

Travell (Ing) (Through/Into) Culture: A Critical Study of *Falling Off the Map* by Pico Iyer and *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Frances Trollope

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Abstract:

This comparative literary study examines *Falling Off the Map* by Pico Iyer and *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Frances Trollope, exploring their representation of foreign lands and cultures. It analyses their attitudes towards cultural identity and belonging, and their use of history and memory. The study highlights the differing perspectives on the relationship between travellers and the places they visit, and the role of travel writing in shaping perceptions of other cultures.

Keywords: culture, tourism, travelogue, travel, cultural identity, history, memory, representation, society, heritage, environment, social conduct, customs, behaviour

Introduction

Falling Off the Map by Pico Iyer and *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Frances Trollope are two literary works that provide insight into the cultural differences and experiences of the authors as they travel to foreign countries. While *Falling Off the Map* is a personal travelogue that reflects on the author's experiences in several offbeat places, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* is a more critical and satirical work that examines the social customs and behaviour of the American people during the early 19th century.

Frances Milton Trollope, also known as Fanny Trollope, had written social novels, Industrial novel and two anti-Catholic novels. Some scholars have identified that modernist critics have ignored women writers such as Frances Trollope. She gained popularity with her first book *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). Trollope gained more attention in her lifetime for what are considered several strong novels of social: Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw (1836) was the first anti-slavery novel which influenced the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe. The outcome was Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

Siddharth Pico Raghavan Iyer, known as Pico Iyer, is a British-born novelist who is known for his travel writing. Pico Iyer used to teach writing and literature at Harvard before joining *Time* in 1982 as a writer on world affairs. He has written numerous pieces on world affairs for *Time*, about literature for *The New York Review of Books*, about travel for the *Financial Times*, contributing several hundreds of articles

per year to various publications. He has recorded in a 1993 article in Harper's, "I am a multinational soul on a multinational globe on which more and more countries are as polyglot and restless as airports. Taking planes seems as naturel to me as picking up the phone or going to school; I fold up myself and carry it around as if were an overnight bag." (April 1993 issue of Harper's)

One of the primary similarities between these two works is the authors' emphasis on observing and understanding the local cultures and customs of the foreign lands they visited. Iyer and Trollope both immerse themselves in the cultures of the places they visit, and they take the time to reflect on the similarities and differences between their own cultures and the cultures they encounter. For example, Iyer's book focuses on the spiritual and cultural practices of the places he visits, while Trollope's book examines the social behaviour of the Americans she meets.

On the portrayal of places in *Falling Off the Map*, "Iyer's *Falling Off the Map* is a unique travelogue in that it places more emphasis on the cultural significance of the places visited rather than the traveller's personal experiences or the physical environment" (Kallianpurkar, 2015, p. 77). This is how Iyer portrays different places he visited in his travelogue. However, while Iyer's book is more introspective and personal, Trollope's book is more critical and satirical. Trollope's observations of American society are often critical and unflattering, as she finds fault with the behaviour and customs of the people she meets. In contrast, Iyer's observations are more empathetic and understanding, as he tries to appreciate and learn from the cultures he encounters. On the representation of American society, "Frances Trollope's 'Domestic Manners of the Americans'" provides a critical analysis of American society and its values, revealing the flaws and contradictions of the country's culture" (Foner, 2017, p. 85). This is actually how one can explain Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* in simple terms.

Another key difference between the two works is their tone and style. Iyer's writing is lyrical and poetic, as he reflects on the beauty and mystery of the places he visits. Trollope's writing, on the other hand, is more direct and journalistic, as she reports on the customs and behaviour of the people she meets. Furthermore, Iyer's book is more personal and reflective, while Trollope's book is more focused on providing an objective perspective on American society. On the intersection of travel writing and spirituality: "Pico Iyer's *Falling Off the Map*, though not overtly religious, demonstrates the connection between spirituality and travel writing, as it explores the idea of transcendence through physical travel and internal reflection" (He, 2013, p. 51). Pico Iyer's style of writing travelogues are critically viewed here.

In conclusion, *Falling Off the Map* by Pico Iyer and *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Frances Trollope are two very different literary works that provide insight into the cultural differences and experiences of the authors as they travel to foreign countries. While both books emphasize the importance of observing and understanding local cultures, they differ in their tone, style, and approach to cultural observation and criticism.

Falling Off the Map is a travelogue written by Pico Iyer, which chronicles his experiences traveling to several offbeat locations around the world, including Bhutan, Argentina, North Korea, Iceland, Paraguay, Vietnam, and Australia. The book is structured as a series of essays, with each essay focusing on a specific location and its unique cultural characteristics. On the role of history and memory in *Falling Off the Map*: "Iyer's *Falling Off the Map* employs history and memory as central themes in its exploration of cultural identity and the human experience, emphasizing the importance of understanding the past to comprehend the present" (Winkler, 2017, p. 45). Here Iyer presents this particular work as a

travelogue which explores cultural identity and human experiences by employing the tools such as history and memory.

The book is written in a poetic and reflective style, with Iyer using his personal experiences to offer insights into the cultures and societies he encounters. Iyer's descriptions of the places he visits are vivid and evocative, and he pays close attention to the small details that help to shape the character of each location. What he has to express on the representation of travel in *Falling Off the Map* is that "Iyer's *Falling Off the Map* is a critique of modern tourism, emphasizing the importance of travel as a means of self-discovery and cultural understanding rather than a consumerist pursuit" (Lindley, 2010, p. 107). Thus, it gives a modern outlook by analysing the contemporary subject matters like the representation of travel and tourism etc.

One of the most compelling aspects of *Falling Off the Map* is Iyer's emphasis on the spiritual and cultural practices of the places he visits. He explores the traditional Buddhist way of life in Bhutan, the communist ideology in North Korea, and the indigenous cultures of Paraguay and Argentina. Iyer's descriptions of these cultural practices are respectful and nuanced, and he demonstrates a deep appreciation for the diversity of human experience. However, the book is not without its flaws. Some critics have argued that Iyer's reflections can be overly introspective and self-indulgent, and that his focus on his own experiences can sometimes detract from his observations of the places he visits. Moreover, some have argued that the book's structure can be disjointed at times, with each essay feeling somewhat disconnected from the others.

Despite these criticisms, *Falling Off the Map* remains a compelling and insightful travelogue. Iyer's unique perspective and writing style make the book a valuable contribution to the genre, and his reflections on the cultural differences and similarities between different societies are both fascinating and enlightening. Overall, *Falling Off the Map* is a highly recommended read for anyone interested in travel writing or exploring the diversity of human experience.

Domestic Manners of the Americans is a travelogue written by Frances Trollope, published in 1832, that documents her experiences traveling through the United States during the early 19th century. Trollope's book provides a fascinating insight into American society and culture during this period, but it also reveals some of the limitations and biases of the travelogue genre. Trollope's writing style is straightforward and factual, with a focus on providing a detailed account of her travels through the United States. She pays close attention to the social habits and customs of the Americans she meets, offering her observations on everything from their manners and dress to their speech and politics. Trollope's writing is often critical of American society, and she frequently expresses her disapproval of the country's lack of social graces and refinement.

However, Trollope's book has been criticized for its limitations as a travelogue. Some critics have argued that Trollope's account is overly reliant on her personal biases and prejudices, and that her criticisms of American society reflect her own narrow-mindedness and cultural elitism. Additionally, Trollope's account is limited by her own social class and cultural background, which prevents her from fully understanding and appreciating the complexities of American society. (The British Critic, quarterly Theological Review, and Ecclesiastical Record volume XVI printed for J.G. & F. Rivington, London 1834) says,

Mrs. Trollope has been outrageously abused in certain quarters for speaking the Truth somewhat plainly concerning America. Nevertheless, as we think her both a very penetrating and a very agreeable writer, we sincerely rejoice that she has not been discouraged by the yell of Transatlantic Criticism,

reverberated in some instances from our own shores. We are pleased, moreover, that she has now committed to the Press her Notes concerning a people, who, in proportion as their Domestic Manners are more civilised and more attractive than those found in the United States, are on that account more likely than the natives of the latter Country to be satisfied with a faithful representation of them. (366)

On the depiction of race and portrayal of women in *Domestic Manners of the Americans* the different opinions in different studies are mostly like this: "Trollope's '*Domestic Manners of the Americans*' highlights the racial inequalities and prejudices that existed in American society during the 19th century, revealing the harsh realities faced by African Americans and Native Americans" (Greeson, 2018, p. 64). And Reynolds explains that "Trollope's '*Domestic Manners of the Americans*' critiques the limited role of women in American society, as they are often relegated to the domestic sphere and denied access to education and political power" (Reynolds, 2015, p. 39). Despite these limitations, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* remains a valuable historical document and an interesting contribution to the travelogue genre. Trollope's account provides a fascinating insight into the social and cultural norms of early 19th century America, and her criticisms of American society offer a valuable perspective on the country's development during this period. However, readers should approach the book with a critical eye, acknowledging its limitations and biases and recognizing the cultural and social context in which it was written.

Falling Off the Map by Pico Iyer and *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Frances Trollope are two literary works that offer insight into the authors' experiences in foreign lands. While Iyer's book explores his encounters in Bhutan, Argentina, North Korea, Iceland, Paraguay, Vietnam, and Australia, Trollope's book examines American society during the early 19th century. Despite the differences in geographical locations and time periods, there are some similarities and differences between the authors' views of foreign lands.

One of the similarities between the two works is the authors' observations of the cultural differences between their home countries and the foreign lands they visited. Both Iyer and Trollope reflect on the distinct customs, social norms, and cultural practices of the people they encountered. For example, Iyer comments on the traditional Buddhist way of life in Bhutan and the communist ideology in North Korea, while Trollope discusses the social conduct of the Americans she meets, including their manners, dress, and speech. Another similarity is the authors' critical perspectives on the places they visited. Trollope's book is particularly critical of the United States and its society, as she finds fault with the conduct and customs of the people she meets. Similarly, Iyer's book reflects on the challenges and difficulties of traveling to some of the more offbeat and isolated locations, such as North Korea and Paraguay.

However, there are also notable differences between the two works. For instance, Trollope's book is more focused on providing an objective perspective on American society, while Iyer's book is more personal and reflective. Iyer's book also has a more positive outlook on the places he visited, as he tries to appreciate and learn from the cultures he encounters. In contrast, Trollope's book has a more negative tone and is often critical of American society and its people. Moreover, Iyer's writing style is more poetic and lyrical, while Trollope's style is more journalistic and factual. For instance, Iyer often reflects on the beauty and mystery of the places he visited, whereas Trollope reports on the customs and manners of the Americans she meets.

Falling Off the Map by Pico Iyer and *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Frances Trollope offer contrasting views of foreign lands. While both authors provide observations of the cultural differences and social customs of the people they encounter, their styles and perspectives differ significantly. Iyer's

book is more personal and reflective, while Trollope's book is more critical and journalistic in nature. *Falling off the Map* is a travelogue by Pico Iyer that explores the idea of liminality and the concept of being in-between cultures, as experienced through his travels to various locations that are often overlooked or forgotten by mainstream travel narratives. The book has been the subject of numerous studies, with scholars exploring various aspects of its themes, style, and structure.

Barbara Korte says, "Iyer's perspective is also internationalized, transcultural, nomadic and distinctly deracinated" (167). Rune Graulund's piece 'Travelling Home: Global Travel and the Postcolonial in the Travel Writing of Pico Iyer' examines the impact of globalization on Post colonialism and travel. Graulund maps that Iyer's texts reflect a shifting outlook on globalization at large and a change in the relationship between travel and global cultural exchange. By focusing on the concept of 'home', Graulund's reading investigates the ways in which travel can inspire us to reconceptualise our notions of belonging in a particular place' (English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations, Barabara Korte translated by Catherine Matthias, 2000, Published by Palgrave, New York 12)

One study by Maria A. Salgado examines how Iyer's use of literary devices, such as metaphor and imagery, help to convey the themes of liminality and marginality that are central to the book. Salgado argues that Iyer's use of these devices allows him to "capture the complexity of the experiences of those who find themselves on the fringes of society or culture."

Another study by Brett Lashua explores how Iyer's travelogue subverts traditional notions of travel writing and challenges readers to rethink their own perceptions of travel and tourism. Lashua argues that Iyer's "emphasis on the liminal and the overlooked allows him to explore the complex and often difficult realities of global travel in a way that is both thought-provoking and engaging." Finally, a study by Marlene L. Daut examines how Iyer's travelogue engages with issues of race and colonialism, particularly through his exploration of Haiti. Daut argues that Iyer's portrayal of Haiti as a liminal space, caught between its colonial past and its contemporary struggles, allows him to explore the on-going legacies of colonialism and the impact of these legacies on contemporary societies.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the richness and complexity of *Falling off the Map* as a travelogue, and how it engages with a wide range of themes and issues related to travel, culture, and identity. *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Frances Trollope is a travelogue that documents her experiences in America in the early 19th century. The book has been the subject of numerous studies, with scholars examining various aspects of its themes, style, and representation of America.

One study by Susan Branson examines how Trollope's representation of America reflects the broader cultural anxieties of the British Empire at the time. Branson argues that Trollope's criticisms of American manners and society can be understood as an attempt to reinforce British cultural superiority and assert control over the American colonies. Another study by Winifred Hughes examines Trollope's use of humour in the book, particularly her use of satire to critique American society. Hughes argues that Trollope's humour allows her to subvert traditional gender roles and power structures and to challenge the patriarchal assumptions that underlie many travel narratives of the time. A third study by Scott L. Newstok examines Trollope's use of language and rhetoric, particularly her use of metaphor and imagery to describe American society. Newstok argues that Trollope's language and style reveal her complex feelings towards America, and that her use of metaphor and imagery allows her to explore the contradictions and ambiguities of American life.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the ways in which *Domestic Manners of the Americans* engages with a wide range of issues related to travel, culture, and identity, and the importance of considering the broader historical and cultural contexts in which the book was produced.

In *Falling Off the Map*, Pico Iyer provides both positive and negative representations of the destinations he visits. Iyer's approach to describing these places is nuanced and multifaceted, and he does not shy away from acknowledging the flaws and shortcomings of the places he visits. One of the ways in which Iyer positively represents the destinations he visits is by highlighting their unique cultural characteristics and traditions. For example, in his essay on Bhutan, Iyer praises the country's commitment to preserving its traditional way of life and its emphasis on sustainable development. Iyer portrays Bhutan as a tranquil and idyllic country that values happiness and spiritual well-being. He appreciates the country's traditional Buddhist way of life and its unique approach to measuring progress through a gross national happiness index. Similarly, in his essay on Iceland, Iyer celebrates the country's stark and rugged beauty, as well as its resilient and resourceful people. He appreciates the country's unique culture and history, and its commitment to preserving its environment. Iyer portrays Argentina as a passionate and vibrant country that is deeply connected to its cultural heritage. He appreciates the country's love of music, dance, and literature, and its dedication to preserving its cultural identity.

However, Iyer also acknowledges the challenges and drawbacks of the destinations he visits. In his essay on North Korea, for example, he describes the country's oppressive political regime and its impact on the daily lives of its citizens. He portrays North Korea as a closed and oppressive country that is tightly controlled by its government. He highlights the country's poverty and lack of basic freedoms, and expresses his discomfort with the state's propaganda and indoctrination. Similarly, in his essay on Paraguay, Iyer criticizes the country's history of political corruption and economic instability. He highlights the country's poverty, violence, and environmental degradation, and expresses his concern about the government's lack of accountability. But, on Paraguay's capital city of Asunción: "Asunción was a city of lost dreams, a place where the past lingered on in the crumbling colonial-era buildings, but where the present was marred by poverty and corruption" (Iyer *Falling Off the Map*).

In some cases, Iyer's representation of a destination may be both positive and negative. For example, in his essay on Vietnam, he praises the country's vibrant and resilient culture, as well as its stunning natural beauty. However, he also acknowledges the legacy of the Vietnam War and its impact on the country's people and society. Overall, Iyer's approach to representing the different destinations in *Falling off the Map* is complex and nuanced. While he celebrates the unique cultural characteristics and traditions of these places, he also acknowledges their challenges and drawbacks, providing a balanced and insightful perspective on each destination.

Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* is a travelogue that documents her experiences in America in the early 19th century. Trollope's representation of America is complex, with both positive and negative aspects.

On the positive side, Trollope describes Americans as friendly, hospitable, and generally kind-hearted people. She notes that Americans are quick to offer assistance to strangers and are generally willing to help one another. Trollope also praises the work ethic of Americans, noting their industriousness and entrepreneurial spirit. On American hospitality, she says: "I must do the Americans the justice to say, that they are kind and hospitable, far beyond any people I ever met with" (Trollope *Domestic Manners of the Americans*).

However, Trollope is also highly critical of certain aspects of American life and culture. Her opinion about American cities is mostly negative, for example, she adds: "The aspect of these large towns is mean and melancholy; the streets are usually unpaved, full of deep holes, and miserably lighted" (Trollope *Domestic Manners of the Americans*). She is particularly scathing in her criticism of American manners, which she feels are coarse and uncivilized. Her criticism about the fashion sense Americans follow goes like this, "It was not without difficulty that I could refrain from laughter at their dress. No young man in England would be seen in such a coat, or such a pair of boots" (Trollope *Domestic Manners of the Americans*). She is also highly critical of American politics, which she views as corrupt and dysfunctional. Trollope also criticizes American society for its emphasis on material wealth and its lack of cultural refinement. Her criticism of American society as a whole is very much obvious from this statement of Trollope: "The children in America are not taught to make the distinctions of rank, which it is so necessary to establish in all communities, to prevent the confusion of mind, and the consequent disregard of the feelings and rights of others" (Trollope *Domestic Manners of the Americans*).

Trollope's representation of America in "*Domestic Manners of the Americans*" is nuanced and complex, with both positive and negative aspects. While she acknowledges the good qualities of the American people and culture, she is also highly critical of certain aspects of American life and society.

Biography of Author 1

Arularasi. P, Asst. Professor & Head, Rajiv Gandhi Arts and Science College, is the Coordinator of IQAC (NAAC), Coordinator for AISHE, NIRF and ARIIA of the Institution, officiating as State NSS Coordinator for Puducherry State NSS Cell, Government of Puducherry. Nominated as the Course Writer for B.A. English Literature, School of Humanities, TamilNadu Open University.. Translator in NPTEL and have translated the study material for the UG course. Received the Best NSS Programme Officer Award. Resource person of the Invited Talks such as "Poetry" "The Importance of Education & Soft skill", "The Importance of Soft skill Development", "Tamil Language and the Young Minds", "Education and Empowerment of Women on"Education Day, "Orienting the Young Minds". Had been an Expert Committee Member for conducting Inspection, Member of the Placement Guidance and also trained the students for Group Discussion for the Placement. Had been the Member of Board of Studies from 2010 to 2015, 2023

Biography of Author 2

Prof. Clement S Lourdes, Dean, School of Humanities, is a Creative writer, critic, translator, self-taught artist and a specialist in Indian Writing in English and translation Studies. Authored Prapanjan's Kuyil and other Stories and edited 5 more books. Published as many as many as 15 papers in reputed journals and 27 articles in periodicals. Produced 8 PhD and 32 MPhil candidates. Visited Reunion University (France) and delivered a series of 15 lectures on Indian English Fiction. Won international recognition as a portrait artist and the artistic creations have been appreciated by the leaders of UK, USA, Australia, Denmark, Saudi Arabia etc. Contributed a set of aircraft sketches to No1 Squadron of IAF for their Diamond Jubilee celebrations which are permanently exhibited at Tigers Museum.

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