Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Mouloud MAMMERI University of Tizi-Ouzou
Faculty of Literatures and Languages
Department of English
Master of General and Comparative Literature

Subject

A Course of Travel Writing for First Year Master Students in General and Comparative Literature

Semester 1

Designed by

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2025-2026

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Course Information

Institution: Mouloud MAMMERI University of Tizi-Ouzou

Faculty: Literatures and Languages

Department: English Language and Literature

Course Title: Travel Writing

Target Students: First-Year MA Students in General and Comparative Literature

Teaching Unit: Fundamental

Coefficient: 02

Credit: 04

Semester: One

Number of Sessions per Week: Two sessions, each lasting one hour and thirty minutes

Course Delivery Modality: Lecture and Tutorial

Venue: Room 1.30

Course Instructor

Instructor`s Name and Position: Dr. Dounia BOUTIRNA, Senior Lecturer at the Department of English Language, MMUTO.

Contact information: dounia.boutirna@ummto.dz

Availability: Mondays, 9.30 AM - 11:00 AM at the teachers' room of the department.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the genre of travel literature through critical readings of travel literary works from diverse cultures in different historical periods from the antiquity to the modern times. The travel narratives range across historical time-periods to enable an understanding of the way the genre has evolved through time in form and content, and how every travel narrative as a discourse is impacted by the social and cultural conditions of its production. Students would be made to develop a contextual understanding of travel writing's relation with the processes of European colonialism and post-colonialism and would be able to examine the ideologies

underlying travel texts such as gender, racism and Orientalism. Through critical readings, the students are expected to develop analytical skills and to produce critical essays about different issues related to travel literature, such as the representation of the 'other,' the imperial gaze, the binary division of the Occident and the Orient, stereotyping peoples and places, gender issues and exile.

Prerequisites

This course introduces travel writing as a literary genre and a multidimensional discourse (political, ideological, gender and cultural) shaped by history, power, and cross-cultural encounter. So, the students are expected to have:

- Basic literary analysis skills
- Awareness of colonial and cultural contexts
- Introductory knowledge of postcolonial concepts
- Ability to read and write in academic English

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- **Define** travel writing as a literary genre and **explain** its historical development from early exploration narratives to modern and postmodern texts
- **Analyze** travel narratives critically, with attention to representation (Self, Other)
- **Examine** how travel writing intersects with power relations involving empire, race, gender and cultural difference.
- **Apply** key theoretical frameworks (e.g. Orientalism, postcolonial theory, feminism) to the reading of travel texts
- **Evaluate** the ethical and ideological implications of travel writing, including questions of authenticity, stereotyping, and exoticization.
- **Conduct** close readings of selected travel texts, situating them within their historical and ideological contexts
- **Produce** analytical essays that demonstrate critical engagement with travel literature and

relevant scholarship.

Formulation of Objectives According to Bloom's Taxonomy

Objectives	Planned activities	Justifications
➢ **Define** the literary genre "travel writing" according to several theorists. ➢ Students will therefore be able to **identify** its types, its characteristics and **classify** it into subgenres, and **understand** its motifs.	**Chapter 1** • **MCQ** • **Categorization exercises (Short answers)**	✓ This chapter introduces the literary genre "travel writing." ✓ Students are given l different definitions of «travel writing» to demonstrate its complexity and its interaction with other literary genres such as autobiography and historiography.. ✓ Thus, the selected exercises will assess students' knowledge in the sub chapters (characteristics, types, and sub-genres).
➢ **Describe** key phases in the evolution of travel writing ➢ Students will be able to **interpret** travel narratives from different periods and cultures to **show** how each travel narrative is impacted by the sociocultural conditions of its production. ➢ **Identify** dominant themes and motifs across periods.	**Chapter 2** • **Short answer exercises** • **Writing exercise (producing an essay).**	✓ The short-answer exercises allow us to assess whether students have understood the essential information in the course. ✓ The writing exercise allows us to assess our students' ability to adopt a critical perspective and analyze travel narratives, as well as their ability to transfer the knowledge learned in Chapter 1. ✓ The essay writing also allows us to assess the students' understanding of the evolution of travel writing in terms of form and content.

➢ **Develop** a contextual understanding of travel writing's relation with the process of colonialism. ➢ **Examine** the role of power, identity and ideology in travel writing ➢ **Recognize** travel writing as a hybrid genre, intersecting with history, ethnography, memoir ➢ **Apply** a critical reading strategy to travel texts (Defoe's and Conrad's) by identifying their discursive layers (aesthetic, cultural, ideological, political)	**Chapter 3** • **Short answer exercises** • **Writing exercise (producing an essay).**	✓ The short answer questions allow us to check students' ability to identify the relationship of the travel text with colonialism and Orientalism and how a text functions as a discourse. They allow us to test the students' knowledge and comprehension of core concepts (such as 'Othering', colonial gaze, discourse) ✓ The essay writing exercise allows us to evaluate the students' ability to analyze travel narratives in relation to historical, cultural and ideological contexts as well as their ability to construct coherent arguments supported by textual evidence.
➢ **Explain** how travelogues function as cultural, political, and ideological texts ➢ **Analyze** representations of Algeria, Algerian spaces, and indigenous people through the lens of colonial and orientalist discourse ➢ **Evaluate** the role of travel writing in legitimizing colonial domination and shaping European perceptions of Algeria ➢ **Compare** different narrative strategies (description, exoticism, stereotyping, othering) used by	**Chapter 4** • **Short answer exercises** • **Writing exercise (producing an essay).**	✓ The short answer questions allow us to evaluate the students' knowledge and comprehension of key concepts, authors and historical contexts of travel narratives (colonial discourse, orientalist representation. ✓ The analytical questions or essay writing questions allow us to evaluate the students' critical thinking regarding representations of space, identity, power and binary oppositions. They also allow us to test the application of theoretical and historical frameworks to travel writing texts.

European travelers ➢ **Critically reflect** on the power relations embedded in travel narratives and their lasting cultural impact.		
➢ **Define** modern and post-war modern travelogues and situate them within the historical context of World War II and its aftermath. ➢ **Analyze** representations of self/other shaped by war, empire, and decolonization ➢ **Evaluate** the shift from imperial confidence to skepticism and moral uncertainty in post-war travel narratives ➢ **Interpret** selected travel texts using appropriate critical concepts such as modernity, ideology, identity and power	**Chapter 5** • **Short answer exercises** • **Writing exercise (producing an essay)**	✓ Short answer questions help us assess students' ability to demonstrate factual knowledge of concepts, authors, texts and historical context. They also aim to show the students' ability to show basic comprehension of themes and periods (modern vs. Postmodern) ✓ Analytical questions aim to evaluate student s' ability to construct coherent, well structured arguments supported by textual evidence, and to demonstrate independent thinking.
➢ **Situate** gendered representations in travel writing ➢ **Examine** the relationship between gender, power and knowledge production in travel narratives	**Chapter 6** • **Short answer exercises** **Writing exercise (producing an essay).**	✓ Comprehension questions help us to check the students' understanding of the motifs of feminine travel writing, and to check their familiarity with theoretical frameworks such as colonial discourse, racial

➢ **Evaluate** how gender intersects with race, class, empire, and nationality in the construction of Self and Other ➢ **Apply** feminist, postcolonial, and discourse analysis frameworks to the reading of travel texts.		representation and gendered travel. ✓ Analytical questions help us evaluate the students' ability to critically analyze travel texts through the lenses of gender, race and imperialism and to check their ability to identify examples of gender bias and imperial ideology in travel narratives. ➢ Essay writing questions allow us to examine their capacity to apply theoretical frameworks such as feminist criticism and postcolonial theory as well to measure their skills in argumentation, textual analysis, and synthesis.

Course Evaluation

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the ILOs are provided through the following assessment methods:

- Participation in class discussions: 10%
- Writing assignments and oral presentations: 20%
- Mid-term test: 30%
- Final exam: 40%

Teaching Methods

The teaching process will encompass various strategies and approaches to facilitate the learning. These methods can be broadly categorized into:

➢ **Teacher-centered approach** mainly in lecturing and demonstrations to give the students the

required instructions to perform a task..

- **Student-centered approach** to motivate the students to be active in their learning by participating in discussions, asking questions and constructing their own understanding of concepts, themes..
- **Technology integration/ hybrid teaching**: using digital tools and incorporating visual and auditory elements with direct instruction to cater to diverse learning styles and enhance the students' engagement.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 **Chapter One:** An Introduction to Travel Writing (Definitions,Characteristics, Types, Sub-genres and Motifs of Travel Writing)

Week2 **Chapter Two:** A Historical Overview of Travel Writing

Week 3 **Chapter Three:** Travel Writing as a Multi-Dimensional Discourse

I. Colonial Discourse in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Week 4 **Chapter Three:**

II. Orientalist Discourse in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Week 5 **Chapter Four: European Travelogues about Colonial Algeria**

I. Characteristics of Travel Writing about Colonial Algeria

II. Eugène Fromentin's Representation of Algerian People and Culture in *Un été dans le Sahara* (1857)

Week 6 Mid-term test

Week 7 **Chapter Four:**

III. Isabelle Eberhardt's Travelogues and Stereotyping the Indigenous Characters

Week 8 **Chapter Five:** Travel Writing in the Modern and Postmodern Periods

I- Key Characteristics of Travel Writing in the Modern and Postmodern Periods

II- A Critical Reading George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) in the Light of Modern Travel Writing: Ideological and Political Commitment

Week 9 **Chapter Five: Modern Travelogues and Political Discourse**

III- A Critical Reading of V.S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* (1964) in the Light of Postmodern Travel Writing

Week 10 **Chapter Six: Travel Writing and the Intersection of Gender, Race and Imperialism**

I- The Relationship between Travel Writing and Gender

II- The Intersection of Gender, Race and Imperialism

III- Critical Reading: Gender Discourse in Isabella Bird's *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879)

Week 11: **Chapter Six: Travel Writing and the Intersection of Gender, Race and Imperialism**

I- A Critical Reading of Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1879)

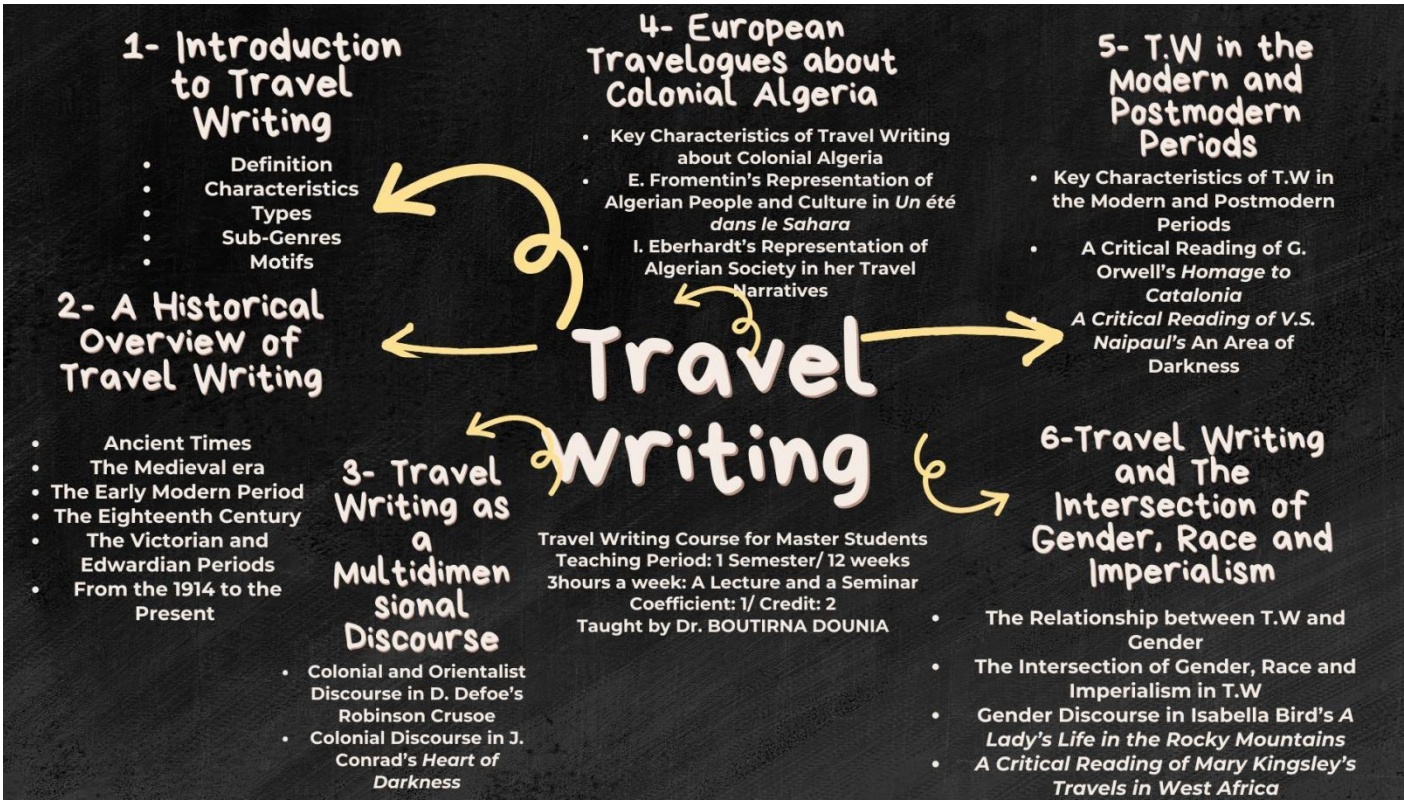
Week 12 Final Exam

Recommended Readings

- Blanton, Casey. *Travel Writing: the Self and the World*. New York: Twayne Publishers. London: Prentice Hall International, 1997.

- Carl Thompson, eds. *The Routledge Companion To Travel Writing, Cambridge:* London and New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Hadfield, Andrew. *Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance. 1545-1625*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Hulme, Peter, and Tim Youngs, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund, eds. *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan*, 2011.*
- Korte, Barbara. *English Travel Writing: from Pilgrimages to Post-Colonial Explorations.* Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd., U.S.A: St.Martin's Press, INC., 2000.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 1991
- Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds.*The Cambridge Companion To Travel Writing, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002*
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Youngs, Tim. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Mind Map of the Course



General Introduction

This course introduces students to travel writing as a literary genre and a cultural practice that records journeys while shaping perceptions of places, peoples and identities. It explores the genre's historical development, key characteristics, and major themes, including representation, selfhood, othering, power, and encounter. It focuses on this genre as a literary practice and production that intersects with power, colonialism, gender, and race, and constructs multidimensional discourse (political, cultural, historical, ideological, gender). Through the study of selected travel texts, students learn to read travel narratives critically and to understand their aesthetic, ideological, and cultural dimensions.

The course **Travel Writing** introduces students to the genre of 'travel literature'. **The first chapter** is an introduction to 'Travel Writing'; it is composed of three parts and the first of which provides definitions and emergence of the genre, the second outlines the characteristics, types and sub-genres of travel writing, and the third part presents its key themes and motifs. **The second chapter** deals with its evolution through history in form and content. The first part focuses on ancient times, studying the context and giving illustrations from ancient texts, the second focuses on the medieval period while the third one emphasizes travel writing during the early modern period, the forth emphasizes the eighteenth century. The fifth focuses on the era of European Colonialism and studies the changes that the genre undergoes due to political, ideological and military factors. The following part deals with the modern period and the last part of this chapter deals with travel writing from the modern period to the present time. In every part, different authors and texts, representatives of the period, provide information and explanations about the genre, the context and the changes that characterize each period and analyze the discourse of these travel texts.

This course will rely mainly on Carl Thompson's *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing* in order to provide the different definitions given to the genre, its characteristics, its types and sub-genres as well as the different stages of its development through time. The genre undergoes different changes during each historical period due to the nature of travel and to

different factors such as political, ideological, cultural and military also especially during European colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. These changes influenced travel writing in terms of form, styles, themes and the writers' attitudes towards the places visited and the people described in their travel narratives. **The third chapter** considers the genre as a multi-dimensional discourse through studying and reading texts underlying colonial and orientalist discourses such as D.Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* **The fourth chapter** deals with European travelogues about colonial Algeria. E. Fromentin's and I. Eberhardt's travel narratives are read and analyzed as Orientalist texts stereotyping the indigenous Algerian people, their culture, language and traditions. **The fifth chapter** deals with modern and postmodern travelogues and their transformation in form and content emphasizing their function as political commentaries on the dynamics of power politics. Two major texts are read critically in the light of the modern and postmodern periods; G.Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and V.S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* are interpreted respectively as two different types of travel related texts approaching similar political issues differently. **The last chapter** deals with travel writing and its intersection with gender, race and imperialism. It shows that travel narratives construct multiple discourses; gender, racial and imperial.

Through an extensive readings and interpretations of various and different travel texts, the students will be able to contextualize which will help them do their own critical readings and produce analytical essays on different topics related to the genre in any historical period. Other resources will be adopted in order to have profound knowledge, such as Tim Youngs' *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* and Blanton Casey's *Travel Writing: The Self and the World.*

This work provides materials that are relevant and accessible to students. By reading and analyzing key works, topics and themes from each historical period, the students will be able to develop critical spirit and interpretative competences by travel related texts not as neutral narratives about mobility and adventure, but as historically situated discourse which intersects with gender, power, race and imperialism and shapes political, ideological, cultural and gender discourses. The handouts will further provide students with detailed information about the different aspects of travel writing as they highlight its changes in form and content, helping

them to interpret the texts from different perspectives, such as ideological, narrative, and cultural.

Chapter One: An Introduction to Travel Writing

General Objective

To introduce students to 'travel writing' as a literary genre by exploring its definition, key characteristics, types, sub-genres and motifs.

Specific Learning Objectives

By the end of the first chapter, the students will be able to:

- **Define** travel writing and **explain** its scope as a literary genre
- **State** its characteristics and **understand** its motifs
- **Distinguish** travel writing from related genres such as diaries, guidebooks and memoirs.

Introduction

Travel writing is a difficult genre to classify as it shares in so many other genres. Autobiographies, histories, personal narratives, accounts of exploration, and tales of epic quests: travel writing derives from and adds to each of these forms. Travel writing has always been as much about the exploration of the self and the other as well as about the places visited. Travel writers and critics of the genre have often argued that the destination is of relatively little consequence; it is the process of travel, the work that is the true subject of the travel writer.

1- Definition of Travel Writing

The verb to travel means to make a journey, a movement through space. This journey might be epic in scale, taking the traveler to the other side of the world or across a continent, as it may be more modest in scope, and takes place within the limits of the traveler's own country or region, or even just their immediate locality. Either way, to begin any journey is to ***encounter difference and otherness***. All journeys are in this way a ***confrontation*** with, or more optimistically a ***negotiation*** of, ***alterity***. All travel requires us to negotiate a complex and sometimes unsettling interplay between alterity and ***identity, difference and similarity.***

All travel involves an ***encounter*** between ***self*** and ***other*** that is brought about by movement through space, therefore all travel writing is at some level a ***record*** or ***product of this encounter***, and of ***the negotiation between similarity and difference*** that it entailed. Sometimes the encounter will be described ***directly*** in the writing, which will accordingly offer a ***narration of the events*** that occurred during the writer's travels. In other instances, the encounter itself will only be ***implicit*** in the writing, as it offers an account not of the actual travelling but of just the new perspectives or the ***new information*** acquired through travel.

All travel writing has a ***two-fold aspect***. It is principally a ***report on the world***, an account of an unfamiliar people or place. Yet, it is also ***revelatory of the travelle***r who produced that report, and of his or her ***values, preoccupations*** and ***assumptions***. And, by extension, it also reveals something of the ***culture*** from which that writer emerged, and the culture for which their text is intended.

In fact, it is not easy to provide an ***unproblematic definition***, or delimitation, of travel writing. The term is a very loose generic label, and has always embraced a bewilderingly diverse range of material. Simultaneously, and as a result of this ***intrinsic heterogeneity***, travel writing has always maintained a ***complex*** and ***confusing relationship*** with any number of closely related ***genres***.

Some scholars emphasize not only the genre's ***formal diversity***, but also its ***thematic and tonal range***. Travel writing in the ***late twentieth century***, stress that the form can embrace everything ‘from ***picaresque adventure*** to ***philosophical treatise***, ***political commentary, ecological parable***, and ***spiritual quest***'. Simultaneously, borrowing freely from history, geography, anthropology and social science'. The result, they suggest, is a ‘***"hybrid genre*** *that straddles categories and disciplines’’*.

One consequence of this heterogeneity and hybridity is that it is often hard to define ***where ‘travel writing' ends*** and other genres begin, such as ***autobiography, ethnography, nature writing*** and ***fiction***. The ***boundaries*** of the travel writing genre are in this way ***fuzzy***, rather than firmly fixed: what we class as travel writing, and what we exclude from the genre, are perennially matters of debate.

Travel books are ***educative*** to some degree, offering their readers ***interesting observations*** about the peoples or places visited by the author. At the same time, the modern

travel book also offers its reader something akin to the ***narrative pleasure*** of a novel or romance.

2- Characteristics of Travel Writing

Major characteristics of travel writing include:

- They are mostly ***prose*** narratives (there were travel texts written in verse during the medieval era and antiquity)
- They are based mostly on ***non-fictional, actual events***
- They are ***utilitarian***: they give information about distant unknown places and people
- They are and ***entertaining***: they report their journeys, they are storytellers; and therefore they afford their narratives with ***literacy*** and ***aesthetics*** to captivate the attention of the readers.

3- Types of Travel Writing

According to the the American cultural and literary historian and author, Paul Fussell, travel writing is categorized into two main types depending on its practical or literary intent:

a. ***Commercial Travel Writing***

The aim of commercial travel writing is ***to market, to promote, to serve***, and to ***help*** travelers and tourists have better experiences. Readers consume it for its ***practical information***. It often has ties to the larger travel and ***tourism industry***. Commercial travel writing can take the form of guidebooks, top-ten lists, best-of lists, articles, destination pieces, itineraries, journalism, restaurant and hotel reviews, side-trip suggestions, advertorials, marketing copy, and other service-oriented articles.

Paul Theroux said that it is "*"market-driven—intending to sell vacations, hotel rooms, restaurant meals, and it is nearly always upbeat. [...] It informs vacationers who have limited time to travel and services the travel industry"*."

Is the goal to inspire travel, to give council or advice, to help, to serve, to offer pointers and tips, or to help others figure out where to go, what to do, and what to eat? If so, this is commercial travel writing.

b. ***Literary Travel Writing***

The aim of literary travel writing is ***to entertain***. Readers consume it *"“for pleasure, and for its aesthetic merits,”"* Thompson notes, instead of for practical insight. Literary travel writing can take the shape of books, novels, memoirs, articles, poems, journals and diaries, journalism, personal essays, travelogues, blog posts, and other more experimental forms of writing.

Is the goal to ***tell a story, to entertain, to humor, to express a fundamental truth about humanity***? If so, this is literary travel writing.

4- Sub-genres of Travel Writing

Like other literary genres, there is a variety of sub-genres in travel books that depend on not just the content of the book, but also how they are put together and organized, their relation of factual and fictional data and so on. Here are the most known ones:

- ***The Travelogue***

The travelogue is the ***prototypical travel book subgenre***. In the travelogue, the author recounts the ***experience of traveling*** to or through some place. It is usually a step-by-step account or ***description*** of what the author ***saw, did, experienced***. Examples: Ibn Battuta's The Rihlah; John Steinbeck's Travels with Charley: In Search of America.

- ***The Quest***

The quest is a travel book framework where the author travels in search of ***something specific***, or to do something specific. It could involve searching for a ***physical object, achieving a goal***, or ***reaching a destination***. What drives the story here is the emphasis on something external to the author. Examples: Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard*, Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, Erika Schelby's *Looking for Humboldt*.

- ***The Adventure***

In the adventure subgenre, the author/protagonist ***pushes the boundaries of human endurance and strength***, either ***mental and/or physical***. The adventure usually involves ***overcoming the limitations of the self***. It includes feats of power, endurance, strength, and resolve. The adventure puts men against nature and the environment. The adventure is a dangerous one. Examples: Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World*; Wilfred Thesiger's *Arabian Sands*.

- ***The Journey***

The journey is a travel book framework where the story's ***emphasis is on something personal in nature***. This subgenre is like the quest, but an i***nner, spiritual, or emotional emphasis*** drives the story. This is like a book of ***self-discovery*** more than it is a book of discovery. Every travel book necessarily has a subjective element to it, but the individual subjective experience here, the so-called "***inner journey***," takes narrative precedence over the exterior journey. Examples: Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*; Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*; Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard*.

- ***The Investigation***

The investigation is a subgenre of travel where the protagonist travels somewhere to ***solve a mystery*** or a puzzle. This could be a ***crime, a disappearance***, or an unsolved mystery. It could also have a ***journalistic or anthropological feel***. Examples: David Grann's *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*.

- ***Gonzo Journalism***

This subgenre riffs off of the investigation subgenre, but the ***author/protagonist*** becomes a ***central part of the story***. Gonzo journalism often has an eccentric, ridiculous, or a comedic feel to it. Examples: Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing Las Vegas*; Charles Nicholl's *The Fruit Palace*.

- ***The Big Idea***

A "big idea" or a central concept connects the material in these types of travel books. The narratives in these books do not always move chronologically; the chapters often "***bounce around***" ***independently*** and as ***thematically connected essays***. These books often use a destination or a series of destinations to ***illustrate, explain***, or ***comment on a bigger idea*** or concept. Examples: Victoria Preston's *We Are Pilgrims*; Dan Richards's *Outposts*.

- ***The Expat Experience***

This travel book subgenre recounts the experiences of someone living or moving somewhere different from their home country. Unlike books about passing through a location temporarily, these books involve the author ***moving to a place*** for an ***indefinite period of time*** and revealing what it is like to move and/or live there. This framework has been particularly successful when blended with humor or wit. Examples: Chris Stewart's *Driving Over Lemons*; Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*.

◆ ***The Mode***

In this travel book subgenre, front and center is the ***mode of transport***, be it foot, kayak, bicycle, motorcycle, car, boat, or train. Examples: Dervla Murphy's Full Tilt: *Ireland to India with a Bicycle*; Monisha Rajesh's *Around the World in 80 Trains*.

[Travel Writing by Carl Thompson]

5- Motifs of Travel Writing

Travel writing is rich and diverse, but several recurring motifs consistently appear across the genre. These motifs often reflect both the writer's personal perspective and broader cultural, social, and political contexts. Here is a clear breakdown:

a. Journey / Movement

The literal act of traveling is central. Motif: roads, rivers, ships, deserts, mountains.

It often symbolizes personal transformation, self-discovery, or escape.

Example: *Heart of Darkness* J. Conrad, Marlowe's voyage up the Congo River mirrors a psychological journey into the heart of human darkness.

b. Encounter with the Other

Meeting foreign people, cultures, or societies. Motif: exoticism, difference, otherness.

It is often tied to Orientalism, colonialism, and cross-cultural observation.

Example: Fromentin's *Un été dans le Sahara*: Tuareg tribes; fascination with local customs and social hierarchies.

Eberhardt's travel short stories: Nomadic Arabs and Saharan communities; blends admiration and outsider perspective.

c. Landscape and Nature

Detailed descriptions of natural environments. Motif: wilderness, deserts, rivers, jungles, cities.

It can symbolize freedom, danger, or the sublime, and often conveys aesthetic or emotional responses.

Example: **Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa***: West African rivers, mangroves, tropical terrain

Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*: War-torn villages and mountains in Catalonia; terrain shapes political experience.

d. Adventure and Danger

Exploration often involves risk, uncertainty, or hardship. Motif: storms at sea, disease, animals, hostile territories. It reinforces the narrative of heroism, endurance, and survival.

Example: **D. Defoe's** *Robinson Crusoe:* shipwreck, isolation and survival struggles on the island.

Orwell's text: battlefield injuries, uncertainty of political loyalties, and front-line danger.

e. Identity and Self-Reflection

Travel as a mirror for the self. Motif: diary entries, personal impressions, introspection.

It often explores gender, race, class, and personal transformation.

Conrad reflects on European morality and human nature, **Bird** negotiates gendered roles and personal courage, **Defoe** via Crusoe reflects on self-reliance, morality, and divine providence.

f. Cultural Observation and Ethnography

Describing local customs, religion, social norms. Motif: rituals, clothing, food, festivals, governance. It can be objective or biased; often reflects imperial gaze or curiosity.

Example: **Kingsley** observes languages, rituals and customs, **Orwell** observes political factions, anarchists and militia life in Catalonia.

g. Time and History

Travel situated within historical or temporal contexts. Motif: ruins, ancient cities, colonial legacies. It shows how past and present intersect in travel narratives.

Conrad: colonial exploitation in Congo, **Orwell:** Spanish Civil War, **Defoe:** Early 18th century colonial trade and European expansion, **Naipaul:** India's colonial and postcolonial legacy; historical poverty and decay of institutions.

h. Exoticism and Romanticization

Places or people portrayed as fascinating, strange, or idealized. Motif: "untouched" lands, noble savages, primitive societies. It is often linked to colonial and imperialist discourses.

Conrad: Africa depicted as mysterious and 'dark', **Fromentin** romanticizes Sahara as timeless, vast and noble.

i. Displacement and Belonging

Feeling of being between places or cultures. Motif: homesickness, alienation, cosmopolitanism. It explores themes of rootedness vs. mobility.

Bird and Kingsley: women explorers navigating male-dominated spaces, **Orwell:** outsider perspective on Spanish factions; feeling socially and politically displaced, **Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness:*** alienation in India; struggles wih cultural and personal belonging.

j. Knowledge and Discovery

Travel as a means of learning geographically, scientifically, or morally.

Motif: maps, diaries, collections, experiments. It often emphasizes the traveler as a witness or authority.

Fromentin: artistic, geographic, ethnographic knowledge, **Naipaul:** social, political, and cultural observations; understanding postcolonial realities, **Kingsley:** scientific observations.

Conclusion

Travel writing is a dynamic literary genre that blends personal experience, observation, and cultural reflection. Defined broadly as narratives of journeys, it is characterized by its attention to movement, landscapes, encounters with others, and the interplay between self and society. The genre encompasses multiple types and sub-genres, from adventure accounts and ethnography to colonial and postcolonial travel narratives, diaries, and literary travelogues. Across these forms, recurring motifs—such as journeys, encounters with the "other," landscapes, danger, identity, and cultural observation, structure the narrative and reveal both the traveler's perspective and the broader socio-historical context. Together, these elements demonstrate that travel writing is not merely a record of movement, but a rich site where literature, culture, history, and self-reflection intersect, offering insight into human experience across time and space.

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Formative Evaluation

A) Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Q1: Which of the following best defines travel writing?

a) Fictional stories set in foreign lands

b) Narratives of journeys combining observation, experience, and reflection

c) Scientific reports about landscapes

d) Historical accounts only

Answer: b

Q2: Which motif is most associated with encountering different cultures?

a) Adventure

b) Landscape

c) Encounter with the Other

d) Knowledge and Discovery

Answer: c

Q3: Which of the following is not a typical sub-genre of travel writing?

a) Adventure narratives

b) Ethnographic accounts

c) Detective novels

d) Diaries and journals

Answer: c

Q4: In *Heart of Darkness*, the Congo River journey is primarily an example of which motif?

a) Knowledge and Discovery

b) Journey / Movement

c) Displacement and Belonging

d) Exoticism

Answer: b

Q5: Which author is known for blending travel with postcolonial critique?

a) Mary Kingsley

b) Isabelle Eberhardt

c) V. S. Naipaul

d) Daniel Defoe

Answer: c

B) Categoriation Questions

Task1: Match the text to its primary motif (some texts may have multiple correct answers).

Text	**Possible Motifs**
1. *A Lady's Life*	a) Adventure & Danger, b) Landscape & Nature, c) Identity & Self-Reflection
2. *Travels in West Africa*	a) Cultural Observation, b) Knowledge & Discovery, c) Journey / Movement
3. *Un été dans le Sahara*	a) Exoticism & Romanticization, b) Adventure & Danger, c) Journey / Movement
4. *Heart of Darkness*	a) Encounter with the Other, b) Displacement & Belonging, c) Identity & Self-Reflection
5. *An Area of Darkness*	a) Cultural Observation, b) Displacement & Belonging, c) Knowledge & Discovery

Answers:

1 → a, b, c

2 → a, b, c

3 → a, b, c

4 → a, b, c

5 → a, b, c

Task2: Categorize the following as either Primary Travel Narrative or Theoretical/Scholarly Work

Item	**Category**
Homage to Catalonia	Primary Travel Narrative
Imperial Eyes	Theoretical/Scholarly Work
Robinson Crusoe	Primary Travel Narrative
Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing	Theoretical/Scholarly Work
Travels in West Africa	Primary Travel Narrative

C) Short Answer Questions

Q1: Define travel writing and explain two of its main characteristics.

Answer: Travel writing is a literary genre that narrates journeys, combining observation, personal experience, and reflection. Key characteristics include attention to landscape and environment and encounters with foreign cultures.

Q2: Name three sub-genres of travel writing and give one example for each.

Answer:

Adventure narratives → *Robinson Crusoe*

Ethnographic accounts → *Travels in West Africa*

War/Political travel → *Homage to Catalonia*

Q3: Identify and explain two recurring motifs in travel writing.

Answer:

Journey / Movement: Physical and psychological travel, e.g., Marlow's voyage in *Heart of Darkness.*

Encounter with the Other: Meeting different cultures or societies, e.g., Naipaul's observations of Indian communities in *An Area of Darkness.*

Q4: How does landscape function in travel writing? Give one textual example.

Answer: Landscape often reflects both the traveler's emotional state and the cultural or historical context. Example: The Sahara desert in Fromentin's *Un été dans le Sahara* evokes isolation, danger, and beauty.

Q5: Explain the difference between exoticism and cultural observation in travel writing.

Answer: Exoticism romanticizes or idealizes foreign cultures and landscapes, often reflecting the traveler's fascination. Cultural observation aims to describe and understand societies more objectively, as in Kingsley's ethnographic notes in *Travels in West Africa.*

Chapter Two: A Historical Overview of Travel Writing

General Objective

To enable students to understand how travel writing has evolved across historical periods, and how it reflects changing cultural, ideological and aesthetic concerns.

Specific Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- **Describe** key phases in the evolution of travel writing
- **Explain** how political, economic, religious and technological changes shaped travel narratives.
- **Identify** dominant themes and motifs across periods

Introduction

Human beings have probably always told stories about journeys made by themselves or their ancestors. These stories may have combined practical usefulness with ***religious or spiritual observance***, ***detailing routes*** through a landscape whilst simultaneously registering and reverencing the ***mythic significance of every landmark*** along that route. More generally, we can assume that they served variously ***to entertain***, ***to pass on important knowledge***, and to maintain the collective memory of tribal groups. However, every historical period has its own travel motives and objectives.

1- Ancient Times

People travelled in ancient times for diverse reasons: to make war, or to escape it; to conduct trade by land or sea; to visit religious shrines and oracles; and to administer and maintain the various empires of the Ancient world, from the Egyptian through to the Roman. All this activity gave rise to a number of ***forms of travel-related text***. Amongst the most basic and functional were the documents known as *periploi* in Greek, or *navigationes* in Latin. These provided ***navigational directions*** for sea captains. They might interweave a more ***detailed description of the voyage*** that had first explored this route. Equivalent documents

existed for overland journeys, and were known in Latin as *itineraria*. More elaborate forms of travel writing are chiefly to be found, in the Classical era. ***Herodotus*** has been called the ' ***Father of History***', but he can also be regarded as a travel writer, since his account of the Greco-Persian wars in *The Histories* (c.431–425 BCE) draws significantly on his own ***travels around the Mediterranean and Black Sea***, and includes lengthy ***ethnographic digressions on the cultures*** he encountered.

One of the earliest accounts of Christian pilgrimage, ***the Pilgrimage of Egeria*** (c.381–84 CE), also places more ***emphasis on the travelling self***, and on the ***details of the journey***, than was usual in this period. Egeria, sometimes known as Aetheria, was a woman, possibly a nun, who travelled from Spain to Jerusalem. An account of her journey, which takes the form of a long letter to her compatriots, circulated in manuscript, and is thus the earliest ***first-person, non-fictional narrative of travel*** we know of in the ***Western tradition***. As this will suggest, the focus of Egeria's narrative falls principally on the ***spiritual significance of the landscapes*** through which she moves, and on the ***devotional practices*** of the people she encounters, rather than on her personal thoughts and feelings. As a result, it still seems to modern eyes a rather ***impersonal form of travel writing***, even though it is cast in the first person.

2- The Medieval Era

The medieval era produced an abundance of travel-related texts. These travel reports are often woven into ***medieval geographies, natural histories, bestiaries*** and '***books of wonders***'. The continents of ***Asia*** and ***Africa*** especially were a ***source of fascination*** to readers in Europe, and gave rise to a rich literature. Very few of these accounts, however, are first-person narratives of travel in which the writer recounts his or her own experience. Typically, they are ***compendia of information***. As a consequence, many medieval travel texts seem to modern readers a curious blend of the ***factual*** and the ***fabulous***, as they combine ***plausible descriptions*** of foreign peoples and places with accounts of ***monstrous*** or ***miraculous*** beings that are clearly projections of European fears and fantasies, such as winged centaurs, dog-headed men and horned-men.

First-person accounts of actual travels occur most commonly in this era in the form of the 'peregrinatio', or ***pilgrimage narrative***. Feudal society did not encourage much personal mobility, but pilgrimage was one form of culturally accepted travel, and by the later Middle

Ages something akin to a tourist industry had emerged, catering for pilgrims visiting Rome and the Holy Land, and to many local sites of religious significance.

For real-life pilgrims, numerous handbooks were available, offering *practical* and *devotional advice to would-be travelers* and some of these guides were written by authors who had themselves made the pilgrimage.The element of travelogue is often strictly subordinated to the text's *practical* and *religious concerns*. Typically, there is little effort to record the events of the actual journey, or the traveler's subjective thoughts and feelings. Nor do these accounts usually evince much interest in the natural world, or in the other cultures encountered during the journey. In such a strongly *Christian era*, an excessive interest in such *secular matters* might potentially be classified as *the sin of* curiositas (curiosity). It was the *education of the soul* that was the text's first concern, a homiletic agenda that often makes the medieval pilgrimage narrative little more than a compilation of passages from the Bible.

Not every traveler in the medieval era was a pilgrim. Within Europe, men might also travel on *church business*, or as *merchants, diplomats, soldiers and scholars*; women, meanwhile, would sometimes accompany husbands and fathers in their travels, and on occasion undertook journeys on their own. The Crusades took many Christian Europeans to the near and Middle East, and many more gained some familiarity with the region through subsequent chronicles of events there. *Missionaries* and *embassies* were also periodically sent still further afield, to places such as *China, India* and *Africa*. It was a diplomatic mission to the court of the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan that produced the most famous travel account of this period, the *Travels of Marco Polo*, which circulated in various versions from the late thirteenth century onwards.

After Marco Polo's Travels, the most influential and widely circulated travel narrative of the late middle ages was the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (c.1356). This account, originally written in Anglo-French, begins as a guide for pilgrims to the Holy Land, supposedly based on the author's own travels in that region, but then extends beyond the Middle East to discuss *China, India* and well-nigh the whole world known to medieval Europeans. Although the narrator claims firsthand experience of these places, many details and anecdotes clearly derive from earlier sources, both Classical and medieval.

Forms of travel writing also existed in other cultures in this period. In the *Islamic world*, meanwhile, the rihlah, or book recounting travel, began to emerge. Its greatest exponent would be the *Moroccan* qadi, or judge, *Ibn Battutah,* whose Travels (c.1355) describes an epic, 75,000-mile *peregrination* around *North Africa, India, China* and *South East Asia.*

3- The Early Modern Period

Christopher Columbus's four voyages between 1492 and 1504 marked a significant shift in European travel and travel writing. His discoveries challenged the medieval worldview and the trust in Classical texts, leading to a new emphasis on empirical inquiry and inductive methods. This led to philosophers like Sir Francis Bacon promoting an intellectual agenda and laying the foundations of modern science. European discovery led to the first successful circumnavigation of the globe by Ferdinand Magellan in 1519. English voyages, led by figures like Walter Ralegh and Henry Hudson, stimulated a wave of travel-related writings and documents, leading to the genre of 'voyages and travels'. The genre was increasingly centered on the report of someone who had made the journey themselves.

Travelers in the early modern era sought information about the New World, Old World, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The Reformation created a rift between Protestants and Catholics, but many writers recounted their experiences in print. Thomas Coryat, Fynes Morison, and William Lithgow were early examples of a 'literary' mode of travel writing. Most writers were men, with no published accounts by women. The encounter with native Americans sparked philosophical and ethical debates, with some arguing that travel exposed young men to moral dissolution, foreign affectation, and Catholicism. This influenced imaginative literature, with Thomas More creating satirical travel accounts and Joseph Hall criticizing travel.

4- The Long Eighteenth Century, 1660–1837

Travel writing in the 18th century gained popularity and prestige, influencing literary forms like poetry and novels. The genre was driven by the increasing mobility of Europe, the development of technologies and infrastructures for travel, and the expansion of print culture. Travel was seen as a crucial part of the New Science of the late 17th century, with the Royal Society promoting travel and the empiricist philosophy of John Locke. William Dampier's *New Voyage Round the World* established a new standard for exploratory travel writing. The

New Science's inductive agenda was further fueled by *Linnaeus' Systema Naturae*, which catalogued the natural world. European and American travelers, such as Captain James Cook, embarked on scientific exploration, often financed by state-sponsored organizations.

The 18th century saw the emergence of the 'tourist', a new type of traveller who was initially seen as a mark of conspicuous privilege. The Grand Tour, an extended visit to Europe, was the only form of tourism widely practiced at the time. The ethos of the Grand Tour was to acquire foreign languages, gather useful information, and visit Roman antiquity. However, the growing appetite for tourism led to a diversification of touristic tastes, interests, and itineraries. Many tourists ventured into print, making the late 18th and early 19th centuries a 'tour-writing and tour-publishing age'. Women also had opportunities to travel and publish travelogues, with some published between 1763 and 1800. The writers of touristic travelogues began to focus on the personality of the traveller, expressing their inner thoughts and feelings.

The rise of touristic travel and travel writing in the early nineteenth century was marked by a shift towards commercial and consumerist society. As more people began to travel recreationally, the industry became an industry. Guidebooks for tourists began to emerge in the 1830s, and Thomas Cook introduced the concept of package holidays in the 1840s in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). As tourism developed, many tourists sought new styles of travel and alternative destinations to demonstrate their moral superiority and discrimination in taste. However, there were also non-turistic travel accounts, such as those by castaways, shipwreck victims, and captives held hostage by hostile tribes. The Evangelical revival led to the establishment of missionary societies and the abolition of slavery. This period also saw the emergence of a distinctively American tradition of travel writing, with accounts by explorers, settlers, naturalists, and missionaries playing an important role in forming a sense of nationhood.

5- The Victorian and Edwardian Periods, 1837–1914

In the 19th century, European and US empires expanded, leading to a surge in travel-related writings. These writings, ranging from memoirs to newspaper reports, facilitated European and US expansion. The emergence of race-based'science' in academia fueled a sense of superiority among Europeans and white Americans.

During the Victorian era, travel writing was a significant form of exploration narrative, providing valuable geographical, natural-historical, and ethnographic information about various regions of the world. Explorers were regarded as emblematic figures of imperial masculinity, embodying the highest ideals of science and Christian civilization. Their travel experiences were often rendered in a stirring style, drawing heavily on literary techniques and idioms developed in imperial adventure stories. These genres functioned as an "energising myth of English imperialism," legitimizing the imperial project to domestic audiences while inspiring readers with fantasies of heroic exploits. Travel writing also proliferated as tourism flourished, and many travelers wrote accounts of their experiences. Many sought to get "off the beaten track" and escape the stifling moral codes of the Victorian era.

The modern travel book emerged, with writers with established reputations taking up the travelogue form. Women writers also made a significant contribution to the travel writing genre, navigating the constraints of femininity. Travel themes were frequently used in imaginative and fictive genres, challenging European imperial assumptions. Fiction, poetry, and travel accounts influenced subsequent travel accounts, shaping attitudes towards foreign peoples and places. Examples include Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Herman Melville's Typee, R.L. Stevenson's South Sea tales, and Rudyard Kipling's Kim.

6- Travel Writing From 1914 to The Present

The European and American railway networks from the mid-nineteenth century introduced a new mode of transportation, introducing speed and disorientation to travelers. This shifted the Western sense of space and time, generating a modern, industrialized mode of consciousness. The motor car and aeroplane further challenged the tyranny of distance, making travel a mass activity available to almost all members of Western society. This led to a dramatic increase in global interconnectedness, with the modern age of globalisation originating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century era of high imperialism. Modernism, a major cultural movement in the West, was influenced by this globalized society. Travel writing flourished between the First and Second World Wars, with acclaimed travelogues and works exploring subjectivity, memory, and the unconscious. The British tradition of literary travel writing was continued by writers like Eric Newby, Norman Lewis, Colin Thubron, Jan Morris, Patrick Leigh Fermor, and Dervla Murphy in the post-war era.

Their travelogues often adopted a variety of interests and tone markers, with Lewis's writing often journalistic in style. However,16 there was a self-deprecating persona and strategy of understatement prevalent in British travel writing.

Jack Kerouac pioneered a different idiom in America, establishing a picaresque, low-life agenda and a fast-paced 'hipster' style. The narrative of scientific exploration gradually fell into abeyance, with professional scientists and social scientists taking on exploratory work. This led to the term 'travel writing' being relegated to a ‘minor’ genre, with critical and commercial fortunes flagging in the decades after World War II. The spread of the internet has also produced a new mode of travel writing, the travel ‘blog’, which represents a subtle re-negotiation of the boundary between public and private communication.

Conclusion

This historical overview reveals travel writing as a fluid and adaptive genre, continually reshaped by shifting historical circumstances and cultural priorities. Tracing its development from early exploratory and imperial narratives to contemporary, self-reflexive, and postcolonial forms, travel writing negotiates questions of authority, identity and the representation of cultural difference. Travel writing is positioned as a hybrid genre that both records movement across space and reveals shifting power relations, ideological assumptions, cultural encounters, and modes of self-fashioning across time.

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Formative Evaluation

A- Short-Answer Questions:

Q1: Why are early travel narratives closely linked to exploration and discovery?

Suggested answer: Early travel narratives are closely linked to exploration and discovery because they emerged from journeys undertaken for trade, diplomacy, religious missions, and territorial expansion. These accounts documented unknown lands, peoples, and routes, serving

practical purposes such as navigation and knowledge transmission. They also satisfied curiosity about the wider world and helped expand geographical and cultural awareness.

Q2: What role did religion play in medieval travel writing?

Suggested answer: Religion played a central role in medieval travel writing, particularly through pilgrimage narratives. Travel accounts often focused on journeys to sacred sites such as Jerusalem, Rome, or Mecca, emphasizing spiritual devotion, moral instruction, and divine purpose. Religious belief shaped how travelers interpreted foreign lands, frequently framing them within Christian or Islamic worldviews and mythological traditions.

Q3: In what ways did travel writing serve scientific and ethnographic purposes?

Suggested answer: Travel writing served scientific and ethnographic purposes by recording observations of landscapes, climates, flora, fauna, and indigenous cultures. Travelers often described customs, languages, and social structures, contributing to emerging disciplines such as geography, anthropology, and natural history. These accounts helped systematize knowledge about the non-European world, though often from a Eurocentric perspective.

Q4: How did colonial expansion influence travel writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

Suggested answer: Colonial expansion strongly influenced travel writing by aligning it with imperial interests. Travel narratives often portrayed colonized territories as exotic, primitive, or undeveloped, reinforcing ideas of European superiority. These texts contributed to imperial knowledge by providing geographical, ethnographic, and scientific information that supported colonial administration and justified expansion.

B- Long-Answer Questions

Q1: examine the relationship between travel writing and imperialism in the nineteenth century.

Suggested answer: In the nineteenth century, travel writing became closely intertwined with imperialism. Travel narratives often accompanied colonial expansion, functioning as **tools for mapping, surveying, and understanding colonized territories**. Writers portrayed distant lands as **exotic, dangerous, or uncivilized, reinforcing hierarchical distinctions between Europe and the colonized world**.

These representations contributed to imperial ideology by **legitimizing domination under the guise of civilization, progress, and scientific advancement**. Travel writing also helped

construct knowledge systems that supported colonial administration and economic exploitation. At the same time, some travel writers expressed ambivalence or critique, revealing tensions within imperial discourse. Nevertheless, nineteenth-century travel writing largely operated as a cultural instrument of empire, shaping how Europe imagined and controlled the wider world.

Q2: Discuss the main characteristics of medieval and early modern travel narratives.

Suggested answer: Medieval travel narratives were primarily **shaped by religious, moral, and symbolic concerns**. Pilgrimage accounts emphasized spiritual devotion, sacred geography, and divine intervention, often blending f**actual observation with legend and myth**. Accuracy was less important than religious meaning, and foreign cultures were frequently interpreted through theological frameworks. Examples include pilgrimage narratives and Islamic travel accounts such as Ibn Battuta's *Rihla*, which combined personal experience with moral reflection.

Early modern travel narratives, emerging during the Renaissance and Age of Exploration, marked a shift toward **empirical observation and secular knowledge**. Influenced by humanism and scientific curiosity, travelers increasingly focused on **description, classification, and firsthand experience**. These narratives reflected growing interest in cartography, natural history, and commerce, as seen in exploration accounts and early colonial travelogues. While still shaped by European perspectives, early modern travel writing laid the foundations for modern ethnography and geographical science.

Chapter Three: Travel Writing as a Multi-Dimensional Discourse

General Objective

To understand travel writing as a multidimensional discourse that combines literary, historical, cultural, ideological, and autobiographical dimensions.

Specific Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- **Identify** how travel texts construct space, place, and how it represents the other
- **Develop** a contextual understanding of travel writing's relation with the process of colonialism.
- **Examine** the role of power, identity and ideology in travel writing
- **Recognize** travel writing as a hybrid genre, intersecting with history, ethnography, memoir
- **Apply** a critical reading strategy to travel texts (Defoe's and Conrad's) by identifying their discursive layers (aesthetic, cultural, ideological, political)

Introduction

Travel writing is often approached as a simple record of journeys, places, and personal experiences. However, beyond its descriptive surface, travel writing is a complex and multidimensional form of discourse that brings together literature, history, culture, ideology, and self-representation. Travel texts do not merely describe places; they interpret them, frame them, and give them meaning through language, narrative choices, and cultural perspectives.

As a genre, travel writing occupies a hybrid position between fact and fiction, observation and imagination. The traveler's voice mediates between the familiar and the unfamiliar, constructing images of places and people while simultaneously revealing the writer's identity, values, and worldview. This makes travel writing a powerful site for examining how concepts such as space, otherness, power, and cultural difference are discursively produced. In this lesson, we will read travel writing not simply as a literary genre, but as a multidimensional discourse shaped by historical contexts, ideological positions, and narrative strategies. By analyzing its multiple layers; textual, cultural, and political, we will

develop a critical understanding of how travel narratives participate in broader processes of representation and meaning-making.

I- Colonial and Orientalist Discourse in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Robinson Crusoe is a prototypical colonial narrative, shaped by colonial discourse and reflects the dominant imperialist ideologies of its time concerning race, identity and otherness. Colonial discourse informs the narrative at the levels of characters, thematic content, rhetoric, and setting.

a- Characters

- **Robinson Crusoe**

Defoe presents Crusoe as a solitary, intelligent, ingenious Englishman who is able to conquer the whole island and transform it into a colony. He gets the position of an unchallenged king who claims ownership of everything and everyone on it. Hence, he represents the British colonizer who builds up an empire and constructs a superior identity through subjugation and domination of the natives. In short, Crusoe is the representation of a colonial figure and a colonial mind.

- **Friday**

He represents not just a Caribbean tribesman, but all the natives of America, Asia and Africa who would be oppressed in the age of European colonialism. Friday is subjugated by Crusoe, and becomes his slave and property because he saved him from cannibals. Accordingly, he incarnates servitude, subjugation, obedience and submission to Crusoe; his owner, and master.

- **The Non-European Others**

It is interesting to notice Defoe's false representation of the non-Europeans he encounters in *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe's characterization of non-Europeans replicates features of 'colonial discourse' in that they are characterized according to the process of 'othering'. In other words, they are represented as inferior, savages, cannibals, and barbarians. *Robinson Crusoe* propagates a discourse of ethnic differences and cultural superiority based on racial criteria. In fact, colonialism and racism are associated to each other because both are based upon the same logic of binarism.

b- The Relationship between Crusoe and Friday: A Colonial Encounter

It represents the master-slave paradigm, and the colonizer-colonized relationship as well as the binary opposition between the self and the other.

Crusoe validates his self-image and culture through his relationship with non-European characters in general and Friday in particular. Indeed, 'racial stereotypes and the image of the racial other who is the colonized inferior (Friday) consolidate the identity of the colonizer as the superior self/master. As part of the colonizing process, the colonizer introduces hierarchical structures based on race and class divisions. Crusoe's interaction with non-Europeans, especially the black characters in the novel reveals this racist sentiment. The novel includes prejudices concerning racial differences and the superiority of the white race through abundant references to the association of blackness with savagery and cannibalism.

This relationship also incarnates the 'civilizing mission' of the European imperialist powers in foreign territories. Crusoe teaches Friday the language and the first word he taught him was 'Master'. Crusoe teaches him only those words, which are useful for the master-slave relationship and helpful for total servitude from Friday. Crusoe also teaches Friday Christianity, which reflects the colonizer's attitude towards the native inhabitants of the territories they colonized, but relevantly contributes in drawing attention to the colonizer's attempts to legitimize their colonizing agenda by framing it as a 'civilizing' mission. Indeed, 'religiously, the novel demonstrates that a spiritual awakening can take place when an Englishman subordinates and converts a non-European 'Other'.

c- Setting:

The island itself is perceived in dominant empire metaphors and other highly stereotypical images, such as 'naked', 'barren' and 'uninhabited', which indicate that Crusoe is the one to fertilize it and develop it as well as the one who elevates the natives from their cannibalistic state to a human state through showing them good manners and by clothing them both literarily and figuratively.

Crusoe constructs the ideology of being superior to the 'merciless savages of human kind' and justifies his mission to dominate, dispossess and own, thereby denying them any voice. Friday has to forsake his entire family and culture and take on Crusoe's and follow him everywhere without ever returning to his family. Not once, do we have Crusoe exhibiting any

compassion towards Friday about the fact that he might miss his family and may want to return to them. Crusoe simply takes over the running of Friday's life for him without any consultation with him or permission from him.

II- Colonial Discourse in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Heart of Darkness is imbued with an Orientalist mode of representation of the African continent, African people and African culture. To satisfy Western exotic tastes, the African landscape is revealed as a mysterious and dark place haunted by diseases and death; African people are misrepresented as savages and barbaric cannibals, and African culture is distorted as corrupt, primitive and devilish.

a- Setting:

- **Africa as a Place of Wilderness and Darkness:**

*In the novel Conrad uses a vocabulary to present a picture of a "wild and dark" African continent.

*He compares stepping on the African land to wandering "*on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet*" (Conrad, 1994)

*The oppressive and incomprehensible mysteriousness of the land is repeatedly emphasized and therefore suggests a menacing force which encircles all forms of civilization, a presence of universal destruction.

*Conrad describes the African landscape as primitive and backward; "*a place of darkness*"

*The African land is described falsely as a primordial continent, mysterious, barbarous, evil and dangerous, "*an imaginary fantasy of an unexplored piece of land which [is] made up by Westerners*" (Xie, 2010). It is served as a foil, remote yet a familiar antithesis of the West and hence the powerfulness, distinctive civilization and exclusive superiority of the West are able to be exhibited.

- **Africa as a Place of Disease and Death:**

*Africa is presented as a place of "darkness" haunted by diseases and death. In the novella, diseases rage in Africa to the extent that the absence of disease is considered remarkable and providential.

*Besides, Africa is also depicted as a place plagued with death. Conrad mentions recurrent

scenes of dying Negroes everywhere, which bring the "*insoluble mystery*", barbarity and desolation to the reader's mind.

*His vocabulary describes a sinister and gloomy atmosphere. In this way Conrad caters for Westerners' fantasy about the Orient. Conrad's adoption of imperial beliefs and attitudes and reveal his pro-colonial attitude.

b- The Distorted Representation of African Culture:

African culture is also misrepresented as primitive, archaic and irrational.

*In Marlow's eyes, the African rituals symbolize mad men performing mad rites, which even degenerate into a fiendish row.

*The ceremonies which are part of African indigenous culture are described to be a kind of a devilish performance to invoke the powers of darkness and the call of wilderness inside human beings. Meanwhile the Africans are labeled as the devotees of the dark power.

*Indeed, Conrad attributes Kurtz's moral degeneration, corruption and sinning to his overexposure to the "darkness" of African culture and a physical and mental isolation from Western civilization.

From Marlow's later account of various talks about Kurtz, we get to know that Kurtz was originally a person of exceptional talents and culture with a promising future, "*a universal genius*" before he set foot on the barbaric African land.

After he comes to Africa and embraces African culture, he descends abruptly to greed and commits numerous crimes though he has been equipped with Western civilizing ideals. "*it [the wilderness] had taken him [Kurtz], loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation.*" (Conrad, 1994)

Kurtz, infected and swallowed by African primitive and savage culture, is a typical victim drawn and seduced to depravity due to his irresistible possession of an awakened fiery thirst for African lawless gratifications. Thus, the wilderness, savagery and darkness of the African culture, as a ghastly antithesis of civilization, are highlighted.

c- Characters:

***Marlow** is the protagonist of the story, who has accomplished his mission, but as he leaves the literal darkness of the Congo behind, he carries with him a symbolic darkness, one of

colonialism and how it changes the natives as well as the colonialists, darkening both lives in many ways.

* **Kurtz** is the primary antagonist of the novella who progresses from an ambitious, charismatic, and successful ivory trader to a magnetic spectral barbarian. This characterization symbolizes Conrad's interpretation of both the jungles of Africa and the native Africans themselves demonstrate barbarism and savagery.

* **Female characters**: Marlow believes that women represent the ideals of civilization; it is on their behalf that men undertake economic enterprises, and it is their beauty that symbolizes nations and ways of life. Kurtz' native mistress is described as savage, and therefore represents the savagery of Africa, while his fiancée is calm and mature, and represents the innocent politeness of European women and the superiority of European culture.

The encounter between Kurtz and Marlow can be seen as a symbolic encounter with one's own consciousness, for both characters have been influenced by Colonialism. Their encounter seems like a reflection on the mirror and the consequent suffering derived from it.

d- The Civilizing Mission:

This period coincided with the "Scramble of Africa", when the British tended to see themselves as superior to other peoples, and Africa as the center of evil, as a part of the world possessed by demonic darkness and barbarism, represented by slavery, human sacrifice and cannibalism. This view came as a result of the myth of the "Dark Continent", according to which Africa required imperialism on moral, religious and scientific grounds.

Conclusion

In examining *Robinson Crusoe* and *Heart of Darkness,* this lesson has shown how travel writing is never a neutral record of journeys but a powerful discourse shaped by colonial and orientalist ideologies. Both texts construct non-European spaces and peoples through binaries such as civilized/savage and center/periphery, reinforcing European authority while marginalizing the Other. Yet, while *Robinson Crusoe* largely normalizes colonial domination as natural and productive, *Heart of Darkness* exposes its moral emptiness and contradictions. Reading these texts critically allows students to see how travel literature participates in the making and the questioning of imperial power, and invites students to approach travel texts as ideological narratives rather than mere adventure stories.

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Formative Evaluation

A- Short Answer Quesions:

Q1: In what ways is Friday represented as an 'orientalized' or colonized subject?

Model answer: Friday is represented as an Orientalized and colonized subject through his subordination to Crusoe. He is renamed by Crusoe, taught English, converted to Christianity, and portrayed as grateful and obedient. His identity is shaped entirely through Crusoe's perspective, reducing him to a symbol of the "civilized native" who validates European superiority. This reinforces colonial hierarchies between the European self and the non-European Other.

Q2: How does *Robinson Crusoe* reflect early colonial and mercantile ideology?

Model answer: Robinson Crusoe reflects early colonial and mercantile ideology through its emphasis on trade, profit, private property, and individual enterprise. Crusoe's voyages are motivated by economic gain, and his actions on the island; claiming land, exploiting resources, and establishing authority, mirror European colonial expansion. The novel naturalizes the idea that Europeans have the right to dominate foreign lands and peoples in the name of civilization and economic progress.

Q3: How does Conrad portray Africa and Africans in relation to European identity?

Model answer: In *Heart of Darkness*, Africa is portrayed as Europe's "Other," a space of darkness that contrasts with European claims of civilization and rationality. Africans are often depicted as silent, anonymous figures, which marginalizes their humanity. However, this portrayal also functions to expose European hypocrisy, as the brutality and moral corruption of Europeans in Africa undermine the idea of European moral superiority.

Q4: How do both texts construct the binary opposition between 'civilization' and 'savagery'?

Model answer: Both texts construct a binary opposition between "civilization" and "savagery" by positioning Europe as orderly, rational, and superior, while non-European spaces are depicted as chaotic and primitive. In *Robinson Crusoe*, this binary justifies Crusoe's dominance over Friday. In *Heart of Darkness*, the binary is initially presented but gradually destabilized, as European characters behave more savagely than the Africans they claim to civilize.

B- Analytical Questions:

Q1: Analyze *Robinson Crusoe* as a narrative that legitimizes colonial domination through religion, labor and hierarchy.

Model answer:*Robinson Crusoe* legitimizes colonial domination by presenting European control as natural and morally justified. Religion plays a key role: Crusoe frames his survival and authority as divinely sanctioned and converts Friday to Christianity, equating spiritual salvation with submission. Labor reinforces hierarchy, as Crusoe assigns roles to Friday and other non-Europeans, positioning himself as master and governor. Social hierarchy is normalized through Crusoe's self-appointment as ruler of the island, reflecting colonial systems in which European authority is unquestioned. Through these elements, the novel presents colonial domination as benevolent and necessary for order and progress.

Q2: Discuss the role of race and otherness in *Heart of Darkness*. To what extent does Conrad reinforce or critique colonial stereotypes?

Model answer: Race and otherness in *Heart of Darkness* operate ambivalently. Conrad often reinforces colonial stereotypes by depicting Africans as voiceless, primitive, and closely associated with nature, which contributes to their dehumanization. However, the novel

simultaneously critiques imperialism by exposing the violence, greed, and moral emptiness of European colonizers. Characters like Kurtz reveal that "civilization" masks savagery rather than eradicating it. While Conrad condemns imperial exploitation, his failure to grant Africans narrative agency means that the novel both critiques colonialism and remains complicit in colonial discourse.

Chapter Four: European Travelogues about Colonial Algeria (1850-1942)

General Objective:

To develop students' critical understanding of European travel writing as a colonial discourse that constructs representations of Algeria and Algerians in ways that reflect and reinforce imperial power, cultural hierarchy, and orientalist ideology.

Specific Learning Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- **Explain** how travelogues function as cultural, political, and ideological texts
- **Analyze** representations of Algeria, Algerian spaces, and indigenous people through the lens of colonial and orientalist discourse
- **Evaluate** the role of travel writing in legitimizing colonial domination and shaping European perceptions of Algeria
- **Compare** different narrative strategies (description, exoticism, stereotyping, othering) used by European travelers
- **Critically reflect** on the power relations embedded in travel narratives and their lasting cultural impact.

Introduction

Travel writing about colonial Algeria refers to a body of texts, mostly by European travelers, artists, soldiers, and administrators, produced during the French colonial period. These writings combine **description, personal experience, and political ideology**, and they played a key role in shaping European perceptions of Algeria.

I- Key Characteristics of Travel Writing about Colonial Algeria

- **Orientalist Gaze:** Algeria is often represented as exotic, timeless, and culturally 'other,' reinforcing East/West binaries.
- **Colonial Justification:** Many travelogues implicitly or explicitly legitimize French presence on the Algerian territory by depicting the land as empty, underused, or in need of European order.
- **Aestheticization of Space:** Landscapes (desert, oasis, ruins) are romanticized, while social and political realities are often minimized.

- **Silencing of Indigenous Voices:** Algerians are frequently reduced to types or background figures rather than speaking subjects.

In sum, this writing often reflects the unequal power relations of empire, presenting the country through a European gaze that exoticizes landscapes, cultures and people while justifying colonial presence. These texts frequently portray Algeria as a space of adventure, discovery, or civilizing mission, silencing indigenous voices and normalizing domination. At the same time, they offer valuable insights into how colonial ideology was constructed and circulated through travel literature, making them important documents for critically examining representations of Algeria and the workings of colonial discourse. This lesson introduces travel texts as literary and ideological documents that both record travel experiences and participate in the construction of colonial and orientalist discourse.

Travel related texts about Algeria are crucial for understanding how literature contributed to colonial domination, but also how some writers began to question it. Studying them today allows for **postcolonial re-readings** that recover silenced histories and expose the politics behind representation.

II- Eugène Fromentin's Representation of Algerian People and Culture in *Un été dans le Sahara* (1857)

1- Historical Context of the Travelogue:

Un été dans le Sahara (1857) was written by Eugène Fromentin, a French painter and writer who travelled to Algeria in the early decades of French colonial rule. The text emerges from the mid-19th-century colonial and orientalist moment, when North Africa was a key site of artistic, scientific, and ethnographic fascination for France. Fromentin's journey takes place during the period of military pacification and territorial expansion, particularly in the southern regions, where French control remained fragile. Travel to the Sahara was therefore both an aesthetic and political act, made possible by colonial infrastructure and military presence.

Within this context, *Un été dans le Sahara* reflects the orientalist imagination of the time; presenting the desert as timeless, sublime, and spiritually charged, while also showing moments of ethnographic observation and ambivalence toward colonial domination. Unlike purely exotic accounts, Fromentin often expresses admiration for Algerian landscapes and

cultures, even as his perspective remains shaped by colonial authority. The work stands at the crossroads of travel writing, art, and colonial discourse, contributing to 19th-century European representations of the Sahara as both a space of imperial conquest and aesthetic contemplation.

2- Critical Reading of the Text

E. Fromentin's *Un été dans le Sahara* is a key example of 19th century French travel writing shaped by colonial and Orientalist discourse. Written in the context of French colonization in Algeria, the text presents the Sahara as an exotic, timeless, and aestheticized space, observed through a European gaze that claims authority and knowledge. Although Fromentin presents himself as a sensitive artist-traveler, his narrative often reduces indigenous people to types of scenery, reflecting unequal power relations between colonizer and colonized. An analysis of his work thus reveals how artistic admiration coexists with, and subtly reinforces, colonial ideology.

A- The Use of Stereotypes and Exoticism

One of the major stereotypes used in Fromentin's narrative to depict Algerians involves superstition, which he defines in terms of an excessive belief in spirituality and the supernatural. Descriptions of local religious beliefs and creeds illustrate his perception of the natives as highly superstitious. Fromentin makes assumptions about Arabs and concludes that they reason according to their beliefs rather than to rationality. During a 'hospitality meal' served by a local chief in the Arab bureau at El- Gouëa, he describes how couscous as a main meal is eaten:

> le couscoussou se mange indifféremment, soit à la cuillère soit avec les doigts ; pourtant il est mieux de le rouler de la main droite, d'en faire une boulette et de l'avaler au moyen d'un coup de pouce rapide, à peu près comme on lance une bille. L'usage est de prendre autour du plat, devant soi, d'y faire chacun son trou. Il y a même un précepte Arabe qui recommande de laisse le milieu, car la bénédiction du ciel y descendra. (Fromentin, 20)

The passage hints at Arabs as being superstitious, supposing that even their eating habits are influenced by their faith. According to him, they believe that the main course in the middle of the serving dish should not be eaten and must be left out in order to receive Allah's benediction and grace. The focus here is on the precept, which is, originally, a culturally

constructed eating habit related to Arab table manners. It is indeed true that couscous is eaten starting from the side of the dish; but the middle is not left out, neither for benediction nor for grace, but rather to make sure each of the hosts gets a fair share of the food.

It could be assumed that such a depiction by Fromentin is meant to promote colonial myths about native Algerians, to justify the necessity of the French presence in assisting the indigenous population to eat in a more civilized way. The widespread scholarship on the Orient in the early nineteenth century nurtured the idea of inherent backwardness in non-European peoples. Fromentin subscribed to the idea that Orientals in general and Algerians in particular "require conquest" as well as correction which only the learned Western elite could provide.

Fromentin also refers to Arabs as "primitive" and "savage", strengthening thereby the binary opposition between the oriental who is, in Said's words, "irrational, depraved, childlike, "different"', and the European who is naturally "rational, virtuous, mature, "normal"'. (P40) Fromentin highlights this juxtaposition of the Oriental/European throughout his text, by referring in a negative way to the Arabs and in a positive way to the French. For example, in a description of the French Lieutenant who accompanied him during his stay at el Aghouat, Fromentin asserts: "*C'est une brave et bonne nature que le lieutenant N, un esprit bien fait, clair, exact, rigide, peu sentimental, et au fond très sensible, quoi qu'il en dise ; assujetti volontairement, plus encore que discipliné*, et auprès duquel il est aussi agréable de parler quand il vous écoute, que de se taire quand il veut bien parler.(P114) This depiction portrays the lieutenant as an ideal soldier and exemplary person whose pleasant company entertains and delights the author. On the other hand, he describes his travel companions, who are native nomads, as "*vantards, gourmands, peu délicats*", "*vicieux* et*sournois*" (*boastful, greedy, unscrupulous*), (*vicious* and *deceitful*) whose "caractères composés de *ruse* et de *vanité*" (personalities [are] composed of *trickery* and *vanity*). (Ibid, 58)

Fromentin highlights his apprehension of the Arabs, claiming that "il faut *se défier* de leur bonhomie", considering that "leur docilité n'est que *feinte*". (Fromentin, 58)This binary

opposition emphasizes the superiority of the French/colonizer and the inferiority of the Arabs/colonized.

Like men, Arab women are also the target of Fromentin's descriptions provided in an abject and patronising discourse. In a detailed account of Arab female clothing, the author explains that women who come to draw water from the fountain maintain "des postures de *singes*" (*monkey* postures). Despite the beauty of their figures and the dignity in their walk, they inspire "des airs de *chat sauvage*"(looks of a *wild cat*). The younger women, according to Fromentin, are much more agitated and their unpredictable behaviours resemble "*un oiseau qu'on* veut *apprivoiser*" .(Ibid, 85)

Such attitudes and strategies of denigration and stereotyping were being used by the French elite to present North Africa and Algeria in particular, as an uncivilized space which needed the intervention of the French Empire to bring light and civilization. Undoubtedly, all these stereotypes; superstition, backwardness, laziness, are used to maintain the classic distinction between the East and the West and, in Bhabha's words, to "construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction".(Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 70)

B- Colonial Ideology and Hierarchy

As part of a wider propaganda initiative, Fromentin's labelling of native Algerians as superstitious, primitive, lazy and savage, is intended to serve the colonial enterprise (mainly through his texts, given that the expenses of his last travel to Algeria were covered by the French government) whose supposedly civilizing mission would bring light and civilization to the far and distant Orient. He also takes part in praising the efforts of the French army in Algeria, by mentioning the names of several officers who lost their lives during the siege of El Aghouat in 1852: "le capitaine Bessières, *tué glorieusement* à l'assaut du 4 décembre".

Additionally, Fromentin identifies with the Empire and uses the third person pronoun

'we' and possessive pronoun 'our' to speak on behalf of France: "*notre ennemi*, le sheriff de Ouargla", "la grande tribu des Arba […]est une des plus importantes du sud de *nos possessions*" , "pauvres murailles d'El Aghouat qui sont tombées devant *nos canons.*" Moreover, these attitudes towards the colony and its inhabitants explain, according to Edward Said, why "the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong". (Said, *Orientalism*, 27) It goes without saying that travel writing and military rule played a vital role in the process of expansion by promoting colonization as a noble mission that would bring culture, development and civilization. All these ideals are reflected in the travelogue of Fromentin who manifests his support of the colonial enterprise throughout his writing and adheres to the Western imperialist Agenda.

Conclusion

A critical reading of *Un été dans le Sahara* reveals how Fromentin's travelogue participates in a broader orientalist and colonial discourse that reduces Algerians to fixed images, such as exotic, lazy, primitive, superstitious, savage and culturally homogeneous. The text claims ethnographic curiosity but these representations embody a European gaze which aim to dehumanize the Algerian natives. Focusing on these stereotypes allows us to question the power relations embedded in travel narratives and to understand how literary texts contributed to shaping enduring colonial perceptions of Algerian people and culture.

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III- Isabelle Eberhardt's Representation of Algerian Society in her Travel Narratives

European travel writers operated stereotypical discursive modes of depicting indigenous peoples, and this descriptive and figurative practice led to what is called "othering" in the postcolonial theory. These travel writers put two distinct cultures against each other by reinforcing pejorative associations against the Oriental culture while glorifying the Western one. In other words, the act of "othering" employed in the travel texts shapes a superior cultural and ethnic identity for the European travel writers while reducing the ethnic identity of the indigenous peoples represented in their texts.

European travel writers manifested a colonial wit in justifying colonial expansion in their texts. The depiction of overseas lands as primeval and empty explained the need for these far-off lands to be developed and populated by "civilized populations". Travel writers also permeated propagandist constructions in their literary works due to their subjective biases as well as to the pervasiveness of "othering" in the 19th century, which provided a powerful discourse that legitimized the European occupation of Eastern territories. The 18th-century portrayal of the Orient as an exotic, uncivilized foil of Europe was a crucial manifestation of the discourses that constructed representations of the Occident as civilized and superior. Travel narratives transmitted these stereotypical images to the European populations in the metropolis by depicting foreign cultures with strange and primitive practices and traditions. Hence, they established cultural norms in the context of heterogeneity to create binary oppositions and maintain otherness. In such wise, European travel writing expresses the rhetoric of imperialism and propagates an orientalist discourse purposed to vindicate the overtaking of overseas territories.

The Swiss-born writer Isabelle Eberhardt (1877–1904) spent the last seven years of her life wandering in the Algerian Sahara. She wrote many short stories, sketches of novels, letters,

and articles, but most were published posthumously because she died at 27. Some of her writings include *Au pays des sables* (1914), *Journaliers* (1929), *Dans l'ombre chaude de l'Islam* (1906), *Contes et paysages* (1925), and a collection of short stories titled *Yasmina et autres nouvelles algériennes*. In this lesson, we focus on the representation of Algerian indigenous characters in some of her travel short stories.

Like all Orientalist travel writers, Eberhardt was inescapably subservient to the predetermined Orientalist discourse. Her travel narratives contain traces of colonial and Orientalist discourse since she informed her travelogues with fixed images and standardized representations of indigenous peoples. The detrimental portrayal of the Arab figures is conditioned by political and ideological factors since this stereotyped representation provides the required knowledge to control the Arabs. The resulting dominant discourse aims at maintaining power and control over the Arab region.

In *Le Magicien*, Eberhardt adopts an imperial gaze to portray the male protagonist. Si Abd-es-Sélèm is described as a pious Muslim and a poor man living in a decrepit house. Yet, he is a sorcerer and superstitious, which implies that he is a malicious person who uses sorcery to harm people. As the story unfolds, the writer tells us that he meets a desperate, beautiful Jewish woman who wants to know her future, but he ends up raping her just after doing the Icha prayer. This evil act reveals the hypocrisy of the indigenous man who claims to be a devout Muslim but is, in fact, an evil person, a rapist, a sorcerer, and a misogynist. He is also depicted as a heartless and pitiless person because he is not moved by seeing the woman's dead corpse lying on a deserted beach: "Il regarda le cadavre pendant un instant et (…) du même pas tranquille, il reprit sa promenade" (Eberhardt 2015: 108). His attitude uncovers his atrocity and brutality, which, by means of generalization, encompasses all Arab men. The story demonstrates a distorted Arab reality based on the use of violent, oppressive, misogynistic, hypocritical, and evil personas as a prototype of Arab men. Producing narratives that reduce and stereotype Arabs is an exercise of the authority granted to European writers by colonial powers in order to create a dominant discourse that propagates a particularly pejorative knowledge of Arabs. This reveals the nexus that exists between power and the knowledge produced, as well as between this knowledge and the imperial project. In other words, European academics generate a set of anti-Oriental assumptions that help divide the world into

insiders and outsiders and differentiate between the West and the East. Accordingly, it appears that the representation of Arabs is politicized and is put at the service of the imperial powers' interests.

Like most European travel writers of the 19th century, Eberhardt seeks confirmation of the knowledge she already had about the Orient, and which was transmitted to her via earlier travel texts, since the Orient had always been described as an exotic place, even in ancient times. The misconceptions and misrepresentations of the Orientals held by the Europeans originated centuries ago and have had a persistent impact on the Western mindset. Accordingly, 19th- and 20th-century travel writers attempted only to validate the Orientalist stereotypes fixed and spread in previous books.

In *Le Meddah*, Eberhardt draws another negative portrait of the indigenous man that is not very different from that of the magician. He is described as a vagrant, uneducated, lethargic, and hedonistic, living in prostitution. These descriptions are based on racial stereotypes that distinguish between the Western and the Eastern individual. Said (1977: 287) argues that in Orientalist representations, "the Arab male is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversexed degenerate, clever, devious, involved continuously in intrigue, inherently sadistic and treacherous". Eberhardt's male figures correspond to the profile described by Said. Both the magician and the meddah are depicted as lustful, devious, and amoral. These downgrading descriptions of the Arab characters are systematic and governed by imperial concerns. According to Said, these stereotypical representations serve as a means to homogenize Oriental cultures and peoples, and this homogenization, in turn, defines the Orient as the opposite of the Occident. Hence, the concept of representation as it is used by Western Orientalist writers draws from their cultural, social, and ethical values, and results in Eurocentric and ethnocentric representations which hierarchize the world into a dominant, superior self and a dominated, inferior other.

Eberhardt attempts to show *Le Meddah* as a highly respected figure among the natives, hinting at the Algerian society's moral and intellectual deterioration. This is evident in the contrast she establishes between the Bedouins and him. He starts the story by referring to the indigenous persons as a mass under generalized stereotypical images, such as dirty, messy, disordered, and poor: "La foule, en burnous terreux, s'entasse bruyamment (…). Les Bédouins

ne sontpas installés (…) calent leurs sacs et leurs baluchons en loques (…)" (Eberhardt 2015: 199). However, in the next paragraph, she refers to El Hadj Abdelkader in a rather more positive way: "(…) jeune, grand, robuste, fièrement drapé dans son burnous dont la propreté blanche contraste avec le ton terreux des autres (…)" (ibidem). This description, which comes into contradiction with the negative descriptions concerning the other indigenous characters, is the only positive one of El Hadj Abdelkader.

Eberhardt portrays the meddah as a poor, degenerate person who is illiterate, ignorant, incompetent, and incapable of doing a decent job except moving from one place to another, singing and telling stories in public for a few cents. He is "Illettré (…). Indolent, satisfait de peu, aimant par-dessus tout ses aises" (Eberhardt 2015: 202). In this and many other passages, the author operates a systematic dehumanization of the Arab persona and insists on portraying them as a kind of dangerous sub-humans.

An imperial "othering" persists in Eberhardt's travelogues, which operate as part of the colonial domination in Algeria. "Othering" is a strategy that informs the Western construction of the East in multiple ways, including stereotypical representations of the Orientals. For instance, Eberhardt refers to the indigenous characters as a mass, such as "les bédouins, la foule, les fellahs". They are never distinguished or individualized but are "othered" and put in a homogenized out-group. They are similar to each other in behaviors, practices, degenerate qualities such as laziness, and physical traits like having an earthy complexion:

> Une foule se meut, houleuse, aux groupes sans cesse changeants et d'une teinte uniforme d'un fauve très clair (…). Les Bédouins vont et viennent (…) discutent, rient, se querellent (…)" (ibidem: 201). This homogenization is a dehumanization of Arabs who are "assigned the lowest value. (Fanon 1967: 189).

The biases underpinning Western knowledge about the Arabs are highly projected in European representations of Arab women. The stereotypes characterizing them weaken their position and uphold their Western counterparts. A system of binary oppositions is created between the developed, liberated, civilized European women and the backward, subjugated, savage Arab women, reinforcing in turn the colonial enterprise and legitimating European violent practices against the Arabs. Accordingly, gendered discourse was instrumentalized to represent the Oriental Other in relation to the Occidental Self.

In *Fiancée*, *Le Portrait de l'Ouled-Naïl*, and *La Derouïcha*, Eberhardt portrays women as oppressed, voiceless, submissive, subservient, seductive, and promiscuous. Female characters are considered "female subalterns" who endure the cruelty, the barbarism, and the atrocity of the Oriental men. The image of the oppressed Arab woman in need of saving prevails over colonial literature and shows that gender is instrumentalized to create a discourse that motivates military intervention in the Arab region and legitimate colonial practices, such as the overtaking of territories and the use of violence against the colonized men.

Orientalist writers reflected a prejudicial view of doubly inferior women, being both females and Orientals. Orientalist representations of the indigenous woman consisted of exposing her as seductive and sexually immoral. Indeed, the exoticized Arab woman had always been depicted nude or partially clothed in many European colonial artworks. In short, she was presented as indecent and a source of erotic pleasure. Ania Loomba (1998: 154) argues that "The non-European woman also appears in an intractable version, as 'Amazonian' or deviant femininity (…) provide images of insatiable sexuality and brutality". In this quote, Loomba summarizes the European perception of the Oriental woman as savage, objectified, and sexualized.

The Orientalist discourse consists of gendered stereotypes, including the licentious erotic oriental female. It reflects women as sexually and physically abused and inferior to men since they are considered a sub-group by their community's men, which explains their subservient status. Accordingly, negative images of Oriental women as naïve, ignorant prostitutes and victims of cruel Oriental men are recurrent in Orientalist and European colonial texts. The post-colonial critic Gayatri C. Spivak (1988) summarizes the process of reducing Arab women in Orientalist imagery to better serve imperialist occupation. She argues: "White men save brown women from brown men" (ibidem: 93). Consequently, the European powers had to send their military forces to free native African and Arab women from their oppressive men and patriarchal systems, revealing that gender is deep-rooted in the dominant discourse about the Orient and that it is used as a practice of symbolic politics.

The ideological facet of the gendered Orientalist stereotypes uncovers their aim, which was not to describe and discover the Orientals but to dehumanize and degrade them for the sake of justifying the European presence in the region. Hence, different and multiple artworks

construct a model for the Oriental woman, revealing her exotic beauty and erotic nature, which consorts with the hedonism and the monstrous promiscuity of the Arab men. In her travelogues, Eberhardt confirms the prototype of the Oriental woman constructed by earlier European travel artists such as Flaubert. In the selected short stories, *Fiancée*, *Le Portrait de l'Ouled-Naïl*, and *La Derouïcha*, Eberhardt emphasizes the representation of Oriental women from social, physical, mental, and ideological dimensions. Woven together, these dimensions create a distorted image that highlights the patriarchal structure of Arab society and its oppressive attitudes towards women.

In *Fiancée*, Eberhardt describes Emmbarka as a charming girl who is in a love relationship with Mohammed, an Arab of noble blood. Mohammed was obliged,by his uncle, to move to the south of Oran in order to put an end to his love affair with Emmbarka. Eberhardt describes Emmbarka as a prostitute who sits on the threshold of her house to seduce the men passing by. She embodies the native woman who is abused morally and sexually by the Arab men, and is revealed as having no role in life except being a sexual object at the disposal of men. Emmbarka's representation is a gendered Orientalist one, which degrades her and exposes her exploitation by the patriarchal power structure. These stereotypical representations of the Arab woman are ideological constructs that aim to spread the idea that she is oppressed and is in need of a strong European man to defend and liberate her from the grips of the barbarian Arabs. Khalid (2011: 18) explains that Orientalism depends on frames, such as "civilization versus barbarism", in order to propagate the image of Arab women as powerless sufferers whose emancipation and release depend on the European colonial "civilizing mission". He argues that the Orientalist discourse is organized as a gendering process which constructs an identity for the Oriental woman as helpless, oppressed, and need to be saved from the savage, barbarian Oriental men (ibidem). Orientalism's representation of Arab women as Others, "a male power fantasy" (Said 1977: 116) constitutes a motive for the maintenance of colonialism and fosters the idea of Europe's supremacy.

In *Le Portrait de l'Ouled-Naïl*, Eberhardt redraws the portrait of the Oriental woman as a passive and submissive prostitute exploited by Arab men. Achoura was oppressed by her father and later, her husband, who divorced her very early. Then, she settled in a crumbling shack in the negro-village to prostitute herself. She used to sit on her doorstep, drinking

absinthe and smoking cigarettes while waiting for customers. Eberhardt (2015: 71) says that prostitution was for Achoura and all Arab women a means of emancipation from the domestic confinement imposed by men: "Achoura, comme toutes les filles de sa race, regardait le traffic de son corps comme le seul gage d'affranchissement accessible à la femme". By reading these representations, she implies that patriarchy leads to debauchery since all these women were sequestered and confined in their houses by their fathers or husbands, and their craving for freedom drives them to prostitution. The Orientalist discourse links the Orient to sex and patriarchy to prostitution and introduces women in eroticized terms.

Prostitution is naturalized in the setting of these stories and is presented as an unpunished public phenomenon. Achoura is portrayed as a metonym for sexual otherness and is described as a shameless, degenerate woman who humiliates herself by becoming a prostitute. There is an insistence on depicting Arab women as sex symbols and erotic creatures, and hence morally debased. By contrasting them with European women, the latter appear superior. Binarism and contrast, Said (1977: 1–2) explains, help the West identify itself through time: "The Orient has helped define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience". This Said's perspective exposes the colonial mindset of the West, which defines itself as moralistic and lofty, with the required capacities to impose its civilization on Eastern backward creatures. Achoura fell in love with Si Mohammed el Arbi, a young man of noble ancestry and the son of an Agha. She was submissive to him, but he was violent with her because of his jealousy of all the men she received while he was away.

Their relationship lasted until Mohammed was called for an opulent leading in the south. Achoura was let down by the Arab man, who was finally not different from her clients who paid money for a night with her. This relationship exposes the dominating status that men have over women in patriarchal societies, wherein females are put in a subaltern position and are considered sexual objects. The gendered stereotypes defining Achoura confirm the model of the Oriental woman who is subservient to men and sexually and morally exploited by the patriarchal authority.

Le Portrait de l'Ouled-Naïl exposes the inevitable connection between Orientalist discourse and the objectification and sexualization of Oriental women. Eberhardt seems to be perpetuating a discourse that is ingrained in the Western fantasies about the Orient

demonstrated in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, where the Arab woman is considered as a sexual object put at the service of men. Likewise, the writer's female figures replicate the same traditional role assigned to females in the Arab world, according to Orientalists. The use of these gendered stereotypes produces a discourse that validates prototypes of Arab women as oppressed, physically and sexually exploited, and in need of protection by Europeans.

The European discourse concerning Arabs depends chiefly on the idea of protecting Oriental women from Oriental men. Eberhardt's narratives rely on representing Arabs as oppressive, violent, and brutal towards women. Mirriam Cooke (2002: 468) explains that the idea of rescuing Muslim women depends on "the negative stereotyping of the religion as inherently misogynist provides ammunition for the attack on the uncivilized brown men" (quoted after Alghamdi 2020: 108).

Through her stories, Eberhardt challenges Said's conception that Orientalist discourse is essentially male. She shows that between male and female Orientalism, there exists no difference as to the representation of Oriental women since both lead to omitting their agency and free will to act in appropriate ways conforming to their society's conservative standards. Arab women are depicted as nude, prostitutes who look for their freedom from their patriarchal society by prostituting themselves. Portraying Arab women as half-dressed prostitutes is, as Yeğenoğlu suggested, an attempt to unveil Muslim women. Indeed, the veil comes in contradiction with the idea of the powerless Arab woman because it challenges the colonial power by turning away the scrutiny of the Western male observers, and hence hinders their domination.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that travel writing about colonial Algeria functions not merely as a record of movement and observation, but as a powerful site where colonial ideologies are constructed and negotiated. Through *Un été dans le Sahara*, Eugène Fromentin exemplifies a nineteenth-century orientalist gaze that aestheticizes the landscape and frames Algeria through cultural distance, even as it reveals moments of unease within the colonial encounter. In contrast, Isabelle Eberhardt's travel short stories disrupt dominant colonial narratives by privileging immersion, marginality, and identification with indigenous life while at the same time providing a stereotypical representation of indigenous people. Read together, these case

studies highlight the heterogeneity of travel writing in colonial Algeria, demonstrating how the genre can reinforce imperial discourse and revealing how western conceptions about the indigenous peoples are shaped in travel narratives and constructed as discourse.

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Formative Evaluation

A- Short Answer Questions:

Q1: How does Fromentin portray the Algerian landscape in *Un été dans le Sahara?* Mention two key features.

Q2: Identify one example of orientalist discourse in Fromentin's narrative?

Q3: How does Eberhardt challenge or complicate colonial representation of Algeria?

Model Answers:

Q1: Fromentin presents the Algerian landscape as vast, exotic, and aesthetically striking. He emphasizes the desert's beauty, silence, and immensity, often using painterly descriptions that transform the land into a visual spectacle rather than a lived space for its inhabitants.

Q2: An Orientalist tendency in Fromentin's writing appears in his depiction of Algerians as passive, superstitious, often contrasted with European modernity. Such representations reduce complex social realities to fixed cultural images.

Q3: Eberhardt describes Algerians from within their indigenous society as she lived with them, married an Algerian man. She portrays indigenous life as dynamic and meaningful because she reveals an understanding of their traditions and culture. However, Fromentin writes about indigenous culture as barbarian because he writes from an an outsider's perspective. However, both of them are Orientalist and were influenced by previous Orientalist writers and reproduced an Orientalist discourse that reduced the indigenous population.

B- Analytical Questions:

Q1: Analyze the construction of the Self and the Other in both writers. How do Eberhardt's and Fromentin's narratives reinforce binary oppositions?

Q2: Compare the representation of the Algerian desert in Fromentin and Eberhardt. How does landscape function as a symbolic space reflecting colonial authority in Fromentin and spiritual or existential belonging in Eberhardt?

Model Answers:

Q1: In Fromentin, the European traveler is the observing Self, while Algerians are the silent Other, reinforcing colonial hierarchies. Eberhardt blurs this boundary by adopting local customs, living among Algerians, and combining insider and outsider perspectives. Her hybrid identity challenges fixed colonial binaries and shows Self and Other as fluid rather than rigid.

Q2: Fromentin depicts the Algerian desert as vast, silent and striking, emphasizing the beauty of the landscape over social reality. This distance turns the land into a colonial spectacle, empty of historical or political presence. Eberhardt, by contrast, immerses herself in the desert, showing it as a lived, inhabited space that fosters belonging and spiritual experience. Fromentin's landscape reinforces colonial authority; Eberhardt destabilizes it through intimacy and participation.

Chapter Five: Travelogues in the Modern and Post-Modern Periods

General Objective

To enable students understand and critically analyze the key characteristics, themes, and ideological concerns of travel writing in these periods, by examining how these texts reflect changing attitudes toward travel, identity, authority, and representation.

Specific Learning Objectives

- **Define** modern and post-war modern travelogues and situate them within the historical context of World War II and its aftermath.
- **Identify** post-war features: disillusionment, reflexivity, ideological awareness, fragmentation
- **Analyze** representations of self/other shaped by war, empire, and decolonization
- **Evaluate** the shift from imperial confidence to skepticism and moral uncertainty in post-war travel narratives
- **Interpret** selected travel texts using appropriate critical concepts such as modernity, ideology, identity and power

Introduction

Travel writing has always been influenced by historical, social, political, ideological, and technological factors. In the post-war years, it acquired different characteristics which differentiated it from previous travel writings. In the twentieth century, travel writing appeared in a postcolonial, globalized and self-reflexive context. It reacted against the assumptions of the colonial travel narratives. Modern and post-war travelogues moved beyond the descriptive and exoticizing travel narratives of earlier periods.

I- Key Characteristics of Travel Writing in the Modern and Postmodern Periods

1. Modern Travel Writing (late 19th–mid 20th century)

Modern travel writing reflects the intellectual climate of modernity, shaped by imperialism, war, and emerging self-consciousness. Its main characteristics:

- **Self-reflexive narrator:** The traveller becomes aware of their own subjectivity and limitations (e.g. Conrad, Orwell).
- **Psychological depth:** Emphasis on inner experience, alienation, doubt, and moral conflict.
- **Questioning of imperial authority:** Colonial ideologies are exposed, critiqued, or shown as unstable.
- **Blurring of genres:** Travel writing overlaps with autobiography, memoir, reportage, and fiction.
- **Political and historical awareness:** Travel accounts are embedded in specific political contexts (colonialism, war, revolution).
- **Disenchantment with exploration:** Travel is no longer heroic discovery but a site of anxiety, ethical tension, or failure.
- **Ethnographic interest with distance:** Cultures are observed analytically, often through comparison and irony.

2. Postmodern Travel Writing (late 20th century–present)

Postmodern travel writing emerges in a globalized, media-saturated world and challenges the very idea of objective travel narratives. Its main characteristics:

- **Fragmentation and non-linearity:** Discontinuous narratives, digressions, and collage-like structures.
- **Instability of truth:** Skepticism toward factual authority; memory and perception are foregrounded.
- **Metafiction and irony:** The text reflects on its own construction and the impossibility of "authentic" representation.
- **Hybrid identities:** The traveller often occupies in-between positions (exile, diaspora, postcolonial subject).
- **Critique of Orientalism and colonial discourse:** Conscious dismantling of stereotypes and travel myths.

- **Intertextuality:** Engagement with earlier travel texts, rewriting or parodying canonical narratives.
- **Everyday and anti-heroic travel:** Focus on ordinary spaces, failed journeys, or immobility.
- **Globalization and mobility:** Attention to tourism, migration, borders, and transnational flows.

3. Key Shift from Modern to Postmodern

Modern	**Postmodern**
*Moral questioning	* Epistemological uncertainty
*Self-aware observer	*Decentered, unstable subject
*Historical critique	*Discursive and textual critique
*Political realism	* Irony, play, and fragmentation

To sum up, modern travel writing questions empire and authority while still seeking meaning. Postmodern travel writing questions meaning itself, exposing travel as a textual and ideological construction.

II- A Critical Reading of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938):

A- Historical Context of *Homage to Catalonia*

The novel was published in 1938, before WWII, it is based on Orwell's experience fighting in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Europe was marked by the rise of fascism, communism, and political polarization, journalism, propaganda and ideological narratives dominate public discourse. Although it is a war memoir, *Homage to Catalonia* fits within modern travel writing because it is structured around movement (England, Barcelona, the front), it records encounters with foreign landscapes, cultures and political systems, it also emphasizes first-hand observation and lived experience, it reflects on difference, misunderstanding and cultural shock. Thus, travel is not leisurely but ideological in nature and dangerous as it is shaped by war.

B- A Critical Reading of *Homage to Catalonia* in the Light of Modern Travel Literature

Read as a modern travelogue, *Homage to Catalonia* reflects the formal and ideological shifts that characterize twentieth-century travel writing: subjectivity, political engagement, skepticism towrad authority and demystification of place.

1- Subjective Witness and the Modern Travel Voice

Modern travel writing rejects the illusion of objectivity, and privileges personal testimony instead. Orwell foregrounds his presence as an involved traveler rather than a detached observer. He says: «I had come to Spain with some notion of writing newspaper articles, but I had joined the militia almost immediately.» (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, Chapter 1). His involvement in the Spanish civil war shifted him from a journalist observing the events to a combatant participating in the war by joining the anti-Stalinist POUM militia, fought on the Aragon front, was shot in the neck, and witnessed the internal purges and propaganda among leftist factions. These experiences deeply shaped his anti-totalitarian views which fueled his novel *Homage to Catalonia.*

Carl Thompson argues that modern travel writers present the traveler as a «fallible and situated observer rather than a reliable authority» (Travel Writing, 2011). Orwell's narrative voice exemplifies this shift: his Spain is explicitly his experience of Spain, not a totalizing representation. The travelogue becomes experiential and provisional, aligning with modernist narrative practices.

2- Travel as Political Commitment

In modern travelogues, travel often functions as a form of political commentary. Orwell's journey to Spain becomes a confrontation with ideology. He says: «Every word of that world-Comrade, Equality- was a reproach to me.» (Chapter I)

Raymond Williams describes Orwell as a writer for whom «lived experience is inseparable from political judgment» (*Culture and Society*, 1958). Spain, in this sense, is not merely a setting but a political experiment that reshapes Orwell's Consciousness. He arrived politically naive, especially about the role the Communists were playing in Spain, and with little political consciousness. This quickly changed and he discovered that the truth in the Spanish civil war in the Spanish press and the press outside of Spain was distorted and repressed to serve the politics of the provincial Catalan government, the central republican

government in Madrid, and governments outside of Spain. So when he discovered the distortion or repression of the truth in the press, Orwell was determined to present the truth based on the authenticity of his own experiences. His travel memoir is an expression of political commitment by telling the truth of the war to people. (from the Rhetoric of disillusionment)

Travel is transformed into an ideological immersion, a defining feature of modern travel writing.

3- Demystification and Anti-Romantic Realism

A major characteristic of modern travelogues is the exposure of myths, particularly those produced by nationalism or imperialism. However, Orwell refuses heroic representations of war. *Homage to Catalonia* acts as anti-romantic realism by stripping away war's glorious facade, exposing its chaotic, muddy, and politically treacherous reality, showing the betrayal of revolutionary ideals through factional fighting (especially Stalinist purges of POUM), and highlighting the disillusionment with both grand causes and propagandistic narratives, presenting a raw, honest, personal experience of war's grime and political betrayal rather than heroic myth. Orwell confronts the 'pernicious feeling' that war is glorious, contrasting it with the brutal realities of battle, illness, and political backstabbing, making it a powerful critique of war's glorification.

Paul Fussell, in *Abroad* (1980), identifies modern travel writing as deeply shaped by war, producing irony, disenchantment, and realism. Orwell's mundane descriptions of trench life dismantle romantic narratives of conflict and adventure. His rejection of heroism shatters the myth of glorious warfare, describing hunger, fear, wounded soldiers and confusion. His focus on the mundane and the brutal describes the physical reality of war: the delapidated trenches, the poor equipment and the constant hardship, contrasting it with idealized notions of revolutionary struggle.

The book's core is the betrayal of revolution by the Communists Party's internal power struggles highlighting therefore the political disillusionment. Orwell also criticized propaganda and exposes how war propaganda (especially by the Communists) twisted the truth, creating a false narrative that obscured the messy realities and internal conflicts. In essence, Orwell replaces the romantic vision of heroic struggle with the anti-heroic, often confusing, and

deeply personal account of how ideals crumble under the weight of political reality and the harshness of war.

4- Fragmented Space and Episodic Movement

Unlike classical travel narratives structured around linear journeys, *Homage to Catalonia,* moves erratically between locations. Zygmunt Bauman's notion of 'liquid modernity' helps illuminate this instability: modern space is fractured, temporary, and uncertain. Orwell's Spain is experienced as discontinuous and precarious, reflecting both war and modernity. Geography mirrors political chaos. In *Homage to Catalonia,* Orwell uses fragmented space and episodic movement to reflect the chaotic, disjointed nature of the Spanish Civil War and his own evolving disillusionment.

He portrays space as physically fragmented and ideologically divided, moving between isolated pockets of reality that often contradict one another. Space is also fragmented by social shifts. Upon his returning to Barcelona, Orwell notes the sudden reappearance of class divisions (servile language, rich/poor distinctions) that had vanished in the revolutionary atmosphere he first encountered.

Movement in the narrative is rarely linear or purposeful; instead, it is characterized by episodic jumps driven by external force, such as erratic shifting wherein he is shown moving frequently between hospitals in Siétamo, Barbastro, and Monzon, often for bureaucratic reasons like getting discharge papers stamped. This mirrors the inefficiency and confusion of the war effort. The narrative structure mirrors the episodic movement, shifting from vivid first-hand combat descriptions (like being shot through the throat) to dense political appendices. This fragmentation highlights the gap between personal experience and the official historical reality often masked by the press.

By focusing on these disconnected spaces and movements, Orwell conveys the «accidental nature» of his perspective and the 'horrible atmosphere' of a war defined by internal betrayal and confusion than by clear front lines.

5- Emphasis on the Ordinary: Social and Cultural Observation

Modern travelogues often focus on everyday practices rather than exotic spectacles and landscapes. Mary Louise Pratt describes this observational mode as 'contact zone writing', where cultures meet under conditions of asymmetrical power (*Imperial Eyes*, 1992). He

recounts mundane details, like the quality of food, the discomfort of trench life, the drabness of uniforms, and the boisterous welcome parades with revolutionary songs. Orwell's descriptions foreground social relations, language, and class rather than picturesque difference. Spain is represented as lived space, not an exotic 'other'.

6- Self-Reflexivity and Narrative Honesty

Orwell repeatedly questions his own understanding of events. He says: 'I do not pretend to understand the complicated political situation.' (Chapter XI). Modern travel writing embraces **partial truths** rather than authoritative accounts (James, Clifford, *Routes*, 1997). Orwell's admission of uncertainty situates him firmly within this modern epistemology.

7- Exposure of Power, Surveillance, and Ideological Betrayal

The modern travelogue often reveals travel as a dangerous encounter with systems of power. **Edward Said**'s critique of political narratives reminds us that texts construct reality through ideology (*Culture and Imperialism,* 1993) Orwell exposes how revolutionary language becomes a tool of repression, turning the traveled space into a site of fear.

Conclusion

Homage to Catalonia exemplifies the modern travelogue by transforming travel into **ethical witnessing**, **political engagement** and **narrative self-questioning**. Orwell's text emerges not as a record of movement across space but as a journey through the fractured realities of modern history, leading to his awareness of political issues and ideological systems of thought. Spain becomes a testing ground for truth, ideology, and the limits of representation itself.

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III- V.S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* (1964)

A- Historical Context of *An Area of Darkness* (1964)

Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* was written and published in the early postcolonial period, a time marked by political independence, cultural disillusionment, and intense debates about national identity in formerly colonized societies.

India had gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947, less than two decades before Naipaul's visit in the early 1960s. Although independence promised renewal and self-determination, the reality was complex as the country was still grappling with poverty, social inequality, caste divisions, and bureaucratic inertia. The trauma of partition (1947) which divided India and Pakistan had left social and psychological scars. As a result, many institutions continued to function under colonial administrative structures, creating a sense of stagnation rather than transformation. Naipaul encounters an India struggling to redefine itself, caught between **colonial legacy and postcolonial aspiration**.

B- A Critical Reading of *An Area of Darkness* in the Light of Post-Modern Travel Literature

V.S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* (1964) occupies a transitional position between modern and postmodern travel writing. While formally resembling the modern travelogue, structured around observation, encounter and reflective commentary, the text anticipates postmodern concerns through its fragmented subjectivity, self-reflexive narrator, and deep scepticism about cultural knowledge, belonging and representation. Read through the lens of

postmodern travel writing, *An Area of Darkness* emerges less as a record of India than as a narrative of epistemological failure and existential dislocation.

1-Crisis of the Travelling Subject

One of the defining features of postmodern travel writing is the **decentering of the authoritative traveller.** Unlike colonial or early modern travelogues, which assert epistemic mastery over foreign spaces, Naipaul's narrator repeatedly foregrounds his **alienation and uncertainty.** Though of Indian descent, Naipaul arrives in India as a stranger, occupying a liminal position between insider and outsider: 'I was not an Indian in the way that the Indians I saw around me were Indians.' (Naipaul, 1964). This fractured identity aligns with what Debbie Lisle describes as postmodern travel writing's 'crisis of authority,' where the traveller no longer speaks from a position of cultural confidence (Lisle, 2006). Naipaul's narrative voice is marked by hesitation, frustration, and self-contradiction, undermining the traditional travel writer's claim to coherent understanding.

2- Fragmentation and Narrative Discontinuity

Postmodern travel texts often reject linear, progressive narratives of discovery. *An Area of Darkness* is **structurally fragmented, moving episodically between places, memories, reflections, and emotional responses.** India is not presented as a unified space but as a series of disjointed encounters that resist synthesis. Naipaul does not offer a totalizing account of India; instead he records moments of confusion, revulsion, and fleeting insight. The travel narrative becomes an **anti-journey**, marked by stasis rather than transformation.

3- Self-Reflexivity and the Limits of Representation

A central concern of postmodern travel writing is **the problem of representation itself.** Naipaul frequently draws attention, implicitly and explicitly, to the inadequacy of language and perception. His descriptions of poverty, filth, and social inertia are not framed as objective truths but as deeply personal reactions shaped by his psychological state: 'India has not worked its magic on me. It remained the land of my childhood fantasies, and I remained excluded from it.' (Naipaul, 1964) This reflexive awareness aligns with Carl Thompson's observation that postmodern travel writers often expose 'the textuality of travel itself' rather than masking it behind claims of realism (Thompson, 2011). Naipaul's India is as much a construction of memory, expectation, and disappointment as it is a physical place.

4- Irony, Ambivalence, and Emotional Discomfort

Unlike colonial travel writing, which often relies on confidence and moral certainty, Naipaul's tone is marked by **irony without consolation, emotional discomfort** rather than aesthetic pleasure and a refusal to sentimentalize poverty or tradition. Postmodern travel writing often replaces empathy with **unease,** forcing readers to confront their own interpretive habits. Naipaul does not offer a redemptive narrative of cultural understanding; instead, he produces a text that **withholds closure.**

5- Travel as Anti-Discovery

In colonial and even modern travel narratives, travel produces knowledge. In *An Area of Darkness,* travel produces c**onfusion, disillusionment and psychological exhaustion**. India is not discovered but **repeatedly misunderstood,** reinforcing a postmodern notion of travel as **anti-epistemological,** a journey that destabilizes rather than confirms knowledge. This contrasts sharply with imperial travelogues (travel as domination) and modernist travelogues like Orwell's Ho*mage to Catalonia* (Travel as political awakening). Naipaul's journey leads not to clarity but to **narrative impasse.**

6- Postcolonial-Postmodern Tension

While postmodern in form and affect, the text remains deeply conflicted. Naipual critiques postcolonial India's failures, but often without sufficient historical contextualization. His pessimism risks aligning with Western narratives of postcolonial incapacity. Thus, *An Area of Darkness* occupies an **uneasy space between postmodern self-doubt and neo-colonial judgment,** a tension that has fueled much of the critical debate around Naipaul.

7- Ethical Ambiguity and Postcolonial Tension

While postmodern travel writing often challenges imperial certainty, Naipaul's text remains ethically controversial. His harsh portrayals of Indian society; passivity, disorder, and decay, have been criticized for reproducing orientalist stereotypes. However, from a postmodern perspective, these representations can also be read as **unsettled and unstable,** lacking the confidence of colonial discourse.

Naipaul does not celebrate Western superiority; instead, he expresses **disillusionment** with both India and the Postcolonial promise. This ambiguity complicates the moral

positioning of the text, situating it with what Graham Huggan terms the '**postcolonial exotic**,' where critique and complicity coexist uneasily.

Conclusion

Read in the light of postmodern travel writing, *An Area* o*f Darkness* emerges as a **text of failure, fracture, and self-interrogation.** It dismantles the authority of the travel writer, refuses narrative closure, and foregrounds the **instability of cultural representation**. Yet, its critical power is inseparable from its ethical discomfort, making it a crucial precursor to postmodern and postcolonial travel narratives.

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Formative Evaluation

A- Short Answer Questions:

Q1: How does *Homage to Catalonia* reflect modern travel writing's emphasis on first-hand experience and eyewitness testimony?

Q2: In what ways does Orwell privilege truth, factuality, and political commitment, key values of modernist travel writing?

Q3: In what ways does *An Area of Darkness* expose the limitations and biases of the traveler?

Q4: How does Naipaul's use of irony and ambiguity align with postmodern travel writing?

Model Answers:

Q1:

Homage to Catalonia is grounded in Orwell's direct participation in the Spanish Civil War, which allows him to present himself as an eyewitness rather than a detached observer. His narrative emphasizes lived experience; life in the trenches, daily routines, and personal encounters, to authenticate his account. This reliance on personal observation reflects modern travel writing's commitment to experiential truth and the belief that reality can be accessed through direct engagement with place and events.

Q2:

Orwell foregrounds factual accuracy by distinguishing between what he personally witnessed and what he learned from secondary sources. He openly critiques propaganda and ideological distortion, insisting on the moral duty of the writer to tell the truth. This commitment to honesty and political responsibility aligns with modern travel writing's belief in objective truth and the writer's role as a socially engaged witness.

Q3:

In *An Area of Darkness,* Naipaul exposes the traveler's limitations by emphasizing subjectivity, bias and emotional alienation. His position as a diasporic returnee prevents full understanding and challenges the idea of objective observation. Cultural misunderstandings and persistent disillusionment reveal that travel writing offers only partial and fragmented representations, reflecting a powtmodern awareness of the limits of the traveler's authority.

Q4:

Naipaul's use of irony and ambiguity in *An Area of Darkness* aligns with postmodern travel writing by undermining narrative authority and stable meaning. Irony allows him to distance himself from both the place he describes and his role as a traveler, exposing contradictions in his expectations and perceptions. Ambiguity prevents definitive judgments, leaving cultural encounters unresolved and fragmented. Together, these strategies challenge the possibility of objective representation and reflect postmodern travel writing's emphasis on uncertainty, self-reflexivity, and the limits of knowledge.

B- Analytical Questions:

Q1: Discuss how changing historical contexts (interwar Europe vs. Postcolonial India) shape the form and concerns of each travelogue.

Q2: To what extent do these works redefine the boundaries of travel writing in the Twentieth century?

Model Answers:

Q1:

Orwell's text emerges from the interwar crisis in Europe, where ideological conflict demanded political commitment and moral clarity. This context shapes a coherent, truth-driven narrative focused on witnessing and resistance. By contrast, Naipaul writes in a postcolonial context marked by disillusionment and fractured identities, resulting in a more introspective, skeptical, and fragmented travel narrative that reflects postmodern uncertainty.

Q2:

Both texts significantly redefine travel writing by moving beyond descriptive accounts of place. Orwell transforms the genre into a vehicle for political testimony and ethical engagement, while Naipaul turns it into a space for self-reflexive inquiry and cultural critique. Together, they illustrate the evolution of travel writing from modern commitments to truth and meaning toward postmodern questioning of representation, identity, and authority.

Chapter Six: Travel Writing and the Intersection of Gender, Race and Imperialism

General Objective

It is to enable students to critically analyze how travel writing constructs, represents, and negotiates gender identities and power relations, and to understand how gender shapes both the traveler's perspective and the depiction of places, cultures and people.

Specific Learning Objectives: by the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- **Situate** gendered representations in travel writing within their historical, social, and imperial contexts
- **Examine** the relationship between gender, power and knowledge production in travel narratives
- **Evaluate** how gender intersects with race, class, empire, and nationality in the construction of Self and Other
- **Apply** feminist, postcolonial, and discourse analysis frameworks to the reading of travel texts.

Introduction

Travel writing has long been more than a record of journeys; it is a cultural practice shaped by power, identity, and historical context. This lesson explores how travel narratives intersect with gender, race, and imperialism, revealing the ways travelers have represented themselves and others. By examining who travels, who is described, and how places and peoples are portrayed, students will see how travel writing has often reinforced imperial hierarchies, racial stereotypes, and gendered assumptions, while in some cases also challenging and subverting them. The lesson invites a critical reading of travel texts as sites where authority, difference, and resistance are negotiated.

I- The Relationship between Travel Writing and Gender

The relationship between travel writing and gender is both historical and discursive; gender shapes who travels, how travel is narrated, what is seen, and how places and people are represented. Travel writing is therefore not a neutral genre; it is deeply inflected by gendered power relations. Here are some important points to know about travel writing and gender:

1. Gender and Access to Travel

Historically, travel was unequally accessible. Men were socially authorized to travel for exploration, empire, science, war, or commerce. Women's travel was often restricted, requiring justification (education, religion, health, accompanying male relatives). As a result, early travel writing is male-dominated, and women's travel accounts were marginalized or framed as exceptional.

2. Gendered Voices and Narrative Authority

Gender influences narrative stance and authority. For example, male travel writers often adopt a tone of mastery, objectivity, and control over space. However, female travel writers have traditionally been expected to be modest, personal, or domestic in their observations. Women's travel writing often negotiates legitimacy by emphasizing eyewitness credibility, moral purpose, or emotional and relational perspectives.

3. Representation of Gendered Others

Travel writing frequently constructs gendered images of the "Other":

* Colonized societies are feminized (passive, mysterious, eroticized).

*Indigenous women are often depicted as symbols of cultural difference or moral judgment.

*This reflects what postcolonial critics identify as the intersection of gender, race, and imperial power.

4. Travel Writing as a Site of Gender Ideology

Travel narratives both reinforce and challenge gender norms:

*Traditional travelogues may reproduce patriarchal and colonial ideologies.

*Women and feminist travel writers often subvert these norms by rewriting mobility as emancipation, questioning masculine heroism, foregrounding embodied and situated experience.

5. Modern and Contemporary Revisions

In modern and postmodern travel writing:

*Gender becomes a critical lens rather than a background condition.

*Writers question fixed identities, stable viewpoints, and authoritative narration.

*Travel writing increasingly intersects with feminist theory, queer studies, and postcolonial critique.

6. Critical Perspectives

Key scholars argue that:

* Travel writing is a gendered discourse, not just a record of movement (Mary Louise Pratt).

* Women's travel writing exposes the limits of imperial masculinity (Sara Mills).

* Gender shapes spatial experience and narrative form (Deborah Nord).

The relationship between gender and travel writing lies in how mobility, voice, power, and representation are gendered. Travel writing becomes a space where gender identities are performed, negotiated, and contested, making it a crucial genre for understanding cultural and ideological formations.

II- The Intersection of Gender, Race and Imperialism

Gender, race, and imperialism intersect in ways that mutually reinforce systems of power rather than operating as separate categories. Within imperial contexts, gender is racialized and race is gendered: colonial discourse often constructs European masculinity as rational, authoritative, and fit to rule, while feminizing colonized lands and peoples as passive, sensual, or childlike and thus in need of domination. At the same time, colonized women are doubly othered and racialized as inferior and gendered as oppressed, frequently mobilized in imperial narratives as symbols of cultural backwardness that justify colonial intervention. European women, meanwhile, occupy an ambivalent position: they may be subordinated within patriarchy, yet they often benefit from and participate in imperial privilege. Gender therefore functions as a crucial technology of empire, shaping how racial hierarchies are imagined, narrated, and naturalized, while imperial power structures redefine gender roles themselves both in the metropolis and the colony.

III- Critical Reading: Gender Discourse in Isabella Bird's *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879)

A- Historical Context of the Text

A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains was published in 1879, during the late Victorian period, a time marked by imperial expansion, scientific exploration, and rigid gender norms. Travel writing was a popular genre, but it was dominated by male explorers; women travelers were often expected to write domestically oriented, morally restrained accounts. Isabella Bird (1831–1904) traveled to the American West in 1873, shortly after the U.S. Civil War, when the

region was still perceived as a frontier. unsettled, dangerous, and masculine. The Rocky Mountains were associated with Westward expansion and Manifest Destiny Encounters with Native Americans, rugged landscapes tied to national identity

Bird's work reflects Victorian interests in:

Geography and natural history, Ethnography (though filtered through colonial perspectives), the negotiation of femininity outside domestic space and most importantly, it challenges Victorian gender expectations by traveling alone, riding horses, climbing mountains, and interacting freely with men; activities considered improper for women at that time.

B- Summary of the Text

The book is an epistolary travel narrative, originally written as letters to her sister Henrietta. Isabella Bird recounts her journey through Colorado and the Rocky Mountains, including places such as Estes Park, Longs Peak, and frontier settlements. She describes dramatic mountain landscapes, harsh weather conditions, wildlife and natural scenery, and isolated frontier life. A central figure in the narrative is "Rocky Mountain Jim" (James Nugent), a mountain guide whose rugged masculinity contrasts with Bird's refined Victorian identity since she presents herself as physically resilient despite illness, adventurous and independent as well as intellectually curious and observant.

The narrative blends personal experience, travel reportage, romanticized frontier imagery, reflections on freedom, health, and selfhood. The text is a landmark in women's travel writing because it disrupts the idea of travel as a male domain. Bird simultaneously resists gender constraints through action and reinforces some Victorian and colonial assumptions in her descriptions of Indigenous people and frontier society.

C- Critical Reading of the Text in the Light of Gender Discourse

Isabella Bird's *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* is a canonical yet critically rich example of nineteenth-century women's travel writing. It occupies a complex position within Victorian travel writing, simultaneously conforming to and subtly contesting dominant gender ideologies of the nineteenth century. Written in the form of letters addressed to her sister, the narrative deploys a feminine, domestic epistolary mode while documenting experiences traditionally reserved for male explorers, such as dangerous journeys, physical endurance, and

encounters with the colonial frontier. Through this tension, Bird's text reveals travel writing as a crucial site for the negotiation of gender identity.

1. Travel and the Transgression of Gender Norms

Victorian ideology largely confined women to the private sphere, associating travel, exploration, and adventure with masculinity. Bird's journey through the Rocky Mountains directly challenges this norm. She rides alone for long distances, survives harsh weather, and navigates unfamiliar landscapes without male protection. These acts destabilize the gendered division between domestic femininity and public mobility.

However, Bird often mitigates this transgression through rhetorical strategies of modesty and self-effacement. She repeatedly frames her journey as accidental or medically necessary, presenting travel as a response to ill health rather than ambition. This strategy allows her to inhabit a masculine-coded space while remaining legible as a "proper" Victorian woman, revealing how gender discourse constrains even transgressive female travel.

2. The Feminine Voice and Narrative Authority

Bird's use of the epistolary form is central to her gendered authorship. Letters were conventionally associated with women's private writing, emotional expression, and intimacy. By adopting this form, Bird aligns herself with acceptable feminine literary practices. Yet the content of the letters—topographical description, ethnographic observation, and political commentary—asserts intellectual authority traditionally reserved for male travel writers.

This tension exposes a paradox of women's travel writing: authority is gained not by rejecting femininity but by strategically performing it. Bird's narrative suggests that gender discourse in travel writing operates not only through exclusion but through negotiated visibility.

3. Gender, Empire, and Colonial Perspective

Although Bird challenges gender norms, she rarely challenges imperial ideology. Her representations of Native Americans and frontier settlers often reproduce colonial hierarchies. Gender emancipation, in this context, coexists with racial and imperial othering. Bird's freedom of movement is enabled by empire, even as her gender restricts her narrative posture.

This contradiction has been central to feminist postcolonial readings of women's travel writing. As critics such as Mary Louise Pratt argue, women travel writers often occupy an ambivalent position: **marginal within patriarchal structures yet complicit in imperial discourse** (Like

Eberhardt). Bird's text exemplifies this duality, revealing how gendered marginality does not automatically produce anti-imperial critique.

4. The Female Body as a Site of Discourse

Bird's frequent references to her body; fatigue, illness, fear, and physical endurance, contrast with the stoic, disembodied tone of many male travel narratives. The female body becomes a textual site where vulnerability and strength coexist. This embodied perspective introduces an alternative epistemology of travel based on sensation and affect rather than conquest and mastery.

Yet the body also functions as a disciplinary mechanism: Bird must constantly justify her presence in dangerous spaces by emphasizing suffering or fragility. **Gender discourse thus shapes not only what is narrated but how experience is legitimized.**

Conclusion

A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains reveals travel writing as a deeply gendered genre in which women writers negotiate authority through compromise, performance, and strategic self-representation. Bird's narrative **challenges Victorian gender norms by asserting female mobility and experiential knowledge,** while simultaneously **reinforcing imperial hierarchies and feminine decorum**. The text demonstrates that women's travel writing is not simply oppositional but dialogic; engaging with, revising, and sometimes reproducing dominant gender discourses. Ultimately, Bird's work illustrates how **gender in travel writing** functions not as a fixed category but as a **dynamic discourse shaped by social constraint, narrative form, and historical context.**

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Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992. (Foundational for understanding women travel writers' ambivalent position within imperial discourse, crucial for analyzing Bird's complicity and marginality)

Mills, Sara. *Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism.* London: Routledge, 1991. (essential feminist reading of how womeen negotiate authority, modesty, and gender norms in colonial travel narratives)

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IV- A Critical Reading of Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897)

A- Historical Context of the Text:

Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* took place in the late nineteenth century (1893–1895), during the height of European imperial expansion and the "Scramble for Africa." Britain and other European powers were consolidating colonial control over West and Central Africa through trade, missionary activity, and military force. Victorian discourse often framed Africa as a space of savagery requiring European "civilization," and travel writing played a key role in legitimizing imperial authority.

Kingsley travelled independently, without official backing from the British government, missionary societies, or scientific institutions; an unusual position for a woman in the Victorian period. Her journeys occurred against a backdrop of intense missionary influence, particularly Protestant missions that sought to suppress African religious practices, and commercial exploitation, especially along the West African coast. Kingsley was critical of both missionary intervention and colonial administration, which distinguished her from many contemporary travel writers.

B- Summary of her *Travels*

Mary Kingsley undertook two major journeys to West Africa, visiting regions including Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, Cameroon, and Gabon. She travelled extensively along rivers and into forested interiors, often using local transport and relying on African guides and traders. Her primary interests were ethnography and natural history, particularly the study of African religious systems, social customs, and fish species. She collected specimens for the British Museum and recorded detailed observations of indigenous cultures. These experiences were later published in *Travels in West Africa* (1897).

In her travelogue, Kingsley challenges common imperial stereotypes by portraying African societies as complex, rational, and governed by coherent belief systems. While she upheld certain imperial assumptions and racial hierarchies typical of her time, she forcefully criticized European arrogance, missionary intolerance, and the disruption of African societies

by colonial rule. Her work occupies an ambivalent position—both participating in and questioning imperial discourse.

C- Critical Reading: Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897)

Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* occupies a paradoxical position within late nineteenth-century imperial travel writing. As a woman traveler operating within a male-dominated genre, Kingsley both challenges gender norms and reproduces imperial and racial hierarchies, making her text a fertile site for examining the intersection of gender, race, and imperialism.

1- Gender and Authorial Self-Fashioning

Kingsley constructs her narrative authority through a careful negotiation of femininity. On the one hand, she repeatedly downplays feminist ambition, presenting herself as an accidental traveler driven by scientific curiosity rather than political intent. This self-effacing posture allows her to gain legitimacy within a patriarchal intellectual culture that viewed women's travel as suspect or trivial. On the other hand, her solo journeys through regions considered dangerous for Europeans, and especially for women, implicitly challenge Victorian gender ideology. Kingsley's physical endurance, ethnographic observation, and resistance to missionary paternalism position her as an **unconventional female imperial subject** who claims access to knowledge traditionally reserved for men.

Yet, this gendered marginality does not place Kingsley outside imperial discourse. Instead, it enables a **gendered form of imperial authority**, whereby her status as a woman allows her to present herself as more sympathetic, observational, and "authentic" than male colonial administrators or missionaries.

2- Race and Ethnographic Representation

Kingsley's representations of African societies are complex and contradictory. She often criticizes missionaries and colonial officials for misunderstanding African customs and imposing European values, especially Christianity. In this respect, she appears unusually relativistic for her time, defending indigenous belief systems and social structures against moral absolutism.

However, this apparent cultural sympathy does not dismantle racial hierarchy. Kingsley consistently frames African people as objects of study rather than as historical agents. Her

ethnographic gaze, though less overtly violent than that of some contemporaries, remains embedded in scientific racism, evolutionary thinking, and imperial epistemology. African cultures are valued insofar as they are stable, traditional, and resistant to modernity; an attitude that ultimately supports imperial control by freezing colonized peoples in a timeless ethnographic present.

3- Imperialism and Anti-Missionary Critique

One of the most striking aspects of *Travels in West Africa* is Kingsley's critique of missionary activity. She argues that missionaries disrupt indigenous social systems and produce disorder rather than moral improvement. However, this critique should not be mistaken for anti-imperialism. Kingsley opposes humanitarian imperialism but supports commercial and administrative empire, particularly trade-based colonialism, which she views as more pragmatic and less morally intrusive. Thus, Kingsley's narrative exemplifies what critics describe as "**imperial dissent from within**": a challenge to certain imperial practices that ultimately reinforces the broader colonial project. Her gendered outsider status allows her to critique empire while simultaneously legitimizing it through claims of superior understanding.

4- Intersectional Tensions

At the intersection of gender, race, and imperialism, Kingsley's travelogue reveals the limits of subversion within imperial discourse. While she **destabilizes the masculine norms** of exploration and resists missionary paternalism, **she does not question the fundamental asymmetry of power between Europe and Africa**. Her authority as a woman traveler is constructed through racial difference: her freedom, mobility, and epistemic privilege depend on the subordination of colonized peoples. Consequently, *Travels in West Africa* illustrates how women's travel writing can function as both a **site of resistance to gender norms and a vehicle for racialized imperial knowledge**. Kingsley's text complicates any simplistic opposition between female authorship and imperial ideology, demonstrating instead how **gender difference can be mobilized in the service of empire.**

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that women's travel writing operates at the intersection of gender, race, and imperialism, as illustrated by Isabella Bird's *A Lady's Life in the Rocky*

Mountains and Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*. Both writers challenge the male dominance of the travel genre by asserting female authority through mobility, observation, and authorship, yet their narratives remain embedded in imperial and racial discourses.

Kingsley critiques aspects of colonial administration and missionary activity, but her ethnographic gaze and evolutionary assumptions ultimately align her work with imperial knowledge systems. Similarly, Bird's celebration of female independence and frontier mobility disrupts Victorian gender norms while simultaneously reproducing racial hierarchies that legitimize settler colonial expansion in the American West.

Together, these case studies reveal the ambivalence of women's travel writing: gender enables moments of resistance, but rarely escapes complicity with imperial power. Reading these texts through an intersectional lens highlights how women's travel narratives both contest and sustain the ideological structures of race and empire that shape the genre.

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Formative Evaluation

A- Short Answer/ Comprehension Questions:

Q1: How do Isabella Bird and May Kingsley position themselves as female travelers in male-dominated spaces?

Q2: In what ways do Bird's and Kingsley's travel narratives reflect contemporary European attitudes toward the peoples and landscapes they encounter?

Q3: How do Bird and Kingsley depict Indigenous peoples, and what assumptions or biases are evident?

Q4: How does the context of empire shape the journeys and observations of Bird and Kingsley?

Model Answers:

Q1:

Both Bird and Kingsley assert their presence in spaces typically reserved for men by emphasizing courage, independence, and resilience. Bird frequently highlights the physical challenges of traveling through the Rocky Mountains, presenting herself as both capable and adventurous, while still mindful of her femininity. Kingsley positions herself as an intelligent and observant traveler, able to navigate West African environments and societies that male explorers often overlooked or misrepresented. Both authors negotiate societal expectations of women, using their gender as a lens that gives them a unique observational authority while subtly challenging patriarchal constraints.

Q2:

Both texts reveal a Eurocentric perspective common in the late 19th century. Bird often romanticizes the American West as wild and untamed, reflecting Victorian ideals of nature and adventure, while her descriptions sometimes exoticize Native Americans. Kingsley, similarly, depicts African societies with a mix of curiosity and paternalism, highlighting differences in culture and practices, but often framing them through a lens of European notions of "civilization." Both authors demonstrate how travel writing could reinforce imperialist ideologies by emphasizing otherness, even when the author expresses admiration or respect.

Q3:

Bird often portrays Native Americans as noble yet primitive, emphasizing customs and appearances in a way that reflects Victorian fascination with "the frontier." Kingsley provides detailed ethnographic observations of West African communities, but her writing sometimes frames cultural practices as exotic or unusual, reflecting European assumptions of racial hierarchy and progress. Despite these biases, Kingsley shows a greater willingness than many

male contemporaries to engage with and respect local knowledge, particularly in understanding medicine and local customs.

Q4:

Both authors write during periods of expanding imperial influence, which shapes their access and perspective. Bird benefits from the relative security of a colonial-settler context in North America, allowing her to travel widely. Kingsley's work is directly linked to British colonial interests, as her explorations provide insights into regions considered politically and economically significant. The imperial context frames their travel as both adventurous and authoritative, giving them opportunities and social legitimacy while simultaneously influencing how they interpret and represent local populations.

B- Analytical/ Discussion Questions

Q1: Discuss how both authors use their travel experiences to challenge or reinforce imperialist ideologies.

Q2: How do race and cultural difference function in their texts? Do the authors exoticize, sympathize with, or critique the communities they describe?

Q3: To what extent can Bird and Kingsley be seen as subverting gender norms of their time through travel writing?

Model Answers:

Q1:

Bird largely reinforces imperialist ideals by presenting the American West as a land to be explored, mapped, and admired from a Euro-American perspective. However, her admiration for local landscapes and peoples occasionally humanizes those often dismissed in colonial narratives. Kingsley challenges imperialist assumptions more directly by critiquing European misconceptions about African societies, particularly regarding health, trade, and morality. Nevertheless, she still writes from a colonial vantage point, which subtly reinforces British authority and the notion of European oversight.

Q2:

Race and cultural difference are central to both authors' narratives. Bird exoticizes Native Americans, presenting them as picturesque and emblematic of a vanishing frontier

culture. Kingsley balances exoticization with sympathy, portraying African communities with respect for their social organization, medical knowledge, and adaptability. Both authors, however, interpret cultural difference through European norms, which can limit the depth of critique and subtly uphold racial hierarchies, even when they express admiration.

Q3:

Both authors challenge Victorian gender norms by undertaking physically and intellectually demanding journeys typically reserved for men. Bird's mountaineering and solitary expeditions showcase women as adventurous and capable, while Kingsley's solo travels in West Africa demonstrate independence, courage, and intellectual authority. Their writing asserts that women could observe, analyze, and participate in exploration, thereby expanding the possibilities for female authorship and agency within a male-dominated literary and social sphere.

General Conclusion

This course has approached travel writing not merely as a descriptive literary genre but as a complex cultural discourse deeply embedded in the histories of Orientalism, colonialism, race, gender, and power. From its early canonical forms to its modern and post-war reconfigurations, travel writing emerges as a hybrid mode of narration in which aesthetic strategies, such as realism, adventure, confession, autobiography, and ethnographic observation, intersect with ideological frameworks that shape how spaces, peoples, and encounters are represented.

The selected case studies reveal how travel narratives participate in the production, negotiation, or contestation of imperial knowledge. Texts such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* exemplify the foundational role of travel writing in constructing colonial subjectivities and racial hierarchies, even when, as in Conrad's case, imperialism is subjected to moral ambiguity and critique.

The course devotes a specific importance to travel narratives about colonial Algeria, focusing on its main characteristics, its discourse and its integration within the French colonial discourse they construct. Fromentin's *Un été dans le Sahara* illustrates the orientalist gaze at work in nineteenth-century French travel writing, where aesthetic admiration coexists with epistemic distance and cultural hierarchy. Isabelle Eberhardt's short stories complicate colonial discourse from within, offering a marginal and gendered perspective to the dominant representations of North Africa.

The course deals with travel writing during the modern and postmodern periods, highlighting the changes that travel writing as a genre has undergone especially due to major historical events such as interwar Europe and the two world wars. The consequences felt during these major periods influenced travelers who became more reflexive, politically aware and their texts reflected the modern and postmodern consciousnesses, such as the trauma of war, disillusionment, and questioning imperial authority. Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*, reflect a decisive shift in the genre. They show that travel becomes a means of political witnessing, self-interrogation, and ethical unease rather than

imperial mastery. Orwell transforms the travelogue into a form of engaged testimony, while Naipaul exposes the fractured identities and postcolonial disillusionment that haunt the aftermath of empire. These texts mark a transition from the confident certainties of colonial travel to narratives characterized by fragmentation, reflexivity, disillusionment and ideological discomfort.

The course has also foregrounded the importance of gender in reshaping travel writing's conventions as well as its intersection with race and imperialism. The works of Mary Kingsley and Isabella Bird demonstrate how women travelers negotiated authority, credibility, and mobility within male-dominated imperial frameworks, simultaneously reproducing and challenging racial and colonial assumptions. Their narratives expose the tensions between empirical observation, personal experience, and imperial ideology, highlighting how gender inflects the production of travel knowledge.

Taken together, the works studied in this course demonstrate that travel writing is never a neutral account of movement or place. It is a historically situated discourse that reflects and shapes relations of power, racial imagination, and cultural difference. By reading travel writing critically; across periods, languages, and positionalities, the course has shown how the genre functions both as an instrument of empire and as a space of critique, negotiation, and resistance. Ultimately, travel writing offers a privileged lens through which to examine the literary construction of the world and the evolving ethics of representing the Other.

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Summative Evaluation

Test and Examination Templates

First-Semester Test

Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou
Department of English
Master 1: General and Comparative Literature
Student's full name: …….

First Semester Test in Travel Writing

Question 1: What are the types of travel writing? Give a definition to each one.

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Question 2: Give three sub-genres of travel writing with definitions.

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Question 3: Write a short, coherent essay to discuss the representation of Oriental characters and culture in one of the travel narratives that you dealt with in class.

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Good luck

First-Semester Exam

Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou
Department of English
Master 1: General and Comparative Literature
Student's full name: …….

First-Semester Exam in Travel Writing

Part I: Short Answer Questions
Answer the following questions in no more than eight lines:

Question 1: How did French colonial ideology shape representations of Algeria in 19th century travel narratives?

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Question 2: What historical factors contributed to the transformation of travel writing in the

modern and post-modern periods?

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Part II: Essay Questions

Write a 25 lines coherent essay to deal with one of the following questions:

Question One: Discuss how travel writing changes from a literature of empire to a literature of doubt, self-reflexivity and political consciousness in the modern and post-war years.

Question Two: To what extent can colonial travel writing on Africa be read as both a literary genre and a political discourse. Illustrate with examples of one or two travel narratives you dealt with in class.

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Good luck

Resit Semester Exam

Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou
Department of English
Master 1: General and Comparative Literature
Student's full name: …….

Resit Semester Exam in Travel Writing

Part I: Short Answer Questions

Answer the following questions in no more than seven lines:

Question 1: How does gender shape the colonial travel narrative?

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Question 2: How did travel narrative contribute to the production of colonial knowledge?

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Part II: Essay Questions

Write a 20 lines coherent essay to deal with one of the following questions:

Question One: Compare a modern travel narrative with a colonial travel text. What changes occurred in the authority of the traveler and the representation of the Other?

Question Two: Using Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, critically assess a colonial travel narrative about Algeria or any African country relying on the travel texts dealt with in the classroom.

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Good Luck