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“To travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries.”
(Aldous Huxley)

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1 Introduction

Ideas about and images of different countries and cultures were, and still are, frequently spread through travel writing. Authors' depictions of 'exotic' places and foreign cultures did not only support the imperial project, through the depiction of Indigenous peoples as 'savages' in need of saving and civilizing by a 'superior' West; but still are one of the main factors that contribute to shaping people's expectations about foreign countries in today's globalized world. Previous research, especially in the field of postcolonial studies, has shown that superior attitudes towards 'others' may be perpetuated or reinstalled through travel writing, even in its contemporary forms (Holland and Huggan viii). The current debate about travel writing focuses on the question whether the discourses present in modern travel accounts are related to the colonial heritage, as argued by Debbie Lisle (5), or if they can be interpreted differently as pointed out by Calzati who maintains that these discourses are related to genre conventions rather than to colonial legacy (433f).

The development of the internet brought about changes to the genre of travel writing. It led to the growth of online resources about travel, such as tourism websites but also, more importantly, to the development of an abundance of weblogs, which are more commonly known as blogs. Such blogs enable users to read, allegedly, 'authentic' and independent accounts about people's experiences in the destinations the readers might wish to visit. Yet, most seminal studies on travel writing, aside from Youngs' *Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, neglect to take the abundance of travel writing in different forms of new media such as blogs, vlogs and pages on social media platforms into account. Previous research on travel blogs mostly focuses on bloggers' self-representation and their construction of the 'Self' as travelers as opposed to tourists (Chen; Azariah). Other studies, especially from the field of tourism, have found blogs to be a (more or less) fruitful resource for market research (Carson; Bosangit, McCabe and Hibbert; Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts). Blogs have also been compared to 'traditional' travel books and analyzed as intermedial dispositions of the genre of travel writing (Calzati "On the Edge").

Traditional travel writing in books and magazines has proven to be a fruitful resource, especially in postcolonial studies as all travel writing includes, to some degree, a confrontation with 'others.' One of the founding works of postcolonial critique of travel writing is Edward Said's highly influential, yet controversial, study *Orientalism* which analyzes the ways in which the Orient was constructed in Western discourse. Many of the works following Said, such as David

Spurr's *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* use similar methods of discourse analysis but also address some of the issues Said is criticized for, such as his own homogenization and essentialization of both the Orient and the West. Further studies, such as Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*, include accounts of the to this point marginalized people whose lives were influenced as their home countries were taken over by imperialism (Lindsay 26ff).

There is, however, no study focusing on how bloggers perceive and report their encounters with 'others' in general nor, more specifically, with Aboriginal Australians. This thesis is a first attempt to close this gap in research by examining Bloggers' reports about their encounters with Aboriginality in Australia. The aim is to find if, and if yes how, modern day travel writing includes perpetuations of stereotypes and othering informed by historical travel writing, contemporary media discourses or other reiterations of the imperial and colonial ideology. The title of this thesis "10 things you need to know about Aborigines," is a reference to the writing style many travel bloggers use. It directly addresses the reader through the use of the personal pronoun "you" and includes a call to action as it implies the readers' lack of knowledge about a certain subject or geographical area. Moreover, and the format of the title, which suggests a numbered, or even ranked, list can frequently be found in blogs where writers give advice on "the top 10 things to do" and "what to see" in a certain place. The number ten in the title further refers to the number of the blog posts that will be analyzed.

The main research question in this thesis is how encounters with Aboriginal Australians are depicted by travel bloggers and how and in which contexts bloggers write about Aboriginality in Australia. Furthermore, the ways in which the discourses present in the bloggers' posts can be traced back to historical travel writing and contemporary media discourses about Aboriginality will be analyzed. To answer these questions this thesis takes the form of four main chapters. The first part introduces the topic of travel writing in general and begins by briefly outlining the genre. After that, the interconnectedness between travel writing and postcolonial studies will be analyzed and the controversial question of whether or not contemporary travel writing can be considered to be postcolonial will be discussed. Then, previous research about travel blogs, and the limitations of such research will be analyzed. The second part focuses on the particular characteristics of Australia by first addressing how the country has been related to in historical, as well as in more recent, traditional forms of travel writing. Then, a discussion of recurring discourses about

Aboriginality in the Media will provide additional background for the analytical part of this thesis. The third part is a brief introduction to the methodology used for this study which is Critical Discourse Analysis. This chapter is intended to provide an overview of this interdisciplinary methodology and will introduce how it will be used to analyze the blogs in this thesis. Then the fourth part, which represents my own analysis and findings follows. First, the choice of blogs, and the decision to differentiate between ‘professional’ and ‘non-professional’ blogs will be explained. Secondly, an introduction about the respective ways of blogging, including the authors’ and audiences’ positionality follows. In the analysis of the individual blogs the background of the writer, the intended audience, and if determinable, the reached audience will be discussed. Thirdly, an analysis of the discourses present in the blogs follows. In the last part of this chapter, the findings of the research will be summarized and critically discussed to attempt to answer the question in which ways the blogs reflect conventions of historical travel writing, as well as discourses found in Australian travel writing and Australian media representations of Aboriginality.

Before moving on to the main part of this thesis it is important to outline two, possibly controversial, aspects thereof, that is the use of the term Aboriginal and the analysis of Aboriginal Australian realities from an outside perspective. In this thesis, the term Aboriginal Australians, or Australian Aboriginal peoples will be used, due to the lack of a better, universally accepted term (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin *Key Concepts* 3). Despite my awareness of the different Aboriginal communities, for example the Anangu people who are the traditional owners of Uluru, it will not be possible to distinguish between individual communities throughout this thesis, due to a lack of information in the primary sources. This might lead to the accidental occurrence of generalizing statements which are, naturally, avoided whenever possible. Hence, the title of this thesis refers to “Australian Aboriginal Peoples” to highlight the diversity of languages, cultures, beliefs, and communities. The term “Aboriginal People” will be used as a collective term in this thesis, and is intended to include all Aboriginal Australians. This has also been noted by Robert Clarke who eloquently approached this possible problematic as follows,

I should note here that I use the terms “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous” interchangeably as shorthand to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I acknowledge that this problematically misrepresents the diversity of the lives, communities, histories, and identities of the First Peoples of Australia. Yet the main focus of this study is not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people per se, but “Aboriginality”. Aboriginality is a symbolic commodity, a function of the economy of Western/non-Aboriginal representations of

Aboriginal life and culture [...] Aboriginality is a social thing: a product of the discourses on Aboriginal life and being that circulate within and across Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. (*Black Australia* 5)

The second, possibly problematic, aspect of this thesis is my own outside perspective. As Mary Louise Pratt states, “[i]f one studies only what the Europeans saw and said, one reproduces the monopoly on knowledge and interpretation that the imperial enterprise sought. This is a huge distortion, because of course that monopoly did not exist” (7). Hence, only looking at one side of the story is controversial, and it is important to give voice to the colonized as well. Despite my best efforts, I was not able to find travel blogs about Australia by writers who clearly identify as Aboriginal Australians. That is not to say that there are no blogs by Aboriginal authors, however, the ones I was able to find were about political and cultural issues, rather than about travel and can therefore not be considered for this thesis. As a writer, I am fully aware of this outside perspective, and of the fact that I will only be able to provide a limited insight into the realities of Aboriginal Australian life.

2 Travel writing

Travel writing, albeit appearing to be a rather straightforward genre, has proven to be difficult to define. It has been interpreted, on the one hand as “memoirs in which autobiographical narratives arise from the speaker’s encounter with distant or unfamiliar data” (Fussel 203). On the other hand it has been argued that “travel writing is not (only) a genre, but more specifically a *rhetorical praxis of knowledge*” (Calzati “On the Edge” 156; original emphasis), due to its “cross-cultural (towards the other) and gnoseological (towards the self) potential for knowledge” (157). Thus, the writing process as such is considered to be an important aspect of travel writing, as it entails a form of mirroring and representation of the ‘Self’ onto the page. This realization bears similarity to Edward Said’s definition of ‘Orientalism,’ which states that the statements made by the ‘West’ about the Orient reveal more about the formers’ desires and repressed feelings, than containing objective descriptions of the latter. According to Calzati’s definition, travel writing further ought to have a narrative form, which excludes the majority of mostly informative texts such as guidebooks (“On the Edge”). Following this definition some ‘professional’ blogs analyzed in this thesis, or at least parts of them, would not be considered as travel writing as they do not focus on the narrative, but rather on informative aspects as will be illustrated later.

In this context, it is also important to note that guidebooks, albeit not considered to be travel writing following the definitions suggested in this thesis, can be problematic as well. This is demonstrated by Deborah Bhattacharyya in her analysis of the Lonely Planet guidebook about India. She identifies several problematic aspects of the representation of India in the guidebook, such as the implicit notion that tourists are seen as being “above the issues of morality and ethical standards” while at the same time critically evaluating the behavior and customs of Indians (377). Bhattacharyya focuses, amongst other things, on the relationship between Indians and tourists as constructed through the guide’s guidelines concerning tourist behavior. She argues that Indian natives only appear in two roles, as either ‘middlemen’ or ‘tourees,’ that is exotic ‘others’ who are exposed to the tourist gaze. She further identifies another problematic aspect of guidebooks in general, that is the “transformation of the human into the specimen” (Said qtd. in Bhattacharyya 388). This construction of one individual as representative of all individuals of a certain group therefore omits to acknowledge the individuals’ “unique human qualities and agency” (388). Such generalizations and the homogenization of large groups of people are also a frequent issue in historical travel writing, contemporary travel writing and travel blogs, as this thesis will illustrate. As Calzati’s, aforementioned, definition of travel writing excludes ‘professional’ blogs, other definitions of the genre, such as those proposed by Tim Youngs are more suitable for this thesis. He describes travel writing as,

Predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travel that have been undertaken by the author-narrator. It includes discussion of works that some may regard as genres in their own right, such as ethnographies, maritime narratives, memoirs, road and aviation literature, travel journalism and war reporting, but it distinguishes these from other types of narrative in which travel is narrated by a third party or is imagined. (*Cambridge* 3)

This distinction between real and imaginary travel writing is also shared by other researchers. While it is predominantly maintained that “all accounts are, to a degree, fictitious,” it is essential to exclude fantastic and science-fiction texts from a definition of travel writing, and limit it to “experiences that really happened, or are likely to have happened” (Calzati “On the Edge” 157). The partly fictitious nature of travel writing is, for example, illustrated by Captain James Cook’s journals which are not solely based on his own accounts collected in the ship logs, but went through several stages of editing. The journals were first rewritten by Cook himself as he made further discoveries throughout his travels, then journals kept by Cook’s officers who frequently had different experiences than Cook, were incorporated, finally the whole manuscript was “revised and

edited by John Douglas” (Duncan and Gregory 3). Thus, the version of Cook’s journals that was put into public circulation is a “composite account” prepared by the Admiralty, and which led to a distortion of truth and objectivity (Duncan and Gregory 3). This distortion of reality is not only a result of the editing process, but also due to Cook’s purely ‘Western’ perspective on cultures and customs he was not able to understand. This is not necessarily done on purpose to serve a political cause, but is also due to the impossibility of translating one culture into another. Even if writers attempt to adopt a postcolonial perspective “the translation of one place into the cultural idiom of another loses some of the symbolic loading of the place for its inhabitants and replaces it with other symbolic values” (Duncan and Gregory 5). Therefore, travel writing is to this day in large parts a representation of the writers’ hegemonic western perspective as later examples will illustrate.

Early academic interest in travel writing was limited to writing about travels in the name of ‘Science,’ while other travel accounts such as the “maritime narratives” or “road and aviation literature” as comprised in Youngs’ definition were ignored. More recently, the research interest shifted and researchers started to analyze how “travel and its cultural practices have been located within larger formations in which the inscription of power and privilege are made clearly visible” (Duncan and Gregory 2). Thus, as Duncan and Gregory argue, travel writing can be interpreted as a set of textual practices that reflect an “imperial stylistics” (3). There “is a sense in which all travel writing, as a process of inscription and appropriation, spins webs of colonizing power” (Duncan and Gregory 3). Therefore, the analysis of contemporary travel writing not only offers insight into the ways in which writers appropriate the ‘Other,’ but also provides the opportunity to reveal power relations between locals and the travelers.

Another significant aspect of travel writing is its performative potential which, as some researchers claim, make it a form of cultural work. Clarke highlights that travel narratives do not only serve “to reconcile the competing regimes of value in the production/representation and consumption/reception of Aboriginality” but effectively brings up questions of “politics, and ethics, identity and history.” Moreover, the writing about Aboriginal Australia confronts both writers and readers with “the debates that structure the nation’s postcolonial public sphere” and thereby invites for “recognition, reflection, and action” (*Black Australia* 8f). The above aspects illustrate the importance of analyzing travelers’ experiences in postcolonial countries to learn more about their connection to colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism. However, as the following

chapter will show, researchers disagree over the question whether all travel writing from or about postcolonial countries can be regarded as postcolonial practice in itself.

2.1 Travel writing and postcolonial theory

“Travel writing is not a literal and objective record of journeys undertaken. [...] It is influenced, if not determined, by its authors’ gender, class, age, nationality, cultural background and education. It is ideological” (Youngs *Blank Spaces* 2). This quote shows some of the reasons why travel writing has proven to be a fruitful field of investigation in postcolonial studies, which aim to expose “the writers’ (often unconscious) complex involvement and implication in the projects of Orientalism, colonialism, imperialism and post-colonialism” (Moroz and Sztachelska ix). Travel, especially in postcolonial countries, has the potential to reveal legacies of the past, as “every journey carries with it the possibility of an engagement with shadow zones” (Clarke, Dutton and Johnston 221). In postcolonial countries travel “is always in a sense already ‘shadowed’ by the legacies of colonialisms past and present” (Clarke, Dutton and Johnston 221). In other words, travelers in countries with a colonial past are bound to be confronted not only with the repercussions of the past colonization, but also with colonial ideologies in their present form.

Historical travel accounts by European explorers “contributed to the establishment of the ideological frameworks of colonialism” through adopting a “rhetoric of appropriation” (Clarke *Black Australia* 11). Moreover, travel writing has been argued to be “one of the main archives or investigating colonial processes, providing rich source material on the formation of western subjectivities out of the encounter with imagined others” (Musgrove 33). In this respect, Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes* aims to render the workings of imperialism within travel writing transparent and to thereby open the genre up to “reflection and transformation” (Pratt, Preface). Pratt is interested in how travel writing encodes and legitimizes imperial aspirations, and how such aspirations may be undermined (4). According to her, the workings of colonialism, go beyond dominating and exploiting another country, but also include a process of ‘transculturation’ which she views to be the process by which “subjugated or marginal groups select and invent from material transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture [...]. They do determine, to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean” (7). Travel texts offer, in her opinion, a method by which this process of ‘transculturation’ may be traced (7).

The process of ‘transculturation’ has also been observed by Homi Bhabha, who extends the concept and introduces a new term, which he calls ‘hybridity.’ The term originates in horticulture where it is used to describe the creation of a new plant species through the cross-breeding of two different species. In postcolonial studies, it refers to the development of “transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 108). More recently, ‘hybridity’ has been associated to Homi Bhabha, who argues that culture is always constructed in an ambivalent and contradictory space, the so-called ‘Third Space.’ This space offers the possibility to overcome the hierarchical relationship of colonizer and colonized through the “recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 108). The post-colonial hybrid is, according to Bhabha, “not simply the ‘image’ of the person, but an interrogation of the discursive and *disciplinary* place from which questions of identity are strategically and institutionally posed” (Bhabha *Identity* 5; original emphasis). Travel writing might help to offer insight on how such hybrid lives are interpreted, observed and criticized by contemporary travelers.

In her analysis of early exploration and travel writing in Africa Mary Louise Pratt further identifies that writers, despite adopting an ‘objective’ scientific point of view, do not contest European presence, but rather depict the landscape as ‘empty’ which predicts and justifies the colonial future due to the “absences and lacks of African life in the present” (60). Such an “absence,” albeit of Aboriginal Australian peoples can also be found in much travel writing about Australia, both historical and contemporary, as will be described in more detail in the following chapters.

The implications of what Pratt identifies as the involvement of travel writing in Orientalism, colonialism, imperialism etc. are not only visible in historical travel accounts. As Thompson notes, also “modern travel writing can yield significant insights into the ideologies and practices that sustain the current world order” (Thompson 3). Hence, through linking the past to the present, an analysis of the portrayal of Aboriginal Australians in travel blogs ought to be aware of both, the countries’ colonial legacy, as well as current power struggles. Academic interest in the analysis of the “effects of colonization on cultures and societies” began in the late twentieth century with seminal texts such as Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin *Key Concepts* 169). “The concept of the postcolonial has been one of the most powerful means of re-examining the historical past and re-configuring our contemporary worldwide cultural concerns”

(Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin *Empire* 219). Edward Said's work illustrates how the European expansion through imperialism and colonialism was not only made possible through technology and economics, but also through discourse and hegemony which served to legitimize the expansion of the Empire in public opinion. Orientalism describes the ways in which the oriental 'Other' was constructed in European minds as an opposition to itself. However, as Said argues, the Orient also has its own history and discourses of the West, therefore the Orient and the West also "support and to an extent reflect each other" (5). Thus, travel writing about foreign countries and cultures can also give insight into the writers' culture and ideology.

Said's work further introduces the binary oppositions of 'us/them' and 'self/Other' which are also an integral part of much travel writing (38). These binaries have been criticized by Bhabha, who claims that they do not manage to encompass the "alterity and ambivalence" of colonial discourse (*Location* 71). Rather, Bhabha introduces the, previously mentioned, concept of the 'third space' which "renders ambivalent established structures of meaning and accepted points of cultural difference, disrupting the dominant sense of history, identity, and culture" (Amoamo and Thompson 39). Other examples of binaries constructed in Orientalism are the denigration of the Orient "as barbaric against the civilized progress of western culture and law" (Phillips 66). Homi Bhabha argues that such depictions arise from the objective of colonial discourse which perpetuates the portrayal of the colonized as "degenerate types on the basis of racial origin in order to justify conquest" (*Location* 70).

One of the most important strategies in the construction of the 'Other' seems to be "the articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual" (Bhabha *Location* 67); this difference is most easily constructed when the 'Other' is a homogenous entity. In her analysis of travel writings about Africa, Pratt identifies that travel writers tend to homogenize people. Native Africans are not considered to be an important part of the journey, despite their essential role in the survival of the traveler. For the writers, "all are interchangeable; none is distinguished from another by a name or any feature, and their presence, their disponibilité, and subaltern status, are now taken for granted" (51). Pratt analyzes that this is done by the discursive summarizing of all native Africans

into a collective *they*, which distills down even further into an iconic *he* (the standard adult male specimen). This abstracted *he/they* is the subject of verbs in a timeless present tense. [...] These descriptive practices work to normalize another society, to codify its difference from one's own, to fix its members in a timeless present where all 'his' actions and reactions are repetitions of 'his' normal habits. (62f; original emphasis)

Such homogenizations also include the ‘fixity’, that is the construction of the ‘Other’ as unchanging through the use of stereotyped descriptions (Bhabha *Location* 66). Such stereotypes also lead to a certain degree of ambivalence, which is especially visible in the ‘mimicry’ of colonized peoples, that is the increasing similarities between colonizer and colonized. As Bhabha describes, “mimicry is a desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (*Location* 86). Mimicry offers a performative potential for the colonized, as it disrupts the colonial authority by reforming it in unique and destabilizing ways that bring agency and ownership to the subaltern (Bhabha *Location* 86). It, therefore, is a conscious choice made by the colonized to disrupt existing power structures.

Researchers are encountering problems with more “modern” travel accounts, however, as the perpetuation of colonialist and imperialist attitudes becomes less visible. This is not to say these attitudes do not exist anymore, but rather that writers adopt seemingly openminded and aware positions, that are frequently critical of the treatment of Indigenous populations only to then perpetuate the same myths and stereotypes that contain racist attitudes. Hence, other approaches to reveal such attitudes had to be developed. One of these was introduced by Debbie Lisle who maintains that travel writing reproduces the same discourses as the global politics that shape the world. Her research focuses on the “tension between colonial and cosmopolitan visions” in travel writing (5) and the ways in which the tropes of power, exclusion and control inherent in the texts correspond to the underlying discourses and structures of hegemony (4). Furthermore, she argues that travel writing is an illustration of the ways in which “acts of writing and speaking are given meaning through prevailing discourses” (12). Lisle further claims that travel writing “organises the world through a number of prevailing discourses, and sediments that world into a seemingly incontrovertible reality. Travelogues [...] mask that process of discursive ordering and offer their observations as neutral documentations” (12). The above quote does not only illustrate the, already mentioned, fact that travel writing is not objective but politically and ideologically charged, but also criticizes writers’ pretense of offering ‘authentic’ and ‘objective’ insights about other countries and cultures. Therefore, an analysis of the discourses inherent in travel writing can unmask the imposed organization of the world.

Lisle is, nevertheless, criticized as being essentialist, as critics have argued that her approach portrays only a partial aspect of the genre by “ignoring a range of travel texts that do not fit the pattern” (Youngs *Cambridge* 9). Another objection to Lisle’s research is raised by Calzati

who, in his analysis of two of Bill Bryson's works, reaches the conclusion that Bryson's texts about his "home" countries, that is the United Kingdom and the United States of America, contain the same othering discourses that are also present in his works about more 'exotic' places which were previously criticized by Lisle. These discourses can, therefore, not be interpreted as being related to the colonial legacy but should be seen as a constitutive aspect of the genre (Calzati "Bryson's legacy" 433f). He further asserts that "encounters with others (plural) happen everywhere, all the time." Therefore, it would become "virtually impossible to consider travel writing outside the frame of postcolonialism" if scholars do not refrain from considering postcolonialism as an inevitable notion (Musgrove 32 qtd. in Calzati "Bryson's legacy" 425). This argument is, however, challenged again by Pratt, who does not only foresee possible criticism of her own work, but explains that in these cases, "related dynamics of power and appropriation are likely to be found at work as well. The discourses that legitimate bourgeois authority and legitimate peasant and subsistence lifeways, for example, can be expected to do this ideological work within Europe as well as in Southern Africa or Argentina" (10). Hence, othering discourses as identified by Calzati, also work outside of a (post)colonial setting, albeit to a different extent. This does not mean, however, that all European travel writing should be interpreted as a "cipher of colonial discourse" (Clarke *Black Australia* 12). Instead, an analysis of the "localised effects of discourses of hegemony and counter-hegemony within specific colonial cultures and how these effects are reflected in travel texts" (Clarke *Black Australia* 12) would prove to be more useful.

Critics have also argued that postcolonial travel writing is not necessarily ideologically charged with imperialistic notions, nor merely an opposition to such notions, but "offers frames of reference that exist outside the boundaries of European knowledge production" and can therefore have counter-hegemonic qualities (Edwards and Graulund 3). This approach highlights the heteroglossic potential of texts, that is the texts' power to express two or more differing viewpoints, and interprets travel writing as "sites of ideological contestation" that are not only open to the particularities of different postcolonial cultures, but also to the changes in the "ongoing historical re-assessment of colonial cultures" (Clarke *Black Australia* 12). Travel writers, therefore, also have the power to challenge hegemonic ideologies and may thereby contribute to the change of the portrayal as well as the perception of 'other' cultures.

Another angle on this debate suggests that some critics try to acknowledge modern writers' attempts towards a "more empathetic, less exploitative approach to the Other," while still

maintaining that “difference will always be compromised and mediated, however serious the attempt to respect and represent it” (Youngs *Cambridge* 184). Hence, as Youngs argues, even with the awareness shaped by the twenty-first century, travel writers have yet to find a way to break out of the constraints of their own genre, which force them to continuously construct difference (*Cambridge* 184). While some research suggests that travel writing may, as already mentioned, contribute to the readers’ enlightenment by offering the possibility to reveal cultural and historical perspectives that would have been rendered invisible otherwise. It is maintained that “the translation of one culture into other must always be to some degree a *mistranslation*, and a *partial representation*” (Thompson 166; emphasis added). Thus, even authors with the best intentions and thorough research will never be able to fully document all complexities of another culture in travel writing.

The texts analyzed in this paper are considered to be postcolonial texts, in the same manner Clarke considered the texts in *Travel Writing from Black Australia: Utopia, Melancholia, and Aboriginality* to be postcolonial. While the characterization of a specific author as postcolonial writer might prove to be problematic, as the writers are, in most cases, white Europeans who have probably never heard of the term, the texts inherently possess a number of postcolonial features such as their engagement with the “postcolonial culture of Australia,” as well as their foregrounding of encounters with Aboriginality, both direct as well as through “mediated images or white race-talk” (Clarke *Black Australia* 5). These encounters are, as Clarke argues, “quintessentially postcolonial” (*Black Australia* 5) and can be found in all of the blogs analyzed in this thesis. Some of which, for example the text by Abi King from *Inside the Travel Lab*, can also be considered as postcolonial on another level, that is they are postcolonial texts due to the writers’ consciousness of “[their] own relation to colonial and anti-colonial formations of power” hence, “the successes, traumas, and legacies of Australia’s colonial past is a theme to which they constantly return” (*Black Australia* 6). Clarke further argues that “travel writing provides readers with a medium for understanding and coming to terms with the contingencies of postcolonial cultures” (*Black Australia* 6). Furthermore,

travel writing is a discursive space in which the legitimacy and legacies of colonialism for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and visitors to the country, can be expressed, debated, celebrated, and/or resisted. They are sites in which travelers and readers can question ways of moving beyond colonialism; of reflection on the possibilities and impediments to decolonization. (Clarke *Black Australia* 29)

Travel writing, therefore, also offers a space to critically engage with prevailing colonialist ideologies in postcolonial countries, and as well as a space to resist and criticize stereotypes and thereby contribute to a renegotiation of contemporary power structures. Not all writers do adopt the informed, critical and open position required to do so. As some still appear unable to move beyond a ‘Western’ point of view that is not only informed by colonial ideology and contemporary stereotyping found in Australian media. The audience of the blogs also plays an important part, as readers must be able to understand how such texts “reflect or resist racist and colonialist values and mentalities” (Clarke *Black Australia* 29). This poses further challenges on writers and readers alike. The medium of the blog offers a possibility for both parties to engage with each other through comments and messaging functions. Those aspects, that distinguish travel blogs from more traditional forms of the genre will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.2 Travel Blogs

Since the turn of the millennium, when platforms such as Blogger (1999), Wikipedia (2001), Myspace (2003) and Facebook (2004) were launched, Social Media has become an integral part of human communication (van Dijck 7). While some academic disciplines such as tourism studies have begun to recognize travel blogs as interesting medium to analyze customer behavior and satisfaction¹, literary and cultural studies have yet to take this new form, or medium, of travel writing into account. The same is true for other disciplines, especially for social sciences (Hookway 94). As Hookway states, while “the increasing popularity of blogs is reflected in their growing presence in popular academic discourse” most of the research on blogs “has been produced by information/computer science and media/rhetoric/communication studies – the research opportunities they afford for the social sciences [...] remains unexamined” (94). Hence, blogs do not only prove to be interesting for tourism studies, but for an abundance of academic disciplines.

Blog is a term derived from the word weblog, which is defined as “a frequently updated webpage with dated entries, new ones placed on top” (Blood “Introduction” ix). While there was only a small number of weblogs in 1998, they soon started to gain popularity. Their number virtually exploded after the first “build-your-own-weblog tool” called “Pitas” was launched. Soon,

¹ see Crotts, Peyton, Boyd; and Bosangit, McCabe, Hibbert for insightful examples of research on the relationship between blogs and the tourism industry.

other platforms such as “Edit This Page” and “Velocri” were released, all of which were free and enabled users to publish their own weblogs “quickly and easily” (Blood “Weblogs” 8). Nowadays, blogs are not necessarily ordered in the way described by Blood, as technology has advanced and styles have changed. Hence the definition of blog as “a frequently updated web site consisting of personal observations, excerpts from other sources, etc., typically run by a single person [...] an online journal or diary” is more accurate as the format and purpose of blogs have evolved (“Weblog”).

Most seminal works on travel writing omit to critically discuss new media forms of travel writing and focus on more traditional media such as the travel book or article. This omission might be related to the fact that many of these books (e.g. Holland and Huggan) were published before the internet became a relevant subject for literary and cultural studies. In this respect, the closing comment of Holland and Huggan’s renowned *Tourists with Typewriters*, contains a discussion of possible future developments of the genre and the main (possibly economical) drives behind such developments while not acknowledging the possibility of new media progress at all (177ff). *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, which was published after the first social platforms were already founded, does not take new media forms of travel writing into account at all, its most recent focus being a discussion of postmodern and early postcolonial writers such as Bruce Chatwin (Hulme and Youngs 8). Carl Thompson’s *Travel Writing*, despite being published in 2011 when the influence of social media could no longer be ignored, merely mentions blogs as continuation of traditional travel writing as the author points out “bypassing the traditional need for publication in print culture, travel blogs represent a subtle re-negotiation of the boundary between public and private communication. [...] although of course the quality of this on-line material varies enormously” (61). Notwithstanding this acknowledgment of contemporary developments, he fails to go into more detail and does not mention any specific examples or characteristics of the new medium.

Youngs’ *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, is the only resource which includes an, albeit limited, discussion of new media developments. The author first asserts that “travel writing, like all literature, responds to new technologies” and then compares the experience of using the internet, with a form of travel in its own right (178). The lack of attention on the influence of the internet on narratives of travel is also briefly mentioned (*Cambridge* 179). Youngs further reflects on the different forms and formats available to users and discusses whether users’

dependence on certain templates to set up their blogs, and thereby the necessity to adhere to certain levels of standardization, limits their perceived creative freedom (*Cambridge* 180). This limitation is also criticized by Calzati who analyzes blogs on an Italian platform “blogs on touristpercaso.it get closer to multi-purpose portals than to simple travel accounts. In other words, the blogs acquire a commercial potential to the detriment of their diegetic development” (“On the Edge”162). By commercial potential Calzati refers to the presence of advertisements on the individual blogs hosted on touristpercaso.it, and on similar platforms such as travelblog.org and travelpod.com which are used in this thesis. Calzati therefore believes that the advertisements surrounding and the predetermined format of the blog damage the narrative potential of the story told. However, the fact that writers do not have to worry about the aesthetics of their blog, and are able to simply log in and start writing without being distracted by technical problems, might as well add to the narrative potential as they are able to focus on the stories they want to tell. It is further argued that serious doubts may be raised against the suggested empowerment of the “ordinary traveler” as the enormous amount of online travel media limits the chance of someone, that is people outside the writers’ own social network, coming across and reading these travel accounts (Youngs, *Cambridge* 180f). While this might be true in some cases, the blogs analyzed in this thesis demonstrate that individual blog posts (George “In the bush”) or whole blogs (tomlewsey) clearly surpass this limited network.

Youngs’ research also disregards readers’ ability find blog articles about destinations they are interested in through various search and ordering mechanisms, such as looking for entries from a certain region, or even searching for blogs by using more specific keywords such as “Aboriginal” as done in the research for this thesis. Thereby, readers are empowered to be highly selective and find an abundance of material online that is relevant for their interests. Further the, arguably limited, number of readers does not reduce the blogs’ capacity to reveal the writers’ subconscious ideologies. Another major weakness of Youngs’ position on new media travel writing is that he omits to include references to, let alone an analysis of, specific examples of such online media to support his arguments.

A more specific way to analyze travel blogs is suggested by Stefano Calzati who examines blogs from an intermedial, multimodal perspective. His comparative analysis of travel books and travel blogs about China attempts to illustrate the changes in the cross-cultural and gnoseological potential of travel writing across different media. He notes that “travel blogs manifest an erasure

of both the subjectivity of the travel blogger, as well as of China and the Chinese people” and concludes that travel blogs are more closely related to guidebooks than to travel books and are therefore no real alternative (“On the Edge” 164f). While Calzati acknowledges that both travel blogs and books may contain an erasure of local people, he does not put these findings into a postcolonial context, and compares this erasure of local people to the, arguably, objective perspective that can also be found in guidebooks (see Bhattacharyya). This means that in the blogs analyzed by Calzati, the sights and experiences are in the foreground, the writer’s personality and life are in the background, and the ‘Other’ is marginalized and almost non-existent. While this appears to be rather strange, even contradictory to the self-published and personal format of the blog, the analysis later in this thesis will illustrate that many ‘professional’ bloggers writing about Aboriginal Australia choose the same method. They put themselves in the foreground, that is in the role traditionally occupied by a tourguide, and primarily give advice to their readers such as places they should visit and where they should eat, while ignoring the ‘Other’ they are perpetually confronted with. This might be due to various factors such as a conscious avoidance of potentially politically incorrect statements, generalizations or stereotyping. This is not to say that those blogs do not contain any of those at all. However, stereotyping and generalizations about nature, landscape and sights, can frequently be found, when bloggers list the “most beautiful places,” “the greatest waterfall” or similar things. Hence bloggers’ awareness of the potentially problematic or controversial descriptions of the culturally ‘Other’ might be the reason for their avoidance of the topic. Further reasons for this phenomenon will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

Another angle on the research about travel blogs is suggested by Deepti Ruth Azariah, who focuses on the authors’ representation of the ‘Self’ and on the possibilities for bloggers to become published authors. She discusses the advantages and disadvantages of self-publishing versus publishing via traditional publishers and also takes the self-positioning of bloggers as published writers and travelers, as compared to tourists, into account. Azariah also analyzes how the blogs can function as commercial platforms for the promotion of the bloggers’ books and guidebooks. This commercial potential of blogs is, however, only present in, what is here referred to as ‘professional’ blogs. The ways in which such ‘professional’ blogs are commercialized will be analyzed in more detail in the chapters 5 and 5.2.

The only research focusing on the representation of local people(s) in travel blogs is an empirical study of travel blogs undertaken by Andrew Duffy who developed the

“mobility/mooring paradigm” (2). A moored representation refers to the description of locals as a homogenous group that consists of stereotypical representatives, while a mobile representation includes an “interpretation of reality based on interaction” (2). Duffy argues that travel blogs have the potential of change from a moored to a more mobile representation as bloggers are independent from the travel industry, and thus have “greater freedom to not conform” to the status quo (4). He also argues that bloggers “may be free to see with new eyes, travel in a different way, and report with a fresh voice” (4). Such a changed way of seeing things and reporting them may be interpreted as a demonstration of an ideal form of postcolonial travel writing. Bloggers are, as Duffy’s research indicates “more open to negotiated meaning in the people they met” than travel journalists (12). The discourses of colonialism and imperialism present in traditional travel writing and travel journalism (see Holland & Huggan; Pratt; Spurr; Youngs) are still evident, but Duffy finds that it is countered by an “open, flexible approach to local people” (12). He further notes that locals encounter the travelers with an equal amount of curiosity, which renders the exchange more equal. Travel blogs, therefore, challenge the unequal power relations frequently connected to tourism, through “a form of amateur, user-generated content” (Duffy 12). It is, however, noted that some forms of the power relations are still evident, for example through the prevalent labeling of locals as ‘friendly’ which implies the writers’ contrary expectations (Duffy 12). While Duffy’s research indicates that bloggers produce travel writing that is different from more traditional forms of writing in the genre, it is important to note that his research did neither analyze a specific region in general nor, more specifically, the representation of an Indigenous minority group as he analyzed a selection of blogs from different countries (7). It will, therefore, be interesting how writers’ attitudes might change when they report encounters with historically marginalized groups such as Aboriginal Australians. This, brief, summary of existing research on travel blogs highlights that there has been no analysis of the discourses present in articles about Indigenous minorities in travel blogs from a postcolonial perspective.

3 Australia

The foundation for the colonization of Australia by the British Empire was laid by Captain James Cook's three Pacific exploration voyages that took place between 1768 and 1779. The colonization of Australia is different than the earlier colonization of North America and the later colonization of India and Africa, because Australia was, from the beginning, constructed as a 'terra nullis' that is, an empty land, open for colonization without regard for the Indigenous population (Fhlathúin 24f). When Cook did not find signs of fixed settlements or agriculture, the British parliament ruled that the Australian "land belong[ed] to no one" and that Aboriginal Australians therefore had no legal right or claim on any part of the country. This also meant that the British settlers did not see any reason to "negotiate any formal treaties with the Aborigines" as opposed to the Maoris in New Zealand (Brittan 73). Australia was initially intended to be a convict colony, therefore, in the early phases of colonization, the people arriving in Australia were predominantly convicts (mostly thieves), rebels, guards, and a few free settlers. The shipment of convicts continued over seventy years (Brittan 73). All of the people who settled in Australia soon began to adopt "distinct regional identities" separating them from their "mother country" (Fhlathúin 25). This led to the development of Australia as an increasingly independent state, which even became a self-governing 'dominion' of Great Britain. The end of the First World War, and the treaty of Versailles, later facilitated Australia's, as well as New Zealand's and Canada's independence from the British Empire. This independence did, however, not change the lived realities of the respective countries' Indigenous peoples, who remained in the same colonized state (Fhlathúin 25). Thus, the end of formal colonization by and dependence on Great Britain, did not coincide with the end of systematic, ideological and structural colonization of Aboriginal Australians.

The history of Australia as a convict settlement also manifested itself in European imagination about the country. Hence, the continent was seen as a "monstrous non-place, and its citizens the members of a topsy-turvy non-society" full of thieves (Brittan 75). The fact that former convicts, after serving their time, could become wealthy and successful members of society appalled the British elite, and served as proof that "the moral order of the place was as upside-down as its position on the world map" (Brittan 76). Thus, not only Aboriginal Australians, but also white Australian settlers were regarded with suspicion by the British. However, while the settlers were merely seen as being of doubtful moral quality, Aboriginal Australians were "believed to represent humankind at an early stage of development" and were seen as "culturally

fossilized, so [...] distant from the advances of European civilizations that they were like living museum pieces made redundant by the arrival of modern man [sic]" (Brittan 77). Later, this view shifted to regarding Aboriginal Australians as 'noble savage' and a subject worthy of study, but nevertheless condemned to go extinct sooner rather than later (Brittan 77). Similar tropes and discourses can also be found in travel writing about Australia, as will be illustrated in the following chapter.

3.1 Travel writing about Australia

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of how the Australian continent and Aboriginal Australians are depicted in travel reports, and how these depictions have changed over time. It is, however, neither intended to be a complete overview, nor an analysis of all travel writing about Australia. Rather a selection of the ideas and discourses authors used in their travel writing throughout history, how those texts were influenced by the socio-political circumstances of the time, and which influence they might have had and may still have will be analyzed.

The first English language travel report that takes Australia, which was called New Holland at the time, into account is William Dampier's *A New Voyage around the World* which was published in 1703. Dampier's descriptions of the 'new continent' and its inhabitants are predominantly negative, yet they were very influential as they inspired the Yahoos, the "degraded human inhabitants" in Johnathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Bohls and Duncan 422). Dampier describes Aboriginal Australians as "the miserablest [sic] people in the world [...] who have no houses and skin garments," he even goes as far as stating that they "differ but little from brutes" (Dampier qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 427). The physique of Aboriginal Australians is further described as "tall, straight-bodied, and thin" but "of a very unpleasing aspect, having no one graceful feature in their faces" (Dampier qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 427). Dampier's report also describes the diet, customs and apparent lack of religion of Aboriginal Australians, but the writer also complains that they were hiding from the exploration party. These observations, done in a seemingly 'objective' and scientific manner, are in line with much historical travel writing which frequently contains similar ethnological and anthropological descriptions. The fact that Dampier addresses the fact that Aboriginal Australians were hiding indicates that they only had very little contact. Hence, all of his statements have to be generalizations, and illustrate how he assumes that all Aboriginal Australians are similar.

Another important early travel report is written by James Cook, whose journals were already mentioned in a previous chapter. He was the first to map the coastlines of eastern Australia and New Zealand in his three Pacific expeditions (Bohls and Duncan 421). The journals are, as previously described, not direct accounts by Cook only, but have been rewritten and edited after the end of the expedition (Duncan and Gregory 3). In these journals Cook states that he believes that only a small number of Indigenous people lives in Australia, and describes them as “of a very dark brown colour but not black” and further notes that they do not appear to use any sort of clothing (qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 450). Cook also describes that “we could know but very little of their customs as we never were able to form any connections with them” (qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 450). He does, however, also challenge Dampier’s earlier, predominantly negative, accounts as he states that Aboriginal Australians “may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far more happier [sic] than we Europeans” (Cook qtd. in White and Greenwood 405). He therefore is the first to introduce a more positive image of Aboriginal Australia. It is important to keep in mind, however, that all of Cook’s accounts, including those about Tahiti and New Zealand, are “sanitized,” and do not report the extent of the violence and bloodshed during his journeys (Bohls and Duncan 441). If reported, violence on Cook’s side is always justified as illustrated in the following passage about an encounter with Maori warriors in New Zealand “had I thought that they would have made the last resistance I would not have come near them, but as they did I was not to stand still and suffer either myself or those that were with me to be knocked on the head” (Cook qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 448). Such reports on violence originating from Indigenous peoples, which is then constructed as justification for the violence by the explorers is an important feature of much historical travel writing, as it helped to legitimize imperial aspirations. As previously stated, the depiction of Indigenous peoples as ‘savage’ or violent, and thus in need of civilizing through “enlightened” Europeans can frequently be found in travel reports from all over the world. Researchers argue, that Cook’s accounts are the foundation of the decision to establish a settler-colony in Australia (White and Greenwood 405; Fhlathúin 24), hence his depiction of Aboriginal Australians as “happy,” but not numerous appears to have served its purpose.

Similar strategies of writing about Aboriginal peoples in more positive terms were also used when the colonization of Australia started in 1787. *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay* describes that the first impression settlers got of Aboriginal Australians “impressed a higher

idea of them than any former accounts of their manners had suggested” (Wood qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 466). However, Wood also refers to them as “tractable [...] when no insult or injury is offered, and when proper means are used to influence the simplicity of their minds” (qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 467). This, again, creates a discourse of Aboriginal Australians as being of a simple mindset, unequal to that of the ‘superior’ European settlers which supports and legitimizes the imperial project. Later reports include the description of first exchanges Aboriginal Australians, and attempts to learn from the ‘Other,’ even if only “for the purpose of knowing whether or not the country possessed any resources by which life might be prolonged” (Tench qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 470). Tench also describes how one of their prisoners “became at once fond of our viands and would drink the strongest liquors, not simply without reluctance but with eager marks of delight and enjoyment. He was the only native we ever knew who immediately showed a fondness for spirits” (qtd. in Bohls and Duncan 471). This might mark the introduction of alcohol to Aboriginal Australians, depicted as something positive by writers at first, as it creates a similarity between the cultures. It is, however, also a frequent issue in later travel writing and media discourses, where it is no longer seen as something desirable, but rather as something highly problematic and illustrative of the “degenerative state” of Aboriginal Australians (Clarke “Ordinary Place” 83). Hence, the same images and discourses of Aboriginal Australians that might, at the time, have been positive, changed into something negative over time. This does not mean that problems with alcoholism in Aboriginal communities is not a real problem, it only outlines a shift in the meaning of that particular discourse connecting Aboriginal Australians to the consumption of alcohol.

Another important historical travel account about Australia is written by Mary Ann Parker, who is one of the few female travel writers at the time. She first describes Aboriginal Australians in a rather degrading manner, as “[smelling] so loathsome, that it is almost impossible to approach them without disgust” (96). She further states that female Aboriginal Australians are “extremely negligent of their persons, and are filthy to a degree scarcely credible” (97). However, Parker also notes she did not experience any bad treatment by them, and is therefore “inclined to think favorably of them; and fully believe[s] that they would never injure our people, were they not first offended by them” (99). Possibly due to having had contact to a number of Aboriginal Australians, Parker is able to look beyond the contemporary image of them as ‘savage’ as she notes that “I flatter myself that the time is hastening when they will no longer be considered as mere savages;

and wherefore should they?" (102). She is one of few writers who are able to develop such a positive image of Aboriginal Australians who are equal to European settlers. Other writers at the time frequently described the Australian continent in favorable terms, but its inhabitants were nevertheless depicted as 'savages,' both 'noble' and 'ignoble,' but possibly "happy" and or friendly, however, they definitely did not view Aboriginal peoples as equal to themselves.

Clarke describes that historically the Australian continent and Aboriginal peoples have frequently been represented through a 'utopian lens,' corresponding to the respective writers' social and ideological ideals (Clarke *Black Australia* 22). Clarke compares fact and fiction as he states that the fictional traveler is a popular motif in literary utopias, which offer the possibility of a critique of society through their comparison to the contemporary world. Hence, Clarke observes that also real travelers oftentimes embark on a quest to find an existing utopia which they then depict in their travelogues. Australia as 'the Great Southern Land,' 'Terra Australis Incognita' or 'terra nullis' was particularly suited for the construction of such utopias, and "an attractive space for the projection and imagined fulfilment of European desires" (Clarke *Black Australia* 27). Those desires were further fueled by the promise of "extravagant fantasies of gold and riches" (White and Greenwood 404). The myth of Australia as utopia was not only imagined in travel writing, but consciously perpetuated by imperialist ideology to further promote and legitimize the colonization of Australia (Clarke *Black Australia* 28). A similar promotion of Australia can be found in Howard Willoughby's nineteenth century travelogue *Australian Pictures*, which depicts the continent as "English, Christian, democratic yet loyal to the Crown, and above all prosperous" (Clarke *Black Australia* 23). Willoughby's utopia is only disturbed by a legitimizing discourse of colonization, which includes "a mixture of misinformed amateur anthropology, contradictory Christian benevolence, crude scientific racism, white superiority, and ambivalence over the British claim to Australian territory" (Clarke *Black Australia* 23). His text creates an outlook into a future where Aboriginal Australians are extinct, as he notes that "under these favorable circumstances the full-blooded black is dying out" (Willoughby 175f qtd. in Clarke *Black Australia* 23). Thereby a, according to Willoughby utopian, "future of white prosperity without the whiteman's burden" is created, while at the same time displaying Aboriginality in a melancholic light (Clarke *Black Australia* 24). Throughout the nineteenth century travel writing about Australia was largely informed by scientific interest in the continents' fauna and flora as well as in its Indigenous peoples. Those nineteenth century accounts were further influenced by Enlightenment discourses,

which led writers to a depiction of “Aboriginal Australians as a race doomed to extinction in the face of a superior civilization” (White and Greenwood 405f). Such a future without Aboriginal Australians can, arguably, also be found in some twenty-first century travel books and blogs, which neglect to acknowledge the existence of Aboriginal Australians.

These examples demonstrate that there is no singular discourse about Australia and Aboriginal Australians, not even in the earliest travel reports. This might be, as White and Greenwood argue, due to the continent’s nature as settler-colony. They note that travelling in a settler-colony complicates the binary of sameness and difference as visitors and settlers “found neither the familiarity of the ‘old world’ nor a sense of plunging into a wholly unknown other” (404). This is one of the reasons for the presence of both utopian and melancholic discourses in Australian travel writing identified by Clarke (*Black Australia*). While many early writers such as Cook, Tench and Willoughby create positive, almost utopian discourses to describe Australia - that is the continent as such, not necessarily about its Indigenous peoples - later explorers, especially those travelling to the interior of the continent, paint a less favorable image. In such accounts the struggle “against heat and thirst and dangerous natives” is highlighted, as the explorers’ hopes for a fertile and habitable land equal to the American west were crushed (White and Greenwood 405). At the same time, explorers who traveled to more fertile parts of the country paint a highly positive image, using “the language of the picturesque and sublime,” in their descriptions of the Australian landscape (White and Greenwood 405). Such a picturesque discourse, again, promotes the colonial project. Discourses about the danger and hardships in the interior of the country can also be compared to travel writing about Africa as analyzed by Mary Louise Pratt and also to novels such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

Most of these early reports are, however, not travel writing in the modern sense as these texts largely consist of explorers’ journals and early reports by settlers. Nevertheless, such reports are the foundation of much later travel writing as they contribute to creating people’s expectations about Australia. The end of the nineteenth century gave way to travel writing more similar to the format it is known as today. However, the duality of positive and negative descriptions of the country persists. While some writers highlight the “sense of wonder” and praise the landscape, others are “appalled by its ‘monotony’” (White and Greenwood 406). A difference to earlier reports is the writers’ shift from a focus on landscape to descriptions of cities and metropolitan areas, which made Australia interesting for more permanent migrants. Such reports frequently

constructed “Australia as a land of the future” while ignoring the continent’s past (White and Greenwood 407). This, again, illustrates the power of travel writing to actively influence the world. Writers, including professional authors, normal travelers and people who visited Australia for different, e.g. economical, reasons; anyone who reports their experiences, contributes to shaping the image of Australia. This in turn “could affect migration, investment and trade” and was part of a larger discursive construction of what constitutes Australia that “was internalized and turned into Australians’ idea of themselves” (White and Greenwood 407). As the establishment of the colony proceeded, travel writing by ‘outsiders’ that is explorers and visitors to the country, became gradually replaced by travel writing by (white) Australians. These are not travel accounts in the traditional sense, as the authors do not report experienced during travels but describe their experiences in the country, for example on the Great Barrier Reef, or amongst Aboriginal Australians. These authors nevertheless “brought a traveller’s gaze to Australia and inspired others to travel” (White and Greenwood 407). Hence, first, travel writing by explorers promoted the colonization of the country to make way for travel reports by Australians, this also promoted the tourism industry which is now one of the most important source of income in Australia.

Travel writing from the twentieth century often depicts “longer journeys around or across Australia,” thereby further blurring the line between the conventional difference of explorer, traveler, tourist and local (White and Greenwood 408). By travelling across the country, Australians can become ‘real’ travelers in their own country, as they explore parts formerly unknown to them and report their experiences along the way. This increase of Australians travelling in Australia can be traced back to the introduction of the car, which enabled writers to travel long distances faster. These narratives, therefore, feature images of empty roads and alien landscapes, as they construct discourses of loneliness and “discover[ing] lost worlds,” as Australians slowly realize “that they [have] a past worth visiting” (White and Greenwood 408). However, the depiction of Australia as a country worth visiting also started white Australians’ “imaginative possession of the land” which in some cases leads to an absence of Aboriginal Australians in these travel narratives, as they are “written out” of the white Australian writers’ stories (White and Greenwood 409). This dispossession was, of course not only imagined but real, as white settlements had displaced Aboriginal communities in the past. While some contemporary travel writers consciously put Aboriginal Australians “on the periphery” of their narratives, other actively seek them out and discuss the apparent absence of Aboriginal culture and people in

everyday Australian life (White and Greenwood 405). Bill Bryson, for example, notes in *Down Under*, “Aborigines just aren’t there [...] you wouldn’t expect to see them in vast numbers anyway, but you would expect to see them *sometimes*” (379; original emphasis). In addition to this absence of Aboriginal Australians, writers also have increasingly noted racist talk and attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Not all writers retain such a critique of white Australians however. Some writers who acknowledge the existence of Aboriginal Australians fall back to perpetuating the discourse of the ‘melancholic indigene.’ This discourse encompasses aspects that are excluded from the image of Aboriginal Australia used in tourism discourse, and focuses on the “apparently fatal nature of Aboriginality: depressed, degenerative, disadvantaged, always already lost” (Clarke *Black Australia* 26). This melancholic representation can, as already mentioned, also be found in historical travel reports. However, due to its seeming omnipresence, it has become “cliché and ripe for satire” (Clarke *Black Australia* 26). Despite this tendency to be ridiculed, the discourse of the ‘melancholic indigene’ also possess power, as it is able to pose challenges for both writers and readers alike. Despite this critical acknowledgement of the lived reality of Aboriginal Australians, travel writers nevertheless tend to retain their Eurocentric perspective and “[exploit] the exotic appeal of Aboriginality” (*Black Australia* 2). Thereby the utopian and at the same time melancholic image of Aboriginal Australians is created, as writers accentuate “their sense of mystery, otherness and exceptionality” while at the same time deploring Aboriginal poverty and dispossession” (*Black Australia* 2). This duality of the utopian and melancholic aspects of Aboriginal Australia is already present in the word “Aborigine” itself, which is not only a term imposed upon many sovereign nations by the European settlers, but also “translates into a complex affective regime” (*Black Australia* 4f). On the one hand, the term goes back to Enlightenment ideas of the ‘noble savage,’ meaning “original men” ; on the other hand, the Latin prefix ‘ab-’ adds a melancholic aspect as it means “both ‘of’ and ‘away from’ [...] after and removed from the original.” Aboriginal Australians who do not conform to mythical stereotypes “are either considered inauthentic and rendered invisible, or positioned in terms of negative stereotypes of cultural and racial degeneracy” (Clarke “Ordinary Place” 83).

By the end of the twentieth century Australia had become part of the worldwide tourism industry that developed after the Second World War. However, the end of the war also brought another type of travel writer to the country, that is a new wave of immigrants who oftentimes

“approached their new country with a tourist gaze” (White and Greenwood 409). Some of these narratives, especially by British travelers, includes discourses of “itchy feet,” for example Eunice Gardner’s *The World at Our Feet*, which contributed to the construction of Australia as a backpacking destination. Other writers turned back to earlier traditions “combining a travel book with advice to migrants” (White and Greenwood 410). Such accounts not only include topics like restaurant recommendations, but also offer a critique of contemporary Australian life. While some writers merely criticize issues such as the “early pub closing hours”, others such as George Mikes and Tony Horwitz, started to formulate a critique of the treatment of Aboriginal Australians and white racism (White and Greenwood 410).

While much research focuses on issues such as the imperialist portrayal of foreign cultures as the ‘exotic’ or ‘savage’ ‘Other,’ Robert Clarke investigates travel writers’ depictions of the role ascribed to Aboriginality in the context of ‘ordinary’ Australian culture. Clarke identifies that observations on everyday life by contemporary travel writers such as Bill Bryson, Annie Caulfield, and Mark McCrum, contain an implicit critique of the treatment of Aboriginal Australian culture. These writers find that the reality of Aboriginal Australian communities neither confirms to the stereotyped representations in tourist brochures, nor to the characters in film or on television. Therefore, encounters with Aboriginality do not appear to have a place in ‘ordinary’ Australian culture and “reveal uncomfortable aspects of contemporary Australian life for national and international audiences” (Clarke “Ordinary Place” 68). The writers observe that “Aboriginality in the form of Aboriginal people is absent from everyday ‘ordinary’ Australian spaces” (Clarke “Ordinary Place” 78). This absence of Aboriginal people in white Australia is contrasted to the ubiquitous, frequently racist, comments about them, uttered by non-Aboriginal Australians (Clarke “Ordinary Place” 78). Clarke suggests that “only by not seeing the realities of the racial divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians [...] can the tourist actually enjoy the pleasures that ordinary Australia affords” (“Ordinary Place” 79). Therefore, if contemporary writers find themselves unable to ignore this reality, they might fall back to either perpetuating stereotyped melancholic discourses about Aboriginal Australians on the one hand, or, on the other hand, might use those experiences to formulate their critique of non-Aboriginal Australians. Such a critique of the exclusion of Aboriginal Australians from ‘ordinary’ Australian life is given in Ann Caulfield’s *The Winners’ Enclosure*. She states that she is “unable to ‘not see’ the unjust treatment of Aboriginal people” and is “shocked and repelled by the white racism she observes”

(Clarke "Ordinary Place" 79). This statement illustrates the discomfort a confrontation with Aboriginality might cause for travel writers. However, a critique of the lack of presence of Aboriginal Australians in 'ordinary' Australian life, inevitably includes Western ideas and concepts of what is considered to be 'ordinary.' Therefore, the absence of Aboriginal Australians in this 'ordinary' life, might partly be due to their own wish and conscious choices made by some Aboriginal communities. This does, obviously, not mean that all of this absence is caused by their own agency, , as it is also influenced by the socio-political circumstances.

The increase in tourism also led to a range of narratives created by both Australian and international travel writers. Discourses of "survival" in the "real" Australia, that is "a vast and uninhabited land" were picked up by writers who "explored" the Australian outback. Other writers turned to road narratives in different variations, travelling in cars, by bike, or on foot (White and Greenwood 411). Some of these narratives put the experience of the white travelers in the center, and thereby displace Aboriginal Australians to the margins of the story, or as White and Greenwood put it "on the periphery of white experiences of the landscape" (412). In contrast to this, Clarke argues that the engagement with Aboriginality is "the main point in much Australian travel literature published after 1980" (*Black Australia* 3). As a result, the juxtaposition of Aboriginal Australia and white Australia are a common element in travel writing, not only by foreign visitors to the country like Paul Theroux, but also by Australian travel writers such as Robyn Davidson or Bruce Chatwin (*Black Australia* viii). In this juxtaposition white Australians are frequently depicted in a rather unfavorable manner; Theroux, for example, describes them as "insecure, threatening, ill-mannered, and parochial" as well as "racist towards Aboriginal Australians" (Clarke *Black Australia* vii). In similar ways, many travel writers who visited Australia after 1980, "seek to distance themselves from the legacies of colonialism and racism" (*Black Australia* 3). Despite the construction of Australia as utopian place in European imagination, starting in the early phases of colonization and continued in contemporary tourism advertisements, the conditions experienced by Aboriginal peoples remain challenging to this day. Travel as such, and travel writing in particular, as already mentioned in this thesis, have "the potential for personal, if not social transformation" (Clarke *Black Australia* 2). In the Australian context, this transformative potential is most clearly realized in the encounter with Aboriginality. However, the problematic race relations in Australia confront travel writers with a "moral and

political dilemma” which often leads to an inherent critique of Australian life in travel texts (Clarke *Black Australia* 2f).

Contained within the recent turn to validating Aboriginal presence in modern Australia is the issue of cultural commodification. Thus, travel literature about Aboriginal Australia includes a conflict between the “commodification and exploitation of Aboriginality” on the one hand, and the travelers’ appreciation and valuing thereof due to its “political, ethical, and aesthetic qualities” (*Back Australia* 8). This tension between the “commodification of cultural difference” and the responses hereto create the ‘postcolonial exotic’ as coined by Huggan. He describes that “the postcolonial exotic is not a simple *result* of the relatively recent institutionalisation of postcolonial studies, nor does it simply *coincide* with [...] postcolonial representations of cultural difference within a global-capitalist alterity industry” (Huggan 243; original emphasis). The ‘postcolonial exotic’ is hybrid itself, as it is “caught between the demands of a transnational consumer public and the need to decolonise cultural production in a post-independence (‘not post-imperial’) age” (Huggan 263). According to Huggan, the ‘postcolonial exotic’ further “occupies a site of discursive conflict” as it

marks the intersection between contending regimes of value: one regime – postcolonialism – that posits itself as anti-colonial, and that works towards the dissolution of imperial epistemologies and institutional structures; and another – postcoloniality – that is more closely tied to the global market, and that capitalises both on the widespread circulation of ideas about cultural otherness and on the worldwide trafficking of culturally ‘othered’ artifacts and goods. (Huggan 28)

Hence, the ‘postcolonial exotic’ is resistance to dominant discourses and, at the same time, part of the capitalist “profit-driven system of the transnational culture industries and global trade” (Huggan 263). It is, as Huggan notes, “both a form of commodity fetishism and a revelation of the process by which ‘exotic’ commodities are produced, exchanged, consumed; it is both a mode of consumption and an analysis of consumption” (264). This leads to a dilemma central to postcolonial studies, as it poses the question whether it is “possible to account for cultural difference without at the same time mystifying it” (31). The ‘postcolonial exotic’ therefore includes cultural artifacts, galleries, ‘authentic’ tours and staged events such as performances of traditional dances for tourists to attend. Such ‘staged authenticity,’ which Urry and Larsen define as a response from those who are subjected to the tourist gaze “both to protect themselves from intrusions into their lives [...] and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents for profitable

investment” (10). Such a commodification of Aboriginal Australian culture can also be found in the travel blogs analyzed in this thesis. It is visible in the ways bloggers write about their paid encounters with Aboriginal Australian culture in the form of tours, tour guides, galleries or visitor centers. Furthermore, this commodification is also, sometimes, criticized as writers for example express dissatisfaction with a certain tour (Louisatroy) or complain about the inauthenticity of the cultural artifacts sold (Jost Going). The commodification of Aboriginal culture appears to be expected by other writers, however, for example for Alice-and-will, who are shocked by the absence of museums, galleries and shops for tourists in the outback. Discourses about the true nature of Aboriginality are, however, not only perpetuated in travel writing but also in contemporary Australian Media where discourses of Aboriginality frequently serve to perpetuate stereotypes to reach a specific political agenda. The following chapter will give an overview of such discourses and their underlying ideologies.

3.2 Media Discourse about Aboriginal peoples in Australia

Discourse theory, as will be more closely discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, does not view language as objective, but as a productive site of power relations where “representations do not just reflect meanings and realities but also produce them” (Macoun 520). Discourses can, therefore, reflect underlying ideologies. In order to identify and be able to relate the discourses found in the blogs, to the larger discourses about Aboriginality in Australian society, this chapter attempts to analyze the representation of Aboriginal Australians in the media. It is inevitable to do this as many travel writers, as well all bloggers analyzed in this thesis spent extended periods of time in Australia, ranging from three months (Louisatroy) to two years (Robbie George). The writers are therefore not only confronted with representations of Aboriginality in the tourism context, but also with contemporary media representations which they encounter both directly, for example in newspapers or TV shows, as well as indirectly through conversations with non-Aboriginal Australians.

Despite Australia’s position among the most highly developed countries in the world, the socio-economic conditions, including education, health and general well-being, of Aboriginal Australian peoples remains poor compared to that of white Australians (Wheeler-Jones et al. 165). The poor situation of Aboriginal Australians is summarized by Clarke

In 2003, [...] when Aboriginal Australians comprised approximately two per cent of the national population, their average life expectancy was approximately 20 years lower than that of non-Indigenous people; the infant mortality rate for Indigenous new-borns was almost double the national average; unemployment was 2.8 times higher for Indigenous than for non-Indigenous people; the suicide rate for Indigenous people was almost triple the national average; and Aboriginal Australians were being incarcerated at nearly 15 times the rate of the non-Aboriginal population. (*Black Australia* 1)

These numbers, Clarke argues, “mock the claims to moral authority of many non-Indigenous Australians” (*Black Australia* 2). Such claims of moral authority are deeply-rooted in history and in the contemporary discursive portrayal of Aboriginal Australians in the media. This portrayal is, however, in large parts created by and for non-Aboriginal Australians, which left Aboriginal peoples with “little or no control over the nature of such representation” (Meadows 43). This puts Aboriginal Australians into the position of objects to be gazed at in pictures and film, it is a representation of them as ‘uncivilized Others’ in stories including children’s schoolbooks (Meadows 43). This also denies them a voice to express their own stories, which puts them into a subaltern position.

Most, if not all, discourses that portray Aboriginal Australians as “simple, backward, or primitive,” as well as their framing as ‘noble savages’ or stereotypical “drunken Aborigines” who are unable to cope with the realities of modernity have a historical background (Hinkson 229). Hinkson identifies a dichotomy of positively connoted “hunter-gatherers [...] who speak distinct languages and live off the land,” and negatively connoted ‘savage,’ ‘anti-modern’ and “impoverished social outcasts” at the end of the twentieth century (229). Such a dichotomy is also noted by Clarke, who argues, that “within European discourses on Australia, images of Aboriginality are caught between the poles of the ‘noble’ and ‘ignoble savages’ (*Black Australia* 30). This myth of the ‘noble savage’ and its opposite the ‘ignoble savage’ is an important concept in postcolonial theory and has already been mentioned a few times in this thesis as it is a prevalent discourse in travel writing about Australia. This concept is a European creation invented to portray ‘Others,’ especially Native American peoples and Aboriginal Australians, as the binary opposite to European civilization. The term ‘savage’ is discursively connected to negative attributes such as “cruel and primitive,” however, also contrasting, nostalgic, ways of thinking and talking about the ‘Other’ exist at the same time (Borsboom 419). Such nostalgic discourses highlight Indigenous peoples’, close relationship to nature as well as their “childlike” ignorance of sexual and social restrictions. However, both representations, ‘ignoble’ and ‘noble’ are a myth, the first serving the

colonial enterprise, the second being a criticism thereof (Borsboom 419). The source of the myth can not be clearly identified. The idea behind it, however, was already introduced by Christoph Columbus whose initial writings constructed the “new world” in utopian terms. His writings not only highlight natural features such as “the beauty of the landscape and its lush vegetation”, but also describe “the nakedness of the people; their fine physique and their peaceful minds” (Borsboom 420). The myth, and the discursive construction of Aboriginal peoples as ‘noble savage’ has frequently been, wrongly, attributed to the romantic writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau’s ‘noble savage’ is “a mythic personification of natural goodness by a romantic glorification of savage life,” that is indigenous life “uncorrupted” by and superior to civilization (Ellingson 1). At the grounds of the myth is also the presupposition of the existence of some form of “natural state which preceded European civilization” but can still be found in “uncivilized” parts of the world (Borsboom 421).

The myth of the ‘noble savage,’ and the subtype of the ‘desert noble savage,’ is particularly interesting in the Australian context where the ‘savage’ is “valorized as a pacifist, an ecologist, and a mythmaker/storyteller” (Graulund 79). Further, the particular, almost outlandish, quality of a desert landscape, and its inherent difference from anything known to Western mindsets, makes it an especially suited place for the construction of a timeless ‘noble savage’ (Graulund 85). In the early stages of colonization, the nomadic lifestyle of Aboriginal Australians and the lack of agriculture enabled European settlers to construct the continent as an empty and uninhabited ‘terra nullis’ which was open to European exploration. Moreover, “the nomadism of the Aborigines was seen as proof of their inferiority” (Graulund 91). Later, through various influences such as the tourism industry, the perspective shifted to a depiction of Aboriginal Australians, the ‘desert noble savage’ who lives a life “directed by dreams, mythology, and spirituality,” and as people who are able to locate food, as well as spirituality in the desert (Graulund 95).

Such, more positively connoted, media discourses of the ‘noble savage’ have, however, increasingly been replaced by a “discourse of failure, suffering, violence,” as well as by accusations of sexual and physical abuse of children (Hinkson 229f). These discourses are also constructions by non-Aboriginal people with limited contact to and little understanding of Aboriginal communities. They are, nevertheless, perpetuated in contemporary media, which leads to the reinforcement of certain ideas and assumptions (Wheeler-Jones et al. 168). Macoun describes that “this problematisation of Aboriginality is a colonial practice, relying on an implied

opposition between a problematised Aboriginality and an idealised ‘civilised’ settler order” (523). Research has shown that discourses of Indigenous deficit are prevalent, and have influenced race relations in Australia since contact, as they are “a key component of racism and prejudice” informed by colonial ideology (Fforde et al. 164). Hence, while earlier discourses in travel writing supported the imperial project, contemporary media discourses frequently serve political campaigns. It is important to note that such representations do in no way correspond to the ways in which Aboriginal Australians view themselves (Fforde et al. 164). This is also an example of how the use of the problematic aspects of the racial hegemony of whiteness, that is the identification of “values and behaviours of Euro-Australian culture [...] as normative and universal, forming the invisible standard against which all other values and behaviours are judged” is problematic as it results in a particular way of viewing the world (Proudfoot and Habibis 173). Hence, western hegemonic concepts and ideas, can never fully serve to represent another culture.

Researchers have argued that certain discourses about Aboriginal Australians, for example the linking of “Aboriginality to abuse of Aboriginal children,” were consciously spread to “limit the discursive authority of Aboriginal people” (Wheeler-Jones et al. 168). This link serves as an illustration of how the “experiment in self-determination” of Aboriginal communities failed, and further implies that “Aboriginal people are to blame for their own demise” (Hinkson 230). However, as Sutton notes, such “patterns of family violence,” even though they may partly be informed by traditions, are “both formed and triggered by ‘new’ factors” such as the effects of colonization, the imposed cultural change, displacement, alcoholism, stress in larger communities that include hundreds of people, etc. (Sutton 153). Furthermore, these discourses about failed self-determination ignore the existence of Aboriginal communities preceding colonization and thereby neglect to acknowledge the wrongdoings and displacements of Aboriginal Australians by the white settlers in the past.

Macoun identifies two ways in which the, aforementioned, need for intervention through ‘civilized’ Australians was and still is constructed. On the one hand, Aboriginal Australians are depicted as “savage or violent and in need of suppression or control,” on the other hand they were framed as “primitive and in need of development or assimilation into the settler order” (523). In both cases this, supposed, incapability of self-governance puts Aboriginal Australians into a “child-like,” effectively subaltern, position (Hinkson 230). The subaltern, is a concept first coined by Antonio Gramsci and later redefined in postcolonial studies, especially through the work of

Gayatri Spivak. It designates populations which are either socially, politically or geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin *Key Concepts* 198). Spivak's work focuses on the question "can the subaltern speak" and the situation of women in colonized countries. She argues that "there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself," and that a true subaltern cannot express their voice as the subaltern does not have access to the dominant discourse (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin *Key Concepts* 201). She further maintains that the situation is even worse for women as their gendered reality puts them "even more deeply into the shadow" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin *Key Concepts* 201). Aboriginal Australians are part of the subaltern because they are excluded from the dominant discourse and the economic power structure, both of which are shaped by non-Aboriginal Australians.

The media's detrimental portrayal of Aboriginality and the negative repercussions thereof, have been widely acknowledged (see Wheeler-Jones et al.; Meadows; Hinkson). However, not only the media's reinforcement of negative ideas about Aboriginality can be harmful, as also the "reproduction of romanticised, patronizing and stereotyped portrayals" which are frequently found in tourism discourse, reinforces preexisting ideas (Wheeler-Jones 169), and contributes to a discursive separation of "remote Aboriginal people's separation from wider Australia" (Hinkson 229). Hence, representations of Aboriginality served to authorize policies of non-Aboriginal Australians, as Dodson explains "Aboriginality became part of the ideology that legitimised and supported the policies and practices of the state" (7). Furthermore, "both representations position Aboriginal culture as an object that functions or fails according to its own logic, ignoring the cultural complexity of forms of postcolonial governance" (Hinkson 230). All of these factors play into a "deficit discourse" surrounding Aboriginality, not only in dominant non-Aboriginal discourse, but also within the marginalized Aboriginal Australian discourse. This is a good example of the transformative power of discourse as such (Fforde et al. 166), as it illustrates how the dominant discourse has the power to shape and influence society and other, marginalized discourses.

An example of how media discourse can serve to support specific government policies can be found in Proudfoot and Habibis' study. Very little research on the "simplistic and stereotyped image" (170) in the media representation of Aboriginal Australians had been done when Proudfoot and Habibis undertook their comparative analysis of both mainstream media in favor of the

Norther Territory Emergency Response, henceforth abbreviated as NTER, as well as Aboriginal populist print media opposed to it. Their study suggests that stereotyped, simplistic, and negative media representations of Aboriginal communities in mainstream media “contributed to a moral panic about violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities” (Proudfoot and Habibis 172). It is essential to acknowledge the role of the media in this context, as “fewer than 10 percent of non-Aboriginal Australians [mix] regularly with Aboriginal people” which results in the media being the only source of information about Aboriginal communities (Proudfoot and Habibis 172). This is another example of the, already mentioned, divide between white and Aboriginal Australia that is frequently observed by travelers.

Produdfoot and Habibis’ study is interesting for this thesis as the writers identify five main groups of discourse concerning the NTER. Those are “homogenising, justifying, blaming, distrusting and contesting” discourses (175). They also identified two subsidiary discourses which are “children-at-risk discourses and supporting discourses” (175). While the features identified of blaming, distrusting and contesting discourses are very specific for the context of the NTER, justifying, and especially homogenizing discourses can also be applied to other contexts, and the ways in which travel writers represent Aboriginal Australians. Travel writers also use their own versions of distrusting and blaming discourses, albeit with different features and meanings and intentions than those identified by Proudfoot and Habibis. Such distrusting discourses present in travel writing, include the blaming of white Australians for the reality of Aboriginal Australians and distrust of stereotyped tourism representations of Aboriginality.

The homogenizing discourses identified by Proudfoot and Habibis share characteristics of the homogenization of the ‘Other’ described by Mary Louise Pratt. In such discourses, Aboriginal Australians are constructed, amongst other things, through the omission of words such as “some”, “alleged” or “remote,” which implies, in the specific case of media discourses surrounding the NTER, that sexual violation of Aboriginal children “was an actuality and ubiquitous in all Aboriginal communities” (Proudfoot and Habibis 176). Another feature of homogenizing discourses surrounding the NTER, is a lack of intertextuality which leads to the discursive construction of Aboriginal communities as dysfunctional monocultures, of adult Aboriginal Australians as perpetrators and of all Aboriginal children as victims. Proudfoot and Habibis identify that media reports at the time not only created a binary between “licentious perpetrators or helpless victims” (177), but also find that “words such as ‘decaying,’ dysfunctional’ and

‘continuing to collapse’ preceding reference to Aboriginal communities” lead to a depiction of Aboriginal Australians as “universally problematic” (177). This, again, can be traced back to colonial ideology which is, in this case, used to justify the need for intervention by the non-Aboriginal government. Such justifying discourses in support for the NTER are, as Proudfoot and Habibis find, constructed in two different varieties. Firstly there are “children-at-risk discourses” which lead to a portrayal of “all Aboriginal children as inherently at risk” (177) of “violence, neglect and sexual abuse” (178). Secondly there are “supporting discourses,” which perpetuate the idea that “white governance [is] needed to restore civility and moral order to remote Aboriginal communities” (178). Moreover, the media coverage implies “that that Aboriginal people need rescuing by the white government due to their inherent deficit” (179). Both, “children-at-risk” and “supporting” discourses were perpetuated in mainstream media through the voices of two Aboriginal supporters of the NTER (178). This illustrates that media discourses to this contain conflicting discourses that perpetuate both, romanticized accounts of Aboriginal Australians as ‘noble’ as well as critical discourses highlighting their ‘uncivilized’ and ‘savage’ behavior. It further illustrates the tension between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, which are all aspects that are present in contemporary travel writing in blogs.

4 Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis

The term discourse goes back to Michel Foucault and is described as “systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs and practices that shape reality” (Kerins 26 qtd. in Fforde et al. 162). Fairclough defines discourses as “ways of representing aspects of the world” (124). However, as there is no singular way to represent the world and one’s experiences, “different discourses are different perspectives of the world” which are influenced by people’s positionality within that world. Analyzing this positionality, that is the writers or speakers “social and personal identities” as well as “the social relationships in which they stand to other people” is highly important to be able to uncover any underlying ideologies (Fairclough 124). Different discourses can be distinguished through the ways in which they “lexicalize” the world, that is their choice of words and vocabulary, as well as the semantic relations between those words. However, discourses may use the same words in a different manner, which means that the context of these words, such as the collocations or metaphors within the text are essential aspects of discourse analysis as well (Fairclough 129ff).

Discourse is closely connected to power, as “those who have the ability to shape discourse define what it is possible to think” (Kerins 26 qtd. in Fforde et al. 163). Therefore, the analysis of discourse offers the possibility to reveal underlying relationships of power. Macoun states “representations do not just reflect meanings and realities, but also produces them,” therefore she notes that “discourses and discursive practices are [...] important sites of power relations, constituting objects, events, identities, subjects and truths in particular ways” (520). This means that discursive practices can, as Wheeler-Jones et al. argue “contribute to constructions of Aboriginality” (168). Further, constructions of Aboriginality by foreign travelers have the potential to empower Aboriginal Australians as travelers are able to adopt an outside perspective (Duffy). However, travelers’ constructions of Aboriginality also inherently possess the execution of the travelers’ power over Aboriginal Australians as they are objectified through the tourist gaze, which is “not a matter of individual psychology but socially patterned and learnt ‘ways of seeing’” (Urry and Larsen 2). These learnt ways of seeing, and the “master narratives and discourses concerning Aboriginal peoples” are rooted in history where non-Aboriginal people constructed depictions of Aboriginal Australians as “simple, backward, or primitive” (Wheeler-Jones et al. 168). Therefore, the travelers’ gaze is also influenced by the ideologies and discourses the travelers are exposed to, as well as by the image of Aboriginality perpetuated in the media. This image then has the power to shape not only “government and policy-makers’ responses to Aboriginal peoples” but also the responses of people who visit the country (Wheeler-Jones et al- 168). Critical Discourse Analysis can be a useful tool to uncover these complex relations of power.

According to Ruth Wodak, Critical Discourse Analysis, henceforth referred to as CDA, “may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (“What CDA is about” 2). It is further essential to note that CDA “centers on authentic everyday communication [...] rather than on sample sentences” (Wodak *National Identity* 8). CDA is an inter- and multidisciplinary, and relatively new field of academic research which tries to go beyond the text as such by taking structures and processes that lead to the production of the text into account (Lê and Lê 4). Hence power, history and ideology are indispensable aspects of CDA (Wodak “What CDA is about” 3). As Rolf puts it “the critical analysis of discourse requires looking beyond the superficial use of language [...] to find what motivations and intentions lie

behind” (128). Therefore, an account of the discourses in historical travel writing is an integral part of this thesis and has to precede any analysis of contemporary travel writing based on CDA.

Lê and Lê propose a “methodological blueprint” for CDA following Fairclough’s three-dimensional model. This blueprint firstly includes the examination of discourse as a text, which includes features of word choice, grammar and vocabulary. On this level the focus is on the textual features of the material. Secondly, discourse is seen as a discursive practice which is “produced, circulated, [and] consumed in society” (Lê and Lê 8). This level of analysis includes an interpretation of how discourse can be understood on the basis of cognitive, social and ideological factors. Lastly the “ideological effects and hegemonic processes” of discourse as a social practice is taken into account. This also includes an explanation of the “ideological underpinnings” any given text has (Lê and Lê 9). However, it is also important to note that “discourse and ideology are (partially) constituted by each other as well as constituting one another” (KhosraviNik 60). Hence, discourses are not only determined by the dominant ideology, they also contribute to the legitimization of the same ideology in society.

To reveal these aspects, this paper will follow the “three level text analysis framework” proposed by KhosraviNik. First the Macro-Structure, that is the underlying ideology has to be identified which is expected to be mostly colonialism and Western hegemony, even though some of the writers might be able to adopt a postcolonial perspective as well. Then, the discourses present in the text, such as the construction of Aboriginal Australian as either ‘noble savage’ or ‘ignoble savage,’ references to ‘problems of alcoholism,’ ‘abuse of Aboriginal children,’ ‘criticism of non-Aboriginal Australians’ and others will be highlighted while discussing the ways in which such discourses put Aboriginal Australians in marginalized roles of the ‘Other.’

The first issue the following analysis will be interested in, is how difference is expressed in the blog posts. It will examine if difference between Aboriginal Australian peoples and the writers is framed in an either open and accepting way which recognizes difference; or if it includes an “accentuation of difference” which includes conflict. Other ways to express difference are the “attempt to resolve or overcome” it, and the solidary attempt to “focus on commonality” (Fairclough 192). Then the representation of social actors will be examined to find instances of exclusion through suppression, that is the absence of certain social actors, in this case Aboriginal Australians in the text; and backgrounding, that is their presence somewhere in text while being “inferred in one or more places” (Fairclough 145). Another important point will be the question if

the actors are named or classified, and if they are represented as specific actors, or as generic representatives for a certain category, in this case, for all Aboriginal Australians. Furthermore, the role of the actor as active or passive participant, as subject or object of the sentence will be discussed (Fairclough 146). It will examine “*what* actions are (and are not) attributed to the actors” and “*how* [these] actions are connected to the actors” (KoshraviNik 64; original emphasis). Furthermore, the analysis of the blogs will examine which “existential, propositional, or value assumptions are made” and in which ways these assumptions may be interpreted as ideological (Fairclough 192). To do so the main questions that must be asked will be “what” bloggers say about Aboriginal Australians, as well as “what *is not* included in the text” (KhosraviNik 64; original emphasis). Furthermore, the arguments present in the blog posts, and how they are expressed will be analyzed (KoshraviNik 65f). Lastly, and most importantly, the discourse topics found in the text will be related to the socio-political context of the blog posts, to find how they relate to “old knowledge,” that is historical texts (KoshraviNik 67).

Summing up, the following analysis of different travel blogs will use CDA to reveal the writers’ underlying ideologies as they write about intrinsically postcolonial issues. The examples analyzed are, however, not “cherry-picked to fit [preexisting] assumptions,” (Caruana and Crane 1502) but were selected according to specific search parameters which will be described in chapter 5.1 and 5.2 respectively. Therefore, there will be no single discourse identifiable about Aboriginality, but several discourses that might represent contrary points of view. Furthermore, it is important to note that the present paper is not a linguistic study, therefore word and clause level analysis will only be included if seen as relevant to the analysis, while the main focus will be on the macro-elements, that is the discourse topics and ideologies present in the text.

5 Blog Analysis

The following part of this paper is concerned with the analysis of selected travel blogs to identify various discourses, both positive and negative, about Aboriginal Australians. The writers of the blogs, that is the bloggers, differ in their motivations for writing however. While some maintain their blogs as a sort of public diary for friends and family to follow their journeys, others have managed to monetize their writing through various strategies such as the use of affiliate marketing, writing branded content and the promotion of products. It is argued that this, economic, motivation behind writing may lead to a difference in the discourses found in the individual blogs.

As a result, the blogs are categorized into ‘non-professional’ blogs that are hosted on platforms such as travelblog.org, and are written by writers without clear economic intentions, and ‘professional’ blogs which have their own unique web address, that is a URL, which are not hosted on larger platforms. As the terms ‘non-professional’ and ‘professional’ are in no way related to the quality and professionalism of the writing, they are put between quotation marks. More parameters of how ‘non-professional’ and ‘professional’ blogs are distinguished will be discussed at the beginning of the respective chapters. The prime reason for the chosen division of blogs into the categories of ‘professional’ and ‘non-professional’ are the writers’ differing target audiences. ‘Professional’ bloggers predominantly write for an audience that is largely unknown to them, which might lead to a more impersonal tone as they appear to attempt to take an objective stance, erasing not only the ‘Self’ from their writing, but also avoiding to mention controversial topics. Furthermore, ‘professional’ bloggers frequently use their blogs as marketing platforms, not only to promote themselves as writers, but also their books, and online courses on things like travel writing, photography, blogging or business. This can, for example, be seen on Nomadic Matt’s blog, where he also offers a “Media School” including “Blogging Course”, “Photography Course”, “Travel Writing Course” and “Travel Video Course” (Knepes). ‘Non-professional’ blogs, on the other hand, are predominantly intended to be read by an audience known to the authors, that is their friends and family. Even so, they are published on public platforms and therefore accessible for a much wider audience; this is, for example, illustrated by Tom Lewesey’s blog which reached an average audience of over three thousand readers per blog post.

Another way to distinguish between the individual blogs, would be sorting them according to the authors’ ‘positionality,’ that is their respective country of origin, age group, style of travel or the topics they discuss. ‘Positionality’ is a concept largely used in feminist studies, it was coined

by Linda Alcoff and describes that “gender, race, class, and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational *positions* rather than essential qualities. Knowledge is valid when it includes an acknowledgement of the knower’s specific position in any context” (Maher and Tetreault 118; original emphasis). Hence, the authors’ positionality, as well as the positionality of the platforms they use to tell their stories are important factors to take into account to successfully conduct CDA. These aspects are, therefore, discussed before the individual analyses, to be able to establish the authors’ backgrounds before analyzing how these may relate to the ideologies underlying their writing. Furthermore, the ‘positionality’ of the blogging platforms will be, briefly, analyzed in the introduction to chapter 5.1 and 5.2 respectively.

There are, however, some factors concerning the writers’ and audiences’ positionality that all platforms and blogs appear to have in common, that is, the writers positioning of themselves as travelers who are, mostly, self-organized and put in opposition to tourists which stereotypically go on organized tour holidays. Such a distinction between traveler and tourist is also an important subject in tourism research where the term tourist is frequently associated with commercial mass tourism, which includes notions of being constrained to “planned itineraries, overdeveloped ‘tourist enclaves’ and the staged inauthenticities of the mainstream tourism market” (Caruana and Crane 1505). Moreover, tourists are also seen as “incarcerated within the tourist ghetto, complete with its over-priced and inauthentic food” (Caruana and Crane 1506). The term traveler is, on the other hand, discursively connected to notions of being independent, “striving for low cost, and getting ‘off-the-beaten-track’” as well as being able to reach “destinations that are ‘largely inaccessible’” (Caruana and Crane 1505). In his critique of ‘pseudo-events’, Daniel Boorstin criticizes “the traveler was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes ‘sight-seeing’” (85). It is therefore not surprising that travel writers, including but not limited to bloggers, frequently position themselves as travelers in their writing, given the negative connotations (mass-)tourism has. ‘Professional’ bloggers even go as far as using terms that further indicate their independence and uniqueness such as “nomadic” (Knepes) or “adventurous” (McCulley) in the names of their blogs. Furthermore, their self-descriptions in the “About Me” sections of the blogs, contain discourses of independence and adventure, which also strengthen the authors’ position as travelers as opposed to tourists. Audiences, especially of ‘professional’ blogs, are thereby also put into the position of being “different” than regular tourists, as they are interested in similar,

independent ways to travel. They are also put on the same level as the writers who frequently employ a personal tone, and directly address their readers with a friendly “you.” Hence, readers have not only found blogs to be a useful resource when planning their trips, but also “have found personal blogs to be credible sources” (Malleus 2). Or, as Cardell and Douglas put it, “audiences who read these blogs are either invested in the author as a friend or family member or are seeking an unaffiliated perspective on [...] travel destinations. [...] the travel blogger’s authority in large part derives from their status as an independent observer” (301). This is important to mention as it illustrates the power that lies in such blogs, a power that writers might sometimes not be aware of when creating their blog posts. It is the power, not only to influence peoples’ choices of where they might travel themselves, but also the power to influence their opinions about certain places and cultures, which is why it is important to analyze how such difference is articulated in blogs.

Previous research on travel blogs has, as already discussed, raised doubts on the blogs’ quality, by relating the self-published format to a questionable quality of the content (Thompson 61). This lower level of quality is true for some writing in ‘non-professional’ blogs, which was found to contain spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes, as direct quotes from the blogs in the upcoming analyses will illustrate. However, this paper is not intended to take an evaluative position on these matters. Such mistakes, albeit distracting in some cases, will be accurately reproduced in the quotes to avoid any alteration of the original statement.

Despite the criticism on the supposed lack of quality, some ‘professional’ travel blogs, were turned into published books, either through self-publishing platforms or independent publishers, but also via traditional publishers. While readers might associate a lack of professionalism and lower-quality with self-publishing, it offers advantages such as the expediting of the publishing process and the circumvention of literary agents. The blogs can then, as already mentioned, function as commercial and promotional platform for the bloggers’ published writing. Some of this writing, for example the book by blogger ‘Nomadic Matt’ is as widely read as traditional travel books (Azariah 936). Furthermore, the unsupervised nature of self-publishing, not necessarily in the form of a book but also of the blog as such, is what gives blogs the potential to reveal the underlying ideologies of a society through their depiction of the confrontation with the ‘Other.’ Specifically, this means that bloggers have the freedom to write things that would most likely be edited out of a more traditional publication, for example the use of the word “Abo” by Tom Lewesey (“Australia”) which will be discussed later in this thesis.

5.1 ‘Non-Professional’ Blogs

The common feature of what is here defined as ‘non-professional’ travel blog, is the fact that the blogs do not have an individual url but are hosted on other sites that function as a platform for people to blog, but also a collection of blogs for people to read. Another feature of such platforms, which is criticized by scholars, is the users’ limited ability to customize the individual blogs (see Calzati; Youngs). This might, as Youngs suggests, lead to problems as “the use of prescribed formats constrains presentation and expression” (*Cambridge* 180). It is further criticized that the amount of entries on such platforms limits the likelihood of an audience outside the writers’ family and friends (*Cambridge* 181). For this thesis, only blogs published on either TravelBlog.org or TravelPod.com are considered, despite the awareness of the existence of various other platforms that offer travelers the possibility to publish and share their experiences without prior knowledge of coding, in a fast and easy manner and are, most importantly, free.

TravelBlog is a growing online community with over 200,000 members, which defines itself as “a unique free online travel diary for travelers across the world.” The website claims to be “one of the most popular travel related web 2.0 sites on the internet” (*TravelBlog*). This claim can neither be confirmed nor debunked through the analytical tool alexa.com as the free version does not offer the possibility to analyze and compare the statistic for travel related websites only. The global traffic ranks suggest that the site has lost popularity, as it is now on rank 83,158 of all websites on the internet; this does not refute the original statement however, as this does not reveal which rank the website has amongst other travel related websites (Alexa, “Travelblog”). Another indication of the sinking popularity of the *TravelBlog* is that the information provided in the site’s “About Us” section was “last updated Feb 2013” (*TravelBlog* “About Us”).

The main audience of this platform are travelers who “can write down a journal [...] write reviews, guides, journals [and] add photos” they are also encouraged “to link to useful sites about areas, to help out future travellers” (*TravelBlog* “About Us”). Therefore, visitors of *TravelBlog* either maintain a blog themselves, or might be looking for ‘authentic’ first-hand experiences by other travelers who have already been to the destination they are planning to visit. Further, users of the site might be looking for recommendations what they could do and see in a certain place. This is facilitated by the site’s search engine which enables visitors to search for specific terms, individual bloggers, blogs, or only recently uploaded photos. It is also possible to browse different blogs according to region that is “Africa”, “Antarctica”, “Asia”, “C. America & Caribbean”

“Europe”, Middle East, “N. America”, “Oceania”, “Oceans & Seas”, and “S. America” (*TravelBlog*). While people can search for and read blogs without creating an account, and thereby registering to the site, services like the ability to post and discuss questions in a forum, or writing their own blog are dependent on prior registration.

TravelPod.com was created in 1997, and defines itself as “the web’s original travel blog.” Like *TravelBlog*, *TravelPod* offers the possibility to read and create travel related blogs to “share [...] adventures with everyone back home” (*TravelPod*). The main heading of the website claims that it offers “blogging built for travelers” and is “the best way to capture and share [...] travel experiences.” The website appears to be more popular than *travelblog.org*, occupying rank 76,103 amongst all websites on Alexa and more importantly rank 37,173 in the United States (Alexa “Travelpod”). *TravelPod* does not offer the same possibilities to browse the site and filter results according to region on their homepage. It does, however offer a link to “Browse travel destination”, which, on the first glance appears to lead to a similar sorting mechanism. Nevertheless, the links provided do not lead to different blog entries about or from the respective destinations but to a hotel booking and comparison site.

The main audience of this site can be compared to that of *TravelBlog*, consisting predominantly of young travelers who intend to share their experiences abroad with friends and family back home. This is not to say that both, *TravelBlog* and *TravelPod* are exclusively used by young adults, as the examples later in this thesis will demonstrate. Blogs analyzed in this thesis are, amongst others, written by students, recent graduates, a woman travelling with her husband and children as well as a retired woman. As the age of the writer varies, so will, most likely, the age of the audience. However, some – if not most - visitors of both, *TravelBlog* and *TravelPod*, might merely be following the blog of a friend or family member, without being interested in other features of the website. This type of reader is also the authors’ main intended audience, as they are frequently addressed directly, for example in Alice-and-will’s blog where they state “Please be aware that we couldn’t take lots of pictures here as it was not allowed in aboriginal lands” (“Welcome”) or, more clearly in the statement “we’ve created this blog to let you following [sic] our trip [...] we keep in touch !! [sic]” (Alice-and-will “About”).

In order to find suitable blogs, the terms ‘Aboriginal,’ ‘Aborigines,’ ‘aborigin*’ were used as parameters in the respective sites’ search field. After an initial elimination of blogs in other languages and images that merely used the terms as subtitles, the blogs were skimmed. Then, blogs

that neither report direct encounters with Aboriginal Australians nor express the travelers' experiences with Aboriginality during their travels, as writers simply refer to the presence of Aboriginal Australians, or their ownership of the land, were excluded from the research. Further, blog entries that were shorter than two paragraphs, and therefore only provide brief information in shorthand form were excluded. Moreover, blog entries that only provide an account about the history of Aboriginal peoples in a 'wikipedia' or, as one blogger put it "Spark-notes-style Version" (Samantha "The Outback"), without describing the author's experiences with Aboriginality in Australia were also excluded. Samatha's text will, however, be analyzed as she does only start her post with such a 'wikipedia' style entry, but then continues to recount her experiences with Aboriginal Australians during a tour she participated in.

The analysis will begin by examining the authors' background, as far as determinable from their writing and the information provided on their "About Me" pages. This background information is essential to the conduction of a CDA study of the bloggers' writing as it helps to determine where the writers come from, possibly their education and parts of their ideological backgrounds, which might in turn help to identify the macro-structure that underlies the discourses present in the texts. This analysis of the authors' background will also include data such as when and in which context the blog was written and, if determinable, how many views individual entries got. This is done to determine the extent of the readership generated by the respective blogs to find out whether or not it exceeds the, aforementioned, intended circle of "friends and family." After that, texts of individual blog entries relevant to the topic of examination, that is the representation of Aboriginal Australians, are closely examined according to CDA from a postcolonial perspective. This examination focuses on the discourses that can be found in the blogs, and relates these discourses to imperial and colonial discourses present in historical travel writing as well as to the discourses found in contemporary media. Lastly, the ways in which Aboriginal Australians are portrayed in the pictures provided by the respective authors will be discussed. This analysis will focus on the question whether the picture was taken with or without consent and in which contexts writers choose to take pictures of Aboriginal Australians which they then publicly post on their blogs. The order of the blogs analyzed corresponds to their alphabetical position in the bibliography.

5.1.1 *Alice-and-will*

Background

Alice-and-will is a blog maintained by a French couple, who are supposedly named Alice and Will. Their profile page and writing does not clearly indicate who the main writer of the blog is and references are always given in the plural form as “we,” it will therefore be assumed that the blog was jointly written. Hence, the plural will be used in the following analysis to refer to the writers of the blog. Alice-and-will wrote two distinct travel blogs on the platform TravelPod.com one about their travels in Thailand and one about their experiences in Australia, with a total of sixty-four individual entries and 2,142 pictures (“Traveler Profile”). As the blog was written in English, which is not the writers’ first language, some mistakes in the use of language are to be expected.

The name of their blog about Australia refers to the British derogatory name for French speakers or someone from France (“froggy, n. 2”) and is entitled “2 Froggies in Australia.” It was written over the span of one year, between August 24th 2012 and July 26th, 2013. This indicates that the writers spent a longer period of time in the country, and were consequently also exposed to and confronted with Australian media discourses about and attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians. In their description of the blog, the writers further outline that they are recent graduates from “a French business school” who went on a Working Holiday Visa to Australia (“2 Froggies”). This is another hint towards the extended period they spent in the country. Further, through working in the country, the writers are likely to have been more deeply immersed into Australian culture, as they also experienced ordinary life and met Australians in the work context. Their profile also includes a map that outlines their travels. This map further illustrates the prolonged period of time they spent in Australia, and the different parts of the country they visited, as Alice-and-will started their journey in Sydney going westwards and finished in Brisbane. The aim of their blog is to “let you following [sic] our trip and sharing moments with us [...]” The pronoun ‘you’ most likely refers to the authors’ friends and families, as they then promise to “keep in touch !! [sic]” (“2 Froggies”). The blog about Australia has fifty-five individual entries, with 2,985 visitors in total. Therefore, the average number of visitors per post is fifty-four. This indicates that the blog does not considerably exceed the intended audience and appears to be, in fact, limited to the couples’ friends and families.

Analysis

All quotes in the following analysis will be direct and indirect references to Alice-and-will's blog post called "Welcome (or not) on aboriginal lands!", unless clearly stated otherwise. Parenthetical reference to this post will not be included for the sake of readability. The authors start their post by describing the way they took on the Great Central Road from Yulara to Laverton. They then state that "thanks to this road, we could cross aboriginal lands and see the truth about their deplorable living conditions" which, apparently, disrupted the authors' expectations of Aboriginal Australia. This disruption of expectations was done on several levels, first, the reality the authors encountered did not correspond to the stereotypical image about Aboriginal Australian life, secondly, the authors were not permitted to enter Aboriginal communities, and lastly they observe the division between white and Aboriginal Australia and problems with drug abuse. In their descriptions the authors then utilize various discursive strategies to narrate their experiences.

Firstly, a distrusting discourse, similar to that identified by Proudfoot and Habibis in their analysis of NTR coverage is perpetuated as the Alice-and-will advise their readers, "[d]on't trust Uluru's beautiful flyers showing happy aboriginals dancing [...] in total harmony with the nature." While Proudfoot and Habibis identify that the distrust was expressed by Aboriginal media towards the government, indicating that it might be disingenuous and interested in the Aboriginal lands, rather than the safety of Aboriginal children, in this context, the distrust is not directed at the government but at the tourism industry. This could have been the beginning of a critique of tourism practices from a postcolonial perspective, however, the writers fail to do so. Instead, they fall back to highlighting their disappointed expectations as they juxtapose the stereotyped image of the 'noble savage' (see Boorsboom 421; Ellingslon 1) who is "in total harmony with the nature" as well as "happy" with the reality they observe in the outback. They describe, "metal sheet houses, abandoned dogs and plenty of rubbish and dropped cars everywhere on the streets." This does not conform to the writers' Western perspective of how Aboriginal Australians ought to live, which leads them to value judgements that include the choice of negative adjectives and adverbs. The people living in this area are depicted as unhappy, aimless, "wandering" and unproductive as well as, by association, unemployed as they "seem to do nothing of their days." These statements also highlight the writers' limited, Western, perspective, and demonstrate their inability to depart from the Western-hegemonic, as well as capitalist ideals of how society ought to function. They are unable to acknowledge the Aboriginal Australians' hybrid identities, that conform neither to the

myth of the 'noble savage' nor to the writers' image of a 'civilized' life that includes education, work and earning money to spend in the market and thereby contribute to the economy. It further illustrates Alice-and-will's neglect to attempt to adopt an Aboriginal Australian perspective, and their lack of openness to the contemporary realities of a foreign culture.

Another example of their inability to depart from their Western, capitalist point of view can be found in the statement that they expected to be able to "visit small art galleries (wood sculptures, digeridoos...all the stuffs we could found [sic] in more touristic places) but it is impossible as you cannot enter the community." This statement highlights the authors' consumerist perspective and the presupposition that they would be able to find galleries and shops that would cater to their expectations and sell cultural artifacts, even in those small and removed communities. The authors thereby complain about the lack of the 'postcolonial exotic' they were able to encounter in other places. Hence, the 'Other' is only described in the ways it fails to accommodate the writers' expectations. It further contains a stereotyped image about Aboriginality which, according to the authors, has to include items such as wood sculptures, or instruments like the digeridoo as integral part of their everyday life. For the authors, Aboriginality appears to be something they can, and should be allowed to consume. Furthermore, Alice-and-will's complaint indicates the authors' expectations of the facilities a town, or even such a small community as to provide for them. They put themselves in the center of their narrative, criticizing the perspective of the communities they pass on their travels. Thereby they adopt a moored-perspective (Duffy), where they view Aboriginal Australians as stereotypical representatives of their culture. This is also done through neglecting to clearly indicate that the Aboriginal Australians they encountered, and hence refer to in the aforementioned descriptions, are only those from the one community they were allowed to enter because it provided access to a roadhouse. They hence base their assumptions on one small part of the community they encountered in Kaltukatjara. Through this positioning of the self at the center of the narrative, the 'Other' is marginalized and not given a voice to speak, which puts Aboriginal Australians into a subaltern position.

These statements also contain a melancholic discourse, as identified by Clarke in his analysis of travel writings about Aboriginal Australia (*Black Australia*). This melancholic discourse expresses the swriters' disillusionment with what they perceive to be the 'reality' of Aboriginal Australia as opposed to the timeless image of the 'noble savage' perpetuated in the tourism context. The melancholic discourse focuses on the "fatal nature of Aboriginality:

depressed, degenerative, disadvantaged, always already lost” (*Black Australia* 26). This melancholic discourse in Alice-and-will’s writing also includes this “lost” image of Aboriginal Australians as “their relation with the nature does not seem to be anymore the same as before [sic] and they don’t seem really happy.” Thereby, the authors imply that the loss of touch with nature appears to be the cause for the unhappiness, they observe. However, this only further indicates the nostalgic and idealized image the writers have about Aboriginal life, and their disillusionment the confrontation with Aboriginality. This disillusionment is further expressed as the writers criticize that they were not permitted to visit the closed Aboriginal communities along their way, where they hoped to be able to “share with them about their culture [sic].” Alice-and-will, also directly refer to this melancholic sentiment as they state “this sad reality highlights the difficult relationships between aborigines and the government.” The emotional adjective sad is a direct expression of their feelings about the treatment of Aboriginal Australians and indicates that, despite their disappointment with the reality they encountered, they have sympathetic feelings. This is a frequent element in melancholic discourses in historical travel writing, where it has achieved a cliché status that is sometimes ridiculed (Clarke *Black Australia* 26).

Despite the writers’ apparent lack of direct contact with Aboriginal Australians Alice-and-will state that the Great Road is “an interesting destination to learn more about the outback and the reality about the aboriginal communities.” Therefore, the one community the writers passed through is taken to be a representative of all other communities, which creates a homogenizing discourse. In some parts of the text this homogenizing othering is avoided by the inclusion of the term “some” and hedging devices such as “seem.” They further state that they do not want readers to “make a generality regarding aborigines.” As if to demonstrate this sentiment, the writers conclude their post by claiming that they met “some nice people” but encountered problems communicating with them, “as a few speak English.” Such communication problems could also be due to the fact that the writers also do not speak English as a first language. However, the difficulties to communicate further puts the Aboriginal Australians the writers had contact to in the position of the subaltern, as they have no possibility to explain their situation and justify the reasons for not permitting non-Aboriginal Australians the entrance to their communities, which might have led to a different point of view. The homogenizing discourse, which is part of many other discourses present in the text such as the already mentioned distrusting and melancholic discourse, is also used as there is no Aboriginal actor present in the text. The people encountered

by the writers are not named, merely observed as an object of their gaze, and put into a passive position.

Alice-and-will also touch upon discourses such as violence within Aboriginal communities, problems with drug and alcohol abuse, and the problematic relationship between white Australians, particularly the government, and Aboriginal Australians. These will not be analyzed in detail, however, as they will be the focus of analysis in other blog posts, and as the scope of this thesis does not permit a close analysis of all discourses present in all of the primary sources.

Images

The blog post “Welcome (or not) on aboriginal lands!” includes 27 pictures, three of which are directly embedded in the blog. Most images depict the red and empty landscape of the Australian outback. Some pictures show the camping place around the roadhouse where the writers parked. There are also two images of each of the writers sitting and posing on the hood of their campervan. Despite the author’s discussion of the “deplorable living conditions” the only image that somehow relates to such a statement is that of an abandoned car. The image is captioned as “one of the lots [sic] of abandoned car [sic] on the road.” Another image shows a gas station where the pumps are encaged captioned as “this is how the fuel is secured in Aboriginal Land.” This image suggests the need for securing fuel (and by association other goods) as Aboriginal Australians would, as the authors suggest, steal it otherwise. In the text of the blog the authors also mention problems with the abuse, that is the sniffing of petrol to get high, which appears to be widespread in the area, and therefore might be another reason for the security measures. The lack of images depicting Aboriginal people or communities can, however, be explained by the authors’ statement that taking photos was forbidden in the Aboriginal communities they visited or passed by.

5.1.2 Robbie George / Wobble

Background

Robbie George, who writes under the synonym Wobble, was 24 years old when he wrote a blog about his travels in Australia with his girlfriend Laura. George’s blog is rather small, as it only contains six individual posts, which were published between June 23rd 2008 and December 28th 2008. The other articles, which will not be analyzed in detail, indicate that the blog was written

after George's travels as he states "even now as I write this 4 months after I went there I still get a buzz thinking about it all" (George, "Karijini"). This is unusual for this type of travel blog which can usually be compared to an online journal or diary and is predominantly written during the writers' travels as they want to stay in contact with their friends and families (Cardell and Douglas). As the intention to keep in touch, and inform friends and family about his adventures appears rather unlikely, given that he wrote the blog a few months after he made those experiences, the question arises what the author's intentions to write were, and who the intended audience was. Maybe, George did not start the blog until later in his travels, or wrote it after he arrived back home as memory.

George also refers to needing to work on a farm to get his second year visa in a post entitled "The Brief 'Top End' Discovery," he thus must have travelled and stayed in Australia longer than for the four months he actively used the blog. The author, therefore, might have had time to process, and think about his experiences before publishing them online. He further was exposed to Australian media discourse about Aboriginality which, along with statements and "insights" from non-Aboriginal Australians he met along the way, for example his employers, might have further shaped and influenced his opinion about Aboriginal Australians. For the purpose of this thesis it will be assumed that Robbie George is British, due to various factors, including the fact that he was eligible to apply for a second year visa through working in agriculture, his use of British spelling conventions, as in using an "s" in the word "recognise," and his reference to the "jobless layabouts that plague Britain" (George "In the bush"). This positions him among the large number of British backpackers that visit Australia for a gap year where they work and travel in the country.

Even though the author mentions encounters with Aboriginal Australians in another post as well, the post most relevant for this thesis is, revealingly, entitled "In the bush – Living with the Aborigines." Interestingly, this post has with 2771 views (last checked 5 April, 2017), by far the most views of all his blog posts. All other posts, except for one which has 619 views ("Karijini"), have an estimated average around 150 views. This, comparatively large, interest in this one post could indicate the readers' interest in Australia's Aboriginal peoples. It further reveals that this blog post has reached a significantly larger audience than just friends and family that might have been his initial target audience.

Analysis

All direct and indirect quotations, as well as the images discussed can be found in Robbie George's blog entry "In the bush – living with the Aborigines" unless clearly stated otherwise. For the sake of readability parenthetical reference to this blog will be omitted in the following analysis. Even though Robbie George touches upon many discourses about Aboriginality, including alcoholism, tensions between white and Aboriginal Australians, historical mistreatment of Aboriginal Australians, and others, this analysis will focus on the ways in which this blog post perpetuates the myth of the 'noble' and/or 'ignoble' savage, and the discursive homogenization and resulting limited agency of Aboriginal peoples.

In this blog entry Robbie George uses various linguistic and discursive methods to 'other' Aboriginal Australians through homogenization. This does not mean that this homogenization is a conscious choice by the writer, but rather that it indirectly reveals his underlying bias towards the 'Other' and illustrates the ideologies behind his statements. The use of such homogenizing techniques in George's blog is even worse than in the other blogs analyzed in this thesis because the author explicitly states that he not only "lived" with Aboriginal Australians as the title implies, but that he also got "on first name terms with a lot of the aborigines" while he worked in a shop in the Australian outback. He, nevertheless, abstains from referring to any individual by their name, but uses collective terms, such as "they," "them," "the aboriginals" or "the aborigines" throughout the text. George also provides a list with some of the names of Aboriginal Australians he met, which further proves that he is, theoretically, able to refer to these people by name, but chooses not to do so. Moreover, the names present in his list are clearly written for a white, non-Aboriginal audience. The writer highlights how "English" of some names such as "Mary Jones" sound, and expresses his amusement about some of the, to him, "ridiculous" sounding names such as "Donny Onion." He justifies the existence of such names by stating that these names are the "result of a cattle station owner with a sense of humour" and comments on the fact that these station owners not only gave names to the Aboriginal people living in that area, but also a date of birth. Thus, instead of critically commenting on the colonial influence and the historical abuse of Aboriginal Australians, the author chooses to not only laugh about their names, but also to make those names public for his friends to laugh about. He thereby puts the Aboriginal owners of those names into the passive subaltern position of an object that can be talked and laughed about, as opposed to a subject that has agency and voice. Writing down Aboriginal names is further problematic as "[i]n

many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the reproduction of a deceased person's name and image is offensive to cultural beliefs" (Oxfam). George never uses names to refer to any individual Aboriginal Australian throughout the text, which makes them classified representatives of a large group of people (Fairclough 146). The only instance where individual Aboriginal people are named and connected to actions is in the subtitles of pictures, where they are depicted while holding up their art as in "Sandy Hunter with his 'Caterpillar' painting."

This limitation to the agency of Aboriginal Australians in George's blog becomes especially clear when comparing the agency of Aboriginal people to that of non-Aboriginal Australians. The writer only homogenizes the Aboriginal Australians, while naming the two white Australian shop owners Margaret and Brian, who are his employers. Even though they are not the focal point, or main subject of his blog post, they are associated to actions and connected to active verbs such as "greeting" or "pretending to manage the shop." Even the author's girlfriend Laura is named in the text, albeit being only mentioned once. Hence, the privilege of being named is only granted to white people. This homogenization and neglect to name the 'Other' is a common feature in travel writing. As Mary Louise Pratt identifies in her analysis of early African travel writing about the Khoikhoi, "all are interchangeable; none is distinguished from another by a name or any feature" (51). By doing this, George puts himself into the same position as the writers analyzed by Pratt, which is that of the seemingly 'objective' and almost ethnographical observer. The author further predominantly uses the present tense to talk about his experiences with Aboriginal Australians. This becomes even more noteworthy when considering that the author does only use the present tense to describe his experiences with, or rather observations about Aboriginal Australians, while he uses the past tense to refer to other aspects of his travels such as "Laura worked the til [sic] and cooked the food." This use of the present tense constructs an image of the stereotypical Aboriginal Australian who lives in a "timeless present tense [...] where all 'his' actions and reactions are repetitions of 'his' normal habits" (Pratt 62). Hence, George's generalizing discourse is comparable to the statements made by early ethnographers who described the 'Other' as homogenous group living in a timeless present.

Furthermore, he also does not distinguish Aboriginal Australians by their given or skin names, even though he clearly is aware of the differences, as he describes, "it is their skin name that separates them, which is their traditional name and is often the name of the land that they own. We have Knangwarreye, Pitjarra, Mbitjana, Ngala and Kamara amongst others." In this list, the

author uses a wrong spelling of the Kngwarraye people, who may also be spelled Kngwarray or Kngwarrey depending on the language group. Thus, while spelling conventions of skins names vary, as “different symbols have been used in the different languages for writing particular sounds,” George’s version does not seem to comply with any accepted spelling convention (*Kinship and Skin Names*). This statement is further problematic due to the author’s use of the stative verb “have” which, being a synonym for possess, implies ownership. The “we” is an exclusive we, encompassing only the white people in the text which are separated from all of “them.” Moreover, the relationship between the two parties is linguistically constructed as unequal, where the latter is owned by the former. The writer also refers to skin names a second time, that is when he describes the differences in Aboriginal Australian art. Here, George again spells Kngwarraye people in a different but still uncommon way as “Knagwarreyes” which indicates his limited knowledge, or lack of respect. Moreover, the terms Aboriginal and Aborigines are only inconsistently capitalized, which further indicates a lack of attention while writing (which is also present in other spelling mistakes), and a lack of respect or limited knowledge of both writing conventions and the wishes of Aboriginal Australians. George thereby demonstrates his western perspective, and lack of interest in customs and conventions of politeness in other cultures.

Robbie George’s blog also contains discourses constructing Aboriginal Australians as ‘savage’ both ‘noble’ and ‘ignoble.’ Discourses connecting Aboriginal Australians to stereotypical images of the ‘noble’ savage are, first and foremost, present in the author’s positioning of Aboriginal people as part of the natural world. This does not only happen in the title, which implies that all Aboriginal Australians live “in the bush,” that is outside of civilization, but also in the first paragraph where the author states “when I think of Australia, I think of kangaroos, koala bears and Aborigines.” This statement clearly illustrates how tourism advertising influenced George’s images and expectations about Australia. Such images of Australia as a utopian country, full of natural wonders can also be found in early travel writing (see White and Greenwood 405f). It further illustrates that George did not critically reflect on the historical atrocities, contemporary problems and prevalent racism in Australia prior to coming to the country. His statement further discursively connects Aboriginal peoples to animals and thereby makes them part of the landscape, that can be observed and, to a degree, consumed by the travelers. He furthers this argument by stating that “the aborigines, those still in touch with their culture, are a little harder to find” than kangaroos or koalas. This also discursively places Aboriginal Australians outside of the ‘ordinary’

perpetuates a utopian vision of Aboriginality and renders Aboriginal peoples extraordinary, especially in contrast to white Australians. Similar strategies of positioning Aboriginal Australians outside of the 'ordinary' have been observed by Robert Clarke ("Ordinary Place").

The discourse of Aboriginal deficit contained within the problematization of Aboriginality (Fforde et al. 164; Macoun 523) and thereby a stereotype of the 'savage' and 'uncivilized' Aboriginal Australian is also perpetuated in Robbie George's writing. He states that the (drunk) Aboriginal people he met in the cities "were dirty and smelled awful." Another instance where the, supposed, 'primitive' behavior is indicated is "for the most part, everyone was well behaved - the children on the other hand were not" which indicates that the author had even worse expectations about Aboriginal Australians which were clearly influenced by media discourse and comments by white Australians. It furthermore proves the author's imperial perspective, as he expects to encounter British manners and conventions of what he considers to be "good" behavior in another culture. He therefore looks at Aboriginal Australians with "imperial eyes" (Pratt). The clearest example of the discourse of 'uncivilized' behavior can be found in the concluding paragraph where the author first repeats and partly agrees to a comment by the shop owners' he had already quoted previously.

In some respects the aborigines are 'feral bastards', I've found children taking a crap on the shop floor 3 times, and they don't wash themselves or their clothes. But they only have clothes because we gave them to them, otherwise they would still be living as proper bushmen. They still only wash when it rains, when there is enough water in the creek to do so.

It is notable that by quoting the owners' comments George separates himself from them, indicating that this statement does not correspond to his own beliefs and was uttered by somebody else. At the same time, the writer aligns himself with those white Australians and media discourse that speaks in those racist terms, and partly confirms it through his description of public defecation and poor hygiene. This comment also includes another discourse, that can be interpreted as a critique on the effects of modernity and civilization caused by colonization. However, the term "proper bushmen" is a valuing judgement, referring to the, to George, timeless and natural state 'noble' Aboriginal Australians are supposed to be like, as he is unable to recognize or understand their hybrid identities. This is also visible in George's critique that Aboriginal people are "out of touch with their ancient sources of food" which is not only another example of this discourse against modernity and its effects for Aboriginal Australians, but also an implicit glorification of these

“ancient sources” as opposed to the modern diet. This is even more clearly expressed in the statement “I find it incredibly sad that these people who survived only off of what the land of Australia offered them are now surviving off of what we offer them from the deep fat fryer. [...] it appears that if it is no effort to get it then they want it in abundance.” George then admits, however, that sometimes people would bring “delicacies” such as kangaroo or perentie which they caught in the desert to the shop, for which he also gives them credit, as he admits that it must be hard to do. Yet, it is another example of how George is unable to recognize the hybrid position of Aboriginal Australians, and contains a romanticizing discourse of the ‘noble savage’ who can find food in the harsh landscape of the Australian desert (Graulund 95). It further illustrates that the author assumes to have an understanding of such traditional sources of food and Aboriginal diet, and criticizes Aboriginal Australians for not adhering to it. Which leads to the construction of discourses of Aboriginal Australians as “deficit” (Fforde et al.) and ‘ignoble savages’ (Borsboom). Another instance of discursive construction of the ‘noble savage’ in the blog post is where the author first describes the traditional way of living stating that “they have a use for every bush or tree in the desert” and comments “they are survivors of the desert.” These surviving skills are then applied to their modern use of cars, where the author comments on the Aboriginal Australians’ ability with handling cars, despite their poor state of repair.

The blog perpetuates the myth of the ‘noble savage’ not only in the, aforementioned, glorification of the ‘natural’ ways of living of Aboriginal Australians, but also in the context of Aboriginal art. Despite all negative discourses perpetuated in the text, the author uses positive, even superlative, terms to describe Aboriginal art, “Utopian Aboriginal Art is widely regarded as the best art the aboriginals in Australia have to offer, and to be honest I can't disagree - it is superb and completely different to any art I have seen before.” In this context, he is, as already mentioned, able to recognize differences between Aboriginal communities as he notes, “[t]he Pitjarras will often paint Caterpillar and body paint, the Ngala's are protectors of the Bush Plum whilst the Knagwarreyes [sic] are guardians of the Rainbow Spirit. They each have their own individual [sic] 'stories' that they paint beautifully.” While he praises the quality of Aboriginal Australian art, he still adopts a superior position and separates himself from Aboriginal Australians and their belief systems through the use of quotations marks around the term “stories” as well as “Caterpillar” in the subtitle of one of the images of Aboriginal Australians presenting their art. These quotation marks indicate a certain level of sarcasm or disbelief in that the painting could really represent a

story or caterpillar, while the prosaic adverb “beautifully” makes a vague value judgement without bothering to explain or even describe in detail. His short, two-sentence portrayal of the art also seems to assume that it is made to be viewed by appreciative foreigners like himself, rather than an integral part of their own cultural practice, for which the Pitjarra would most likely have other ways of describing it than as “beautiful.” This assumption also puts both Aboriginal Australians themselves and their art in the hybrid position of the ‘postcolonial exotic’ which is open for consumption through non-Aboriginal visitors and on the one hand commodifies Aboriginal culture, while on the other hand contributing to the “dissolution of imperial epistemologies” (Huggan 28). This connection is also recognized by the author as he comments that Aboriginal art “is the longest running continuous part of their culture. It is also a part of their culture that is significant to their income.” The clear separation the author makes between “us” and “them” is again visible in this context. He explains that the artists do not receive the full market price if their painting is sold, but only a significantly smaller commission. He justifies this by explaining that the artist not only get their materials for free, but also, more importantly, by stating that they cannot be trusted with money. George notes, “It would not be like me and you getting \$30,000 – it would be chicken and chips all round and crap toys for all!” Thereby the author separates himself as well as his readers from Aboriginal Australians, claiming that there is a difference in how money is spent. This also excludes Aboriginal Australians from the power structure, that is capitalism, and puts them into the position of the subaltern. It also perpetuates the discourse of distrust (Proudfoot and Habibis), present in various instances throughout the text. Firstly, when he refers to the shop owners’ aforementioned, comments stating that Aboriginal people “are ‘feral bastards’ that shouldn’t be trusted.” The second instance is, when he refers to the fact that artists only receive a very small part of what their paintings are sold for on the market. He states that, “they are wilfully [sic] irresponsible with their money” and “they do not understand the concept of money” as “they just spend what they have.” Another justification for this inequality in power, and the resulting subaltern status of the Aboriginal Australians is that he claims that artist would not be able to sell their art without the contacts provided through the project. The blogpost ends on more positive terms, highlighting positive traits that were not part of the author’s earlier statements, which could be seen as an attempt to hide the colonial ideology informing and underlying his writing.

Images

There are eleven images embedded in the blog post and none attached at the end. Most images portray Aboriginal Australians, with only three images showing the landscape. All of the images portraying Aboriginal people appear to be taken with consent, as they are - with one exception - portraits of one or more people who are posing and looking directly into the camera. Three of the images showcase Aboriginal people who present their artwork. The subtitles of these images also include the name of the artist, which is the only circumstance under which names of Aboriginal people are given in the blog. This suggests that they are only deemed worthy of being referred to by name if they are artists, which the author holds in high regard as already discussed in the analysis of the text.

Furthermore, three group photos, one of children titled “the snotty nosed bunch, shortly before they cased the joint”. This is highly problematic as the expression “to case the joint” means “to visit a house [...] with intent to burglarize or rob it later” (“case the joint”). This discursively connects the children in the picture, two of whom are smiling at the camera, to having a criminal intent. The next group picture is also of children and teenagers and has the caption “More trouble!” This further adds to the impression of Aboriginal children as ‘uncivilized’, ‘wild’, and criminal troublemakers. The third group shot is taken after a game of football and shows the winning team “Cowboys – The Champions!”, as they happily pose for the camera and celebrate their victory.

5.1.3 Jost Going / Wander over yonder

Background

The blog “Wander over yonder” is written by a retired British woman under the pseudonym Jost Going. The blog was set up to document a journey around the world with her partner Steve (“Wander”). While it is not clearly stated in the description that the writer is a woman, Steve is named as second part of the “we” that used throughout the blog. Furthermore, a picture of a woman in a blue shawl, which the writer describes to have been wearing herself as protection against the flies can be found (“Between a rock”). The writer’s nationality is revealed in the Blog Map, where “Home” is marked to be in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the writer refers to the way drivers were greeting each other on the road as “that barely noticeable index finger-twitch that only Yorkshirefolk use so I’m convinced there were *a few of us* on the road”, which narrows the writer’s home down to Northern England (“Between a rock”; *emphasis added*).

The blog includes 67 posts written between September 27th 2015 and June 1st 2016 with an estimated average of 100 views per post. Blog posts about Australia were written between November 2015 and January 2016, which indicates that the author spent approximately three months in the country, and therefore was exposed to Australian media discourse about Aboriginal Australians. The most interesting post for this paper is “A town Called Alice,” as it is the only post that explicitly describes the author’s experiences with Aboriginal Australians. In contrast to this, the post which recounts the writer’s visit to Uluru does not even mention Aboriginal Australians, or the meaning the Red Center has for Aboriginal peoples at all (“Between a rock”). This omission of the spiritual importance of Uluru is interesting in itself. The author also does not refer to Uluru correctly, calling it “Ohuru”, “Oahu”, “Aloha”, “A-Guru” and “Ayers Rock”, and even states that she was not able to “get [her] brain/mouth/tongue to register” the word Uluru. Even though this was most likely done for comedic purposes, and to entertain her readers, it still is ignorant.

A further proof of the authors possible ignorance, inappropriate use of jokes, or the fact that she does not care about the sentiments of Aboriginal Australians is that she also prefers to use the term “The Olgas” instead of the Aboriginal name “Kata Tjuta” and even misspells it as “Kata Tjutu” in an image’s caption, which might, again, have been done for comedic purposes, as the author’s spelling and grammar throughout the rest of the blog is almost immaculate. Furthermore, the author neglects to mention the spiritual importance of Uluru to the local Aboriginal people. She merely utters her disappointment as she states “we certainly didn’t get any spiritual or mystical vibes, which was disappointing”. The author, moreover, list a few activities they tried to feel the “mystical vibes”, such as visiting Uluru at different times of the day, making it sound tedious for the reader. Another factor adding to the implied tediousness of the visits to Uluru is her complaint about the flies, which are described as vengeful and being “of plague proportions”. She also mentions that they decided to abstain from climbing Uluru, but leaves the reader to wonder why, as she does not reveal the local Aboriginal people’s request (“Between a rock”). Both posts have 143 (“A town Called Alice”) and 167 (“Between a rock”) views respectively, which makes the number of views above average. Nevertheless, the audience is rather small, and therefore does not exceed the intended audience of friends and family by far.

Analysis

All quotes in the following analysis refer to the post “A Town called Alice”, unless specifically stated otherwise. Parenthetical reference to this post will, for the sake of readability, be omitted. While the author also uses some homogenizing discourses, and reflects about the absence of Aboriginal Australians in ‘ordinary’ Australia, the most prominent discourses in her post are the distrusting discourses against both Aboriginal Australians’ and white Australians’ honesty, and discourses outlining the tensions between white and Aboriginal Australians.

In contrast to the aforementioned post about her actual visit to the Red Center (“Between a rock”), the author acknowledges the spiritual importance of Uluru for Aboriginal Australians in this post (“A town called Alice”). She states that Alice Springs is “the closest (but still very distant) town” to this “particularly spiritual place.” The writer then continues to describe the, apparent, divide between white and Aboriginal Australians, as she points out that “they tended to keep their own company and cluster in groups under the shade of trees, or gather together in the parks – school is permanently out in their wonderland.” This illustrates the writers view of Aboriginal Australians as living outside of the ‘civilized’ urban space of Alice Springs, despite being in a town. She thereby assumes that they are stuck in a timeless past, which is incompatible with modernity and forces them to seek out ‘natural’ spaces, for example parks, in urban areas, unable to adapt to modern life. She further, implicitly, criticizes the, alleged, lack of education of the people she observes.

The fact that her insights mostly come from her observations through the ‘tourist gaze’ is affirmed in her statement that they “had very little interaction with the Aborigines,” due to a lack of opportunities. She explains this lack of opportunities as being grounded in the exclusion of Aboriginal Australians from the bar the writer visited with her travel companion. It is clear that this is just an excuse, however, as the writer describes that she would have had other opportunities for “interaction” but might not have realized it at the time. She states, “we were approached a number of times to buy some pieces of ‘original’ art.” Jost Going describes that they did not wish to buy said art she states that “a simple ‘no thank you’ was sufficient to be left alone”. This implies a certain weariness when it comes to interaction with Aboriginal Australians, as well as a certain level of doubt towards the honesty of Aboriginal Australians as the author claims that they did not want to buy because the paintings “looked mass-produced.” Therefore, she uses a distrusting discourse (Proudfoot and Habibis) and does not believe that the paintings were ‘authentic.’ The

discourse of distrust towards Aboriginal Australians is also visible in the statement “we felt safe at all times but our street-wise antennae were primed.” This implies a racial bias, as she notes that they did not observe any signs of aggression and “felt safe at all times.” This bias is rooted in colonial discourse and as well as in contemporary Australian media discourse, which “problematizes” Aboriginal Australians and depicts them as “deficit” which strongly influences race relations in Australia (Fforde et al. 164; Macoun 523). Another instance of this distrust towards Aboriginal Australians, which is a discourse that was also observed by Proudfoot and Habibis, can be found in her narration of an encounter she observed between a white Australian guy who invited an Aboriginal Australian woman to the bar to buy some of her paintings. She states that the Aboriginal woman “made up an almost believable story about her grandmother’s farm.” The use of the adverb “almost” modifies the statement from having a sympathetic to a mocking tone that illustrates the author’s distrust, and doubt of the truth value of the woman’s story. According to the author’s framing of the incidence, the story was only told to make time for the woman’s family and friends to arrive and try to “take advantage of the chap’s generosity.”. Hence, Jost Going does not consider the possibility that the story might have been true and has no way of researching it to either confirm or negate the story.

This distrusting discourse is, however, not exclusively directed at Aboriginal Australians, as she also appears to be suspicious towards a white Australian traveler they talk to. She questions the young man’s source of income and describes him as “descendant of deported British criminal stock” and as “latter-day Ned Kelly.” This statement relates back to historical discourses of Australian settlers as being of doubtful moral quality, where British people were not able to understand how former convicts might be able to become successful businessmen after serving their sentence (Brittan 76). The fact that the author describes that the young Australians “was quite honest in saying he stole his food” leads her to the conclusion that he might be of dubious moral quality and criminal family background. She further exclaims “he seemed to have money from who knows where to buy his pint!” which suggests that she believes that he either stole the money, or that he might have other unlawful sources of income. Such an unfavorable depiction of white Australians is common in late twentieth century travel writing about Australia for example by Theroux, Bryson (Clarke *Black Australia* 3). Jost Going’s critique of this particular white Australian is, however, not founded in his racism, as he appears to be sympathetic towards Aboriginal Australians, but in this, allegedly criminal, lifestyle.

The most prominent topic in Jost Going's blog post, is the description of the tensions between white and Aboriginal Australians. This conflict is present in many of her observations, such as "there is significant police presence in Alice Springs though, and there is clearly an undercurrent and tension between the two communities." This observation does not only highlight the divide between white and Aboriginal Australians, but also illustrates the ways in which for example of the presence of police who checked Aboriginal Australians' IDs before allowing them to enter a bottle shop. She also states that "there is clearly an undercurrent and tension between the two communities." These problems between white and Aboriginal Australians is also the main issue in the conversation the writer and her partner had with the aforementioned young Australian, of doubtful moral quality, who tried to explain the situation to them. This young man pointed out the bar owners' and police's racially motivated behavior as he explains that Aboriginal Australians have to provide identification documents to prove that they are not living in a "dry area" and therefore allowed to drink alcohol. However, neither he (being white), nor the writer and her husband had to provide ID to prove this, despite not being regular customers. This clearly illustrates that the bar staff assumes that neither of the white guest live in dry areas, and allows them to consume alcohol, while asking Aboriginal Australians to prove that they are allowed to do so. This, while being in line with current Australian law, limits the agency of Aboriginal Australians, as it takes away the right to decide what they wish to eat or drink. The young Australian even goes as far as to compare the treatment of Aboriginal Australians to "a form of Apartheid." Another instance of the tensions between white and Aboriginal Australians is the bar staffs' reaction to the invitation of an Aboriginal woman into the bar, as the author states "this was frowned on but tolerated by the bar staff." As more people wanted to join later she describes that "the goodwill dissipated, the bar staff became mean and all parties left." The exact meaning of "mean" is not elaborated though, however it clearly indicates that the author believes that the expulsion of these Aboriginal Australians from the bar should or could have been done in a better, less "mean" way. She thereby does the same as other travel writers, such as Bryson and Caulfield, as she reacts to her discontent with the treatment of Aboriginal Australians by commenting on it.

These observations of conflict, and/or contrast between white and Aboriginal Australians is also observed by Clarke who identifies the travelers' "moral and political dilemma" as already mentioned in this paper (Clarke *Black Australia* 1). Jost Going deals with this "dilemma" by abstaining from commenting on whether or not she agrees to the young man's opinion, or if she

thinks the police's behavior is justified. Moreover, she carefully frames her arguments, using hedging devices such as "there is *apparently* a big alcohol problem with the Aborigines" (emphasis added). She also questions the bar owners' motivation if they did serve Aboriginal Australians as either "sympathetic (or wanton?)", which further indicates that she is not sure what she should think of the situation. The fact that she shares her observations and thoughts, without taking sides, indicates the beginning of a postcolonial perspective in her writing. It is clearly just a beginning, however, as other discourses originating from colonial ideology, such as distrust towards Aboriginal Australians, timeless imagery of them as 'noble' savage and homogenization are still present in her writing.

Images

The most interesting image in this blog post depicts three Aboriginal Australians who sit or lie in a park. Two of the people in the picture have their backs turned to the camera and one is lying on the ground, apparently sleeping. It is obvious that Jost Going did not ask the people in the photo for consent to be photographed and published on the internet as no one appears to be aware of her. Further, the picture was taken from a distance and is of poor quality and blurry, especially when compared to the other pictures in the blog post which also indicates that it was taken without the Aboriginal Australian people's knowledge. The placement of this image is also interesting as it is placed next to the paragraph where the author notes that "there is apparently a big alcohol problem with the Aborigines." Therefore, the image's connotation is, that the people pictured, are drunk. The fact that the picture was taken without the knowledge of the people pictured is not only rude, but also proves the author's ignorance of Aboriginal Australian's culture and customs.

5.1.4 Tom Lewsey / tomlewsey

Background

Tom Lewsey, whose blogger name is not a pseudonym but tomlewsey as well, is a self-proclaimed "international playboy" who, after having worked for seven years, wanted to escape the "rat race" and travel the world ("tomlewsey"). He states that he is 29 years at the time of writing, which is between August 5th 2004 and June 28th 2005. The blog contains thirty blog posts from a journey around the world, starting in Pakistan, over India, Venezuela and Australia, and ending in Malaysia. There are two posts from Australia, the first written on February 20th 2005, the second

on March 4th of the same year. As he describes all the places he went to, Queensland, Melbourne, Sydney, the Red Center, Western Australia and the Northern Territory it is assumed that he must have stayed longer than just for one month. Hence, the exact length of his stay in Australia cannot be determined, it is, however, a minimum of two weeks, but more likely more than two months. Due to the author's use of British spelling conventions, such as "prioritised" or "Centres" and a discussion about political correctness in the comments the author is believed to be British as he refers to different meanings and uses of abbreviations for cultural groups in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, one comment under the posts states "I'm a Brit as well" which indicates that the person commenting either knows the author in person, or at least knows his nationality ("Australia").

The blog appears to be predominantly intended for friends and family, but certainly has the purpose to entertain, as indicated by the author's rather informal use of language and humorous and satirical descriptions not only of the places he visits, but also of himself. Examples of such satirical language can be found in his self-description where he colloquially states that he intends to "slum it" as well as in his introduction of the post about the Australian outback where he notes that it is "frontier country, where men are men, and sheep are worried, and a bloke would never be seen dead drinking wine." The blog's informal style is further increased by the author's neglect to use an inverted comma before abbreviations such as "cant," "dont" and "wouldnt" while he correctly uses "it's" and "you're." This indicates that he is aware of the difference in meaning the lack of inverted comma would result in. Moreover, a certain inconsistency in capitalizing proper nouns such as Australia or "aboriginals" can be observed which further adds to the author's informal style.

Despite the, supposedly limited audience the author appears to have intended, the average number of views per post is over 3000. Some posts, for example one about Thailand, even managed to gain the significantly larger readership of over 21,900. The article that is most relevant for this analysis is called "Australia – the other bits: Red Centre, Top End and Out West." This post has an audience of "only" 3723 readers which can be considered to be slightly above the average amount of views. All direct and indirect references in the following analysis will be from this blog post, unless specifically stated otherwise. For the sake of readability the parenthetical reference to this post, i.e. (Lewsey "Australia") will be omitted.

Analysis

Tom Lewsey first describes his way from the Australian east coast to the outback and the differences in climate and landscape he immediately noticed. He describes the outlandish quality of the surrounding, by which he relates back to historical travel accounts depicting “alien roads” (White and Greenwood 408). Aboriginal Australians are only introduced later, as the author refers to the local Aboriginal Australians’ wish that visitors should abstain from climbing Uluru. He appears to be annoyed by that, however, as he notes that “they cant [sic] tell you why – it’s a secret.” He further describes his inner struggle, as he states that he “wanted to do the right thing, and not offend the aboriginal sensibilities” but he “was in a competitive mood, and wasnt [sic] going to let a load of Japanese teenagers get all the glory.” Therefore, he decided to climb Uluru, despite being aware of the wishes of the Aboriginal owners. He merely notes that “he was told that the no climb request [is] based on safety concerns” and he admits that his “own hiking vanity got prioritised over respect for a 10,000 year old tradition.” Hence, he demonstrates his white hegemonic perspective and imperial eyes that need to “conquer” land, and climb a mountain. Furthermore, the sight of “scores of Japanese tourists” who were climbing Uluru motivated him to do the same, as he appears to be highly competitive. Lewsey is unable to accept the request made by the Aboriginal Australian people, as he cannot accept that they might not want to share their stories and spiritual believes with everyone. Thus, for him “Aboriginal sensibilities” are not enough reason, which demonstrates a lack of cultural sensitivity and respect. A similar lack of cultural sensitivity is present in a lot of travel writing, where early explorers viewed the Australian landscape as ‘terra nullis’ which was open for their conquest, as they could not understand that in Aboriginal belief land cannot be owned and is an important part of their spirituality (Graulund 91).

The author then appears to try and atone for his mistake by visiting “all the Aboriginal museums, visitor centres and craft shops.” However, he does not appear to sincere in this context as the visits to these places are part of the sentence stating “we had done the dutiful thing.” This implies that the author only went there because he had to. This is further illustrated as he states that he still felt detached. He further proves his cultural insensitivity by stating that he would like to “save [his] fingers extra hardship and type ‘Abo’ as shortened version, but that is considered offensive in this ridiculously PC country.” This statement is highly problematic and was, therefore, also a topic picked up by the readers in the comments. On the one hand, readers state that he should

not use the shortened version of the term as it is considered “very offensive” and “an abusive term.” On the other hand, readers argue that they would not get offended when someone referred to them as “brit instead of british [sic]” and that “aboriginal people have more important abuses to take issue with.” The author also interacted with his audience in the comments, as he first tells them to stop this debate and explaining that “it was meant as abbreviation.” He further acknowledges how it might be offensive to some people, and that he will avoid it in the future. However, he also notes that “if no offence is meant, none should be taken” which again illustrates his Eurocentric positionality. It is clear that the ones in a power position, which he clearly is in as he has the freedom to either obey the Aboriginal Australians request, or ignore it without any consequences. Thereby the Aboriginal owners of Uluru are put into a somewhat subaltern position. Even though they are allowed a voice, that is they are allowed to discourage people from climbing their spiritual site, they are not allowed to prohibit the climb and close the trail.

While the author demonstrates his, apparent, insensitivity on the one hand, he also tries to critically reflect on the realities and problems of Aboriginal Australians. He criticizes that a “vibrant, engergetic and successful” country like Australia is unable to “accommodate the needs of its oldest inhabitants”. He thereby is able to adopt a partly postcolonial perspective on the realities of Aboriginal Australians realizes that “the shuffling lost looking souls who you see looking vacant in the shopping centre car parks [...] are not indicative of their whole society.” He further criticizes white Australians for their inability to do the same as he claims that they “only see victims, the ones who cannot cope. [...] they dont [sic] see the good side of Aboriginal communities.” He further comments on the fact that there are remote communities which are neither accessible to Australians nor tourists, where people are “not really welcome just to drop by.” This critique of white Australians led one reader, writing under the name “Aussie” to take a defensive stance and criticize the writer himself, stating that “the POMS were the culprits who envaded [sic] [the Aboriginal Australians’] land and killed and enslaved them in the first place a lot has / and is being done to unite the people” and that no adequate judgement could be made in the brief time the author travelled in Australia. “Aussie” uses the derogatory term pom to refer to the author and British citizens in general, which is a reflection of the offence he must have taken by Lewsey’s comment. However, such a critique of white Australian policy and treatment of Aboriginal Australians is a common feature in contemporary travel account, as the confrontation

with Aboriginality leads writers to a “dilemma” which often leads to such an inherent critique of white Australian life in travel texts (Clarke *Black Australia* 2f).

The problems of Aboriginal Australians with health and alcohol are also, part of Tom Lewsey’s reflections, as he claims that the problems with sugar and alcohol are a result of the Aboriginal Australians’ metabolism, which is not adapted to “Western food”, as he states that “the modern western way of living is literally killing them” as it leads to a much lower life expectancy. He also relates the problems back to the differences in society, going from “stone age level” to the twentieth century less than a century ago. This is, however, a simplification of complex political and socio-cultural issues in Australian society. As an outsider, it is easy for Lewsey to adopt a critical perspective, which he believes to be a “balanced” representation of Aboriginal Australians. However, he fails to acknowledge his own position as an outsider who contributes to the perpetuation of colonial stereotypes as he depicts some Aboriginal Australians as “lost” and thereby also “in need of saving.”

Images

The images in the blog post focus mostly on the landscape of the Australian outback, that is different views of Kata Tjuta and Uluru. All images are captioned with descriptions of what is shown such as “Uluru, aka Ayers Rock – typical Aussie roadsign as well.” Some of the descriptions, as does the rest of the text, have a comedic tone such as showing a cemetery “Grave of a Prospector – a dead hot in Alice (get it??)” or an image showing a white woman in a bikini playing the didgeridoo “Oh dear – Didgeridoo player (bad one).” Even though most images on the blog do not show people, there is also an image of the author standing on top of Uluru with the caption “On top of Uluru – very wierd [sic] landscape.” Attached to the blog post, that is not directly embedded images that are displayed next to the text, are also pictures of Litchfield National Park (called Lichfield by the author throughout the text and in the image captions), Perth, crocodiles, the author swimming, and the, aforementioned, girl playing didgeridoo, who is, presumably, the author’s girlfriend, or at least travel companion to whom the author might be referring to with the “we” he uses throughout the blog. There are, however, no images of Aboriginal Australians.

5.1.5 *Louisatroy*

Background

Louisatroy is a female traveler from the United Kingdom who travelled to three countries, posted over 2,000 pictures and wrote 81 individual blog entries in two different travel blogs named “G’day Australia!!” and “Hola, South America!” (“Traveler Profile”). The blog “G’day Australia!!” is, as the name suggests, about her travels in Australia. It is interesting, however, that Louisatroy did not travel alone, but with her husband and three children. This makes her blog especially interesting to analyze as she has a completely different positionality as a mother and wife who travels with her family, than the other writers who are backpackers or an elderly couple travelling in a campervan. The blog contains 58 entries that were written between September 22nd 2012 and November 18th of the same year, which indicates that the family was in Australia for approximately two months, which gives them enough time to be confronted with media discourses and stereotypes about Aboriginal Australians. In the description of the blog the author apologizes to the reader “for tone of voice issues” and expresses doubt that “anyone will actually have time or inclination to read it except good old Mum and Dad!!!” This statement illustrates that the author does not expect a large readership, and that the intended audience hence are her friends and family (“G’day”).

Louisatroy’s blog was published on *TravelPod* which does not provide publicly available information about the number of visitors on any particular blog entry. However, the blog has 3490 visitors all time. Considering that it contains 58 individual entries, it can be stated that “G’day Australia” has an average of sixty visitors per post, which would indicate that it was indeed mostly accessed by the writer’s friends and family (“G’day”). All quotes in the following analysis and the pictures described herein are taken from Louisatroy’s blog post “Another day, another Aboriginal Art Centre.” Due to the lack of page numbers or chapters on websites further parenthetical reference stating the same will be excluded for the sake of readability.

Analysis

Louisatroy’s blog post predominantly questions the authenticity of an Aboriginal Australian tour they attended in Arnhem land and thereby contains distrusting discourses, and a critique of the ‘postcolonial exotic’. She initially outlines her high expectations as they “had heard good things about this company.” She also states that “yes, *technically*. we couldn’t fault them” (original emphasis and punctuation) as they were provided with comfortable transport, good food, cold

towels and “a nice chat on the way into Arnhem land.” However, she then describes the tour as “labored, lacking insight and frankly dull. All it really was, was us paying over \$2000 for the privilege of being taken into the shop at the end.” While she acknowledges that it was her choice to bring three kids along, she still maintains that this tour, as compared to others they had taken before, was not worth that amount of money. Hence, she is in the power position of the wealthy tourist, who expects a service for that money, which was, in this case, not delivered. However, upon analyzing Louisatroy’s critique, it becomes clear that the first thing criticized by her is the spirituality and energy the place they were visiting has. This is something that she could not understand, as she states “what on EARTH does that really mean?! Great energy my arse” (original emphasis). Hence, she is not able to depart from her Western experience and point of view, and finds herself unable to experience said spiritual energy. Maybe her critique is also in part informed by frustration about her own inability to open her perspective and try to understand Aboriginal culture and belief.

Louisatroy further criticizes the visit to the gallery at the end of the tour, and advises future visitors that “this shop has a load of regurgitated, Aboriginal tat. This may be a politically incorrect thing to say. But it was.” She further states “Buyer beware,” strengthening her dissatisfaction with the tour and goods offered. She justifies her point of view with by stating her disappointment that “such a wonderful place [...] has allowed itself to become part of the tourist machine like all the others.” Through this statement the author questions the authenticity of the experience offered and criticizes the commercialized aspect of it. She further observes the ‘postcolonial exotic’ that is the fact that Aboriginal Australians, commodify their culture to a degree to earn money. She is, however, not able to realize that this commodification can contribute to the empowerment of Aboriginal communities. This also discursively constructs Aboriginal Australians as dishonest and inauthentic, and perpetuates a distrusting discourse similar to that identified by Proudfoot and Habibis.

Another discourse present in Louisatroy’s blog entry is the problem of Aboriginal Australians and alcohol consumption. She uses homogenizing language as she describes an encounter with a big group of “them” at the restaurant of their hotel. She depicts the place as littered with “50 empties strewn around the tables,” and the Aboriginal Australians as “happy but hammered group of pretty whiffy locals,” who are hardly able to stand. While the author’s experiences should not be questioned in terms of the accuracy of the events reported, statements

like this are a reiteration of the stereotypical discourse of a stereotypical ‘uncivilized’ Aboriginal Australian, who has a problem with alcohol. The use of the adjective “happy” can also be traced back to historical travel writing about Aboriginal peoples, for example by James Cook. The use of this adjective is, however, problematic as it implies fun, and should include a responsible consumption of alcohol, which clearly is not the case. It further distracts from the possible, real life problems and maybe alcoholism of the people she encountered in this bar. The way in which Louisatroy describes the scene could also refer to a celebration, if it was not for the consumption of four strong alcoholic beverages within thirty minutes which becomes clear in her conversation with the bartender. In this conversation the regulation of alcohol consumption of Aboriginal Australians in some communities is also mentioned. The bartender explains to the writer that “it’s hotel policy to let them drink as long as they don’t cause trouble” and that “no one person can buy more than four drinks” with having to “leave 20 minutes between drinks.” However, Louisatroy’s observation shows that this policy is not always, or only sparsely enforced.

The homogenizing use of “they” and “them” to refer to the “big drunken group of [Aboriginal Australians] living it up” at the bar also demonstrates the authors shift in attitude towards Aboriginal Australians. This is furthered by the omission of hedging devices such as “some” which would indicate that not all Aboriginal Australians are like this. The only named Aboriginal Australian is the tour guide Simon. However, he is also only named in the image captions and is not mentioned in the main part of the text at all despite spending a whole day with the author and her family. Louisatroy concludes her blog post by reflecting on her own attitude towards Aboriginal Australians, as she states “I am shocked by my own emotional response. I am, frankly, appalled by it all. [...] I can feel myself becoming cynical, becoming hardened, having less and less sympathy. I feel my attitude has shifted. Is this fair? I am confused.” This confusion can be seen as an expression of the duality of utopian and melancholic images of Aboriginal Australia as expressed by Clarke (*Black Australia*). The author expects an extraordinary encounter with the mythical ‘Other’, when her expectations are not fulfilled, her descriptions showcase a rather melancholic attitude when confronted with the realities and problems of some Aboriginal communities in Australia.

Images

Louisatroy's blog post contains the large number of 107 images, which is the third highest amount of images in all blog posts created by her. This indicates that a lot of the things the author encountered were deemed to be interesting and worth sharing. The presence of family pictures in the post also confirms that Louisatroy intended the blog to be read by friends and family, and not by strangers on the internet. All images contain titles describing their content. Most of the images show "Art in Arnhem Land", as well as the author's family, including herself which indicates that at least some of the pictures were taken by someone else. A few images show the surroundings and landscape of "Arnhem land". Only two images are embedded directly in the blog post, both show Simon, the family's Aboriginal guide, who does not look directly into the camera and does not appear to be aware of the photo being taken. There are, however, also a two group images of "the family with Simon our aboriginal guide" and "Simon and the family" where everyone, including Simon, looks directly into the camera. This serves as indication that Simon gave consent to images being taken. Other images show the Aboriginal guide explaining or demonstrating things to the group. In these images, for example "Blowing in the wind," "Aboriginal art stories," or "Eliza listens on" neither the guide nor other people in the picture look directly into the camera which adopts an observing, documentary position.

5.1.6 Samantha / Smwilliams87

Background

Samantha does not provide any information in the "About me" section of the blog. The pictures attached to the blog posts suggest that she is a white woman in her twenties ("Outback"). Her age being in her twenties is further indicated by the fact that her screenname includes the number 87, a possible indication of her year of birth, which would make her 21 in 2008 when the blog was written. Further analysis of her other entries reveals that she is an Anthropology student from the United States who came to Australia to work and study in Feemantle, Western Australia ("Bang"). The fact that she studies Anthropology makes her blog especially interesting to analyze, as travel writing, anthropology and ethnography have historically been closely connected as they all contributed to the legitimization of imperialism and therefore heavily criticized by postcolonial scholars. The fact that she comes from the United States and came to Australia to study, also is a unique characteristic that none of the blogs analyzed share,

Samantha's blog was updated more or less regularly over a period of four months between July and October 2008. Hence, it can be assumed that she wrote the blog during a semester as an exchange student. Her blog is clearly aimed at friends and family, which is confirmed by the low number of views of her posts, ranging between 37 and 80 views per post. Her entry about the Outback, is by far the most viewed post as it has 222 readers. All quotes in the following analysis, as well as the pictures described are taken from Samantha's blog post "The Outback: The Spark-notes-style Version." Due to the lack of page numbers or chapters on websites further parenthetical reference stating the same will be excluded for the sake of readability.

Analysis

The author begins her blog entry by expressing her embarrassment for her lack of knowledge about Aboriginal Australian history before coming to the country. She, therefore, feels that it is necessary to outline it for her friends and family at home, by stating that "I just wanted to make sure that everyone got the general idea that the Aboriginal culture is native to Australia and has been treated awfully ever since colonization." She thereby illustrates awareness of her own western hegemonic perspective which she knows is shared by most of her friends and family. This recognition of her own outside perspective, as well as of the historical mistreatment of Aboriginal Australian peoples is a step into a perspective on Aboriginal Australians that might, in itself be postcolonial.

She therefore starts her blog post with a historical "essay" as she calls it, which highlights the presence of Aboriginal peoples on the continent "for AT LEAST 40,000 years" (original emphasis) before being "discovered" by James Cook. The verb discovered is also put between quotation marks in the original post, which highlights the fact that the author understands that no a country like Australia with a preexisting history and Indigenous population can not in fact be discovered by anyone and that the discovery of "new land" is a western concept. The author also outlines the "extreme lack of understanding between the two cultures" and notes that there is no clear consensus about early history between European settlers and Aboriginal Australians. She also criticizes white Australians' ignorance of Aboriginal history, which is according to her is made worse by the fact that the subject is neither part of the school curriculum, and nor a compulsory subject at university. She also outlines the "superior" attitudes of white Australians, and the attempts to eliminate Aboriginal Australians by taking children from their families, which is nowadays known as "The Stolen Generation." This essay includes a critique of contemporary

as well as historical treatment of Aboriginal Australians by the white colonizers which can be found in many contemporary travel reports as outlined by Clarke (“Ordinary Place” ; *Black Australia*).

The rest of her blog takes the format of a journal and is a day to day description of a tour in Kimberly National Park. She appears to have been was part of a larger group who booked a guided tour through the region, as she states that they were picked up by “the Morgan family, our Aboriginal guides.” She further notes that they went to an Aboriginal community, but “unfortunately” did not meet or see any people there. The use of the adverb “unfortunately” illustrates her disappoint about not being able to see and observe Aboriginal people in their community, which indicates her anthropological interest in observing the ‘Other.’ This anthropological and archeological interest is, however, partly satisfied as she describes their day to day activities, such as examining ancient footprints or finding “ancient Aboriginal fish traps.” She also describes meeting the community elder Uncle Bundy and his family who taught them how to make spears and boomerangs, as well as using an “ancient Aboriginal method of catching the fish.” This exchange is another example of the ‘postcolonial exotic’ (Huggan). The Aboriginal people encountered by Samantha are living hybrid lives as they work as tour guides in the tourism industry, and also express their plans to travel to the United States. Through their position as guides, they have the ability to educate visitors and to keep the knowledge about their culture alive.

Her blog post is concluded by stating “one last thing that is important to mention is the amazing people who were our guides – they shared so much about their culture and experiences and I learned so much from them.” This statement further illustrates her appreciation of and respect for the Aboriginal communities she encountered. It is further worth mentioning that this blog post does not homogenize Aboriginal Australians, as the family of guides “the Morgan family” as well as the community elder “uncle Bundy” are named. The author also uses a capital A for Aborigines or Aboriginal throughout her writing which indicates her knowledge of writing conventions, which is likely due to her studies. The only thing she should have added in her description is the name of the particular community or language group she visited, which might be the Yawuru people who “are the traditional owners of the lands and waters around Rubibi (the town of Broome) [...] in the Kimberly region of northern Western Australia” (*Yawuru*).

It was not possible to identify othering discourses, or discourses about alcoholism as perpetuated in the media, nor romanticizing discourse of the ‘noble’ Aboriginal Australian in this

blog. This might be due to the author's background as an anthropology major, and thus her awareness of the importance of cultural sensitivity when writing about the 'Other.' The only discourse visible is an implicit criticism of the treatment of Aboriginal Australians by non-Aboriginal people, and the ongoing discussions about the history of Australia. It is also important to mention that, despite her major, Samatha also does not adopt an anthropological or ethnographical point of view in her writing.

Images

While the images embedded in the main part of the blog only show landscape, camels and group shots of the author and her friends, a few images of Aboriginal Australians can be found in the images attached at the end of the blog. The majority of the images shows the writer and the group she travelled with doing various activities such as "burning the wood to make spears" or "throwing a boomerang" as well as landscape and also some architecture. There are, however also photos depicting Aboriginal people, those are entitled "Uncle Bundy making a spear," "Uncle Bundy making a boomerang," and "Uncle Bundy and his daughter spearing the fish." There is also one photo that only has a numeral sequence as title. None of the images show the Aboriginal Australians as looking directly into the camera, it might therefore be assumed that they were taken without clear consent. However, consent to take pictures during the tour might also have been given in advance. The images are taken from the perspective of the writer who gazes at the Aboriginal people while they demonstrate traditional ways of creating spears or fishing, which is a perspective both taken by the 'tourist gaze' (Urry and Larsen) and by ethnographers and anthropologists. Uncle Bundy, who is identifiable through his hat and shirt, is part of all images containing Aboriginal Australians, which might be due to his importance as community elder. The author's choice of providing his name, as well as describing the activity performed in the pictures' titles, with the exception of one picture showing him and another Aboriginal Australian preparing either medicine or possibly also body paint, is in line with the rest of the text of her blog that attempts to avoid othering and homogenizations.

5.2 ‘Professional’ Blogs

In contrast to ‘non-professional’ blogs, which are part of mother sites, such as *TravelBlog*, which host many blogs by different writers, ‘professional blogs’ are written by one person only, apart from occasional entries by “guest bloggers.” One of the most important features a blog has to have to be considered “professional” in this thesis is their own web space, that is an individual url that does not include host platforms such as *TravelBlog*, *TravelPod* or *WordPress*. ‘Professional’ blogs are also distinguished by the fact that they reference established publishers such as Lonely Planet, National Geographic, CNN and other magazines and platforms on the homepage of their blogs, frequently by using the term “as seen in” before displaying the publishers’ respective logos (Knepes). Another indicator for a blog to be considered “professional” in this thesis is a significant social media following on *Facebook*, *Twitter* or *Instagram*. Another feature of ‘professional’ blogs their use of affiliate marketing as they contain, for example, Amazon links of products they use, or other links to hotels, booking platforms and destinations they visited. If visitors use these links to buy certain products the bloggers earn a commission without extra costs for the customer. Moreover, many ‘professional’ blogs also include branded content, that is blog posts which are written specifically on request to promote a certain product (McCulley “About Kate”). Some of the ‘professional’ bloggers also earn money through freelance writing and marketing work, and through courses they offer and promote on their blogs. Such courses promise to teach readers how to blog, write, take travel photos or videography, which implies that the readers could, after taking the course, become as successful as the blogger offering the course (Knepes “About Matt”).

This connection to marketing and branded content confronts the bloggers with certain challenges, however, as their “independence” may increasingly be put into question by their audience. They thus must navigate “a fine line between independence and affiliation [...] similar to how other kinds of review experts operate” (Cardell and Douglas 302). To retain their ‘authentic’ and ‘independent’ position and thereby remain believable for their audience, many ‘professional’ travel bloggers choose to clearly state if articles are sponsored in any way, as well as disclose how the affiliate links on their sites work. Therefore, Kate McCulley, who runs the blog *Adventurous Kate*, explains how she earns money through her blog in the About Me section of her blog (“About Kate”) and also references any sponsored content, for example “many thanks to Northern Territory Tourism for their generous support of the SOTM Tour, and to Flight Centre for providing us with complimentary 3D 4WD Kakadu Unleashed tour by Adventure Tours

Australia” (McCulley “Kakadu”). In this disclaiming statement McCulley also provides links to the respective companies which are likely to be affiliate links earning her a commission.

To find such “professional” blogs, terms such as “travelblog”, “best travel blogs” and “travel blog Australia” were searched for in Google. After an initial examination of results by typing “Australia” in the search bar of the individual blogs, some could be eliminated if bloggers had not written about the country. Then the terms “Aboriginal”, “Aborigines” and “aborigin*” were used in the search provided by the blogs to find blog entries using one of those terms. Hence, blogs that are examined in this part of the paper have to fulfill at least two of the aforementioned requirements in addition to containing at least one blog post that mentions Aboriginal Australians. The blogs are analyzed in alphabetical order, corresponding to that of the bibliography. First the background of the individual writers, and the “success” of the blogs will be discussed, then the text and the discourses present therein will be analyzed, after that the images in the blog posts will briefly be looked at in order to identify how Aboriginal Australians are visually portrayed by ‘professional’ writers.

5.2.1 Pommie Travels by Victoria Brewood

Background

The blog Pommie Travels is an “award winning blog” run by Victoria Brewood, who is originally from Manchester in England. It was set up after the author graduated from university in 2008 and became a full-time blogger and freelancer in 2010. Victoria now lives in London but still frequently updates her blog (“About me”). Pommie Travels has a Facebook page with over 4,000 likes which is regularly updated (“Pommie Travels”). While she does not list magazines or publishers she has worked with, she lists brands and companies she collaborated with such as Qatar, Panasonic and Topdeck.

Analysis

There are two blog entries deemed interesting for this analysis, as they depict Aboriginal Australians in contrasting ways. The first, less favorable blog post is called “St Paddy’s Day in Alice Springs” and recounts the writer’s experiences in the town of Alice Springs. She initially states “I knew I was going to like Alice Springs. I expected it to be like going back 50 years [...] I wanted to see the real outback – small town Australia” (“St Paddy’s”). She further states that she

had been warned “how backward Alice Springs is,” but ended up being positively surprised that there were supermarkets (“St Paddy’s”). Moreover, her arrival in the town is described that the town appeared “like an alien colony on the surface of Mars. Alice looked so out of place it was surreal” (“St Paddy’s”). These statements that outline the author’s expectations create a discourse of Alice Springs, and especially of Aboriginal Australians as partly existing outside of ‘modernity’ and ‘civilization’ (Hinkson 229). It further perpetuates the image of the Australian outback as an alien landscape (White and Greenwood 408).

The author then introduces the discourses of the problematization of Aboriginality as she describes how she perceived the presence of Aboriginal Australians in the town. She argues that “many of them have lost their way in today’s modern society and hang around street corners drunk or on drugs” (“St Paddy’s”). This statement is on the one hand a perpetuation of problematizing discourses (Fforde et. al 164), but can also be seen as an expression of the authors melancholia when confronted with the reality and the problems of Aboriginal Australian communities (Clarke *Black Australia* 24). Despite the presence of discourses relating to Aboriginal alcoholism and drug abuse, the author does not use them to construct an image of ‘uncivilized’ Aboriginal Australians. Instead, she justifies these problems by relating them to the problems of ‘modernity.’ She hence claims that “the sad thing is many of them have lost their way in today’s modern society” (St Paddy’s”). It is further argued that one always encounters “groups of them,” which is no clear criticism but the author’s observation, by which she differentiates between herself, and other western people and Aboriginal Australians. She thereby constructs the ‘Other’ through difference, as she explains that “in aboriginal culture they share everything, so it is quite normal to see a group of them driving a car around town, then a different group driving the same car [...] the next day” (“St Paddy’s”).

While the author uses hedging devices such as “a lot of” and “many”, and thereby tries to avoid generalizations, she still homogenizes Aboriginal Australians through the use of the collective ‘they’ and ‘them’. In addition, Brewood does not name any of the Aboriginal Australians she encounters, and does not identify the Aboriginal community they might belong, nor even the existence of such communities and differences. She also fails to use a capital letter at the beginning of the word Aborigines, Furthermore, despite her use of the past tense when talking about her experiences, she shifts to present to talk about Aboriginal Australians. This is another method of homogenization through the discursive creation of a “timeless present” for the ‘Other’ (Pratt).

The second article that offers interesting insights into the author's encounters with Aboriginality was posted the next day and is entitled "Big Rock Tour: To climb or not to climb?" As the title suggest, this post deals with the author's visit to Uluru and discusses the "very difficult dilemma, to climb or not to climb" ("Big Rock"). Brewood compares the climbing of Uluru, which is sacred to the local Aboriginal people, to climbing the roof of a Christian church. She therefore advises her readers to abstain from climbing. She does, however, admit that the view would have been tempting, and that she only later realized that "it did really seem so disrespectful – any educated person would no [sic] that you don't trample all over people's beliefs" ("Big Rock").

The author also narrates her visit to the cultural center, where she was able to learn about 'dreamtime' and was also fascinated by a book where people apologized for climbing Uluru or doing other disrespectful things such as taking stones with them. Those people wrote letters as they experienced bad luck after and wanted to apologize ("Big Rock"). This book, and the author's belief in it creates a 'mythical' and 'magical' discourse surrounding the inexplicable powers of sacred Aboriginal places. She further describes that she was able to learn about "aboriginal culture and costumes [sic]" and retells a romantic story her Aboriginal guide, Azza, told the group. This story also references the existence of skin color groups, which indicates that the author was, after all, aware of different Aboriginal communities, even though she does not name them ("Big Rock"). The story is a prime example of the myth of 'noble savage' describing two "starcrossed lovers" who fled into the outback and lived poor but happily and in love for forty years, until a drought forced them to return to their communities ("Big Rock").

In contrast to the blog post about Alice Springs, the author here names an Aboriginal person, that is Azza, and does not use the homogenizing 'they.' This might be due to the fact that she had the chance to learn something from her guide and therefore was able to avoid homogenizing statements. Hence, while Brewood is, in parts, aware of her outside position, she falls back to perpetuating discourses of Aboriginal Australians such as the problematization of Aboriginality because of alcoholism, homogenizing discourses and romanticizing of the 'noble' Aboriginal Australian who is able to live "off the land. All of these can be traced back to historical travel reports as well as media discourse.

Images

The images that were originally attached to the blog were, unfortunately, no longer available at the time of analysis.

5.2.2 Inside the Travel Lab by Abi King

Background

Inside the Travel Lab is written by Abi King, who is a self-proclaimed “writer, photographer, speaker, TV host and explorer” who quit her job in the hospital to write in 2007. This blog won the award for “best travel blog 2014” and she has worked with renowned publishers such as Lonely Planet, National Geographic Traveler and Traveller as well as BBC and The Huffington Post. The blog was also among the “top 15 UK travel blogs” by Yahoo and among “9 favorite travel bloggers” in the Huffington post (“See the world”). King updates her blog and social media pages regularly, and has over 6,500 followers on Facebook (“Inside the Travel Lab”).

In the About me section of the blog, which is called “see the world through my eyes” King lists the four main topics she is interested in writing about. Those are “responsible travel yet luxury travel,” “historic travel yet active travel,” “Inspirational travel yet cynical travel” and “plenty of travel photography tips.” Hence, she does not write a typical backpacker blog, but focusses on issues of sustainability, cultural and ecological responsibility and travel that does not need to be “on a budget” which is, for example, done by Matthew Knepes.

Analysis

All quotes direct and indirect are taken from the blog post “Kakadu Park and crocodiles” by Abi King. To enhance readability parenthetical reference will only be included when referring to sources other than that. The blog post starts out by describing the sound of the name “Kakadu” which was given to the National Park by the local Aboriginal people. The author then continues to describes colors, and the feeling of emptiness she experienced in this region. She describes “roads that probe, but not too far, into each of Kakadu’s seven regions, treading the delicate balance between ‘access for all’ and environmental conservation.”

Furthermore, King avoids homogenizing statements as she names the local Aboriginal people “the Bininj – or Mungguy- community” who are, according to her, amongst the oldest living societies on earth. This consideration of Aboriginal Australian tradition and customs is also

reflected in the following quote. “getting this far in the article has taken hours of consultation and to try to get the words right and yet still I expect somewhere offence will be taken. When it comes to writing about race, culture, nationality and religion, few words remain safe.” She thus demonstrates her awareness of her own outside position, and thereby adopts a postcolonial perspective on Aboriginal Australian peoples.

The author also refers to the tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, as she describes the relationship between the two parties as “fragile” which is, according to her, “a gross underestimation.” She traces the conflict back to the colonial settlement and the ideology spread at the time which viewed Aboriginal Australians either as childlike and “vulnerable people in need of Christian redemption” or as ‘uncivilized’ people who were seen as animals rather than human beings. King further criticizes contemporary Australian politics as she believes to be “well-meaning but flawed” and describes that “as late as 1967, Aboriginal people ‘didn’t count’ in the census.” This acknowledgement of the tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is frequently found in contemporary travel discourses, as writers are no longer able to ignore the reality of the “racial divide” in Australian society (Clarke “Ordinary Place” 79).

As part of the description of the historical reasons for the conflict between the two groups, the author also outlines the problems of the debate about Aboriginal alcohol consumption, and states that is a “toxic debate between individual choice, responsibility, stereotypes and community action in the wake of longstanding inequality.” King also quotes Dean, her guide who criticizes backpackers’ attitudes as they would harshly judge Aboriginal Australians’ consumption of alcohol when “all backpackers do is sit around getting drunk all day.” This again demonstrates the western hegemonic perspective many travelers visiting Australia have. They are only able to see what they expect from the media, that is problematic and drunk Aboriginal Australians who are unable to cope with modernity (FForde et al. 164), while getting drunk themselves.

King also outlines her bureaucratic struggles to get a permit access to Kakadu national park, and was not able to get permission as authorities stated that it was not possible “out of respect.” While the author could not understand the reasons at first, an explanation was given to her in Darwin where she learned that “they” that is the Kakadu Board of Management, “have had many bad experiences,” including the striptease of a TV-reporter on a sacred site. Another reason given to her was the misrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the media, as her guide Dean reveals. He explains that this misrepresentation is problematic as “there are hundreds. With

different languages and customs and territories and religions” which could be compared to Europe. Yet they are predominantly referred to and treated as a homogenous entity.

The author also writes about her discussions with the Aboriginal Australian “Robbie from the Larrakia clan, who spoke a little about the customs and traditions that permeate his world.” She describes her reaction when she learned that the Larrakia people do not keep records or write things down. Robbie also told her about the societal system as he describes “we are older than the pyramids and older than the bible. We have had no dictators. No caste systems. Limited numerology. And no concept of money.” The author’s questions about Robbie’s sentiment towards her writing, or about the role of men and women in Aboriginal society remain unanswered. She also acknowledges that the Larrakia people reside very close to a city, which may create a very different belief system than that of the remote communities. As King was not allowed to visit one of the remote communities, she is limited to the examination of Aboriginal Rock art and the knowledge of “an enthusiastic park ranger called Douglas.” The author also describes her first hand experience of the “ancient Aboriginal practice” of burning parts of the land to enable new life. However, the fire as such, caught the author unaware which led to a misunderstanding, and brief panic on the side of the writer.

The blog post is ended by a reflection of the Western practice of writing things down, and keeping records. She ends her thoughts by stating that to understand more about Kakadu, and by association about Aboriginal culture, she will need to revisit the place. This blog entry is special for a number of reasons. The writer, first and foremost, demonstrates cultural sensitivity by using the correct terminology and by reflecting on the problems of writing about another culture. She further uses Aboriginal names for the places she went to, as well as the Aboriginal term for a white Australian – “Balanda.” Furthermore, the author confronts and questions her own misconceptions and the differences between the cultures, for example when it comes to writing, or forest fires. Instead of criticizing these ancient practices she acknowledges her own lack of information on the subject and then notes that “the Bininj might actually know a thing about land management or two.” Thereby, King again criticizes non-Aboriginal policies that outlawed this practice until they realized that it was an integral part of the ecosystem.

Images

The images found on Inside the Travel Lab are all pictures of the fauna and flora of Kakadu National Park, or of Aboriginal Rock art. There are no images of people, neither Aboriginal nor non-Aboriginal.

5.2.3 Nomadic Matt by Matthew Knepes

Background

Matthew Knepes, who blogs under the name Nomadic Matt, is a professional blogger from Boston in the United States who has been a full-time travel writer since 2006. He is also a “best-selling author” who has been featured by The New York Times, BBC, National Geographic, Lonely Planet and other established publishers, as Knepes outlines on his blog. Matt claims that his website is used by over 1,000,000 people per month, which is partly backed up by the statistics provided by Alexa who ranks his website as 23,334 globally, which means Nomadicmatt.com has more visitors than all blogs of both *TravelBlog* or *TravelPod* together (“nomadicmatt.com traffic statistics”). Knepes further has a page on Facebook which has also has over 175,000 likes on Facebook (“Nomadic Matt”). He is still active as travel writer but has expanded his business to offering writing, blogging, photography and videography classes on his blog, which is still regularly updated. In the “About Matt” section of his blog he highlights that anyone can become a travel blogger, if only they follow the advice given on the blog. This illustrates how the blog also functions as a marketing platform for Knepes’ courses and books.

Analysis

Nomadic Matt’s travel blog resembles a tour guide, rather than a real blog. The search for the terms “aboriginal” and “aborigines” lead to a few articles all of which are either “guides” or blog posts about “weird facts.” The actual texts do not relate actual encounters with Aboriginal Australians but rather list advice where to stay, what to eat, how to save money and the “top things to see and do.” Such descriptions of “things to see and do,” are the only place where the presence of Aboriginal Australians is acknowledged. In his “Alice Springs Travel Guide” Matt mentions the “religious importance” of Uluru and explains that “climbing Uluru is really frowned upon.” He does, however, not include his own thoughts or opinion on the matter, and thereby leaves the choice to his reader. He also does not comment on the history of the place, but merely states that

one can “walk around the base, visit the information center, and [...] get guided walks with local Aborigines” (“Alice Springs”). This is in line with many other “professional” blogs which could be compared to guidebooks, as factual information is foregrounded and narrative posts are only rarely posted. This absence of Aboriginal Australian actors in a context so intrinsically connected to them, clearly is an example of a discourse of “exclusion through suppression” (Fairclough 145).

Aboriginal Australians are also mentioned in the context of their art, when Matt recommends visiting the Museum of Central Australia, and the Namatjira gallery. He does not comment on Aboriginal art as such, but gives practical advice as states that the museums are interesting and will not “take a lot of time to see” (“Alice Springs”). Matt also recommends the Aboriginal Australia Culture Center as one of the “things to do and see” when in Alice Springs. He claims that it is an “incredible gallery” that “highlights the cultural history of the Aboriginal people of Australia,” where visitors can also learn throwing a spear and to play the didgeridoo (“Alice Springs”). Matt’s blog entry does not recount any direct contact with Aboriginal Australians but merely functions as a guidebook for people interested in visiting the area. The author appears to try hard to abstain from making any comment about Aboriginal Australian culture or traditions. He also correctly uses a capital A at the beginning of Aboriginal people, and avoids the use of a homogenizing language by avoiding possibly generalizing statements altogether.

Images

There is only one image in the blog post “Alice Springs Travel Guide” which is a picture of Uluru that is used as header for the blog post.

5.2.4 Adventurous Kate: The Solo Female Travel Blog by Kate McCulley

Background

Kate McCulley, who uses the name Adventurous Kate on her blog, is “a 31-year old girl originally from the Boston area.” She started to travel and blog full-time in 2010, and then settled down in New York city in 2016 (“About Kate”). She still posts regularly on her blog and social media, where she has a following of over 52,000 likes on Facebook (“Adventurous Kate”). Her “About me” page also provides information on how she generates her income online. Even though she does not advertise it as obviously as other ‘professional’ bloggers like Nomadic Matt, she was also

featured by various publishing companies, such as The Boston Globe, Vogue India, Huffington Post and Buzzfeed.

The purpose of her blog is “to show what it’s like for women to travel solo. [...] and my ultimate goal is to show women that independent and solo travel can be safe, easy, and a *lot* of fun” (“About Kate”; original emphasis). She further focuses on adventurous activities, which is not only implied by the name of her blog, but also in the first paragraph of her introduction where she states that she has “been shipwrecked in Indonesia” and other, for her, adventurous activities. She also focuses on travel on a budget.

Analysis

This article is a list of some things the author believes her reader will not have heard about Uluru. It is important to mention that this article was commissioned writing as indicated by her expression of thanks to Northern Territory Tourism and others. Hence, those companies might have influenced the content of the article or, at least, suggested a direction of what McCulley should write about. While McCulley also talks about non-Aboriginal issues such as the presence of camels, the tourist demographic and the resort close to the national park, she also highlights the spiritual importance of Uluru and Kata Tjuta, which is according to her “even more important to the Aboriginals than Uluru when it comes to ceremonies, and as a result, much of it is off-limits to most of the world.” This statement includes a discourse of the utopian ‘noble savage’ who lives a premodern, spiritual life outside of civilization. Furthermore her use of the term Aboriginals, instead of Aboriginal Australians, or even better the name of the local Aboriginal people, the Anangu is not ideal. She does however, include that name later when she advises her readers to not climb Uluru, and outlines the reasons why the hike is still not officially closed (“10 things”). McCulley thereby shows her respect for and knowledge of the traditional owners of Uluru, and thereby avoids homogenizing statements. Similar to the statements made in Knepe’s blog post, no descriptions of the author’s encounters with Aboriginal Australians or names of her guides are given however.

By referring to the spiritual importance of Uluru, the author briefly touches upon discourses about Aboriginality. She also, indirectly, refers to the tensions between white and Aboriginal Australians as she explains that allowing the climb was a prerequisite for them to get back the rights to their lands from the government. However, any clear statement is avoided, which might

be due to her lack of courage to address such issues in her blog, as this topic might offend some people, and thereby scare away readers.

Images

The images included in the blog are mostly shots of the landscape, or of Kate and her boyfriend. There are no images of Aboriginal Australian people. The author also describes the fact that due to her professional position her photos had to be approved. This means that the images she was allowed to publish were selected for her. She states that she was “happy to comply with this request, but [...] a bit sad that some of [her] favorite pictures of Uluru will never see the light of day” (“10 things”). Hence, even if she took a picture of an Aboriginal Australian, it might not have been approved.

5.3 Discussion

The analysis of the blogs, especially by non-professional writers demonstrates that travel blogs can function as a platform where colonial discourses are perpetuated. That is not to say, however, that all blogs do contain such discourses, or that all bloggers depict Aboriginal Australians in problematic ways. The most common discourses found were homogenizing discourses (Pratt 51) where the authors use generalizing statements and language to make claims about all Aboriginal Australians. Of all the blogs analyzed, only King’s post includes the names of the people she talked to, as well as the skin names of the Aboriginal Australian peoples who live in the area. She even goes as far as to use the Aboriginal term “Balanda” to refer to non-Aboriginal people. Most writers do, however, not name the people they encounter and also forget to use a capitalized initial letter for the word Aboriginal or Aborigines. Furthermore, the exact name of the Aboriginal community encountered by the authors was only rarely mentioned.

Another common discourse found was the problematization of Aboriginality (Fforde 124), that is the observation, or implication that Aboriginal Australians abuse alcohol and drugs and are unable to cope with modernity. This discourse is mostly present as a general, homogenizing statement, without the authors’ acknowledgement of the fact that such problems do not apply to all Aboriginal Australians, while it might be true for some. Alcoholism, can also frequently be found in discourses expressing a melancholia for the living conditions of Aboriginal peoples (Clarke *Black Australia* 24).

Many bloggers include observations about tensions between non-Aboriginal Australians and Aboriginal Australians. Some, for example Abi King from Inside the Travel Lab, criticize non-Aboriginal people directly for their past and present attitudes towards, and the unfair treatment of Aboriginal Australians. Other bloggers merely mention these tensions as a side note, before moving on to another aspect of their post. This is done by Robbie George, who just states that he “became aware of the huge divide in Australia between the whites and the Aborigines” (“In the bush”) only to continue with his own observations about the “problematic” state of Aboriginal Australians. He does, nevertheless, mention that they did “sympathise with them as they have been cruelly treated by the Australian governments up until recently” (“In the bush”) but this sympathy is nowhere to be found in the rest of the blog.

Another discourse that could frequently be found, albeit to varying extents, is the discourse of Aboriginal Australians as ‘noble savages.’ Such depictions frequently highlight the connection of Aboriginal Australians to nature and romanticize their art and spirituality and at the same time mourn the loss of what the writers believe to be ‘traditional’ ways of living.

In general, more discourses about Aboriginality could be found in the ‘non-professional’ blogs. These were not only easier to locate, but also included more narrative representations of their encounters with Aboriginal Australians. Further, the unsupervised nature of these, self-published travel reports, which are only intended to be read by friends and family gives them the freedom to write what they think, as they do not have to face any consequences. Unlike ‘professional’ bloggers who might use a business contract or readers if they blatantly perpetuate colonial ideology in their writing.

Hence, it was much harder to find suitable ‘professional’ blogs that dealt with Aboriginality. This indicates that ‘professional’ writers are aware that depictions of Aboriginal Australians as exotic ‘Other’ bears the danger of perpetuating colonial ideology and can easily be considered as offensive. As this then could have an effect on their audience and possibly future publishers and other employers, and could have direct effects on the bloggers’ income. Furthermore, the format of many professional blog posts, indicates that readers prefer short posts and “to-do lists” where they will be able to look up information for their own travels, rather than reading long and detailed first person descriptions of someone’s encounters with otherness. Hence, many ‘professional’ travel bloggers tend to avoid depictions of encounters with Aboriginality.

6 Conclusion

This study set out to analyze the ways in which travel blogs by professional and non-professional writers contain othering discourses about Aboriginal Australians, and to find how Aboriginality is experienced, and re-told by travelers through the analysis of various blog entries about encounters with Aboriginal Australians. It is the first study that applies discourse analysis to travel blogs, to identify how otherness is perpetuated and constructed. The insights from the analysis of the blogs partly refute Duffy's study which suggests that bloggers are more open than traditional travel writers in their constructions of otherness, and less likely to use generalizing or homogenizing statements (Duffy 12). The blogs analyzed in this thesis frequently featured discourses that are also present in historical travel writing and media portrayals of Aboriginal Australians, most of which depict an unfavorable image of Aboriginal Australians. This thesis identifies that the blogs containing homogenizing discourses frequently construct Aboriginal peoples as 'noble' or 'ignoble savages' depending on the situation. Evidence from this study suggests that the discourses present in historical travel writing, as well as in contemporary media informs travel bloggers to this day, despite the increasing awareness of racial stereotyping and the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples around the world. These findings enhance understanding of how people perceive Aboriginal Australians during their travels. Awareness of these perceptions might help Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians of misunderstandings between locals and travelers, who wish to improve the public image and fight stereotyped representations of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. Further research should explore how blogs are read, what readers wish to read in a blog, why they read them, and how the reading of blogs might shape public opinion.

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8 Appendix

English Abstract

Ever since Edward Said's seminal study *Orientalism*, research on travel writing from a postcolonial perspective has proven to be a useful resource to reveal the writers' underlying ideologies through discourse analysis, as all travel writing entails, to some degree, a confrontation with the 'Other.' However, no research on how the internet has influenced how both 'professional' and 'non-professional' travel bloggers describe their encounters with other cultures. The main objective of this study is to close this gap by analyzing how bloggers write about their encounters with Aboriginal Australian peoples. Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to ten different blog posts, by six 'non-professional' and four 'professional' writers. The analysis focused on the ways in which historical discourses grounded in traditional forms of travel writing are perpetuated, and in which ways the authors may disrupt such discourses. The results reveal that most, especially 'non-professional' writers, are unable to depart from their western hegemonic perspective and perpetuate discourses about Aboriginal Australian peoples as the 'other' including homogenizing discourses, the myth of the 'noble savage' and the dichotomy between utopian and melancholic discourses of Aboriginality. Furthermore, discourses of Aboriginality found in Australian media discourse, such as the stereotype of the 'drunk Aborigine' can be found. However, some writers are able to adopt a more open perspective, by criticizing non-Aboriginal Australians and attempting to avoid the homogenizations found in historical travel reports as well as in the other blogs. The results further suggest a divide between 'professional' bloggers, who appear to prefer to avoid the topic of Aboriginality and only mention it as a side-note in their blogs, while 'non-professional' writers show no such constraints. It is, therefore, concluded that the difference in audience and purpose of writing, also leads to a difference in how encounters with Aboriginality are reported.

Keywords: Aboriginality / Aboriginal Australian / travel writing / travel blogs / Critical
Discourse Analysis / postcolonial

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Angefangen mit Edward Saids bahnbrechender Studie *Orientalismus* konnte die Diskursanalyse von Reiseberichten aus einer postkolonialen Perspektive dazu beitragen die Ideologien aufzuzeigen die diesen Schriftstücken zu Grunde liegen da jeder Reisebericht zu einem gewissen Grade eine Konfrontation mit den „Anderen“ beschreibt. Allerdings gibt es nur sehr wenig Forschung darüber, ob das Aufkommen des Internets und die Entwicklung von Reiseblogs Einfluss auf die Art und Weise hatte wie Verfasser von Reiseberichten, kurz Blogger, solche Begegnungen mit anderen Kulturen erzählen. Das Hauptziel dieser Studie ist, diese Lücke in der Forschung zu schließen indem analysiert wird wie Blogger über ihre Konfrontation und Begegnung mit Aborigines in Australien berichten. Um dies herauszufinden, wurde kritische Diskursanalyse auf zehn verschiedene Blog Einträge, wovon sechs von ‚nicht-professionellen‘ Schriftstellern und vier von ‚professionellen‘ Bloggern verfasst wurden, angewandt. Die Analyse der Blogs fokussierte sich vor allem darauf welche Diskurse aus historischen Reiseberichten übernommen wurden, und auf welche Art Blogger diese durchbrechen. Die Resultate der Studie zeigen, dass die meisten der Blogs, vor allem derer von ‚nicht-professionellen‘ Schriftstellern Diskurse die schon in historischen Reiseberichten zu finden sind aufrechterhalten. Dazu zählen Diskurse die Aborigines als das „Andere“ darstellen, die homogenisierend wirken, den Mythos des „edlen Wilden“ aufrechterhalten oder auch Diskurse die auf die Dichotomie zwischen utopischen und melancholischen Darstellungen der Australischen Ureinwohner eingehen. Außerdem konnten Diskurse, wie zum Beispiel der des stereotypen „betrunkenen Ureinwohners“ welche vorwiegend aus den Australischen Medien kommen gefunden werden. Allerdings kann auch festgestellt werden, dass einige der Autoren eine offenerere Perspektive gegenüber Aborigines einnehmen, was unter anderem dazu führt, dass sie die Handlungen der weißen Australier kritisieren und homogenisierende Aussagen vermeiden. Die Analyse der Blog Einträge deutet außerdem auf eine Spaltung zwischen ‚professionellen‘ Bloggern, welche dazu neigen das Thema Aborigines zu vermeiden oder nur kurz anzudeuten, und ‚nicht-professionellen‘ Blogger, welche keine solchen Einschränkungen zeigen. Daraus ergibt sich die Annahme, dass die unterschiedliche Zielgruppe zu Unterschieden in der Art und Weise führt wie über Aborigines berichtet wird.

Schlagworte: Aborigines / Australien / Ureinwohner / Reiseliteratur / Reisebericht / Reiseblog /
Kritische Diskurs Analyse / postkolonial