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Introduction: RE-mapping travel writing in the 21st century

This special issue of *TEXT* invited scholars and creative writing academics from universities across four continents to create new pieces which emphasised current developments in, and the evolving significance of, travel writing in the 21st century. Contributors were invited to provide fresh perspectives on these themes:

- diverse voices and agency in contemporary travel literature;
- the writing and reading process as a journey: the impact of travel narratives on the reader and the writer;
- writing the unfamiliar in a globalised and internet-enabled world;
- what's left to discover: the future of travel literature and travel writing research;
- publishing travel narratives: current trends, genres, destinations and readership;
- gender and sexuality: constructing and exploring marginal spaces;
- ethical responsibility and travel writing in the 21st century;
- experimental styles and structures;
- social influences on travel writing: politics, science and culture; and
- writing identity: mapping the self through encounters with the 'other'.

RE-mapping travel writing in the 21st century explores these themes by highlighting issues in travel modes, travel trends and travel perspectives, and by focusing on new forms and styles, especially new interdisciplinary approaches and creative writing practice as research.

Travel writing in its various forms helped shape the way we understand the world. This is a world that keeps changing, and humans keep adapting to these changes, allowing new stories to be constructed on each journey. An evolution traceable in Western travel writing involves the increasing participation of the first-person author in accounts of the travel experience. While the ‘I’ was barely visible in ancient and medieval travel narratives, it has grown to become a central issue of 21st-century travel writing (Blanton 1995; Thompson 2011).

The ‘I’ that entered the travel narrative initially was male and imperial. Things changed when women travellers of the 18th century redefined gender roles through adding women’s perspective to travel accounts of Europe and beyond (Dolan 2001; Thompson 2011: 180ff). In the 19th century, women’s participation increased as travel became commercialised and popularized, but still travel writing was dominated by the Western world view of ‘others’ (see, for example, Clark 1999). In the 21st century, the concept of dominant-discourse northern Europeans journeying to the weed-strewn ruins of ancient civilisations to write bleatingly of curiosity, strangeness and plunder is not only naïve and self-indulgent, it is culturally offensive. With the impact of new technologies, new communications, new security risks, new geopolitical relations and new attitudes to the environment, travel has changed significantly and travel writing is now expected to reflect, analyse and keep up with the rapid changes.

Studies of historical travel writing have reminded us of the ideologies and idioms of elite and popular exoticism, both historical and contemporary (Leask 2002, Urry 1990). The relationship between mobility and literary expression is now questioned in terms of the politics of place, identity, global economy, asymmetrical power relations and the ecological impact of tourist incursion and consumption. While Jim Philip regarded travel writing as enabling a sense of international engagement (Philip 1993), Robyn Davidson remarked that travel books invoke nostalgia by creating the illusion ‘that there is an uncontaminated Elsewhere to discover’ (2002: 6).

Yet, writers are often travellers, and travel writing continues to be a celebrated genre of contemporary culture. Rather than conveying impressions of remote places out of reach for most readers, travel writing is, perhaps necessarily, as much about the impulse to express the writer’s immediate experience and sense of self, as it is about a

journey's object or destination. If 'Thoreau's impulse as a travel writer was to see the familiar in new ways', contemporary writing can sometimes work to familiarise history and culture by commodification (Helmets & Mazzeo 2009: 5). To resist this, writers like Rebecca Solnit create layered accounts of time and place, bringing together memoir, historical and geographical evidence, and social and cultural commentary through literary evocation. For Solnit, to write 'is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination... To read is to travel through that terrain with the author as guide' (Solnit 2001: 72).

Travel writing has many facets: discovering new territory, redefining society and the self, and discussing fresh modes of travelling. At the same time, McWha, Frost and Laing, discussing ethical approaches amongst travel writers and questioning the sustainable approach of the genre, say:

While travel writing has increasingly been embraced as a subject of scholarly discussion, with many scholars having conducted literary, textual or semiotic analyses of travel texts (e.g. Tavares & Brosseau 2006), there is still a dearth of research regarding travel writers' views on what they write and their motivations for doing so. (McWha, Frost & Laing 2017: 1402)

This special issue of *TEXT* focuses on travel writing as creative practice and academic research discipline in the 21st century, exploring the different modes this broad genre has to offer in a globalised, transcultural and more diverse world. It focuses on travel modes, travel trends and travel perspectives.

Travel modes

Ben Stubbs explores nocturnal travel writing in his paper 'The night writer: The emergence of nocturnal travel writing' and provides insight into an overlooked mode of travelling and travel writing. In this article, he discusses the emergence and development of night writing and also highlights how the night influences the nocturnal travel writer.

In his article ‘Literary tourism: Readers, writers and being there’, Nigel Krauth examines literary tourism in light of self-educational aspects of the European Grand Tour recorded by writers across four centuries. Nigel also provides insight into the writer’s mind and discusses a literary pilgrimage he undertook as writer in Central Western Queensland in 1981.

Kate Douglas addresses an often-overlooked mode of travelling and travel writing – children and families as travellers – in her life narrative essay ‘To move with quick, gentle steps’. She highlights children and youth as travellers and discusses how and what our ethical responsibilities are as we engage in and document our travel in the twenty-first century.

In ‘Travelling in the traces of...: The travelogue and its pre-texts’, Manfred Pfister argues that ‘travelling is always travelling in traces’ and explores how travel writing becomes a form of self-writing. He focuses on modern and postmodern travel accounts and looks into the lives of some of the 18th to 20th century’s most influential travel writers such as Chatwin, Stark, Lawrence and Johnson.

Utilising a fusion of memoir, ficto-criticism, literary analysis and creative non-fiction, in ‘Empire’, Sally Breen examines the complex and often problematic nature of the travel writing form and its contributions to cultural representation and analysis. She suggests that travel writing which opens out beyond the self does more to advance the form and address its implicit problematics.

Travel trends

Kate Cantrell examines female wandering in her article ‘Wandering with Wi-Fi: The wandering trend in women’s travel blogs’. She not only explores how or why women wander but also argues that the blogs wandering women produce are ‘wandering’ texts that combine the physical wandering of the body with the abstract wondering of the mind.

Stefan Jatschka addresses a lack of interdisciplinary research regarding the selfie as a socio-cultural phenomenon in his article ‘The travel selfie: Exploring the writer’s

vision in contemporary travel writing'. He analyses the influential travel blog of Drew Binsky in order to investigate what a travel selfie may contribute to a writer's travel account and explores the vision of the 21st-century online travel writer who uses travel selfies as a narrative device.

Matthew Day explores the editorial role in contemporary travel blogs in his article 'From Richard Eden to *Everything Everywhere*: Discourses of travel writing from early modern editors to the contemporary travel blog'. He investigates the editorial role of travel bloggers in gathering, selecting, shaping and disseminating content, the use of images and links with advertising, changing attitudes to style, and engagement with readers.

In her personal creative non-fiction essay 'Continental drifter: Solo traveller', Rebecca Haque looks back at her own travels and how being a nomad has shaped her self. She poses poignant questions in the nostalgic memories of her essay that address migration, youth and the impact of the solo traveller who seems too restless to settle down.

Jane Hanley discusses the intersection of ethnographic, reflexive and anecdotal styles in travel writing produced out of contemporary international volunteer tourism – an increasing travel trend in the 21st century. In her article 'International solidarity, volunteer tourism and travel writing: Mexico and Central America in Spanish and English', the author analyses the impact of volunteer tourism on the production of a narrating subject and on the representation of host communities.

Travel perspectives

In 'The scent of things: Travel and the traces of the past', Stephanie Green explores the representability of travel writing as material engagement and as a creative endeavour of scholarly inquiry. She uses a framed auto/narrative which follows a sequence of journeys undertaken by the author herself, in reverse order, that speak to questions of authenticity and illusion across space and time.

In ‘On the death of travel writing: An autoethnographic inquiry’, Caleb Lee González uses an autoethnographic approach to connect his own travel writing identity and family history of migrancy to larger historic, cultural, political, and social meanings. Furthermore, he explores what it means to engage in travel writing, while working toward a global understanding through stories of travel, movement and migrancy.

Nigel Krauth challenges the perspective travellers take on their journeys with a discussion about prepositions in his story ‘On / In Mykonos’.

Sue Lovell, Bridget Thomas and Olga Wickham examine Australian cli-fi in their article ‘Neither fish nor fowl: Traveling across genres and disciplines through 21st century Australian Cli-fi’ – focussing predominantly from the 21st century and its use of concepts familiar from travel writing. The authors argue that travel concepts, as they are engaged in non-narrative travel literature, enable an engagement with cli-fi that moves beyond debates about its generic or literary status to deeper more existentially relevant understandings of what it means to be human in the 21st century.

In ‘Travel writing: Always has always will be’, Jono Lineen explores some of the universal structures of experiential travel writing under the prism of the journey narrative and argues that travel and narrative is in all of us through our ancestral memories of *Homo sapiens*’ seventy-millennia long history of migration around the globe.

In ‘The quest for tourism authenticity: The mediation and appropriation of literary-induced tourism’, Susan Sullivan examines themes from literature and subsequent adaptations into popular culture via film and television and how these themes are appropriated by tourism communicators to portray an authentic tourism experience. The author analyses examples of tourist locations that are appropriated and mediated into literary-based storytelling by travel writers in order to attract visitors.

In her article ‘Prosthetic journeys: Re-thinking travel writing through documentary adaptation’, Tash Turgoose deconstructs visual and verbal elements of Joanna Lumley’s *In the Land of Northern Lights* (2008) for the purpose of adaptation into a multimodal, static form. The author explores the possibilities for these adaptations

through a practice-led approach and provides an insight into both the process and practice of adapting form.

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