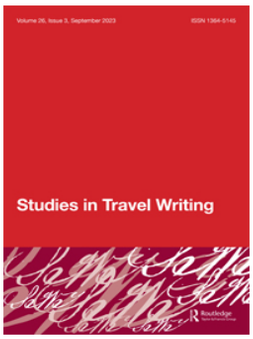

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Introduction: travel writing and the travellee

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ABSTRACT

First coined by Mary Louise Pratt in 1992, the concept of the "travellee" has received a growing amount of interest in research on travel writing. Exploring the methodological possibilities opened up by the perspective of the travellee, the six articles in this special issue aim both to sharpen the edges of this concept and to test it as a key which may open doors into new disciplinary directions, including geography, political history, anthropology, and translation studies. As the contributions confirm, the encounter between self and other which defines travel writing is certainly a more multifaceted phenomenon than simply an instance where a travelling self acknowledges the presence of "locals". Indeed, attention to the agency and multiple roles of travellees helps to elucidate not only the cultural significance of travel writing but also its temporal dimension.

KEYWORDS

Travellee; other; temporality; agency; post-colonial; translation

If travel writing is understood as the product of an encounter between self and other which is brought about by movement in space (Thompson 2011, 9–10), why should the study of travel writing remain focussed only on one side of this encounter, the travelling self? In her seminal work *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt criticised colonial meaning-making from a post-colonial perspective, and in this context coined the term "travellee", meaning "those who participate on the receiving end" of travel (Pratt 1992, 242). As Pratt pointed out, all travel accounts have a "heteroglossic dimension", which means that we, as scholars, need not stick with "author-centred ways" of reading them but can – and indeed should – look beyond the author-traveller's "sensibility and powers of observation" (Pratt 1992, 135–6).

While Pratt introduced the concept of the travellee in a discussion of Alexander von Humboldt's (1769–1859) interaction with South American informants (who ought to be recognised as contributors to Humboldt's "discoveries"), as Pratt herself admitted, "travellee" is a somewhat "clumsy" term (Pratt 1992, 242). More recently, Catherine Mee has examined comparable "travel encounters" in a very different context: in recent French and Italian travel writing (Mee 2014, 3). Accordingly, Mee has aimed to counter one of the shortcomings of the term "travellee": its "grammatical passivity". As such, she has

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highlighted the travellee as a subject performing actions "to or for the traveller", something which Pratt's original usage of the concept also implied but which is easily lost if the travellee is only considered as being analogous to "addressee" (Mee 2014, 4–5; Pratt 1992, 242). While, as Charles Forsdick has rightly observed, in travel writing published before the twentieth century "textualization of 'travellees' and their culture had depended above all on strategies of containment and imposition of coherence" (Forsdick 2005, 140), cracks in these systems of "containment" have always enabled travellees to disrupt the narratives written about them. Accordingly, despite its dichotomous relationship with the grammatically active term "traveller", the travellee should also be considered as a subject with an agency in travel writing.

Alasdair Pettinger has done this by, in a way, reversing Pratt's perspective and directing attention to instances where travellees engage in "people watching". This is done through an analysis of works in which "[t]he narrator writes from a point of view of immobility, drawn to the people who approach or pass by" (Pettinger 2021, 213). In other words, at least in modern travel writing it is also possible to consider the narrator as a travellee. In fact, during the three decades that have passed since the coinage of the term travellee, it has not only been applied in studies of different types of travel writing; the concept has also been developed further. Thus, although first introducing the travellee along the lines of the definition given by Pratt, as "a passive rather than active entity, observed rather than observing", Paul Smethurst acknowledges that Wendy Bracewell has presented travellees as readers of travel writing who are able to react to the traveller's gaze and "write back" (Smethurst 2019, 269–70). Indeed, even though "writing back" signals a post-colonial attitude, the idea of a subaltern travellee reacting to a travelogue by writing "back" and refuting it did not feature in Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*. Instead, the figure of the travellee as an author publicly responding to a travelogue about his/her country has been established by Bracewell, who, more than any other scholar, has contributed to the elaboration of the concept of the travellee.

Applying this concept from Pratt's discussion of Humboldt's exploration of South America to intra-European debates revolving around customs and manners, Bracewell has, in a series of studies, shown that early modern and nineteenth-century travellees were interested in their home countries' reputation and ready to defend it in writing. Firstly, educated travellees across Europe were able to access works written in major European languages; secondly, as regards the rhetorical protocols of travelogues, they were invited to share the narrator's opinions while also "recognizing themselves as the objects of his gaze" (Bracewell 2015, 216–17). The resulting responses can be found in reviews, translations, and in "travel polemics" including the sub-genre of the "counter-travelogue" (Bracewell 2015, 217–18). Curiously, as Bracewell has noted, in the early modern period travel writers often do not seem to have considered travellees as a potential audience for their writing, but rather wrote for their own domestic readers (Bracewell 2019, 549). Travellee critics, however, readily sought to refute the ethnographic truth forged by foreign travellers, suggesting "inaccuracy, generalization from anecdote, malicious misrepresentation", as well as reliance on questionable sources (Bracewell 2019, 564). As demonstrated by the rich material referenced by Bracewell, the perspective of the travellee can in fact be usefully employed to give voice to the others depicted by the travelling selves.

As noted by Tim Hannigan, Bracewell's focus on intra-European polemics "helpfully 'disaggregates' the idea of a monolithic Europe" (Hannigan 2019, 379–80; Bracewell 2015, 216). Thus, applying Bracewell's concept of travellee polemic to the "new nature

writing" of the twenty-first century, Hannigan himself has read James Rebanks' *The Shepherd's Life* (2015) as a Lake District travellee's response to old and new writing about rural Britain. Evidently, exploring the methodological possibilities provided by probing the perspective of the travellee is a worthwhile exercise, and for this reason the six articles in this special issue aim both to sharpen the edges of the concept and to test it as a key which may open doors into new disciplinary directions, including (but not limited to) geography, political history, anthropology, and translation studies.

In her opening essay, Wendy Bracewell further develops her analysis of what the concept of "travellee" encompasses. In an analogy with readers (real-life readers, fictive addressees, and readers as decoders), a distinction is made between the positions of real-life travellees, fictive travellees and travellee-readers. As Bracewell points out, these categories can be divided into even more types of travellees, some of which figure in the articles that follow. Contrary to the assumption that the travellee's social status is typically lower than that of the traveller, Bracewell reminds us that the category of the real-life travellee may in fact include practically anyone, including fellow travellers. Another thing to bear in mind is that the travellees we encounter in travel narratives are always fictive, "textual manifestations" of real-life travellees created by traveller-authors for their own purposes. The category of the fictive travellee also includes, for example, such "travellee-travellers" who are the narrators of "reverse travels" or "write back" to the metropolitan centre while identifying with a colonised people. Moreover, as Bracewell points out, a person who is a traveller in one text can be a travellee in another, as in the case of the Italian writer Giuseppe Baretti (1719–89). Indeed, according to Bracewell, the figure of Baretti "challenges the still common notion that the travellee is mute, passive, and immobile" (Bracewell 2024). This is something that the following articles also aim to do, each from their own specific perspective. The third category of travellees identified by Bracewell – that of the travellee-reader – is therefore the one elaborated the most (2024). Actively responding to representations of a society which they take as their own, travellee-readers are invited to see their home country with the eyes of another while also finding themselves the objects of a foreign gaze. The possible conflict that arises when travellee-readers consider to what extent they agree with the traveller's description may then result in a travellee polemic. However, as Bracewell notes, travellee readings can be *acquiescent* or *negotiated* as well as downright *oppositional* (on these terms, see Hall 1980, 136–8).

Considering how travellee-readers compare with the "geo-graphed" readers who found their home countries described in eighteenth-century geography books, Dean Bond contends that the collaborative ethos of scientific production of knowledge inspired local responses which can be characterised as writing *with* geographers instead of writing *back* – in the postcolonial sense – to refute their descriptions. Taking up the example of the German geographer Anton Friedrich Büsching's (1724–93) gargantuan *Neue Erdbeschreibung* (in German: New Description of the Earth) (Hamburg, 1754–92) and the reactions it provoked in the press, Bond spotlights lengthy travellee revisions published in a journal based in Zurich, another one based in Frankfurt am Main, and in the English translation *A New System of Geography* (London, 1762). As it turns out, applying Bracewell's work on the concept of the travellee to the study of geographical knowledge construction in the Enlightenment period does help to appreciate the multi-site nature of this enterprise and "the power of place" (Withers 2007, 9). At the same time, the fact that the

reactions of the geo-graphed to inaccurate representations of their home countries seem, on the whole, to have been more dispassionate than those of the travellee-readers indicates that geography was firmly embedded in a culture of science which did not define the contemporary responses to travel writing. Indeed, as Bond points out, Büsching himself "appealed to readers of his geography to submit to him more accurate geographical knowledge if they found errors in his descriptions" (Bond 2024). Yet it should also be noted that for the geo-graphed, amending descriptions of their domestic regions was motivated not only by an interest in improving scientific knowledge *per se*, but, similarly to travellee polemics, also by patriotic sentiment (Bracewell 2019, 550).

Discussing a case of political travel writing translated back into the culture described, Laura Tarkka (Tarkka 2024) directs attention to the fact that representations which flattered national pride could also provoke criticism among travellees. As Tarkka points out, the British reception of the first part of Johann Wilhelm von Archenholtz's (1741–1812) *England und Italien* (Leipzig, 1785) was ambivalent even though this work – originally composed as a "counter image" to German principalities – is known as one of the most prominent examples of eighteenth-century Anglophilia (Maurer 1987, 188–9). The criticism of British reviewers, as well as the British translators' meddling with the contents of *England*, is explained by Archenholtz's praise of "republican" public spirit in the Kingdom of Great Britain. Indeed, for the sake of rhetorical acumen, republican-minded British travellees found themselves unable to publicly accept Archenholtz's image of their country's constitution. Moreover, as the violent events following the French Revolution unfolded, *England* was retranslated in a way that was better suited for patriotic and reactionary sentiments among the travellees – who would now have read the work with the recently founded French Republic in mind. In Bracewell's terms quoted above, Archenholtz's British reviewers and translator-editors were therefore active travellee-readers who provided their domestic audience with "negotiated" readings of *England*. Indeed, these travellees acknowledged the republican "code" of Archenholtz's work but considered it best not simply to repeat all his claims in the English language. Accordingly, Tarkka suggests that such politically engaged travellees could be called "travellee-rewriters" (see Lefevere 2017, 1–4).

Focussing on descriptions of travellers' rest houses in the diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai (1709–61) and the pilgrimage account of Enugula Veeraswamy (1780–1836) alongside details from Louis de Grandpré's (1761–1846) *Voyage dans l'Inde et au Bengale* (1801) and Elijah Hoole's (1798–1872) *Personal Narrative of a Mission to the South of India* (1829), Sanjukta Banerjee provides yet another fruitful perspective on the concept of the travellee (Banerjee 2024). As Banerjee emphasises, those who are travelled among need not be stationary but may in fact be itinerant themselves. This becomes evident when the travellers' rest house, a ubiquitous institution which offered shelter to all sorts of travellers in India, is drawn to the centre of attention. Indeed, perceived in this context, the binary opposition between the traveller and the travellee is problematised, since the narrator of a travelogue becomes just one traveller in the co-presence of many. As Banerjee contends, recognising the contemporaneous movement and shared dwelling of European travellers and itinerant travellees breaks down some of the boundaries that are often pre-supposed in discussions of colonial India. Most significantly, closer attention to time spent in travellers' rest houses allows religion and pilgrimage in India to be displayed as mutable, combining the sacred and the civil. As Banerjee argues with

reference to anthropological discourse, linking Indian hospitality solely to religion and seeing it as representing a generic other is in effect "a denial of coevalness" or intersubjective time (Banerjee 2024; Fabian 1983, 31, 154; see also Forsdick 2014, 97–9). In Banerjee's self-reflexive essay, written from the vantage point of a modern travellee-reader partly identifying with the pandits who would travel for work in colonial India, the notion of the foreigner instead "becomes a graded category" enabling us to appreciate the complexity of traveller/travellee relations – in their textual representations as well as in the historical realities to which they refer.

As demonstrated by Gábor Gelléri in the fifth article (2024), it is also possible for travellers to remain silent and for travellees to react to a journey even before it has begun. Examining the colonial propaganda trip of a group of ten French female students to Indochina in 1924, Gelléri avoids the customary setup "of the colonizer writing and the colonized reacting" (Gelléri 2024). This is because he shows how, despite a lack of any published travelogue, travellees responded to this trip by making their critical voices heard in the press. Such reactions were possible since the students' tour was advertised beforehand in the French newspapers *Le Journal* and *Mer et Colonies*, and details of its progress were published in the local press of Indochina. As becomes evident, travellees contributing to interwar Indochina's rich newspaper culture perceived public attack on this propaganda mission as an opportunity to criticise Metropolitan ignorance of colonial realities. As in the preceding article by Banerjee, the commonplace binary between the European traveller and the colonial subject is deconstructed and redescribed as a complex issue, in this case because a considerable amount of critique came from the settler community and was directed not so much against the travelling students as those responsible for the propaganda mission: the newspaper *Le Journal*, the lobby group Ligue Maritime et Coloniale "and, by extension, Metropolitan France" (Gelléri 2024). By focussing on reactions in settler newspapers, Gelléri depicts an active scene of frustrated settler travellees who ridiculed Metropolitan attitudes and sought to draw attention to the uncomfortable truths of the colonial project to which they had committed themselves.

In the final article of this issue, Alison E. Martin (2024) explores the layers of cultural memory accumulated in three German editions of Thomas Nugent's *Travels through Germany. Containing Observations on Customs, Manners, Religion, Government, Commerce, Arts, and Antiquities. With a Particular Account of the Courts of Mecklenburg* (London, 1768). Interrogating the first German translation by Franz Christian Lorenz Karsten (Berlin/Stettin, 1781–2) and its twentieth-century adaptations by Heinrich Stoll (Wismar, 1936) and Sabine Bock (Schwerin, 1998), Martin directs attention to the tendency of translations to accord with the historical junctures of their target culture (Venuti 2004, 34). She also draws attention to the role of translators in the production of travel writing, who are both readers of the source text and creators of the target text. As Loredana Polezzi has argued, this puts them in a position to ask the following question: "Am I totally disempowered by someone else's appropriation of my "home" or is there still a place for me within this representation?" (Polezzi 2002, 305). Or, to put it another way: "Once I am placed […] at the receiving end of the author's representation of an elsewhere which is at the same time my home, is there any critically intelligent position I can take?" (Polezzi 2002, 306). From this perspective, Nugent's travellee-translators emerge as active builders of cultural memory who loaded his English text with new meanings, even though they can be seen

as acquiescing that it presented "a true picture" of their society (see Bracewell, in this issue 2024). By extending the scope of research not only to the most proximate German translation of Nugent's work but also to much later versions, the article breaks new ground in the study of translated travel writing and, in parallel with Banerjee, postulates that travellee-readers need not be limited to the traveller's contemporaries. Like Archenholtz's *England und Italien* discussed by Tarkka, Nugent's work underwent several transformations in translation. The first translator Karsten corrected and updated the text with footnotes, considering it a valuable historical artefact which was, however, in need of improvement to cater for his German readership. Stoll, who revised Karsten's translation in the interwar period, chose rather to abridge the text, taking it into the direction of nostalgic entertainment literature. The third German version prepared by Bock reproduced Karsten's translation in its entirety but added a considerable number of notes on architectural heritage, thus reframing Nugent's work for a scholarly audience. As these examples show, travellee-translators building the collective memory of their culture by means of a foreigner's gaze are, at the same time, witnesses of changing interests within that culture.

Evidently, the encounter between self and other which defines travel writing is a more multifaceted phenomenon than simply an instance where a travelling self acknowledges the presence of some "locals". Indeed, as demonstrated by the examples quoted above, it is more useful to consider the "others" – and at times, even the selves – of travel writing as travellees, because their presence often leaves tangible traces to the text. As such, encounters with travellees are not finished when the traveller moves on. Visiting a place which others call their home can give rise to long-term negotiations and this is one way in which travel writing gains not only cultural significance but also a temporal dimension.

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