



UDK:811.512

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TRUTH AND IMAGINATION IN EARLY TRAVEL LITERATURE-ANALYSIS OF P.G. ADAMS' BOOK "TRAVELERS AND TRAVEL LIARS"

Annotation

This article introduces Percy G. Adams' book "Travelers and Travel Liars", 1660–1800, a pioneering exploration of the role of deception in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel literature. Adams demonstrates how fabricated accounts, exaggerations, and plagiarisms influenced European knowledge of distant lands and peoples. The article presents a chapter-by-chapter overview of Adams' work, situates it within the broader intellectual context of the Enlightenment, and highlights how both contemporary philosophers and later scholars from Uzbekistan, Russia, and America have examined the intersection of truth, fiction, and cultural representation in travel narratives.

Key words: Travel literature, cultural history, fabrication, exaggeration, plagiarism, documentary realism, enlightenment discourse.

ИСТИНА И ВЫМЫСЕЛ В РАННЕЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ ПУТЕШЕСТВИЙ- ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ КНИГИ П. АДАМСА "TRAVELERS AND TRAVEL LIARS".

Аннотация

В статье представлен труд Перси Г. Адамса, обзор его книги "Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800, в котором исследуется феномен вымысла в путевой литературе XVII–XVIII веков. Адамс показывает, как поддельные описания, преувеличения и плагиат формировали европейское представление о дальних странах и народах. В статье приводится обзор содержания книги по главам, анализируется её место в контексте эпохи Просвещения и отмечается, что проблема «правды и лжи» в путешествиях обсуждалась как современниками авторов, так и позднейшими исследователями из Узбекистана, России и США.

Ключевые слова: путевая литература, культурная история, вымысел, преувеличение, плагиат, документальный реализм, дискурс просвещения.

SAYOHAT ADABIYOTIDAGI HAQIQAT VA UYDIRMALAR (PERSI G. ADAMSNING "TRAVELERS AND TRAVEL LIARS" ASARI TAHLILI MISOLIDA)

Annotatsiya

Maqola Persi G. Adamsning "Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800" kitobi tahliliga bag'ishlangan. Unda XVII–XVIII asr sayohat adabiyotlarida uchragan yolg'on va uydirmalarning o'rni ko'rsatiladi. Adams sayohat yozuvlaridagi mubolag'a, plagiat va soxta ma'lumotlar orqali yevropaning uzoq mamlakatlar haqidagi tasavvurlari qanday shakllanganini ochib beradi. Ushbu maqolada asar bobma-bob sharhlanadi, uning ma'rifatparvarlik davri ilmiy va adabiy kontekstidagi o'rni tahlil qilinadi hamda ushbu asarning o'z davridagi va zamonaviy O'zbekiston, Rossiya, AQSH olimlarning izlanishlari bilan bog'liq holda tadqiq etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Sayohat adabiyoti, madaniyat tarixi, uydirma, mubolag'a, plagiat, xujjatli realism, ma'rifatparvarlik davri diskursi.

Introduction. The eighteenth century was a period of unprecedented global contact, yet also of rampant misrepresentation. Travel literature, one of the most popular genres of the Enlightenment, shaped European readers' perceptions of the wider world. As Percy G. Adams demonstrates in his seminal work *Travelers and Travel Liars*, 1660–1800 [1], many accounts of voyages and discoveries were deliberately falsified. Adams identifies a unique category of writers- "travel liars" who blended authentic observation with invention, using narrative realism to disguise deception. Adams' study shows that these lies were not isolated or accidental, but systematic literary strategies embedded in the culture of exploration. Myths such as the Patagonian giants, false rivers in the Mississippi basin, or the elusive Northwest Passage shaped maps, influenced imperial policies, and even entered philosophical debate. In doing so, travel lies reveal the performative power of discourse: through language,

imagination became accepted knowledge. This article aims to introduce Adams' book to readers of literary and cultural studies, situating it within both the Enlightenment's own intellectual context and modern scholarly traditions in Uzbekistan, Russia, and America that continue to explore the boundaries between truth and fiction in travel narratives

Literature review. The question of truth in travel writing was first raised during the very centuries when "travel liars" flourished. Enlightenment philosophers and scientists often questioned the credibility of travelers' tales. Pierre Bayle in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) warned against the "uncritical acceptance of marvels" reported by explorers [2]. Voltaire, in *Essai sur les mœurs* (1756), mocked stories of giants and monstrous peoples, claiming travelers "gave the marvelous rather than the true" [3]. David Hume in *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741) identified the psychological roots

of exaggeration: the human tendency to magnify distant wonders [4].

Cartographers and natural historians joined this debate. Guillaume Delisle corrected maps of North America by deleting nonexistent rivers and towns that earlier travelers had imagined [5]. Members of the Royal Society such as Hans Sloane openly doubted the reliability of missionaries' reports [6]. Buffon, while critical, still used travelers' accounts as empirical material, noting that "error repeated may yet conceal a particle of truth" [7]. These Enlightenment debates foreshadowed Adams' later analysis of falsehood as a structural feature of travel writing.

In modern scholarship, these questions have been revisited across cultures. Uzbek scholar, Kh. Djalilova [8] in her scientific work, analyzed the researches of P. Adams and analyzed English travel diaries and travel novels of the Enlightenment period. In addition, she compared them with the travelogues of modern Uzbek writers and artistic works using the travel motif. She compares English Enlightenment travelers with Jadid authors like Behbudiy and Fitrat, showing how both traditions balanced observation and fiction to express social ideas. Safarova, Rajabova, and Amonova [9] study Bukhara travelogues, emphasizing how political and religious motives shaped geographic description. Abdurauf Fitrat's *Tales of an Indian Traveller* (1912) demonstrates how imagined travel could serve reformist and philosophical ends. In Russian studies, Andrei Solovev [10] examines the evolution of Russian travel narratives, highlighting their hybrid form half report, half imagination while Prokhorov and Saveliev [11] trace how Western depictions of Russia transformed its geography into a mythic "terra incognita." In the American and Western tradition, Susan Roberson [12] explores travel writing as an expression of national identity, and Gilbert Chinard [13] analyzes how French Enlightenment writers projected exotic fantasies onto America. These scholars collectively extend the inquiry initiated by Adams: how narratives, through the authority of form, convert imagination into accepted reality.

Research methodology. Percy G. Adams's *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800* (1962) stands as one of the most influential studies in the history of travel literature. It investigates the curious phenomenon of falsehood, fabrication, and imagination in European travel writing during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - a period when exploration, science, and literature were all rapidly evolving. Adams's central aim was not to simply accuse certain writers of deceit but to understand why they lied, and what those lies reveal about the mental, cultural, and scientific atmosphere of Enlightenment Europe. His book combines history, literature, and philosophy, exploring how early modern travelers created "truth effects" through narrative technique, and how readers' willingness to believe reflected a broader European desire for wonder, novelty, and empire. Adams's work thus occupies an interdisciplinary space: it is part literary criticism, part cultural history, and part epistemological study. It shows how deception in travel narratives was not always malicious; often, it was a creative form of interpretation, an attempt to fill the unknown with meaning. By analyzing these texts, The writer exposes how the boundary between truth and fiction was not fixed but fluid, defined by the cultural needs of the age.

This literary article employs a descriptive, analytical, and comparative approach. Firstly, descriptive analysis summarizes each chapter of Adams' book to introduce its thematic and structural features. Secondly, comparative context connects Adams' ideas with those of Enlightenment contemporaries and modern scholars from various traditions. And finally discourse interpretation highlights how travel lies function as linguistic constructs, producing "truth effects" through repetition, authority, and style. This method situates

Travelers and Travel Liars not only as a historical study but as a text that continues to inform modern theories of discourse, narrative reliability, and cultural representation.

Analysis and results. In the Preface, Adams emphasizes that his book is not about purely imaginary voyages such as Gulliver's Travels or Baron Munchausen but about those works that pretended to be truthful accounts of real journeys. His goal is analytical rather than moral: to uncover how "travel liars" reflected the intellectual, scientific, and ideological climate of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He argues that the era's passion for discovery and the expansion of print culture created ideal conditions for deception. Readers craved novelty; publishers rewarded exaggeration; even scholars and cartographers occasionally relied on dubious data. Thus, Adams treats false travel writing not as an aberration but as a vital part of the Enlightenment imagination. So, his book is a valuable source from different perspectives. Firstly, it can be considered a work of literary criticism. Adams's study examines the language, structure, and rhetoric of travel narratives. He reveals how liars used stylistic realism, detailed description, and pseudo-scientific vocabulary to achieve credibility - techniques that later influenced realistic fiction. Secondly, as a work of cultural history this book situates these lies within the broader context of European exploration, colonization, and intellectual life. It explains how travel narratives shaped- and distorted - Europe's understanding of other cultures and continents. Thirdly, it may be called an interdisciplinary study, because Adams merges literary criticism, historical geography, and epistemology. His method crosses disciplinary boundaries, connecting the history of science, cartography, and narrative theory. Lastly this book is a study of knowledge and belief, at its deepest level, *Travelers and Travel Liars* is a meditation on truth and error-a study of how societies construct "truth" through language. The book demonstrates that lying, in this context, was not merely moral failure but a cognitive and cultural process. Adams classifies travel narratives into three categories - authentic voyages, imaginary journeys, and deliberate lies [1:10]. The latter were most dangerous because they claimed the authority of truth. These works exploited the Enlightenment's faith in empirical observation, masking invention as reportage. Voltaire [3] called this fascination with the "plausible marvelous" the hallmark of eighteenth-century curiosity.

Chapter II is called *The Patagonian giants and mythic ethnography*. This chapter examines one of the most enduring geographical myths of the early modern period: the Patagonian giants. In Chapter II, Adams explores the myth of the Patagonian giants, a fiction sustained from Magellan's chronicler Pigafetta to Admiral Byron [1, p. 41]. "John Callander had been wrong in saying that navigators subsequent to Sarmiento had disproved the legend. He was also wrong in believing that the Spaniard had started it. As most historians have known for a good four centuries, that honor must be given to Antonio Pigafetta, an Italian who sailed around the world on the Vittoria, one of Magellan's ships. At least half a dozen early sixteenth-century versions of this first circumnavigation of the globe are known, four of them apparently by men who made the voyage, but none by Magellan himself. Of the four eyewitness accounts, Pigafetta's journal is the fullest and the longest." [1:21]. The myth endured for two centuries because repetition across texts transformed fantasy into ethnographic "fact." Hume's psychological explanation of human wonder [4] and modern Russian analyses by Prokhorov and Saveliev [11] both support Adams' view: myths persist because they fulfill cultural expectations of otherness. The story originated with Antonio Pigafetta's account of Magellan's circumnavigation (1520s), which described indigenous Patagonians as towering giants

"eight feet tall." The myth was repeated by later travelers, including Sir Francis Drake's chroniclers and Commodore Byron in the 1760s. Adams reconstructs how this falsehood became "scientific truth." Early travel accounts were cited by later ones, each reinforcing the previous, until the myth was accepted even by cartographers. Guillaume Delisle's map of Patagonia, for instance, labeled the region as "land of giants." [1:12] Adams calls this process "self-replicating textual authority"-where repetition, not observation, creates legitimacy.

Chapters III-IV address fabricated geography, including imaginary rivers in Louisiana and the nonexistent northwest passage. These "false topographies" influenced real cartography. Here, Adams delves into one of the greatest obsessions of the eighteenth century: the search for the northwest passage, a supposed maritime route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. For over two centuries, explorers, merchants, and monarchs pursued this phantom path, producing countless reports, maps, and testimonies. Adams calls it a "collective dream." Explorers like John de Fuca, Martin Frobisher, and Arthur Dobbs all claimed falsely to have discovered the passage. Their narratives, filled with fabricated coordinates and "eyewitness" detail, gave scientific form to wishful thinking. Geography books and collections of travels were affected by the enthusiasm of the 1740's, but perhaps its greatest historical influence was exerted through the cartographers; for, someone has observed, "There is nothing that has such an air of veri-similitude as a map." From times long before Ptolemy to the end of the eighteenth century hundreds of years without instruments to provide exact locations mapmakers were called upon to use reason, ingenuity, and imagination in deciphering known facts about the surface of the earth. But often they employed more imagination than reason or were too quick to accept new reports. [1:69]. For Adams, the northwest passage myth reveals the psychology of Enlightenment optimism: a belief that nature must be rational and navigable, that every mystery had a solution waiting to be found. False reports did not merely deceive; they sustained hope and justified funding. In this way, the myth became both a scientific and nationalistic enterprise, blurring the boundaries between fantasy and policy. Adams concludes that the search for the passage is emblematic of the Enlightenment's faith in progress a faith so powerful that it created facts out of dreams. Delisle's later corrections [5] show how the scientific community gradually recognized the danger of basing exploration on lies. Similar tendencies appear in Uzbek travelogues, where ideology shaped landscape description [9]. Adams anticipates this insight: geography in travel literature is a linguistic construct shaped by power, not discovery.

Chapters V and VI analyze "fireside travelers" like Defoe, who used stylistic realism precise detail, economic calculation, and moral tone to create plausible fiction. Nevertheless, Defoe intended to deceive the public when he put his books together. Some of them were better as realistic fiction than as apocryphal voyages the first part of Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jacque, and Roxanna, for example since they fooled only a relatively few people and had little to do with geography and history. Others were more successful as hoaxes and have caused not only much pleasure

to the general reader but often much anguish to the scholar. These include at least six books, not counting *A History of the Pyrates*, by Captain Charles Johnson," but the latter seems to belong to real voyage literature romanticized as it very well may be rather than to the extreme kind of fireside travels. [1] In this chapter, Adams turns to the literary craftsmen who never left their homes but nonetheless wrote entire worlds into existence. He calls them "fireside travelers" writers who, surrounded by books and maps, fabricated journeys from secondhand sources.

In the final chapter, "The voyage ends," Adams summarizes the cumulative impact of travel lies. The final chapter synthesizes Adams's arguments into a profound philosophical conclusion. Lies, he argues, have been essential to the evolution of human knowledge. The myths of the Patagonian giants or the northwest passage, though false, stimulated real scientific inquiry. Fiction thus acted as a catalyst for truth. Adams terms this paradox the "creative mechanism of falsehood." Imagination fills the void where observation cannot reach, propelling exploration, debate, and discovery. Many of the Enlightenment's genuine achievements, he suggests, emerged from dreams that began as lies. In his closing line, Adams writes: "Another derivative lesson is that the search for sources is under certain conditions not only rewarding but necessary. It is necessary when it proves that some travelers are not to be trusted because they did not narrate their own experiences, when it helps to determine the methods and the canon of such a realistic fictionizer as Defoe, when it leads to a correction of history, or when it helps a bibliographer place a book or a librarian to catalogue it." [1] So, writer's conclusion is "Man writes not to discover the truth but to create it." [1] With this statement, Adams transforms travel liars from deceivers into visionaries. They remind us that knowledge is never purely objective; it is always a narrative, shaped by culture, language, and desire. They were performative acts linguistic inventions that shaped maps, inspired exploration, and influenced literature. Myths justified imperial expeditions, while fabricated voyages inspired works like *Candide* and *Robinson Crusoe* [1]. As Roberson [12] notes, travel narratives often mirror national identity; Adams shows that even false ones did so. Across centuries, from Buffon's cautious empiricism [7] to modern discourse analysis, scholars recognize that language does not merely describe reality it creates it.

Conclusion. A. Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800 remains one of the most insightful studies of the Enlightenment's intellectual imagination.

B. Percy G. Adams demonstrates that travel lies were more than literary curiosities they were linguistic and cultural forces that molded European perceptions of the world. By combining narrative authority with invention, travel liars transformed fiction into collective belief.

C. From the skepticism of Bayle and Voltaire to modern analyses by Djalilova, Solovev, and Roberson, the question of truth in travel literature continues to resonate. Adams' "voyage" shows that the Enlightenment's quest for knowledge was inseparable from its appetite for wonder, and that the border between truth and falsehood remains as fragile today as it was three centuries ago.

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