy these studies, meeting their authors and the texts they treat in surprising places along the way.

While I am certain some will intuit others, this volume suggested itself to me in four broad categories.<sup>2</sup> The first, “Crossing Boundaries: Values in Crisis,” features two articles which discuss how journeys can variously reinforce and destabilize social hierarchies. Dr. Mindy Badía discusses the round-trip “journey” of a black wedding party in a sixteenth-century Spanish poem by Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, “Bodas de sangre.” She articulates a fresh take on this poem by suggesting that this procession to and from church serves as a symbolic reference to early modern transatlantic travel and the social ills brought back to the Peninsula because of and via these voyages. She instructively reveals relevant theories and scholarship on the representation or construction of blacks in some other literary texts of the same milieu, and shows how blackness in a post-Colonial context often serves both to reinforce

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish is much more evocative of the intent of this volume, meaning “trip,” “travel” and “journey,” and evoking at once several possibilities. “Journey” in English perhaps best approximates it, covering at once geographical and ideological movement and convergence.

<sup>2</sup> The categories, as the articles within them, are presented in alphabetical order by author last name, as no particularly coherent thematic pattern emerged.

hegemony and to assess the value of different classes of whites, including the *indiano*. Her main suggestion is that, while these connections remain implicit in “Bodas de sangre” itself, it is only in the specific context of New World slave trade, including the return to Spain of the *indiano* and the black slave, that we can fully understand the implications of the poem. For Badia these include, most importantly, the fearful prejudices that the poem reveals regarding perceived social instability of the black “returned” Peninsular, including moral, economic and social decay. Dr. Kristin Routt presents an original study of Rosa Montero’s *Historia del Rey Transparente* that takes advantage of the *viajes* theme of the volume in a similar way in that she presents how a crisis of values is taken on through travel in the literature she analyzes. In this case, we have a twelfth-century cross-dressed young woman who escapes a country existence of hard toil to live out her life as a knight errant of sorts, whose task can be conceived, as Routt emphasizes it, as re-discovering history through another sort of travel: that of crossing gender divisions. Routt’s analysis convincingly articulates that this sort of movement serves as an important but preliminary backdrop—as does the young protagonist’s travel from the Spanish countryside to what is now southern France—for more significant ideological flux. As Routt points out, for example, “voces [distintamente] modernas en un ambiente medieval,” and the juxtaposition of logical and irrational explanations for the same phenomena, serve not only to question master narratives but to draw probing attention to their perceived inevitability.

“Travel Narrative: Monstrous Margins,”<sup>3</sup> presents two studies featuring travel narratives, both of which discuss how “peripheral” travel experiences are presented textually, and for what reason and to what effect. For Dr. Karen Daly, the periphery denotes *mirabilia* of early travel narratives. This scholar convincingly shows us how a medieval use of and audience preference for marvels in travel literature influences travel literature into the fifteenth century, even as other salient characteristics change, and how the marvels themselves become more realistic in the face of changing needs: that of the chronicler to be perceived as present on the scene, but authoritative, through more credible fantastic evidence, for example. Her essay discusses the texts of two Renaissance chroniclers, Ruy González de Clavijo and Pero Tafur, along these lines, providing examples for her thesis which allow readers to see how these texts are also precursors to Colonial travel literature. Dr. Olena Shkatulo presents how the narration of female travels might affect the identification of both the originating geographical “center” and the “periphery” from a comparatively unfathomable outside in, and how this negotiation is expressed in a genre long relegated to the shadows by critics. Shkatulo’s study is one of a very few critical approximations to a travel literature by Peruvian Clorinda Matto de Turner, *Viaje de recreo*. Here, Shkatulo, provocatively suggests that it is through the nineteenth-century intellectual’s experiences in Europe that she is able to “interrogate . . . the ostracism she faced” and negotiate a once-denied position in her pluralistic “nation.” Exiled on a forced journey more than once—from Peru to Argentina to Europe—Matto de Turner’s “multi-nationality” and “ambiguous positionality,” according to Shkatulo, is brought into focus by the Peruvian’s travels, affording her the opportunity to define and re-define both herself and her “nation(s)” to Europeans, and thus reposition herself authoritatively within that nation—a task which Shkatulo suggests is difficult if not impossible for the South American female of the Independence period to do from within proscribing national boundaries.

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<sup>3</sup> The secondary title of this section references phraseology from Mary Campbell’s *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988), also evoking Karen Daly’s reference to the same assertion about far-off lands in a quote in her study.

“Travel and Identity: Space and Place” continues the volume with two articles that feature contemporary literary pieces that encompass the varied experiences of Latin Americans with the United States, and vice versa. Dr. Louise Detwiler’s intricate contribution takes an expanded notion of “viajes” in both a theoretical-existential and physical, or embodied, direction. Basing her approach to several texts on the idea of autobiogeographical spaces, Detwiler suggests that “space matters” in terms of theorizing identity, but also intelligently articulates what this looks like “on the ground,” as space, place, gendered physicality—all different articulations of “geography”—determine diverse female experiences. Bringing us from the terror camp in *The Little School* to the Puerto Rican “metonymic stand-in” that is an eatery in *The Latin Deli*, Detwiler both affirms and challenges aspects of previous theories relevant to (gender) identity as tied to locale. Her suggestion is that bodies both mark and are marked by the places they have inhabited, and thus calls into question theories which neglect the issue of place. More importantly, she articulates new ideas about visual and narrative works from this perspective, parenthetically calling into question the shortsighted although fashionable notion that such approximations (her example is testimonial literature) are passé. Dr. Christopher McGrath lucidly analyzes the representation of tourism in the cultural discourse of the Hispanic Caribbean through his analysis of two contemporary authors: Dominican Aurora Arias and Jose Miguel Sanchez (Cuba). McGrath’s posits that the motif of consumption that pervades many advertisements, some of which he references, is one that characterizes the relational dynamic between the tourist and the local “brown person” in the short fiction of the two authors he treats. Seating this commercial-exchange dynamic within colonialist discourse by citing Cristobal Colon, this scholar nevertheless articulates how even as the white tourist sets up his travels as a “stage for his own protagonism,” the native Other equally participates in this dynamic to benefit him or herself, albeit by force. By making this and other timely points, McGrath articulates how the two Central American authors demystify these relationships even as they avoid simplism by showing their human complexities.

“Mirroring Journeys: Travel and Metaphor,” completes the volume with two articles involving journeys that have a strong or near-exclusively emblematic component. In the first case, physical journeys have parallel metaphorical ones as Dr. Sonia Feingenbaum and Dr. Natalia Gómez present a subtle post-colonial analysis of two recent novels by Spaniards José Ovejero and Carmen Jiménez, *Nunca pasa nada* and *Madre mía que estás en los infiernos*. They contrast the female protagonists presented in each text, in particular as concerns each woman’s significant journey back to “colonialism” through immigration from Latin America to early twenty-first-century Spain. Feingenbaum and Gómez argue that these women represent “dos mundos contradictorios,” and that yet both bear a legacy of colonization and abuse, albeit very differently. They show how such is perpetuated in the first case on a poor domestic through the objectification of a Spaniard, and in the second case, how the protagonist herself, an educated woman, refers to the colonist context of Spain in such a way that causes her to recognize not only her current entrapment in poverty and servitude, but also her previous enslavement to her abusive Dominican husband. These scholars’ incisive exploration of each protagonist’s personal emotional and physical terrain is mirrored by their investigation and presentation of what current political measures are being taken in the host country to improve the conditions for all immigrant peoples, even as they show how two young Spanish authors’ consciousness-raising texts serve to increase the awareness of citizens to the immigrant plight. Dr. Diane Wright also takes us on a series of metaphorical journeys in her piece on Rodríguez de Padrón’s Renaissance sentimental romance, *Siervo libre de amor*. Wright posits that the protagonist of this novel uses memory to recover from

an unrequited love, following an Augustinian trajectory in line with monastic meditational reading practices to create new associations. This scholar perceptively reveals how the narrative uses *enargeia* and ekphrasis to enable the visualization of memories and scenes necessary for the healing of the protagonist, contributing to scholarship on this fifteenth-century text by furthering the connections between the frame and an intercalated story, which she suggests functions as a particularly “ekphrastic narrative embedded in the emotional journey,” itself expressed primarily through related *enargia*. Her revelatory mapping of associations between the two discursive levels bring us from the emotional landscape of the protagonist, through the healing intercalated chivalric tale, and to a new path, through all of which the spurned lover –protagonist is able to reconcile his failed human love with the spiritual one he seeks through associative memory, a journey which both a fictional interlocutor and readers are invited to share.

In closing, and along the same lines of participation, I am gratefully indebted to the scholars in this volume for their enthusiastic willingness to form part of this project and for the exciting result.

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