Travel, Writing and the Media
Contemporary and Historical Perspectives

Edited by
Barbara Korte and
Anna Karina Sennefelder

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Introduction

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Travel, Media and Mediation

The chapters of this book were written during the coronavirus pandemic – a time when travel stood still and made many people aware of the extent to which mobility and travel had become part of their life. Yet, while actual travel was impaired, armchair travel was still possible, enabled by travel books and magazines, television documentaries, online media, video games or virtual reality tours.[1] Such travel by proxy has a long history because, as the saying goes, "(s)he who travels has stories to tell". Travellers seem to always have had the desire to record and communicate their journeys in words and images, just as people appear to always have been interested in learning about others' experiences of travel and the worlds they visited. This desire to talk and hear about travel has led almost naturally to descriptions and depictions, as well as the mediation of travel: the formation and circulation of its representations in various kinds of media. In recent research, the term "mediation" often overlaps with and is not always clearly differentiated from the terms "medialisation" or "mediatisation", which refer more specifically to media-societal relations and the way media permeate and actively construct our everyday lives and the experience of reality.[2] All three terms are used in this volume, as we chose not to enforce a single conceptual frame on the contributors. As a result, the chapters reflect the flux in media studies terminology as well as the contributors' various academic backgrounds, and the whole volume demonstrates how its field of inquiry demands a multi- and interdisciplinary approach.

The nexus between travel and media is highlighted by the profound impact of digital media, but this book aims to show that travel practice and representation have always been enlaced with media and subjected to changing standards of mediation. While the chapters in this volume are concerned with representation within a wide range of media, from the hand-crafted album to Instagram, we still use the term "travel writing" to refer to an essentially narrative rendering of travel experienced by an individual.[3] In the history of (Western) travel mediation, print is probably the medium that first comes to mind, even if it was not the

first in which travel was recorded. Travel writing has been a staple of print culture since at least the eighteenth century. So has "secondary travel writing", such as "apodemic or instructional works for the use of travellers, from gentleman adventurers to emigrants to a very modern kind of tourist" (Bell 2020, 132–133). Another secondary form consists of the geo- and anthropographic descriptions derived from travel, for instance the book publications that were related to the great exploration voyages of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In both primary and secondary forms, travel writing has remained a popular and profitable segment of the twenty-first-century book market, and print publications are now also remediated into digital and audio forms, and are available as e-books and audiobooks. To name just one example: at the time of writing this introduction, in spring 2021, a popular classic of English travel writing, Patrick Leigh Fermor's *A Time of Gifts* (1977), the first part of his memoir of a journey on foot from Holland to Constantinople, was available in hardback and paperback editions, as an audiobook (Audible edition) and as an e-book (Kindle edition). This shift of the same text (or, more precisely, textual substrate) into other material and sensory modalities has consequences for its reception.[4]

Apart from phenomena of remediation,[5] a glance at the book market also reveals to what extent contemporary travel mediation is affected by media convergence (see Jenkins 2006). On the British book market, quite a few travel books are tie-ins with television productions by major broadcasters like the BBC or ITV; for example, the cover of Julia Bradford's *Unforgettable Walks* (2016) is explicitly marked "as seen on ITV". Additionally, all of Bradford's television walks are listed on a website that provides fans of the British presenter with maps and descriptions so that they can do these walks themselves.[6] Travel writing in the medium of the book is thus often part of a "multimedial profile", as Bill Bell notes (2020, 138). Bell also points to the continuum in today's (multi-) media environment:

> In the end, while travel blogs, Trip Advisor, and online travel advisories might appear to demonstrate a break with the past, it might be argued that, in attempting to keep one step ahead of changing demands, they represent one more stage in a process that began with the industrialisation of print over two centuries ago.
>
> (139)

It is hardly deniable, though, that digital media and media platforms have made the nexus between travel practice and mediation more complex and interdependent than it was in the earlier stages of media history.[7] While migrating from manuscript to print, and from there to radio, cinema and television, and then to online media, travel writing has always adapted to, and accumulated, the respective standards and modalities

of these media. All media mentioned above are coexistent, but they also converge, and travel writing today manifests itself as a *trans*media phenomenon.[8] This is addressed in this book, as is the long-standing tradition of *inter*mediality in travel writing, in particular a co-presence of text and visual material (maps, drawings, photographs) in manuscript as well as print culture. As Alù and Hill observe,

> [t]ravel writing, in its varied forms and formats, has long been deeply implicated with visual practices. Seeing, looking and gazing are entrenched in the majority of travellers' narratives. [...] Historically, it is above all through seeing that distant places, landscapes, foreign people, animals and objects seem to gain consistency. The gaze is then transferred into the text whether in written or in visual form.
>
> (2018, 1)

If print media tend to emphasise the primacy of the visual experience in travel, then audio and audiovisual media encourage the inclusion of travel soundscapes. The way in which online media remediate older media and establish multiple media connections has created an intricate situation of coexisting medialities and modalities in the mediation of travel.

But this is only one side of the coin. The practice of travel itself has become increasingly mediatised and has transformed in the process. Just like traditional travel writing has been absorbed by the new media, travel has embedded mediation within its own practices. In present-day travel, the selfie stick has become just as important as the walking stick; travelling today entails taking photos, filming, posting, blogging, vlogging and commenting online before, during and after the journey. The smartphone, a device that is almost an extension of the traveller's body, epitomises today's convergence of media and travel practice, not least because it combines functions formerly distributed among other travel accessories such as cameras, guides, maps and old-fashioned paper diaries. The smartphone is used for gaining information about routes and sights, to book tickets and hotels, to take photos and videos for social media, where they are then shared with others. All this can happen within minutes, so that travel practice, experience, representation and mediation are almost instantaneous. The smartphone has also encouraged a form of self-representation of the traveller – the selfie – that has become ubiquitous and has left a significant imprint not only on touristic sites, in the form of over-visited selfie spots, but also on the construction of travellers' images and identities (see, for example, Gretzel 2017). Having said this, one has to note, however, that there is a long tradition of travellers carrying media equipment to record their journeys and to enable specific travel experiences. Picturesque tourism around 1800 is a case in point, as it was a highly mediatised (and intermedial) affair from

the start. This form of landscape tourism was first popularised in England during the last quarter of the eighteenth century due to the dissemination of illustrated guide books such as William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales* (1782). Travellers in search of the picturesque came with aesthetic expectations that were prefigured by verbal and pictorial representation, and they often carried a Claude glass with them, a mirror that framed and tinted their perception of a landscape view in the manner of a painting. Of course, these tourists were also typically equipped with sketchbooks that allowed them to take an on-the-spot impression of the picturesque view. All this seems to anticipate practices of the smartphone age, and the use of the Claude glass has been compared to the use of filters on Instagram photos (see Robert 2013; Smith 2017).

The so-called 'new' media[9] pervade travel to an even higher degree than older media, even where the most traditional forms of travel are concerned. When Nick Hunt walked from Holland to Istanbul in the footsteps of Patrick Leigh Fermor, he was aware that he was travelling in a different Europe, and across a different media landscape, than Fermor had in the 1930s. Hunt's own travel book, *Walking the Woods and the Water* (2014), communicates this awareness from the start: Hunt and his girlfriend say their goodbyes over mobile phone, and a relative living in Rotterdam shows Hunt his route on Google Earth because Hunt did not bring a paper map of Holland ("dragging and clicking, dragging and clicking, my journey unfolded before me in an abstraction of pixels", 14). Significantly, the tradition-minded traveller remediates the electronic map into a handwritten sketch ("took this opportunity to scribble down a basic diagram of waterways and bridges", ibid.), but he appreciates that the Couch Surfing website helps him find accommodation ("an ancient tradition of hospitality […] to which the internet had given new meaning", 17) and that, because news about his travel project spread on the internet among "the rhizomatic network" of Fermor fans, his own network of contacts was further extended (186).

Media Awareness in Travel/Writing Research

The convergence of travel and media enabled by digitisation has received much attention by the disciplines concerned with travel practice (tourism studies, sociology, human geography, media and communication studies, cultural studies). Research interests in these disciplines include the role of the smartphone and the impact of destination webpages, booking platforms and posts on social media. There is also work about the influence of media representations on travel, for example in the form of film- and television-induced tourism.[10] Studies on travel journalism have traced its development across media, and examined journalism's impact on travel and tourism.[11]

Studies of narrative travel writing, by contrast, lag behind as far as aspects of media and mediation are concerned. With few exceptions, such aspects have only recently begun to appear in introductions and handbooks of travel writing.[12] Even the printed travelogue has only sporadically been considered in light of the affordances of print for travel mediation,[13] and much of this work is concerned with the interplay of text and image in travel writing.[14] Even less attention has been paid to narrative travel representation in the audiovisual media of the twentieth century: a volume of essays edited by Jeffrey Ruoff (2006) unfolds the history of the travelogue in cinema, from silent film to IMAX, but the role of travel writing for radio (which is still a staple of radio programming today) is a widely neglected area (however, see Christopher Meid's contribution in this book). The rise of online media may have initiated a media turn in travel writing studies; it has definitely expanded the way travel writing is understood. Discussions of blogs and selfies, for example, not only describe their media-technological affordances but also reveal that these forms of mediation have a narrative and autobiographical dimension that they share with more traditional manifestations of travel writing.[15] Online media are enabling new textual and audiovisual forms of travel representation, as well as new media convergences, while remaining related to long-established forms of travel writing. New research questions and agendas have emerged from the new media constellations of the twenty-first century: what new aesthetics and poetics of travel writing arise with new media affordances; what to make of all the instantaneously shared and distributed travel writings in online forums and posts; and how to manage the daily growing number of "produsers" (Klemm 2016, 35) of travel narratives? Travel writing in the twenty-first century is a complex transmedia phenomenon marked by continuities, change, convergences and intermedial relationships. This complexity deserves more in-depth study, which this volume aims to offer from both a contemporary and a historical perspective. Its chapters illustrate how current transformations invite us to revisit earlier periods of travel writing and their media environments, and to explore the ways in which contemporary forms of mediation are prefigured by earlier practices and forms.

Survey of Chapters

The chapters of this volume were written by experts in literary and cultural studies as well as journalism and digital culture studies. The chapters explore the nexus between travel representation and the media through case studies on select, interconnected issues, and they illustrate general observations with specific analyses. The chapters are arranged along the lines of media history, tracing developments from the early modern period to the present digital age. They explore in what respects

contemporary forms of travel mediation are anticipated by earlier forms, and how established forms adapt to more recent media environments and affordances.

In Chapter 1, "Travel in Social Media: From Historical Albums to Selfies and Stories", **Annegret Pelz** discusses the forms and functions of historical travel albums as an antecedent of the (self-)presentation of travel and travellers on social media in the twenty-first century. Travel albums are blank books filled with handwritten comments, drawings, ready-made prints, texts and objects during a journey, and which therefore have mixed-media and intermedial content. Originating in the early modern period, these portable media allowed travellers to keep a record of encounters, events and experiences, thus eventually also serving as a travel souvenir. In a cross-period approach, Pelz examines three German albums from different periods: the friendship album of a student from the late eighteenth century; Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau's albums covering his famous travels in England; and the subversive travel album created in 1937 by the emigrant writer Max Herrmann-Neiße. These examples illustrate practices reiterated on twenty-first-century social media: declaring friendship and forming networks, recording a journey with different kinds of texts and images, and self-presentation of the traveller. With its scrutiny of a historical medium, the chapter challenges the view that digital social media platforms are 'new' media in every respect; when viewed from a historical perspective, analogue and digital media appear to have more in common than is often assumed.

Chapters 2 and 3 look at travel representation in the nineteenth-century periodical press, addressing the fact that this important and prolific segment of travel mediation in print is largely unexplored. The nineteenth century was fascinated with travel and knowledge about the wider world, and the quickly expanding periodicals market aimed to serve this fascination. **Kirsten Belgum** discusses periodicals entirely dedicated to geography and travel (a type of magazine that has survived until the present day). In "Travelling Texts and the Influence of Images: Nineteenth-Century Popular Geographical Travel Magazines", she outlines both the transnational character and uniquely national variations of these publications, discussing the pioneering French magazine *Le Tour du Monde* (1860–1914), its German counterpart *Globus* (1862–1910) and the British serial publication *All Round the World* (1861–1877). As Belgum demonstrates, verbal and visual content was traded between the various European publications; the illustrated travel magazine depended on the availability of images from around the world and a trade in clichés of such images. The mediation of travel in the nineteenth century was thus dependent not only on available media forms and technologies but also on a well-organised media market. In "The Media Logic of Victorian Periodicals", **Barbara Korte** explores the special affordances of periodical publication for travel writing and reading, in contrast to

that of book publication. Three British general-interest magazines of the mid-nineteenth century are in the focus of the chapter: *Leisure Hour*, *Good Words* and *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*. These magazines exemplify general features of travel writing in periodicals, but comparing them reveals their individual profiles and modes of address. The chapter is informed by recent theorisation in periodical studies and emphasises the significance of typical features of periodical publication for travel writing, such as seriality and periodicity, the co-presence of travel and other topics, and the intermediality of illustrated periodicals. Illustrations were a special asset of all travel publishing in the second half of the nineteenth century, when "the consumer of travel accounts was coming increasingly to demand texts that not only told but showed what its author had seen" (Bell 2020, 127).

The periodicals discussed by Belgum and Korte were all illustrated with engravings. The reproduction of photographs required further developments in print technology, and it took some time for photography to become part of the print culture of travel. In principle, as Peter Osborne writes in his study *Travelling Light*, "[a]s soon as there was photography there was travel photography" (2000, 3).[16] However, Osborne notes that this "was not due to an instant convergence between itself and the culture of travel", but rather "a leap in the evolution of types of image-making long associated with travelling" (ibid.). In Chapter 4, **Charles Forsdick** discusses another such leap and shows how the availability of lightweight camera equipment (as well as lightweight typewriters) revolutionised the poetics of travel. Forsdick focuses on two important travel writers of the 1930s, Ella Maillart and Peter Fleming, who travelled through China together in 1935. As their separate accounts of the journey reveal, for them the Leica camera was not only a means of recording the journey but also a prop for self-representation and a tool of intercultural encounter. Furthermore, Forsdick discusses the role of the Leica as an example of product placement in the travelogue – a practice that has become common in contemporary online media.

The presence of illustrations in travel writing supports the observation that "accounts of travel tend to isolate vision from the other senses" (Topping 2016, 79). This tendency is countered in audio-mediations of travel, for instance in radio programmes or the more recent travel podcasts. In Chapter 5, **Christopher Meid** scrutinises "German Radio Travelogues in the 1950s" by Wolfgang Koeppen and Ernst Schnabel, two important representatives of West German literature at the time. In a country still haunted by its recent past, travelogues occupied a central place in the literary scene, in radio as well as print; indeed, popular radio travelogues were often remediated into print. Meid discusses how and to what extent the radio environment shaped the travel text, and how the competition between audio and print media in the 1950s helped to promote travel writing. Chapter 6 also illuminates transitions

between media, but for a specific type of travel. In "Walking Books", **Barbara Schaff** traces "Practices, Semantics and Mediations of Literary Walks", from Romantic literary tradition to digital media. The chapter first outlines the reciprocal relationship between the practices of walking and writing in the process of literary creation since Romanticism. Schaff shows, for example, how English writers such as Wordsworth, Hazlitt and Byron synchronised walking with the rhythm of their thoughts and, subsequently, their texts. The second part of the chapter addresses the conspicuous presence of (literary) walks in the present-day media landscape. Walks in the footsteps of writers and their works have become a product of the tourist, as well as media, industries. They are the content of online media, but they still flourish in the form of radio and television programmes.

Travel programmes became increasingly popular on television during the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the form of first-person, presenter-led documentaries. Having proved their success with audiences, such programmes are now also produced for the new television of streaming platforms. In Chapter 7, "Binge-Watching the World: Contemporary Travel Television on Netflix", **Tanja Kapp** shows that streaming television provides much more than simply a new form of access to television programmes. The streaming platform Netflix is an entirely new digital environment that destabilises established genre notions of (televisual) travel writing because it juxtaposes factual and fictional programmes. Kapp examines two first-person, original Netflix docuseries, *Dark Tourist* (2018) and *Jack Whitehall: Travels with My Father* (2017–2020), and demonstrates how these personalised documentaries are infiltrated by the conventions of the television dramas with which they are co-present in the Netflix library and on the Netflix user interface. Kapp suggests that Netflix-as-paratext affords ways of reception that are no longer grounded in established generic categorisations, but are anchored within affective visualisation.

Like the travel programmes on Netflix, the video games discussed in Chapter 8 are calculated for response and effect. These games offer virtual travel and are embedded in the history of touristic mobility and travel writing, but they also constitute a form of writing with its own specific affordances. **Tom van Nuenen** points out in "Travel Writing and Video Games" that three-dimensional games such as the *Assassin's Creed* series, *Dark Souls*, *Firewatch* and *Death Stranding* not only model spatial engagement in sophisticated environments but also demand that the player adopts an embodied position.

In Chapter 9, **Anna Karina Sennefelder** addresses the traveller's body as represented in selfies on social media and how selfies influence the self-representation of female travellers in recent personalised documentaries made for German cinema. Selfies have been described by Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas (2018) as a visual form of first-person travel

narration and hence a variant of travel writing as life writing – an aspect that is pronounced in the films discussed by Sennefelder: *Expedition Happiness* (2017) and *Leaving the Frame* (2019). Sennefelder asks whether we can speak of a "Harmful or Empowering Convergence" of travel selfies and documentaries, with regards to their imaging of the female travelling body. The way the young Australian polar traveller Jade Hameister is represented on social media and in other media can be considered empowering. Hameister is the core example of Chapter 10, "Youth and Travel Narration: Exploring the Jade Hameister Archive", in which **Kylie Cardell** and **Kate Douglas** investigate the mediation of Hameister's travel stories across different media, including memoir, documentary and social media. Hameister presents an autobiographical story that adapts to and transforms in relation to the various media she uses. As the authors conclude, "the Hameister archive reveals the tensions and benefits between different modes of travel writing, and the ways in which young people creating travel works intermedially are shaping the future of travel writing".

Chapter 11 addresses intercultural issues of mediation. In "Challenging the Tourist Gaze? Exploring Majority World Countries", journalism scholars **Phoebe Maares** and **Folker Hanusch** depart from the idea that social media platforms enable anyone to reach a large, potentially global following, or to become influencers who can make a living from travelling and mediating their travel impressions. Their chapter asks whether 'Majority World' influencers (in other words, influencers from the Global South), as non-traditional journalistic actors, have the power to challenge the cultural imperialism and lack of close contact with other cultures often identified in Minority World travel writing, journalism and photography. In a structural and quantitative approach, Hanusch and Maares offer a first exploration of the accounts of ten travel Instagram influencers from Asia, Africa and Latin America, and suggest that counter-narratives occur in two modes: either when countering texts accompany images that reproduce dominant narratives, or when the tourist gaze is challenged both visually and textually.

The volume closes with a media-reflexive contribution. In Chapter 12, Stefano Calzati examines "Travel Writing between Poetics and Politics" and presents case studies that shed light on the tensions between travel writing as a textual genre and the various media in which it manifests. As Calzati claims, the present-day proliferation of mediation and mediatisation enriches and diversifies the poetics of travel writing, but it also needs to be linked to the politics that lie behind the textualisation of travelling and writing. The digital media have created new forms of online travel writing, such as blogs and Instagram posts, but they also challenge practices of travel/writing in the medium of the book, as is illustrated by two examples: the travel book *Crónica de viaje* (2009) by the Spanish writer Jorge Carrión, which questions the generic features of

travel writing by foregrounding the role of the Web as a meta-medium; and *1 the Road* (2018), an even more radical example of the mediati(sati)on of the travel writing genre, as it is the first travelogue co-written by an Artificial Neural Network that was literally put on the road. Through such examples, the chapter draws broader reflections on the consubstantiality of genre and medium, and points to possible future lines of research.

Notes

 1 On opportunities for virtual-reality travel during the pandemic see, for example, Joseph (2020).
 2 This understanding of mediatisation is elaborated in Couldry and Hepp (2016). For a critical discussion of "mediatisation" versus "mediation" see, for example, Corner (2018). See also the distinctions made by Stefano Calzati in his contribution to the present volume.
 3 With its generic openness, travel writing is notoriously difficult to define even when viewed as merely a literary phenomenon. See, for example, Thompson (2011, chapter 2) and Borm (2004). Furthermore, the term persists in analyses of contemporary digital forms of travel representation, such as the research by Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas (2018) on the selfie "as travel writing".
 4 Modality is the way in which information is encoded. Modal analysis has gained speed in media studies over recent years. See, for example, Elleström (2010), who first distinguished between aspects of material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic modality and who recently published an expanded version of his theoretical framework on "the multimodal character of media products" by focussing on "media integration" and "media transformation" (2021).
 5 For the concept of remediation see, of course, Bolter and Grusin (1999) and their observation that all media, not only the digital media, refashion other media.
 6 "Julia Bradford Walks" on "The Outdoor Guide", https://theoutdoorguide.co.uk/walks/julia-bradbury-walks/.
 7 The bizarre forms of "travelling in the footsteps of" that can occur thanks to geo-tagging and online connectivity are emphasised in Madelene Blaer's article on adaptations and reimaginations of traditional travelogues in the digital age. For example, the follower of a well-known Australian travel blogger did not only travel in the footsteps of the influencer, but also imitated all of her picture posts down to the last detail, "sometimes even copying the caption" (2019, 80).
 8 On phenomena of transmediation, see, for example, Freeman and Gambarato (2019).
 9 For a short but precise reflection on the ambiguity of "new" within the term "new media" see Gitelman (2017).
10 On cinema-induced tourism see also Beeton (2015). For a more comprehensive overview see the volume edited by Månsson et al. (2020). When comparing this recent volume to an earlier publication in the field, Crouch, Jackson and Thompson (2005), it is immediately apparent how quickly and intensely the online media gained impact on tourism, while the influence of audiovisual media remains significant.
11 See, for example, Hanusch and Fürsich (2014), Pirolli (2018) and Cocking (2020).

12 Youngs (2013) refers to travel/writing on the internet (178–182); media-related chapters are found in Thompson (2016) on travel blogs (by Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas); Clarke (2018) on postcolonial travel journalism and the new media (by Brian Creech); Das and Youngs (2019) on travel in the digital age (by Paul Arthur and Tom van Nuenen 2019); Pettinger and Youngs (2020) on book and print technology (by Innes Keighren).

13 Keighren, Withers and Bell's *Travels into Print* (2015) is a pioneering work.

14 For a major study see Stafford's *Voyage into Substance* (1984). For the use of visual images in travel writing see also the surveys by Leitch (2019) and Alù and Hill (2018).

15 See, for instance, Cardell and Douglas (2016), Azariah (2016) and Calzati (2018) on travel blogs, or Cardell and Douglas (2018) on travel selfies.

16 For a historical survey of the relationship between photography and travel see also Smith (2013).

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