

On the manifold prefiguration/ premediation of the representation of reality in the travelogue: An outline of a narratological theory, typology and poetics of travel writing*

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1. On the boom in travel writing and the aims of this essay

At the beginning of his essay “On the Genre-Poetics of Travel Writing”, Wolfgang Neuber (1989: 50) observed twenty years ago that “the present outline cannot refer back to methodic prototypes or thematic precursors”. Though research dealing with this unduly neglected genre has greatly intensified over the last two decades, even today there is still relatively little in the way of methodical patterns for a theory, typology and poetics of the travelogue. Although both travel writing and research on the genre have experienced a remarkable boom during the past one to two decades, the travelogue remains relatively neglected in comparison with the ‘main genres’ of literature. An overview of the current state of research into the genre shows that, fundamentally, very little has changed since Peter Brenner’s sober and sobering survey of the state of research, published in 1989. While a number of groundbreaking articles have been published in literary studies (cf. e.g. Pfister, 1993, 1997, 2000), to this day we find neither a theory nor a typology of travel writing, and nor is a differentiated poetics of the genre anywhere to be found.

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