

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE GAZE OF THE TRAVELER AND THE GAZE OF THE TRAVELEE**

One's destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things.  
(Henry Miller, *Big Sur* 25)

Traveling is an activity where the traveler/writer moves through a selected region, giving information and commentaries about the place, its people and culture that he/she visits. The traveler tends to be an adventurer or a connoisseur of art, landscape, or strange customs who may also be a writer of merit. The traveler produces his/her experiences and observations accumulated during the travel in the form non-fictional prose narratives known as 'travel writings'. It depends largely on the wit, powers of observation, and character of the traveler for a decent reception of the travel narrative amongst the masses, for the reader sees the 'other' in the words of the travel writers. Travelogues or travel narratives go beyond plain cataloguing of occurrences and dates. In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Roy Bridges talks of the importance of the genre thus:

Travel writing . . . has a complex relationship with the situations in which it arose. It is taken to mean a discourse designed to describe and interpret for its readers a geographical area together with its natural attributes and its human society and culture...embrace approaches ranging from an exposition of the results of scientific exploration claiming to be objective and value-free to the frankly subjective description. (*Cambridge Companion* 53)

However, the documentation of travel in the form of literary texts had been a less explored area until lately when travel and the study of cultures have gained importance in the academic or literary circles. Traveling and writing about it could help in an enhanced and healthy understanding of humanity. Travel narratives help in responding to many doubts or queries that one may have about her/his fellow beings across cultural boundaries. In the words of Homi K. Bhabha, "When did we become a people? When did we stop being one? Are we in the process of becoming one? What does this big question have to do with our intimate relationships with each other and with others?" (*Nation and Narration* 7). Traveling and travel narratives thus, help bring distant people and places close.

In this regard, the role of the narrator is of utmost importance in understanding a travel narrative, because the interpreted land or people are classified and conserved in the narrative of the writer. Hence, travel writing is a conscious activity that requires a lot of effort on the part of the traveler. The narrator can preserve or sap out the

qualities of the society depending on the power and manner of representation in his/her narrative. The accounts of the narrator/writer can be an act of resourcefulness or obliteration of the particular society that he/she looks at.

Here it is important to know that traveling has been considered and looked upon as a male prerogative from the very beginning. Traveling and narrating one's experiences has largely remained a male activity. Billie Melman claims that traveling is purely a male endeavor and says that, "This is a distinctly masculine bond and indeed the travel epic purports to be a masculine genre" (*Cambridge Companion*, 117). However, as it is seen in the history of travel writing, a whole lot of enterprising women like Lady Mary Wortly Montagu (1689-1762), Frances Trollope (1779-1863), Mary Shelley (1797-1851), Mrs. Nancy Prince (1799-?), Mary Kingsley (1862-1900), etc. have donned the garb of a traveler and charted various places and people of the globe. Disagreeing with Melman's opinion, Susan Bassnett says:

Alongside the myths of the heroic explorer, however, are other kinds of narrative, some of which have been produced by women. The travel text as ethnography or social commentary transcends gender boundaries and increasingly in the twentieth century, male and female travelers have written self-reflexive texts that defy easy categorization as autobiography, memoir, or travel account. (*Cambridge Companion* 232)

Nevertheless, irrespective of the gender of the traveler, travel writing is an area of interest to the readers as the narratives are loaded with personal metaphors or descriptions of the traveler/writer about the people and places encountered and visited. The narratives reveal a lot about what the traveler sees as well as about the traveler himself/herself. However, questions remain to be answered about how one writer sees or perceives another culture; what might be that interests him/her about that 'other' culture; what might be of less or more interest to the writer. Edward Said's remarks in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) could guide one in this inquiry on travel narratives and the cultural encounter/s discussed therein:

It is more rewarding-and more difficult-to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about 'us'. But this means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how 'our' culture or country is

number one. For the intellectual there is quite enough of value to do without that. (336)

The above comment throws light on the fact that travel writing is a difficult task while being an interesting genre of study. It becomes a challenging task for any writer, considering the personal biases she/he could have while ‘narrating’ about a foreign place, to produce a credible piece of narrative. At the same time, it also becomes quite exigent on the part of the reader to decipher the gaze of a traveler at her/his viewing places/culture for an appropriate understanding on the former’s part. Finding meaning out of the writer’s experiences has a significant role in the assessment of travel narratives and cultural encounter/s.

In this regard, travel writers, while documenting the ‘other’ during the cultural encounters, build on the framework of two important elements, the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’. In the process of defining oneself or representing one’s identity, the easiest way to differentiate a community from another is to use the terms ‘self’ and ‘other’, where the ‘self’ is the ‘subject’ and ‘other’ is the ‘object’. It has been understood that the subject position is a hegemonic central force that locates and registers the peripheral locations. For a long time, the ‘imperial’ or colonial travelers have represented this central hegemonic force, which has been, in turn accommodative of the theory of the ‘male gaze’. Thus, the colonial-male-white traveler has been the producer of the ‘ways of seeing’; as we see in the words of E. Ann Kaplan, “The imperial gaze reflects the assumption that the white western subject is central much as the male gaze assumes the centrality of the male subject” (*Looking for the Other* 78). The present study is an effort delineated towards the recognition and analysis of the peripheral locations and its ‘ways of seeing’ as is manifest in the travel writings of various African American travel writers.

If “travel and the construction of American identity are intimately linked” (Benedixen and Hamera 1), then African American identity is all the more fulcrumed around travel in the form of the forced travel ‘to’ the new world and the voluntary flights ‘out’ of that world. African American travel writing textualizes a protagonist whose mobility constitutes a denial to be fixed. As it is seen, African American travel and its textual illustration coalesce to create a space in which identity can be affirmed or reaffirmed, discovered, or renegotiated. Traveling and thereby writing about it led the ‘black’ entity to traverse the gap between the white world and the ‘black’

confinement. In *A long Way*, Colleen J. McElroy exclaims, “It was the first road where I learned how to push against the ‘black’/white limits of anyone’s map” (21). Asserting a similar opinion, Tim Youngs, in *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, says, “Writing has served for African Americans as not merely an expression of identity but constitutive of it” (78). As such, African American travel writing constitutes a challenge not only to geographical confinement, but also to racial and social stratification and textual restrictions appropriated on them.

The history of African Americans and their travel writing rests on two broad tropes of travel: “the forced journey into slavery, signified by the middle passage; and the willed flight to freedom” (Youngs 72). The tales of dehumanization in the captivity arose in the ‘black’ and/or New World cultural discourses, which however, remained widely oral for long. However, as Smith asserts in “African American Travel Literature”, the displaced slaves, in due course, learned the “master’s tongue” (197) and gave their stories to the world in the written/published form. The writing generated a socio-politically motivated quintessence and reflected a collective desire, and thus, “African American travelers inaugurated an eclectic genre of domestic and transnational travel writing which was often socio-politically motivated on behalf of the collective for racial uplift rather than for mere individualized” (Smith 197). Working on a different ground, the slave narrative, thus, generated its own sub-genre of travel writing.

In this regard, delineating the genre of African-American travel writing and sketching its quintessential features is more complex than it may seem. Olaudah Equiano’s first person testimony of his life and times and his eye witness accounts of Europe in its institutionalizing the brutal system of slavery in *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, a Slave, Written by Himself* (1789) is invaluable in defining the genre of African American travel writing. In this credible eyewitness account of a slave and then freedman, “the rhetorical devices defining embodies discourse...reappear continually in travel accounts emerging throughout the African diaspora” (Smith 198). Equiano can be seen as setting the pattern for an emancipatory form of travel writing using images and devices which set into motion an archetypal pattern in slave narratives/African American travel writing. Of these, the symbol of the “slave ship” (Smith 198) cuts across almost the entire African American literary world, and most importantly African American travel writing. For almost every African transported to

the New World during the ill repute ‘middle-passage’, the slave ship stands for a “hole” or a “dark hole”, “hopeless and unending” (Smith 198).

However, the ship which serves as a ‘prison’ for the ‘black’ body during the ‘middle passage’, acts as a means for escape and provides an altogether different symbol in the later emancipatory travel writing, thereby setting, perhaps, the biggest example of chiasmus in African American literary world. In this regard, Pettinger suggests, “Travel writing is a particularly fertile ground for chiasmus...especially in its classic two-clause form, chiasmus sets the items being contrasted alongside each other in a way that forces the reader to pause and determine their relative weight or significance” (“Kinship” 323).

The idea of ‘escape’ also gives rise to the figure of the “trickster” (Smith 199) in association with the ‘black’ body trying to make a flight. Characters like Equiano, Nat Turner (*Confession*) try to escape many a times out of the slave world, and in this, the ship acts as the major/final turnout or recourse, while modes of escape such a wagons, coaches, boats, or trains serve as the emblematic ‘hole’ for the concealment of the runaway slaves.

Apart from outlining such marked chronic features, the African American travel writing also platforms that:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (DuBois, *Souls* 615)

The African American, thus, travels while struggling with a many-sided conception of self, a “double consciousness”. Thus, the subsistence of these two states—the African American at ‘home’ and ‘abroad’—has to do with more than the mere evaluation of ‘home’ and ‘away’ that all travelers make. There is an ever presence of a “two-ness, -

an American, a Negro; two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (DuBois, *Souls* 694). Traveling has always been experienced as “enabling, and the condition of being masked, which often accompanies double consciousness” (Youngs 80). Richard Wright poses the perfect example of carrying a ‘double-consciousness’ to his travels. In *Pagan Spain* (1957), he writes, “I was not long in learning to detect, under a thousand varied masks, the all-pervading, substitute, and symbolic nature of most Spanish reactions” (81). Despite knowing Spanish or having stayed there for a long time, he claims to possess an insight denied to “less astute or more experienced observers” (Youngs 80). This might also be attributed to his cultural insiderness being a person belonging to a subjugated race besides other reasons. The evidence of his superior perception is given through the words of a Catalan barber who congratulates him thus, “Ah, you have eyes! You can see! ... Most tourists come here because it’s cheap, no? But they do not see; they do not care to see” (92). Similarly, in *Black Power* (1954), catering to the idea of returning home to Africa he claims that he visits, his ancestral place, with an insight seasoned by ‘double-consciousness’, and hence a finer perception. The simultaneous movement of two consciousnesses thus creates transnational, cross-cultural identities that tend to silhouette the gaze of an African American traveler.

Having set a prefatory note on African American travelers and their writing, it is pertinent at this moment to have an appraisal of the traveling African American women. As we understand, the soul of travel lies in taking risks and exploring the ‘unknown’, ‘unexplored’. As such, travel narratives tended for most parts to be accounted by men. From the Norse Sagas, the Arthurian tales, the Odyssey to the days of slavery in America, the heroic, risk-taking traveler has been the man, who sets out to chart the *virgin* lands.

Nevertheless, women have been traveling; as wives, daughters, missionaries, or slaves. Society has been, for long, hesitant to accept mobile women because “historically women have been more associated with sessility than with mobility” (Roberson 216). Thus, women have been challenged in their traveling roles by constrictions conditioned by gendered ideologies. However, despite the relegation to the private sphere, the female entity has been frequenting the public sphere since long.

Consequently, the patriarchal societies have been forced to reconsider the meaning of female mobility and to re-think strict social norms that sought to confine women to the domestic sphere. In due course, the swell in travel sparked an unparalleled interest in travel writing, and women, like men, from all social backgrounds recorded their travels in diaries, memoirs, and travel narratives. In *Traveling Economies*, Steadman writes: “Thinking about traveling women invites us to modify our understandings of women’s experience in the last century to consider the constant and complex negotiations individual women entered into between gendered expectations and the lived reality of their participation in private and public life” (7). Thus, encouraged and being confident by new opportunities to travel and excited by the market for travel writing, women “became increasingly comprehensive in their declared reasons for publishing travel books as the century progressed” (Schriber, *Telling Travels* xxivxxxv). Female mobility thus, merged the private and public spheres of demarcations attributed to them.

In America, the ideologically demarcated separate spheres, which confined women to the domestic sphere while men occupied the public sphere of business, politics, etc., was still very much intact during the nineteenth century. However, several social and political developments exposed the “gaps in the ideology of gender” (Schriber, *Telling Tales* xv). With an urge to break the bondage of slavery or/and a zeal to act as ‘crusaders’ for political and social reform, ‘black’ slave women, in the larger canvas of American women travelers, hold a special place trying to cut across the intracountry lands in America, or wade through the oceans into places like Europe, Russia or Africa.

American slave women, in their occasional flight/step out of slavery evinces the kinds of legal, social, and physical freedoms that were long denied to them. Roberson, in “American Women’s Travel Writing” asserts that, in traveling the American slave women challenged legal, economic and ideological limitations that sought to keep them “in place” (218) tending to the racist strictures against mobility. While, in writing about their travel and the cultural interactions, they sought to declare constitutional freedom of their selves, to expose the vast gap between the racist America and the rest of the white world, or to pursue careers, to assert their political rights, and thereby “extending mobility beyond the road and challenging the status



quo” (Roberson 218). With their mobility came the declaration of a certain kind of ‘freedom’ from the confining patriarchal norms.

At a time when the African American woman in America was an indiscernible entity in the already marginalized ‘black’ world, African American slave women used mobility to reach out to that ‘other’ world where they themselves no longer remain the ‘other’. A remarkable woman, abolitionist and feminist, Sojourner Truth, takes up the task of representing the enslaved world of ‘black’ women. She stands for a truth that still holds true: “Among the blacks are women; among the women, there are ‘blacks” (Painter, *Sojourner Truth* 4). She fought against the xenophobic parameters that bound “‘black” women in America and “used travel to raise money, to pursue careers, to assert their political rights, thus extending mobility beyond the road and challenging the status quo” (Roberson 218). Someone like Nancy Prince marries, and with it ushers in a remarkable change in her status quo; she travels. Prince also writes with a motive to gain economic liberty, but in the process, ends up portraying to the world that how a ‘black’ woman can legitimately ‘look’ and chronicle ‘other’ people, places and cultures.

However, in the nineteenth century even as women traveled abroad, “the domesticized space...remained the proper province for women” (Caesar, *Forgiving the Boundaries* 218). But as the twentieth century marched on, the “domesticity on the road” (Roberson 218) remained, no doubt, but there emerged emphasized challenges to protest about “male paradigms or ideologies of domesticity” (Roberson 218). This led to African American women broadening their social paraphernalia, reaching out to new places on the globe, but at the same time striking a balance between the “domestic and the feminine” (Roberson 218). Women, moving out to the West, attempted to create the “ideal home” (see Judson 9), to their domestic duties as wives and mothers and at the same time to step outside that domestic ‘hole’. Making a home out of the wild or the foreign seems to be an employment with these women; “Maya Angelou relates her living arrangements in Ghana” (Roberson 219) while working in the University and managing her son; Carolyn Vines attempts to complete her professional assignments for her teaching job while nurturing her baby in the womb and afterwards act as a ‘good’ wife.

However, the African American women had to constantly deal with a major factor wrapping their travel and interactions with the world, color. The 'black' gaze, in general registers an 'opposition', and a female 'black' gaze at that places her in a negating position between gender and color. The prolonged silence of 'black' women comes to a mutation into a tone/voice in travel narratives, through movement and "cultivated a way to look past race and gender for aspects of content, form, language" (Hooks, "Oppositional Gaze" 122). In their journeys/travels and the in the act of writing about it, they not only addressed new home escaping their confining locations and positions, but also challenge the age old stereotypical images of 'black' women as mammy, jezebel, 'black' bitch, sapphire, tragic mulatta, angry 'black' woman etc. (see West 286).

The African American traveler, thus, devoid of gender, must force in from the peripheries to the center, and in doing so, she/he must force out of the menacing, claustrophobic racist American social and political milieu. In doing so, it is always travel that has served as the means to the end; to make a flight out of the farms of the slave masters or to cross the oceans altogether into the lands of hope and parity.

### **Africa**

Africa, as the root of the African Americans, never leaves their consciousness. The former slaves and their descendants harbor Africa in their deliberations as a 'lost home' and the 'returned body' become rhetorical signatures in other travel accounts by African Americans during antebellum and postbellum times" (Smith 202). For the hybridized American-born 'black', Africa comes to symbolize "re-affirmation", a search for "re-identification" and definitions of "self-reliance" (Smith 202). The three West African countries of Liberia, Ghana and Nigeria persist as recurring sites of study in 'black' travel writing producing discourses of "romantic wonderment and love" (Smith 204) and "strange but familiar" (Youngs 82).

### **Europe**

The racially subjugated African Americans appreciated the idea of foreign travel. The 'blacks' were in search of places where the black-white boundaries ceased to exist, or were at least, tolerable towards them. As such, Europe, with its asceticism towards

racism, became one of their most sought after destinations, even though it stands as the facilitator of the slave trade initially. William Wells Brown spends three years in Europe after escaping from slavery in America. Brown recounts an episode in which an American is appalled at traveling aboard the ship with a ‘negro’. However, “this very same man, who would not have spoken to him in the United States, speaks to him respectfully in Paris” (Smith 206). In fact, France and its heart, Paris, serve as a major recluse for the American ‘blacks’ (especially ‘black’ writers) from the racist America. Instances of the ‘black’ body seeking solace in France are also seen in names like James Baldwin, Hazel Scott, Richard Wright, for “the expatriates feel freer in Paris” (Smith 208). While accounting England, Frederick Douglass writes, “England is often charged with having established slavery in the United States” (*My Bondage* 250), however, as he lands in Liverpool, he walks into every building “on an equal footing” (*My Bondage* 247) with his white fellow-citizens. He spends some of the “happiest moments” (*My Bondage* 245) of his life in this country where even “the chattel becomes a man” (*My Bondage* 246). Travel in Europe thus seems to reduce the ambivalence of identity in the African Americans and the articulations asserting the “Negro inferiority” (Youngs75) are done away with.

## **Russia**

Between 1823 and 1981, number of African Americans escapes American racism and flees to Russia seeking “freedom or opportunity” (Smith 208). In a bid to make something out of her life, Nancy Prince marries Nero Prince and travels to Russia, where Mr. Prince is a court hand. Prince “describes the excitement of being thrown into the opulence of the Russian court ruled by Emperor Alexander in St. Petersburg” (Smith 209). She is respectfully received as a wife of a colored guard. She is given condition to the growth of her self-respect as a human irrespective of color and opportunities to cultivate her entrepreneurship skills. Claude McKay, in “Soviet Russia and the Negro” (1923), while praising Russia presents the Soviet Union as the answer to the “Negro Problem” (Smith 209).

It is important to note that the country welcomes him with a warmth thereby making him, he says, less “self-conscious with the realization that I was welcomed...as a symbol, as a member of the great American Negro group-kin to the unhappy ‘black’ slaves of European Imperialism in Africa-that the workers of Soviet Russia, rejoicing

in their freedom, were greeting through me” (McKay 207-08). He finds that diverse races conserved a degree of compassionate forbearance towards each other. He constantly praises the Russians for valuing him as a poet and he is received with animated acclaim, mobbed with gracious demonstration, whereas Americans denounce both him and his poetry as inferior and uncultured. To the general mass of Soviet Russia whose “remarkable” attitude he finds “beautifully naïve”, he says, “I was only a ‘black’ member of the world of humanity” (McKay 210). Similarly, Langston Hughes in “Going South in Russia” (1934), “compares the Soviet Union with the American South that still imposes racist social codes upon black people” (Smith 210), thereby triggering pleasant memories of his visit to the Soviet Union two summers earlier. The Soviet Union thus, provides no breeding ground for the unethical Jim Crow laws that mar the American setting and its history.

It is, however, imperative to know that African-American Travel writing is clearly distinguished from their ‘white-authored’ counterparts. The white travelers mostly penned down European-type leisure class entertainment travel narratives which are often individualistic in their narrative patterns. But in the case of African-American travel writings one could see a relationship between individual and group experiences. It was a relationship in which the voices of the group or the entire race enabled themselves to be heard or echoed through an individual narrator who acted as the representative, and this representative could also be a symbolic figure. Butterfield, in *Black Autobiography in America*, says, “the self belongs to the people, and the people find a voice in the self” (3). Thus, the African American self acts as a communal figure for her/his entire race.

This thesis works on the changing perspectives of African American travelers when they look at different places, cultures and people. However, this analysis calls for an understanding of the theory of gaze, for, perspectives are ways of gazing.

A gaze is a projection of conventions that facilitates certain potentials/possibilities of meaning, certain forms of experience, and certain relations among participants. The gaze has been called an aspect of one of the “most powerful human forces”; that is, “the meeting of the face and the gaze” because “Only there do we exist for one another” (Knausgaard, “The Inexplicable” 32). It is the gaze and its reciprocity between the ‘subject’ (gazer) and the ‘object’ (gazed) that brings about the existential

forces at work. This act of gazing is, however, built on and extends into various *ways* of seeing, and these *ways* are the ideologies, prior understandings and ‘antecedent literarios’ at work on the part of the subject which tends to ‘create’ its object in the process of seeing.

Meanwhile, theorists have propounded various definitions of the term ‘gaze’. However, it is a term popularized and disseminated by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who, in his theory of the “mirror stage” (*Ecrits* 75-81), elaborates on the anxious state that comes with the consciousness that one can be seen. His first remarks on the gaze appear in the first year of his seminar in orientation to Jean Paul Sartre’s phenomenological investigation of ‘the look’. For Sartre, the gaze is that which sanctions the subject to identify that the ‘Other’ is also a subject; “my fundamental connection with the Other-as-subject must be able to be referred back to my permanent possibility of being seen by the Other” (*Being and Nothingness* 256). It is only in 1964, with the intensification of the concept of “OBJET PETIT A” as the basis of desire, that Lacan advances on with his own theory of the gaze, a theory which is empirically distinct from Sartre’s. While Sartre had merged gaze with the act of ‘looking’, Lacan at this point splits the two; in the act of looking, the gaze becomes the object, or, to be more precise, the object of the ‘scopic drive’. The gaze is thus, in Lacan’s deliberation, no longer on the prospect of the subject; it, rather, turns into the gaze of the ‘Other’. Thus, ‘gaze’ in Lacan’s terms is a process in which “You never look at me from the place at which I see you” (*Seminar XI* 103). Thus, the subject and object position waver.

The concept and theory of the ‘gaze’ occupies a major share in the theoretical world of travel writing. Travel theory deals with the dynamics of ideology at work which shapes the perspective/s of a traveler while visiting a place and confronting its people and culture for the first time. It is followed up by the resultant framing of the seen/experienced world in a particular way. Travel and Travel narratives addresses the diagonal concepts of ‘home’ and ‘away’, ‘us’ and ‘them’. Even the question of identity is scrutinized and proliferated as it (travel) entails a movement away a familiar landscape and location to an unfamiliar place, one that is dissimilar from the ‘home’. In the post-World War II era, interest in an organized study of travel narratives was rekindled due to an unparalleled emphasis on reimagining and ordering the mangled geography of the globe. Traveler’s accounts of far-flung, unfamiliar and

‘exotic’ places were recovered and a methodical examining, observation, interpretation and articulation of the traveler’s world commenced.

During the same period, theoretical models for a better reading and understanding of the texts were being developed as well. These theoretical models wade through an entire stream of theorists like Jacques Derrida, Sigmund Freud, Hayden White, Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt, etc. For the purpose of the present study, theoretical machineries of John Berger (*Ways of Seeing*, 1972), Laura Mulvey (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 1975), Michel Foucault (*Discipline and Punish*, 1975), Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1978); Mary Louise Pratt (*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 1992); Jean Paul Sartre (*Being And Nothingness*, 1956); and Jacque Lacan (Ecrits, 2002; “Seminar of Jacques Lacan”).

Exploring and establishing the fact that gaze is an ideological construct and that several patterns of gazing are at work simultaneously when one visits the ‘other’, leads to the usage and application of ideas put forth by the theorists mentioned for the purpose of this dissertation. John Berger in his seminal work, *Ways of Seeing*, talks about two important points on gaze. First, he says what we see is affected by what we know already, “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” (Berger 8). Thus, the object of our gaze is never at its pristine self and so when we narrate it or write it down, it is morphed by our ideologies and prior knowledge, “seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with word...yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight” (Berger 7). Hence, every image represents a way of seeing.

Each way of seeing and the subsequent explanation inherit consciousness of one kind or the other. Any image represented in a text is detached from the place and time of its actual occurrence or presence. The narrator sits down in a different place and at a different time frame to narrate the image; thus, temporally and spatially she/he is already far off. After that her/his gaze, carried in the mind, immersed in an ideology, understanding or consciousness, brings about a newness or distinctiveness in the objective truth of the image.

Second, Berger talks about the ideal spectator or the gazer, who is always taken to be a male and hence, in a narrative, whether visual or written, ‘men act’ and ‘women appear’. Woman appears, is seen and judged and is turned into an object of vision. The ideal gaze is always that of male and images are developed for and by him to flatter him/self. Women have been seen and judged as sights, and on this note Berger develops the concept of the surveyor and the surveyed. This concept is crucial in understanding the theory of gaze in general, as the gazer is the perennial surveyor and the object of his gaze is the one that is surveyed. The former is active and hence has the power to literally create/narrate his object of gaze in an all new form; whether the new avatar conforms to the original is a matter of critical inquiry, “An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced...every image embodies a way of seeing” (Berger 9-10). Berger works on another important premise as when he says that the act of gazing is always relational, i.e., we are also being seen by the other while we are looking at that other. This reciprocal nature of vision or gaze is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue, say Berger. Thus, codes of seeing are important in relation to gender, subject-object binary and preconceived ideological framing of a particular culture and its people.

Understanding thus, it is imperative to see how Mary Louise Pratt in her groundbreaking work, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), uses personal narrative as a catalyst to an inquiry into travel writing. She considers its impact in empires and their colonies and tries to decolonize knowledge and unravel imperial meaning-making. Inter-cultural texts suggest the possibilities and perils of writing in ‘contact zones’, which are “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination-like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (4). It is always about the kind of gazing that spar in such ‘contact zones’; the European traveling subjects, while looking at their ‘objects’ in non-European parts of the world create the “domestic subject” (4) of Euroimperialism. And thus, exploration and travel writing produced “the rest of the world for European readerships at particular points in Europe’s expansionist trajectory” (5). It is the colonialist project that created much of the ‘other’.

Elaborating further, Pratt says that “transculturation” (6) is a phenomenon of the ‘contact zone’, which is a process through which subordinated and/or marginalized

groups choose and design from resources passed on to them by a central or metropolitan culture. In this, the imperial center may impose its cultural characteristics upon the periphery, but the latter does regulate to varying degrees what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for. Travel writing is “heavily organized in the service of that imperative” (6). Travel writers claim the discovery of places or ‘tribes’ which are already known to some ‘others’, and thus, not discovery in the true sense.

Meanwhile, Travel writers also make use of strategies of representation whereby approaches of innocence in gazing are founded in relation to older imperial rhetorics of conquest/invasion associated with the absolutist period. Pratt refers to this as “anticonquest,” which talks of “the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” (7). The traveling subject can be seen as a figure “I” (7) sometimes call the “seeing-man” (7), an admittedly frosty label for the European male subject of European landscape/setting discourse— “he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (7).

A final characteristic term that Pratt uses is “autoethnography” or “autoethnographic expression”. She says:

These expressions refer to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations. (7)

To this end, African American travel writing texts constitute a canonical instance of autoethnographic representation. Being seen, registered and illustrated for more than two centuries, African Americans engage in an “oppositional gaze” (see Hooks 115131) in their travels, and also involve in partial “collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror” (Pratt 7). The idioms appropriated and altered in travel and exploration writing, combine or penetrate those to variable degrees with ‘native’ modes, thereby producing various patters of gazes.



Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) stands as a milestone in challenging, questioning and critiquing the patterns of gazing at work in the visual narrative medium. Mulvey states that the subconscious of the society is male, and hence we live in a patriarchal society. In *Visual Pleasure* she relates this psychoanalytical theory taken from Freud to examine how the patriarchal subconscious of our society outlines the way films are watched and thereby how do we experience and understand cinema.

This theory can be productively adapted to understand and examine the theory of gaze in general and other forms of narration and gazing too apart from the visual. Althusser, in his "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1971), states that the ideology of the state is guided by the consciousness of the dominant order. Hence, Mulvey adapts to it and articulates that the dominant gaze of the society is that of patriarchy and thus, male. It can be put here that the unconscious patriarchal society has organized the cinema form/s, "The image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order" (Mulvey 843). It can be asserted here that the male gaze acts a colonizing gaze over the female body.

Mulvey notes Freud's use of the term *scopophilia*. It is the pleasure involved in looking at other people's bodies while considering the same as objects, principally, as erotic ones. In the blackness of the movie theatre, it is notable that, one may look or gaze at the screen without being seen either by those on screens or by other members of the spectators sitting around. Mulvey argues that two very important textures of gazing get developed as viewers experience various conditions of viewing cinema, voyeuristic and fetishistic. The photographic/cinematic text is prepared along lines that are parallel to the cultural subconscious with is fundamentally patriarchic and hence the psychoanalytic desire is molded with the semiotic representation which leads Mulvey to recognize and distinguish between two important forms of seeing. She talks about both the voyeuristic process of *objectification* of female bodies/characters and the narcissistic course of *identification* with an 'ideal ego' which is observed on the screen. These she presents in the Freudian terms as response to the *castration anxiety*. The first way of seeing dictates an objectification of the image and the latter an identification with or documentation of it.

The woman is permanently the object of the reifying gaze and not the bearer of it (this has approximately suggestive of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*). Mulvey states that between the subject and the object, the subject replicates the societal consciousness of the dominant male order and the object is always the passive female. Mulvey's theory, when applied to the theory of a traveler's gaze, fashions a set of three very important premises: firstly, the traveler has been dominantly come to mirror the male logos around which the traveling world is fashioned accordingly. Second, this theory can be adapted to visualize and theorize the traveler as an all-powerful, dominating subject, who may not be necessarily a male, surveying the others (which constitutes both the genders), the powerless objects of a strong scrutinizing gaze.

From here we are led to the third premise which says that the traveler, in accordance with her/his idealistic corollaries, the supposed vantage points and comforts zones either identifies with the visiting culture, its people and customs or objectifies those as mere objects of gaze as something foreign to themselves. It follows that 'looking'—that is, looking at—is defining in one way or the other, and not just an innocent act of narrating as things are. In her essay *Unmasking the Gaze: Some Thoughts on New Feminist Film Theory and History* (2001), Mulvey opines that, "Ways of seeing do not exist in a vacuum. The 'gaze', as many critics and theorists have argued convincingly, is a key element in the construction of modern subjectivity, filtering ways of understanding and ordering the surrounding world" (5). While Mulvey defines the politics of gazing on the premise of gender, where one gender overpowers the other, there are, however, many such premises which defines and demarcates patterns of gazing in people. One can think of race, nation and religion, among these, which will be examined in this dissertation.

Gaze stands for and proliferates power. The 'gaze' is a term that Foucault introduces in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963). Foucauldian theory on gaze has far reaching similarities with the Lacanian concept of gaze and the "mirror stage" (*Ecrits* 75-81) theory. Gaze, in the psychoanalytical theory of Jacques Lacan, is the restive state that comes with the cognizance that one can be seen/viewed as one participates in the process of viewing. The theory of mirror stage arches this concept in which it is examined and established that a child facing a mirror realizes that he or she has a peripheral self or an external appearance.

This means that when the subject becomes aware of the being or presence of an object, it (subject) also realizes of its own possibility/ies of being an object. From this point, Foucault goes on to institute and elaborate on two important concepts: panopticism and knowledge/power. Jeremy Bentham's design of a strong surveillance system in prisons has facilitated in the development of the concept of Panopticism. Panopticon is a building which is supposed to have the mechanism of an all-seeing eye, but this omnipotent and omnipresent eye is itself invisible to its objects of watch, and thus has a controlling, defining power. Foucault talks about the panopticon gaze which is an anonymous power and boasts of a position, which forces down upon individuals an image of how to be a subject, and has an axiomatic and constitutive impact upon the subjectivity of the individuals in its field of vision and scrutiny.

In travel writing, most travelers seem to possess an 'ominous' panoptic gaze. Historically, the genre and the gaze evolved together in the in the colonial period when the white-male traveler had the power to survey and chart the world of the 'other'. In most cases, the travel writer carries this omnipresent gaze everywhere, turning the act of gazing into an ideological apparatus. In other words, the presentation of experience in the form of a narrative text is already under the shadow of ideology and the aesthetic. Gazing, in the travel writer's case, therefore is akin to supervising and controlling life-worlds of the travelee.

The power relationship between the observer and the observed can be further elucidated through what Foucault calls "medical gaze" (see *The Birth of the Clinic* 14). Gazing is a major component of medical diagnosis and the dynamics of power between doctors and patients. In such a relation, the gazer is in a much more superior and controlling position than the one being gazed as the former is armored with the powerful equipment of knowledge and Foucault states that knowledge is power. Gaze itself is not power, but when one enters a relationship of gazing that the dynamics of power gets developed. Thus, when a traveler gazes at a culture and the people, she/he not only exercises power and produces meaning but is also being driven by a reciprocal gaze from the object of her/his gaze. However, subtle, a traveler exercises power. They have a power of knowledge, they seem to already understand and know 'everything', however this knowledge is a prior understanding, a predetermined thing more than a practical one, and the field experiences tend to later mold the shape of that knowledge/power, if not do away altogether.

The panoptic relational gaze opens space for acts of resistance, which Foucault terms as “practices of freedom” (*Foucault Live* 434). The hierarchical position that the panoptic gaze creates also allows the objects to assert power in return by reciprocal gaze/s. It is because, in the context of panopticon, everyone, including the scrutinizers, is under scrutiny. Thus, a traveler’s gaze can never claim to have seen a picture as it is, because their gaze creates a stir in the normalcy of the ‘natives’ or the others and their activities and appearances. Similarly, the so-called ‘others’ brings in some sort of an awareness of their presence and ‘look-back’ in the travelers/subjects. The ensuing gaze, Foucault says, is at once collective and anonymous, carrying instructions from everyone and everywhere and yet from no one and nowhere. Thus, The Panopticon serves as a laboratory between the subject/s and the object/s, with data collected and collated through what Foucault termed ‘the gaze’ and sieved through the dynamics of power, knowledge and ideologies.

The power play in the subject-object binary is carried further in *Orientalism* by Edward Said, originally published in 1978. It is a seminal text of cultural studies in which he has challenged the concept of ‘orientalism’ or the division and difference between east and west. What Said first referred to as “orientalism”, is also widely used in the literary and critical circles as the ‘post-colonial gaze’ and is used to illuminate the connection that colonial powers drawn-out to people of colonized countries. This theory basically throws light and powerfully institutionalizes, two important points on gaze that have been discussed so far, and then moves on to relate them to the postcolonial scenario. First, that there is always a hierarchy in a gaze, as gaze is a performance between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Second, that in this performance the resultant picture is never wholesome and unadulterated. Ideologies, priorities, powerplay, etc. mar the gaze of a person.

Westerners do not comprehend the non-western people because they gaze through an ‘orientalist’ sieve, i.e., they look upon people they believe to be culturally underneath them with an exoticized enthrallment which wishes not to encounter an ‘other’ honestly but to narrate and consume that other, and perhaps, as in colonialist history, to enslave. For example, some so-called ‘orientalists’ wish to consume Middle Eastern exoticism. It is as if this is what draws them to travel, to encounter the “exotic”. And hence they would see all around them in the Middle-East what they

want to see, and when they find something unexpected, baffling, they seem to explain and narrate it on their own terms, understandings and comfort. Said has said:

The Orientalist can imitate the Orient without the opposite being true. What he says about the Orient is therefore to be understood as description obtained in a one-way exchange: as *they* spoke and behave, *he* observed and wrote down. His power was to have existed amongst them as a native speaker, as it were, and as a secret writer. And what he wrote was intended as useful knowledge, not for them, but for Europe and its various disseminative institutions. (160)

*Orientalism*, thus breaks the Orientalist's/Europe's authority of dictating subject object binaries. Another important observation that Said brilliantly develops over and extends is on Frantz Fanon's dictum that Europe is fundamentally the creation of the Third World. Said says that the West's production of their 'other', i.e., the East leads to the creation of the former's own identity. Occidentalism is in a way a reflection of Orientalism itself. In short, the West could not exist if the East was not created as its contrast.

Travel Writing theories and the narratives also mull over these facets as discussed by Said by adapting those into their own terms. As has been pointed out before, in Travel Writing, there is the dynamics of gaze on the go in between the subject and the object. Just like a Western Orientalist, travelers also tend to place themselves on a higher plane than the 'others' in the dynamics of gaze. Travelers from the first world tend to exoticize the third world countries, people, places and cultures. The scientific mind of the Western travelers proves a mismatch for the spiritual and intuitive cultures of the Middle-Eastern, African and Eastern countries and end up looking and narrating them as 'strange objects'. Hence, the Western traveler, irrespective of race, color, gender or religion, seems to carry smidgens of Orientalism in their outlook, and ideologies befitting their background, while traveling amidst the Third world countries and eventually goes on to construct "imagined geographies", in the words of Said.

### **Gaze and Psychoanalysis**

With the introduction of psychoanalysis in an endeavor to further comprehend gaze, there surfaced a full new perspective to study ways in which travelers look at people and places. In a discussion of psychoanalysis and its relation to gaze, the name of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, a primary theorist of child development, is

inevitably drawn in. He found the theory of the gaze significant in what he termed as “the mirror stage” (*Ecrits* 75), upon which children gaze at a mirror image of their own selves. Lacan states, “It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context as an identification, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [assume] an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, ‘imago’” (*Ecrits* 76). And thus, the concept of the gaze was connected to the growth of individual human agency. To this end, the idea of the gaze was changed into dialectic amid what he called the ideal ego and the ego-ideal.

The ideal-ego is the appearance of imaginary self-identification, in other words, the idealized image that the person envisions themselves to be or desires to be; while the ego-ideal is the imagined gaze of another person who gazes upon the ideal-ego. An example would be if a famous rockstar or singer (which may function as the ideal ego) secretly hoped that the school bully who tormented them as a child was now aware of his or her subsequent success and fame (with the imaginary, ‘fantasmatic’ figure of the bully functioning as the ego-ideal). Travelers, often find their own self reflect in the image of another person of the place that they are visiting. In case of an African American traveler, for instance, the identification of the traveler with a ‘black’ ‘native’ in peril under foreign domination is quiet a common phenomenon, since the condition of ‘black’ people in American society has been despondent ever since they landed on the continent during the notorious slave-trade. Even now, after almost two centuries have gone by, one cannot say with full confidence that the scene has completely changed for better. But on the other hand, an African American traveler showcases the ego-ideal as well, when, for instance, they feel anglicized or Americanized in their education and sophistication and find the ‘natives’ still in the cloud of savagery or lack of civilization. The same might also be cited in the case of an English Women traveler to a colony in the days of colonialism.

Later, Lacan developed his concept of the gaze even further, claiming that the gaze does not belong to the subject but, rather, the object. In his *Seminar One*, he tells his viewers:

I can feel myself under the gaze of someone whose eyes I do not see, not even discern. All that is necessary is for something to signify to me that there may

be others there. This window, if it gets a bit dark, and if I have reasons for thinking that there is someone behind it, is straight-away a gaze. (Lacan, *Seminar Book I* 215)

Thus, Lacan, says that the object and subject do exchange positions. This quote has similarities to Sartre's idea of the gaze leading us to an analysis of his theory of gaze in *Being and Nothingness*.

### **The Watcher in the Park**

Vision is usually theorized from the perspective of a subject located at the center of the world. This centralized subject is increasingly dismantled by Jean Paul Sartre and Lacan's theories- and the direction of their thought is unambiguously towards a fundamental decentering of the subject. Sartre's idea of the gaze of the 'other' is comprehensible in the history/anecdote of the watcher in the park as expounded in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). He says:

I am in a public park. Not far away there is a lawn and along the edge of that lawn there are benches. A man passes by those benches. I see this man; I apprehend him as an object and at the same time as a man.... If I were to think of him as being only a puppet... I should apprehend him as being "beside" the benches, two yards and twenty inches from the lawn, as exercising a certain pressure on the ground, etc.... I could have him disappear without the relations of the other objects around him being perceptibly changed. In short, no new relation would appear through him between those things in my universe. (254)

However, the moment Sartre considers the 'other' body as a 'man', comes the difference. He writes:

Perceiving him as a man, on the other hand, is not to apprehend an additive relation between the chair and him; it is to register an organization without distance of the things in my universe around that privileged object... Instead of the two terms of the distance being indifferent, interchangeable, and in a reciprocal relation, the distance is unfolded starting from the man whom I see and extending up to the lawn as the synthetic upsurge of a univocal relation. We are dealing with a relation which is without parts, given at one stroke, inside of which there unfolds a spatiality, which is not my spatiality; for

instead of a grouping toward me of the objects, there is now an orientation which flees from me. (*Being and Nothingness* 254)

In short, his narrative comprises two stages. In its first movement, Sartre goes to a park and notices that he is alone: everything in the park is there for him to see/regard from an unopposed centrality of the visual field. The entire park unfolds before this entire center of a lived horizon/perspective: the subject resides at the static point of the revolving world, master of its views/prospects, and independent/sovereign surveyor of the vision.

The second movement says that his rule of luminous and plentitude of peace is brought brusquely to an end: into the park and into the gazer's solitary sphere there arrives another, whose invasion, disrupts the peace and ruptures the spectator's self-enclosure. The spectator/watcher is in turn watched: observed of all observers, thus, creating a two-way traffic of gaze, the viewer becomes a spectacle to another's sight.

The viewpoint becomes or merges into the vanishing point. The result is challenging. Everything converges into a center where the subject-as-seer is not, everything turns into a place where the subject-as-seer ceases to exist. The subject is welcome into the 'black' hole of 'otherness'. Thus, the Cartesian seeing subject, who is at the 'unchallenged' center of the visual field, until the 'other' man walks in, is then decentered and displaced from his privileged seeing position. For Lacan, however, this decentering of the seer, or observer is set on action not so much by the invasion of another person on the field of vision as by an irretrievable state of 'being seen' by a disembodied, unlocalizable 'gaze', interceded by a network or 'screen' of social signification that is further than the control of the individual subject. For Sartre, thus, "'Being-seen-by-the-Other' is the truth of 'seeing-the-Other'" (*Being and Nothingness* 257). In other words, the subject, while seeing its object, is always seen by the latter in return.

### **The Orpheusian Gaze**

A particular mention of this gaze seems pertinent, which is derived from the mythic/archaic Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (see Hamilton, *Mythology* 1079). Ensuing his descent into the underworld, Orpheus disregards Hades's and Persephone's condition (that he should walk in front of her and not look back until he



had reached the upper world) for release of his captured wife Eurydice. In his anxiety, he breaks his promise, and Eurydice vanishes again from his sight.

The Gaze of Orpheus has subsequently been assessed by many philosophers and literary critics. Similarities are made between Orpheus's gaze and the writing processes, philosophical interpretation, and creativity. Some of the most well-known uses of the gaze of Orpheus can be seen in Maurice Blanchot's work *The Gaze of Orpheus* and Jacques Lacan's work on the mirror stage.

The work, thus studies gaze in its various forms, definitions and patterns when two conscious bodies confront and come into an eye contact. In this regard, it is assumed that:

- i. Of the two agents involved, the one that gazes is active, and the one being gazed at is passive.
- ii. Often the object, who is supposed to be a passive gazer, gives back a look, which defines and disturbs the subject, the one with the active gaze.
- iii. The subject with the active gaze often creates, dismantles or paints the object, one with the supposedly passive gaze, or at times no gaze at all, under the influence of various ideologies, experiences, etc.
- iv. There are broadly two kinds of gazes: physiological and epistemological. The former is the one that purely marks the physical body through the lens of the eye and the latter is one that is created after the image passes through the lens and gets informed and shaped through various ideologies stored in the mind.
- v. In the interplay of gazes between the subject and the object, there takes shape a pattern of gazing.

A gaze is, thus, a construct; an ideological construct: ideology in a book, in this case a travel book, is simply not a matter of the content of the book. Rather, ideology is, so to speak, built into the very gaze of the traveler, especially in terms of perspective and the writing later. Even the editing of the content at a later stage is also inherently ideological. In fact, a traveler's field of enquiry and the situation there are also ideologically shaped. Further, individuals are shaped by the cultures in which they are raised and their choices are also socially authorized. This is the Althusserian dispensation (see Althusser, "ISA" 127), which says, individuals and their decisions

and choices are completely constructed by the social system in the interests of the dominant order.

The above study of the theories of gaze/perception/ways of seeing gathers the following conclusions:

### **Variables of Power**

The apparent powers of the gaze are susceptible to different variables. These variables integrate whether one is the subject or the object of the gaze, i.e. who is looking and who the recipient of the gaze is. This also brings in the conjecture that whether the gaze is traded between equals or is it articulated in hierarchical division, and whether it is active or passive. Here, a returned gaze will be the active and an unreturned gaze passive. Thus, gazing is never unilateral, but bilateral and manifests itself in layers.

This also brings to the fore that gaze is not merely an element that possess or uses; rather, it is a relationship into which one enters and plays a part. This relation manifests power between the observer and the observed. The hierarchical gaze contributes in instituting a power relation where an unbalanced relationship between the subject and the object exists. This power relation empowers one while disempowering the other. The variables of an egalitarian or hierarchical gaze and those of an active or passive interchange of seeing are interrelated. Surveillance is focal the power of gaze. Another way in which the gaze produces power is through desire. This element of desire stimulates behavior, according to the concentration of the felt desire (see Hoffman and Van Dillen 317). In this regard, the ‘oppositional gaze’ of the ‘blacks’ in America emanates a very strong desire to gaze, hence power.

### **Asymmetrical Power Relations**

Elaborating further on the propensity of gaze to empower or disempower, gaze has a tendency to create asymmetry in the power relations between the subject and the object. Although it may appear that “gaze” is merely seeing or looking at, but the mutuality of the gaze between the subject and the object can replicate power structure, or the nature of a relationship between the subject and the object, as Jonathan Schroeder expresses that “it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which

the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze” (Schroeder 58). Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, in “The photograph as an intersection of gazes”, also propose the same point as when they say that the relationship of gaze between the gazer and the gazed “tells us who has the right and/or need to look at whom” (Lutz & Collins 142). But, it is also important that when the subject looks at an object, the object is always already reciprocally gazing at the subject, and from a vantage point at which the subject cannot see it. So, there is always a two-way traffic of gaze.

### **The Supervising/Observing Gaze**

The fundamental part of the principle of Panopticism says: power should be perceptible and unverifiable. As such, ‘supervising gaze’ makes its presence felt and known to the one being looked at (object), thus, it provides scope for the object to delineate its mannerisms in certain ways as selected by it. However, it is also to be noted that this observing gaze, which is considered/characterized by the variables reckoned above, upholds a sense of terror and fear. As a result, the object’s behavior fluctuates. The gaze is felt/experienced as disempowering since it limits and/or alters the object’s regular thoughts and actions.

### **Gender Matters**

One concept that originates from feminism is the idea of the ‘male gaze.’ The male gaze is fundamentally about power relations between men and women (it is worth noting that the concept exists within a binary system that links, if not conflates, gender and sex). The power relations are asymmetrical, with power residing in the Male who gazes at the Female. ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ here are abstracted to a broader sociological sense. In a patriarchal society, the Male figure is imbued with power in relation to the Female. The Male gaze has primarily been understood in terms of sexual objectification. Men objectify the bodies of women (bodies understood have an ‘alignment’ of gender and sex).

### **Ideology of Construction**

It is a borrowed knowledge about something which is gathered from different sources like family, books, school/education system, friend, movies, etc. It forms our gaze or

perception of looking at somebody or an event before we step into the field or come in direct contact with the object of gaze. It is based on incomplete and often prejudiced knowledge and because of which a traveler (in case of travel writing) approaches his field/object with a veiled or multi-layered gaze. As Berger says, “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” (8). In a similar tone, Sontag opines, “It is still ideology (in the broadest sense) that determines what constitutes an event” (19).

It is writing, painting or photographing that turns a moment into an event, because an event is something worth photographing or narrating, but it is ideology which decides what is worth narrating, painting or photographing.

### **Ideology of Production**

While talking about photographs, Sontag suggests, “Quality of feeling on seeing a photo depends on the degree of the people’s familiarity with the images” (19). It takes account of the real experiences after stepping into the field. It is a contextually derived knowledge. But even this knowledge is incomplete and inaccurate in the sense that the subject already has the ideology of construction on in his/her gaze and he/she don’t necessarily know the “object’s” reality in the latter’s geographical, historical, cultural, political background or context. In the ensuing contact between the subject (traveler) and her/ his object of gaze, the events gets manipulated and transformed. For example, Berger writes, “An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced...which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance...Every image embodies a way of seeing” (9-10). Similarly, Sontag says, “Photographs are selective, based on what the cameraman wants to show and what will go with the home public’s knowledge” (19) [example for this quote: American photography and the American and Korean War (Note: This point also goes with Ideology of Construction)]. Thus, as it is understood, “Quality of feeling on seeing a photo depends on the degree of the people’s familiarity with the images” (Sontag 19). The knowledge about an object of gaze regulates the way the subject feels about it.

## **Exoticizing**

Visiting a place for the first time, with almost zero or limited knowledge about its people, customs, traditions, practices, beliefs, history, makes a traveler/person look at people and events with wonder/awe. As a result of which, the normal events/practices of the people are turned into something 'exotic', something which is foreign to the traveler, and hence strange. Sontag suggest, "But essentially, the camera makes everyone a tourist in other people's reality, and eventually in one's own" (57). The event/episode which is natural to one person (object) as it is stupefying to the other, traveler. Thus, "The camera has the power to catch so-called normal people in such a way as to make them look abnormal. The photographer chooses oddity, chases it, frames it, develops it, titles it" (Sontag 34).

Berger takes Van Gogh's painting, Wheat field with crows flying, and shows how words change the images. It is a painting of a wheat field with birds flying out of it. But, when in the next page, Berger narrates the picture as Gogh's last painting before he commits suicide, the painting altogether changes its meaning. One develops the feeling of terror and surprise. And thus, the natural gets transformed into something foreign/unnatural.

## **Taming and the Violence of Writing**

When a traveler visits a place, where people, customs, practices, dressing, food-habit etc. are like those of the traveler's own, she/he tends to narrate the events in such a way as to give a sense of familiarity to the reader. This could be a gaze of normalizing or familiarizing. At the same time, any attempt at narrating an event is its violation or violence done to it. Because, however innocent a gaze claims to be, it cannot be free of one or the other kind of ideology. The traveler is a surveyor, who does violence to the object in trying to understand and narrate 'it' (the surveyed).

## **Decontextualization**

A subject/surveyor/traveler can never fully come to terms with the context of the object being studied or surveyed. The objects, event and its context are as foreign to the traveler, as the latter is to the former. So, while narrating an event to her/his

readers, the traveler decontextualizes it, because of which a very much normal/day-to-day activity in the object's culture turns into a spectacle.

As such/, the traveler/narrator has the power to do violence to a private moment, which is inviolable, and turn it into a public moment or event, which is vulnerable. Thus, it is not simply about transforming the private into the public, but rather publicizing the private moment in a completely new light, which is mostly completely out of its context and hence with an altered meaning. This new meaning/reading of an event is not always in the positive light and constructive. The 'inside' is thus turned 'outside'.

Nancy Prince's travel book, *A Narrative of the Life and Travels of Mrs. Nancy Prince* (1854), shows in Russia, people drinking wine in a funeral, and ladies coming in their best, is their custom, which has a special significance in its context, narrates the event with a comic surprise. And thus, the activity indigenous to the Russian people, turns into a foreign activity to Prince and her readers, and hence a debatable spectacle.

### **Ideology and Rhetoric**

While there are numerous ways to describe ideology, for our purpose the most common one will serve—an ideology is a belief/value system that functions to maintain or challenge the existing order. This suggests a relationship to power which acts as a central feature of an ideological orientation/coordination to the world. Ideological gazes proliferate at different levels through a varied perspective. Rhetoric is the instrument of orators or writers to disseminate their ideology. Rhetoric is a political act which involves a dialectical interaction involving the social, the material, and the individual writer, with language as the agency of mediation. Because of this dialectic collaboration, these different elements—the material, the social, and the individual writer—are part of a reciprocal relationship with ideology; they at once produce and are products of ideology. As such, writing, or thereby, probably any action is not and cannot be an innocent act. Ideology may be theorized as separate from rhetoric in that its manifestation is merely an offshoot of its attitudinal viewpoint. As such, it lives or dies by virtue of the resonance its expression has in the lived experience of those who declare allegiance to the orientation it takes towards the world.

Rhetorical criticism examines ideology as a form of strategic argumentation that functions to legitimize political authority. Ideology can be traced at several diverse linguistic levels, and in a number of rhetorical and perhaps even nonrhetorical forms. Rhetorical criticism of ideology presupposes that ideology takes the form of persuasive discourse. At a minimum, this means that ideology must be isolable as a verbal text, must be addressed to an actual audience, and must aim at persuasion. Ideology, like all rhetoric, is designed to persuade, but does so by distorting reality in distinctive ways. Ideological arguments present themselves as a form of discourse which at once legitimates the existing political system and obscures that system's nature.

'Black' biographies, autobiographies and travel narratives pose particular challenges, signifying a history of a regularly captivating, yet typically unknown or little known, individual/subject. The rhetoric of 'blackness' inexorably comprises of cross-cultural developments and hybridity with a stress on the interrelations between 'black' and white cultures. The Harlem Renaissance, as defined by Alain Locke, W.E.B. DuBois and Jones Weldon Johnson, endeavored to reevaluate and reclaim the ideology of American exceptionalism together with pluralism and cultural nationalism. However, the vision of pluralism harnessed by Harlem Renaissance required a cross-cultural idea of the 'Americanness' of 'black' culture and the blackness of American culture. This associated with American nationalism, the ideology of hegemonic masculinity and 'black' liberation.

Just like the notion of the frontier, the concept of race has also played a role in the way Americans think about their history. However, long after the idea of the frontier has lost its power to have a sway over its people in Ideological state America that of race still endures to allure many. Queries of race and color have been at the epicenter of some of the most significant events in American experience.

Every place has its own unique qualities and every traveler has her/his own unique perspective/s to look at a place, its culture and people. Travel narratives bring to their readers distant places, their history, politics and culture. What is important is the perspective that creates patterns and layers of gazing in the understanding of the narrator-traveler. Gazing as an activity codes and decodes human reasoning and often shows how a human being comes to think what she/he thinks about other human

beings. Though the human sciences return through art and literature as well as sociology and cultural studies to the point at which they recognize how they come to see what they see of human beings, there is no agreement on what causes ways of seeing. Travel writing tries to raise and address some vital issues that go into putting together perspectives at the heart of seeing as an activity. This study attempts to frame seeing as social, cultural, and disciplinary. African American travel writing offers key examples to understand human negotiations with race, color, nationality, religion, gender, and other institutionalized forms of power at key instances in human history.



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