

新学识·英语语言与文学研究博士文丛

性别·种族·空间：
伊迪斯·华顿游记作品研究

吴兰香 ◎ 著

Gender, Race and Space: A Cultural Study of Edith Wharton's Travel Writing



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写在前面

毫无疑问,英语是一门全球语言。

在全球化给世界带来巨大影响的同时,英语作为一门语言,已然成为了全球化传播和影响的有力工具之一,成为了东西方文化交流与对话的纽带。在东西方的文化认同之路上,抑或是文化冲突之路上,英语不可或缺。

学,乃效法。识,乃辨别。在英语语言与文学研究领域,不断有新的知识需要探索,需要“学”与“识”。

新学识·英语语言与文学研究博士文丛,意在为大家呈现出近年来江苏高校教师在英语语言学与文学研究方面的最新成果,为此收录了一批具有代表性的博士论文,内容涵盖了语言学、语言教学、文学、文化以及翻译等领域,以兹为从事英语语言与文学研究的学者、教师以及学生提供参考。

*Oh, if only some magic cloak were mine,
A cloak to waft me into unknown lands!
I'd not exchange it for the costliest robes—
No, not for the crown and mantle of a king!*

(Faust, I, "Outside the City Gate")



ABSTRACT

The emerging critical attention to travel writing studies is coincident with the rise of postcolonial theory. Since the publication of Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*, scholars have enthusiastically looked into the relationship between travel writing and empire building. Yet, there has not been sufficient academic attention to women's travel writing. Compared with male travelers, Western women travelers are in a more subtle position. They are culturally "observed" and "othered" at home, but when they step abroad, they become observers and direct their "othering" gaze at an alien culture. As a result, their travel writing presents more complexity and uncertainty.

The American novelist Edith Wharton (1862—1937) was the author of six travel books on Italy, France and Morocco. Her travel writing not only reflects the way in which she interprets and represents landscapes but also reveals how she defines herself against a cultural Other. Embedded in her travel texts is the cultural ambivalence and strong tension between the powerful transgressive impulse

and irresistible pull of convention.

There are three chapters in this book. Chapter One starts with Wharton's sense of belatedness as a travel writer and illustrates how she uses her individual talent to tackle "the anxiety of influence", and then moves on to elucidate how she challenges the established tourist norm, and simultaneously conforms to social restraints. Chapter Two takes the Self/Other relationship as the central focus to expound on Wharton's attitudes towards foreign landscapes; which is characterized by a mixed feeling of attraction and repulsion, penetration and submission, arrogance and fear. Chapter Three centers around the issue of gender to examine Wharton's concepts of womanhood, the way in which she constructs her travel texts and the narrative strategy she adopts for her travel writing.

Shaped by her engagement with genre, race and gender, Wharton's travel narrative is marked by conflicts, fissures and ambivalence. As a travel writer, Wharton desires to construct her travel texts with a unique expression; as an American traveler, she approaches foreign landscapes in an impressive way; and as a woman travel writer, she strives to break the imposed constraints for liberated space of her own. But her travel discourse also manifestly reveals her conformity with the predominant ideology. Similar to an average traveler who departs from the homeland, ventures into the outside world and finally returns to the domestic territory, Wharton has displayed in her travel writing a complicated mentality characterized by dramatizations of running and returning.



中文摘要

赛义德的《东方主义》出版之后,游记与帝国的关系越来越成为学术界探讨的热门话题。但批评界对女性游记作品关注不多。相比之下,西方女性的处境更为微妙。虽然她们在自己的国度是文化他者和被观察者,但一旦踏出国门便成了观察者,将自己的“他者”目光指向异域文化。因此,她们的游记作品常常更复杂,更矛盾。

伊迪斯·华顿是 19 世纪末 20 世纪初的美国女作家,著有关于意大利、法国和摩洛哥的游记共六部。这些游记作品不仅反映出她如何看待、再现异域景物,更揭示了她如何在文化他者的衬托下定义自我的过程,其文本充分展现了华顿在强烈的逾越冲动与难以抗拒的传统力量之间经受的张力,蕴含着相当的文化复杂性。

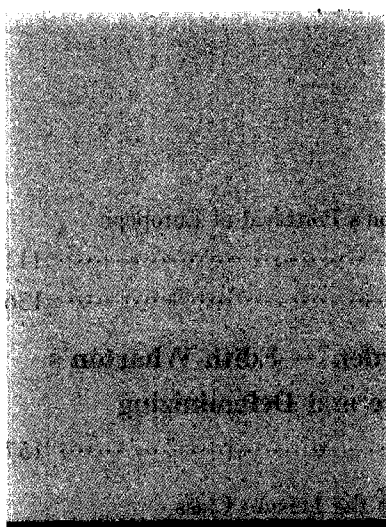
本书在结构上分为三部分。第一章从“影响的焦虑”谈起,论述华顿在难以出新的游记领域另辟空间时既反抗又妥协的做法;第二章以自我和他者的关系为切入点分析了华顿在描述异域景物方面显露出的既靠拢又排斥,既侵入又谦服,既高傲又恐惧的复杂心态;第三章围绕性别来检视华顿的女性观及其建构游记文本的方法,并从人称指代方面考察其女性叙述策略。

在文学传统、种族、性别等因素作用下,华顿的游记显示出很多冲突、断裂、矛盾之处。作为游记作家,她渴望使用新的话语构建文本;作为美国人,她以特有的方式看待异域景物;作为女性,她奋力挣脱强加在自己头上的诸多束缚,在男权社会中争取自己的自由空间。然而如前所述,她又在游记中显示出对原有价值观的眷恋,对主导社会意识形态的妥协。就像一个离开家乡到外界闯荡最后又回到故土的普通游客一样,华顿在游记中显露出一种意欲逃脱却又一再回归的复杂心态。



ABBREVIATIONS

ABG	=	<i>A Backward Glance</i>
CC	=	<i>The Custom of the Country</i>
CS	=	<i>Edith Wharton: Collected Stories 1891 - 1910</i>
FF	=	<i>Fighting France: From Dunkerque to Belfort</i>
FWM	=	<i>French Ways and their Meanings</i>
IB	=	<i>Italian Backgrounds</i>
IM	=	<i>In Morocco</i>
IVG	=	<i>Italian Villas and their Gardens</i>
L	=	<i>The Letters of Edith Wharton</i>
MF	=	<i>A Motor-Flight Through France</i>



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Introduction

Travel writing has long been relegated as a sub-genre in the literary history. The rise of poststructuralist critique and increasing attention to post-colonial theory in the 1970s helped to lift it out of inferior position. While volumes of books have been published in this field, there is a significant portion devoted to the study of women travelers. Edith Wharton (1862—1937) is mainly known as a novelist. But her travel writing is also an important constituent of her position as a major intellectual force at the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, a careful examination of her travel books will offer new assessments to Wharton as a great writer and provide a glimpse of the aesthetic, social and racial formulations of other American women travelers.

Before a detailed analysis is made of Wharton's travel books, a couple of questions have to be answered. The first concerns the generic development of travel writing. To put it simply, how is travel writing generally viewed and accepted? What are the characteristic features of this particular type of writing? The second is related to the focus of the present study. The corresponding questions would be: Why is

Wharton's travel writing chosen as the research objective? Out of what kind of cultural context does her travel discourse emerge? And what are the general characteristics of American women's travel writing in her age? To answer these questions, the following introductory part aims to sketch a basic framework of travel writing studies and Wharton criticism to pave the way for further discussions.

The Resurgence of Interest in Travel Writing Studies

Travel writing^① has a long origin. Ever since the beginning of oral and written literature, it has contributed its significant share to the treasure of world literary history. Of the early classics that have recorded human adventurous experience, Homer's *Odyssey* could be found on the top of the list. Equally noteworthy would be Marco Polo's travel accounts about Asia, and Christopher Columbus' journals about the New World.^② Human beings travel for various reasons. Perhaps, "it is the nature of man, of all nations, to be restless, to wander" (qtd. in Adams 70). Whatever the motivation is, a certain driving force has sent man onto the road of exploring the unknown for centuries, and the traveling records, either in the form of a tale, or a travelogue, have produced unflinching effect upon readers.

Though travel writing is "as old as fiction itself" (Hulme and Young 2), and as important as fiction itself, there has long been an absence of critical attention to it. Looking up the word in the dictionary, one scarcely

① Different terms have been used to address the large body of traveling records. Travel writing, travel literature, travel narrative, travel books etc. are most commonly found ones.

② Whether in the form of fiction or nonfiction, these books about travel have undoubtedly produced pervasive influences in the Western culture. Walter James Miller, in his introduction to *The Odyssey*, reiterates Homer's importance as "the fountainhead of Western civilization" (Miller xviii), and cites Ezra Pound and James Joyce as two examples to show how Homeric themes have shaped the Western literature. Similarly, Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus' travel accounts have left a significant mark on the Western history.

finds a satisfying and detailed definition.^① As a genre,^② travel writing seems to have long been pushed to the shadow of creative writing, and to be dismissed as a sub-genre in comparison with novels and poetry.

In *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* published in 1979, J. A. Cuddon defines travel writing as “[a] neglected and much varied genre of great antiquity to which many famous, more or less professional or ‘full-time’ writers have contributed, but which has also been enriched by a number of occasional writers. For the most part these have been diplomats, scholars, missionaries, soldiers of fortune, doctors, explorers, and sailors. The genre subsumes works of exploration and adventures as well as guides and accounts of sojourns in foreign lands and includes various works” (715). This definition has some points there. First and foremost, it tells the insufficient study of travel writing before 1979, as the word “neglected” has made it clear; secondly, it points out that this branch of literature, which is varied, old, and much neglected, could be a great treasure awaiting exploration; thirdly, writers, professional or amateur, have tried their hands on it simply because travel writing is supposed to be less demanding

①For instance, there is no definition of “travel writing” in *The Oxford English Dictionary*. What is given is a brief description of “travelogue”—“An (illustrated) lecture about places and experiences encountered in the course of travel; hence a film, broadcast, book etc. about travel; a travel documentary.” See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, Vol. XVIII, eds., J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 446. Neither can a definition be found in the dictionary of literary terms, for example, M. H. Abrams’s *A Glossary of Literary Terms*.

②Some critics are reluctant to treat travel writing as a genre. Jan Borm argues that travel writing “is not a genre, but a collective term for a variety of texts both predominantly fictional and non-fictional whose main theme is travel.” See *Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology, Perspectives on Travel Writing* (Studies in European Cultural Transition), eds., Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004) 13. But there are critics who consider travel writing as a genre in its own right. See Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women’s Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 1-2; Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, “Introduction,” *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 1. This book insists on the generic nature of travel writing and takes the non-fictional form as the focus of analysis.

than creative writing. This easy accessibility partly explains why this genre has not won serious critical attention. No wonder travel books characteristic of loose structure are regarded as "literary carpetbags in which travelers pack all that they need for their travels and all that they collect along the way, to be unpacked and preserved in a potpourri of forms" (Schriber, *Writing Home* 58). With all sorts of material put in the big carpetbag, travel writing has been taken as a container of facts, reports, impressions, or even gossips. It seems that for inexperienced writers, nothing could be easier than writing a travel account.^①

Neglected for years, travel writing has gradually gained critical attention in the past several decades.^② Noticing the generic development enriched by interdisciplinary criticism, Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs were excited by the revival of travel writing studies:

Travel has recently emerged as a key theme for the humanities and social sciences, and the amount of scholarly work on travel writing has reached unprecedented levels. The academic disciplines of literature, history, geography, and anthropology have all overcome their previous reluctance to take travel writing seriously and have begun to produce a body of interdisciplinary criticism which will allow

①Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad* presents an ironic scenario where American passengers are enthusiastically engaged in the practice of travel writing. For these pilgrims to Europe, travel writing is simply an act of scribbling down foreign impression. On the ship there is a young man named Jack who treats travel writing as a simple matter of insertion. He even thinks of copying the whole guidebook into his travel diary. See Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or The New Pilgrims' Progress* (New York: Airmont Publishing Company, Inc. 1967) 28-29.

②Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is usually taken as the initiative work on the study of travel writing. Following his pattern, scholars "have begun to scrutinize relationships of culture and power found in the settings, encounters, and representations of travel texts." See Peter Hulme & Tim Youngs, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, 1. Mary Louise Pratt, Peter Hulme, Homi Bhabha have made considerable contribution to this field.

the full historical complexity of the genre to be appreciated. (1)

The revival came with the advent of poststructuralist critique. Since Jacques Derrida and others “undertook to ‘decenter’ or ‘undermine’ or ‘subvert’ traditional claims for the existence of self-evident foundations that guarantee the validity of knowledge and truth, and establish the possibility of determinate communication” (Abrams 238), the long accepted binary divide between creative writing and non-creative writing has been questioned. When the strict dividing line between what is central and what is marginal in the literary canon slackened, and when creative writing was no longer fetishized as “something essentially separate from and superior to writing of other kinds” (Porter 19), travel writing began to emerge out of restrained inferiority. Aside from the theoretical support, political situations throughout the world in the past decades have also contributed to the resurgence of interest in travel writing. Mary Baine Campbell reads the interest in travel writing through a political spectrum and views it as “part of the necessary reimagining of the world first occasioned by the post-World War Two resistance movements and wars of literature in the former European colonies, as well as by the waves of immigration that followed...” (261). As critics have agreed, travel writing about non-European world has shaped European imperialists’ vision of the world, and some racist travel accounts have justified the colonialist expansion. ① With the surging of national liberation movement, people of the former colonies need to examine their own images as portrayed in Westerners’ writing and find out how these writings have been

①The way travel writers observe, interpret and describe a foreign or “exotic” place often betray their particular positionality in the complicated national and racial issues. Therefore, travel writing—the genre which has long been regarded as neutral, ahistorical, and apolitical is now seen as heavily embedded within colonial and postcolonial discourse.