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Recognising the importance of objects in travel writing

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Recognising the importance of objects in travel writing

Abstract:

Throughout its history, travel writing has not been held in the same esteem as many other forms of non-fiction writing (Youngs, 2013; Stubbs, 2015) due to issues with representation, the creative techniques used, and the subjective perspective of the writer. Despite this critique, Baine Campbell has asserted that travel writing has a 'plurality' (2002), which allows it to resonate across a variety of disciplines. This paper observes how a recognition of the importance of objects as evocative and creative artefacts can provide a prompt for more engaged and authentic examples of travel writing, so as to better achieve recognition as a legitimate blend of creative writing, journalism, and history writing. The research will examine the influential travel writing works of Bruce Chatwin with *In Patagonia* (1977) and Christopher Kremmer's *The Carpet Wars* (2002) to observe how these writers use objects for significant creative and cultural guides within their explorations. By looking closer at how objects can present new ways of looking at and writing about place, I will examine how an awareness of meaningful artefacts has influenced the creative and structural choices of my own travel writing practice to better achieve a plurality of appeal that moves it beyond its past criticisms.

Biographical note:

Dr Ben Stubbs is a senior lecturer in journalism and creative writing at the University of South Australia. He has written three books and numerous journal articles, book chapters, and features exploring the intersections between travel writing, creativity, and journalism.

Keywords:

Travel writing, objects, auto-analysis, Robinson Crusoe

Introduction

The travel writing form has been critiqued, quite rightly, throughout its history for a variety of reasons and subsequently, it has not been held in the same esteem as many other forms of non-fiction (Youngs, 2013). Travel writing has been criticised because of the practitioner's often privileged perspective when writing about the 'other' without proper consideration – of being a temporary guest in a foreign culture without demonstrating sufficient awareness, sensitivity,

and depth when representing these places to the rest of the world (Pratt, 2002). Travel writing has also been criticised because of the subjective nature of the immersion practised by writers. It is not held to the same rigid standards as straight history writing or ethnography, and it is assumed to lack the veracity of journalism largely due to the creative techniques and personal perspective used by many travel writers (Stubbs, 2015). These reasons have seen the creative, immersive, and subjective works presented by travel writers often maligned and seen as 'much lower in status' (Cocking, 2009, p. 55) when compared to other non-fiction forms.

The prompt for this special issue offers the chance to consider how a closer focus on the creative utilisation and cultural significance of objects within travel writing can further demonstrate the depth and legitimacy of the genre. This presents an interesting opportunity to pause and consider how these travel artefacts might allow for a more culturally nuanced and creatively explicit form of travel writing to be practised, to move it beyond the limitations of its past, and to better achieve the plurality of appeal that Baine Campbell (2002) attests that the form is capable of.

Notable Thing theorist, Professor Bill Brown, writes of A.S. Byatt's novel *The Biographer's Tale* that, 'the interruption of the habit of looking through windows as transparencies enables the protagonist to look at a window itself in its opacity' (2001, p. 4). Considering the inherent problems with representation in the travel writing form, there is an opportunity to interpret Brown's analysis here to see how the tendency to look through things and past things – as travel writers passing swiftly through destinations often do – can lead to missing important details of both creative and cultural significance.

Thing Theory suggests that an object becomes a 'thing' or an artefact when it is observed beyond its everyday use. There is an opportunity here to explore how the use of artefacts in travel writing can go some way to addressing the historical concerns of the form. Brown writes that we can think of Thing Theory as 'what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects – their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems' (2001, p. 5). This definition also holds significance as it relates to travel writing.

As a former travel writer, this prompt offers me an opportunity to perform an autoanalysis of my own practice and to observe how the recognition and appreciation of things has influenced my work. The creative diversity of the travel writing form, as a style which has links to a plurality of influences – journalism, history writing, poetic observation, and ethnography – is instructive when we analyse it through the lens of 'writing through things'. As such, this paper will analyse a diverse set of creative texts to demonstrate how things have been instrumental in the appreciation of character, place, and narrative, within my own travel writing.

To arrive at a more significant understanding of how the importance of objects might be judged from within my own work, it is helpful to look through historical examples of travel writings and things to map this trajectory and to demonstrate a precedent.

In general terms, travel writing might be better recognised in a modern setting for its relationship with tourism, guidebooks, and exploration; however, it has existed for millennia (Das & Youngs, 2019). Within this categorisation, there is a clear relationship with the 'things' of the travel experience that stretch back thousands of years. Dreaming stories of Aboriginal peoples, their song lines, and the expression of these stories on walls and in caves have created some of the earliest travel writing artefacts in existence. 'These stories were spoken or sung or depicted in visual art,' writes Das and Youngs (2019, p. 1).

As Das and Youngs outline in their introduction to *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing,* there is also a clear relationship between travel, writing, and objects in the ancient world. Indeed, some of the first discovered forms of travel writing involve the utility of objects. In the 3rd Century BCE, Harkuf, an emissary to the pharaohs in Egypt, left details of his travels written on the surface of a tomb (Holland & Huggan, 1998). There were many travel-related texts produced in Greco-Roman literature of the Hellenic age; as Burgess writes, 'War and trade were always prime causes of mobility in the ancient Mediterranean world' (2019, p. 19). The journals of these trade and conflict voyages documented the travel to sites of pilgrimage and to observe ruins, temples, and churches – objects of religious and spiritual importance, which defined much of the boundaries of early travel and travel writing. The journals themselves also became important travel objects – they would list locations, geographical details, routes taken, supplies used, and the place names and languages encountered. Most notable among these early travelling writers was Herodotus, who was said to be the first intentional travel writer, tourist, and ethnographer with his detailed journeys in Persia (Youngs, 2002). Herodotus' observations in the 5th Century BCE often centred on the artefacts which would add intrigue and clear narrative progression to the writing of his journey – from descriptions of giant fauna to the exotic costumes of the people he encountered.

As Leavenworth (2020) writes, the Bible was also seen as an important object for early Christian travel. Pilgrims would employ the 'footsteps' motif of travel (Youngs, 2002) to trace the journeys of early Christians before them. The Bible acted as a guidebook for those venturing beyond Europe and into the Holy Land for the first time, as individual pilgrims and on the organised group travel that came later during the Grand Tour era, such as that seen in Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) about his journey on the world's first pleasure cruise to Europe and the Holy Land. While much of the scholarship focus, until recently, concentrated on Western accounts of travel, there were also many similar written journeys from Jewish travellers and Islamic pilgrimages, including the 25-year journey by Ibn Battuta in the 14th Century and across Eastern Asia in the same period, which also highlights the universal concentration on the search for significant objects (Newman, 2019).

Beyond the historical positioning of travel writing and the importance of the 'things' of travel, the modern practice of travel writing is identified largely as narrative focused on first person accounts of non-fiction, mostly seen since the 1970s and written principally for popular, commercial consumption. This style uses the artefacts of travel in a much more intentional manner, with the objects not just representing a marker of the journey, but also as an important creative device for the exploration.

A personal journey of things

As mentioned previously, I worked as a travel writer for more than a decade for publications such as the *New York Times, The Guardian,* the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Rough Guides.* As I was beginning my foray into the genre, there were two books that inspired me to become a professional travel writer. These were Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977) and Christopher Kremmer's *The Carpet Wars* (2002). What is now also apparent to me is that beyond their literary merit and creativity, both titles demonstrate the importance of objects as central concerns within their construction. These books offer both creative (Chatwin) and cultural (Kremmer) clues for how the importance of things can be used within travel writing and subsequently, how these approaches influenced my own practice.

In Bruce Chatwin's 1977 book *In Patagonia*, it is the use of an object which compels him to leave his life in England and escape to the southern reaches of Argentina and Chile.

> In my grandmother's dining-room there was a glass-fronted cabinet and in the cabinet a piece of skin. It was a small piece only, but thick and leathery, with strands of coarse, reddish hair. It was stuck to a card with a rusty pin. (1977, p. 1)

Chatwin's mother tells him that it is a piece of brontosaurus, thus stringing the young boy on, as many parents do, as a way of satisfying his incessant questioning. The story had more than a ring of truth to it though, as Chatwin's great uncle Charley Milward was a sailor and explorer in South America, and it was said that he found the brontosaurus at the bottom of a glacier after his ship had sank in the Strait of Magellan. Apparently, the beast went rotten on the voyage back to England, though the small piece of skin that Charley sent back survived. The skin became an object of fascination for Chatwin as he grew up, and even when he learned much later that it was indeed the skin of a giant sloth and not a dinosaur, his interest to see this place and align it with the stories of his childhood remained. When he was older, Chatwin left his prestigious newspaper job in the UK and travelled to Argentina to answer the questions he had of Charley Milward and the object he had returned with from Patagonia once and for all. He employed the 'footsteps' or 'quest' motif of travel writing to re-trace his ancestor's journey, with the ultimate goal of either arriving at a physical destination or returning with a sense of emotional achievement and enlightenment (Hemley, 2012; Leavenworth, 2020).

Validating the importance of the artefact, Chatwin continually revisits the story of Milward and fills in the gaps of knowledge that intrigued him for all those years – that his relative wasn't as heroic as he first thought, and that the skin came from a cave in Chile when Milward was working with a German gold panner rather than a sunken ship at the base of a glacier as he initially believed. These details are interspersed with Chatwin's own travels along the southern spine of South America to piece together Milward's story: 'I have had to reconstruct it from faded sepia photographs, purple carbons, a few relics and memories in the very old', writes Chatwin (1977, p. 159). This example revealed to me that the combination of creativity, with how Chatwin interprets the significance of this object, alongside his awareness of structure and

how he might shape this into a coherent journey to write about, was both creatively enticing and achievable as a blueprint for my own writing.

In another powerful demonstration of the importance of artefacts in the instigation of a travel journey and the representation of place, Australian journalist Christopher Kremmer uses objects as a central plot device to allow his readers to go on the trip with him as a war correspondent in the 1990s and early 2000s. In his book, *The Carpet Wars: Ten Years in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq* (2002), Kremmer starts his layered and immersive exploration of these volatile places in the calm, dimly lit surrounds of a Kabul rug store. He writes of his first encounter with a rug salesperson: 'Rolled-up rugs lined the walls, insular and secret. But knowing them well, Tariq was more interested in unravelling me' (2002, p. 3). Kremmer uses rugs throughout the book to detail the different places he visits and the varied impacts of the conflict in the region on both himself and the visited locations.

In Kabul, Tariq takes Kremmer through his store, detailing the stories of the carpets as they walk, telling him of the weaves, the wool, and his own origins in Afghanistan over cups of tea. Tariq tells Kremmer of the carpets of Herat, his home city, a place poets and weavers in the Paropamisus Mountains.

When Kremmer spots a small *Cowdani* rug with the tree of life woven across it, he buys it for much more than it is worth, though the purchase of this object is the marker of his arrival into Afghanistan and his introduction to the importance of bargaining in the culture he is visiting. Kremmer learns first-hand of the cultural importance of carpets – a theme that would repeat itself many times throughout his 10 years in the region:

> The early Muslims inhabited lands where people were born on carpets, prayed on them, and covered their tombs with them. For centuries, carpets have been a currency and an export, among the first commodities of a globalised trading system (2002, p. 40).

Kremmer then uses rugs to further plunge us into his story and to show both how the region and he as the traveller, change throughout his time there; initially, he tells us of the oriental carpet he bought in Hobart in 1987, which turned out to be a fake, with him none the wiser, and later he shows us the harsh northern city of Mazar-e Sharif during the middle of the war where he meets carpet seller brothers Rafi and Asif, 'with their countries decimated, cultures pulverised and families scattered, they flee, carrying what is often the only portable asset they own – their carpets' (2002, p. 40).

Kremmer uses rugs to also show us how he functions and interacts in the environment as an outsider. He does this powerfully with an anecdote showing his astute, but ultimately insensitive bargaining conduct in Islamabad once he knows how to play the 'game' of negotiation. Kremmer also takes us to the demoralised, hungry shell of post invasion Kabul where, among the brutal Taliban rule, he is dragged into a dusty store on Chicken Street by Abdul Razzaque. His rugs are a collection of wrong patterns, missed stitches, and uneven dyes. Abdul becomes desperate when he sees Kremmer's dismay at the fragments of old rugs he has procured from bombed-out buildings as they engage in the 'expected' haggling that occurs

when visiting a rug store. Kremmer is not interested in anything in Abdul's shop though, until the façade is dropped and Abdul tells him of life as a Hazara in Kabul and of the Taliban school his son is forced to attend where he learns to kill his own people. Abdul finally apologises to Kremmer and shows him that this exchange is about more than just the carpets he is selling. It is about showing his son that there is some hope in this seemingly hopeless situation they find themselves in: 'Please accept my apologies for kidnapping you into my shop. You are my first customer for three months. Please buy something, anything, so that my son can see what his father is' (2002, p. 133).

In this anecdote, the symbolism invites the reader to understand Kremmer's gentle storytelling persona, to see and feel a sense of what Kabul is like in this war-ravaged era and then through the powerful anecdote about Abdul's family, to understand the human impact of this war that Kremmer has come to report on.

From the writing of Kremmer and Chatwin, the two most notable inspirations for my own practice, it became clear that the highlighting of objects not only allowed for a more engaged awareness of both creativity and culture in their books, but also of my own choices as a travel writer.

Robinson Crusoe and an auto-analysis of the 'importance of objects' in travel writing

Das and Youngs define travel writing as being 'the written record (usually in prose but sometimes in poetry) of travel that has actually been undertaken by the author-narrator' (2019, p. 10) and this becomes an interesting extension of the genre when we look at castaways as travellers who write.

The romantic notion of a message in a bottle and the importance of the objects of castaways takes on a wholly different significance when we think of the plight of Alexander Selkirk (the inspiration for Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*) and others deserted throughout history.

In Defoe's 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe*, in the chapter 'I Furnish Myself with Many Things', Defoe details how Crusoe returns to the shipwreck after fully understanding his dire situation on the island, and he strips it of all the objects he can use to help him to survive, from wood to create rafts, to biscuits, whisky, a carpenter's chest, and two pistols. He then sets out to build his shelter, high up on the island so as to see passing ships: 'I found a little plain on the side of a rising hill' (1988 [1719], p. 65) writes Defoe of Crusoe's discovery. These things give him hope and provide shape and meaning to his incarceration on the island. Crusoe was subsequently marooned for 28 years in the novel. The shelter that Defoe wrote about also has an interesting cross-genre and multi-generational significance as an object of travel writing significance nearly 300 years later.

Defoe's story of Robinson Crusoe was inspired by the true story of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who was abandoned on the island *Mas a Tierra* (meaning 'closer to land') off the Chilean coast in 1704 during a plundering voyage around the Americas with William

Dampier and other sailors. The quarrelsome Selkirk was ordered off the ship and onto the island that was often used as a place to repair vessels and recover from scurvy. Selkirk had been accused of inciting a mutiny over the condition of their craft, the *Cinque Ports*, which was infested with ship worms. It was the beginning of Selkirk's four years and four months of solitude on *Mas a Tierra* before he was rescued in 1709 by English sea captain Woodes Rogers, who found him barefoot and alone in his jungle fortress.

The Robinson Crusoe/Alexander Selkirk story also has a curious meta story to it and a personal attachment. *Mas a Tierra* was re-named 'Robinson Crusoe Island' by the Chilean government in the 1960s in the hope of promoting tourism. It is one of three islands in the Juan Fernandez Archipelago, 670 kilometres off the coast of mainland Chile and 3000 kilometres from Easter Island in the other direction. It is only accessible by container ship or on a seven-seater plane from Santiago in Chile. In my own career as a travel writer, I was struck by the Crusoe/Selkirk story and the possibility of this artefact, of Selkirk's hut, still remaining on the island all these centuries later. I employed Hemley's 'quest' style of writing (2012) to inform my exploration. This style borrows from memoir and is often a constructed search for a historical object. I used this technique in order to structure my writing of the journey as I sought out what remained, if anything, of Selkirk's most significant relic.

Unlike Robinson Crusoe, Selkirk did not have a wrecked ship to pillage for wood, building material, and whisky as his fictional inspiration did, and accordingly the thing most central to Selkirk's stay was his lookout hut. As Diana Souhami writes in the non-fiction account *Selkirk's Island,* 'He watched in the first light of the morning, at noon and at dusk. Behind the bay he climbed to his lookout, his vantage point. He scanned the encircling sea. He surveyed The Island, its tormented forms, its peaks and valleys' (2001, p. 89).

Souhami observed that 'the Island was a prison and he a mariner without a ship, a man without a voice' (2001, p. 83) and I was compelled to see what had happened to this shelter that had shaped so much of the subsequent narratives of Selkirk and Crusoe.

When I visited the island in 2009, my goal was to find the link, both physically and from a literary point of view between Selkirk's hut and the transition of this artefact as it is observed by three different authors across a 300-year timeline. My host, local diver Pedro Niada, had lived on the island for 13 years and he assured me that the remnants of Selkirk's hut were well known to locals. Niada furnished me with a map (another travel object that would allow me to discover and write this story), detailing where the remains of Selkirk's shelter were hidden, also highlighting the ravines around Cerro Centinela, the site of Selkirk's lookout. 'You have to think like a pirate,' Pedro told me. 'From here, you can see all along the south and east coasts and if you were stranded here it would be the perfect spot to spot an incoming ship' (Stubbs, 2009).

Over the course of a week on the island, I would walk across the mountains and wind-scorched cliff tops, alone and only with my map and provisions for company. I would also carry copies of Souhami's book and Defoe's novel, objects to assist me appreciate the significance of the stories of this place when I would stop and read passages along the trail. I eventually discovered

Selkirk's ultimately underwhelming hut, 'now just a collection of arranged stones, this was his sanctuary 300 years ago, where he constructed a sail tent, scrounged through the forest for turnips and watercress and supplemented his diet with goat, lobster and the occasional turtle' (Stubbs, 2009). The discovery of the hut, and the writing of my own story completed the full circle of this exploration, prompted by the search for an artifact that had continued to influence writers since the 18th Century.

As an important addition to the meta-analysis of the travel writer's process in this context, not all of the writing can be captured in the moment in the creative and structurally sound manner that is needed for final publication. While travelling, I did carry small notebooks to write observations, which I would transfer onto a computer after the trip, though the other significant 'object' were the photographs I took while walking the hills of *Mas a Tierra*. After I had left the island, and with a deadline approaching, my initial technique would be to use the material from my observations and interviews and to reference this with my secondary sources. To also instil a more visceral sense of place so that readers could experience the wind whipping through the valleys on the approach to the shelter and feel the squelch of the mud on the barely discernible track, I would rely on photographs to re-live these moments, 'bringing the past into the present and transforming absence into presence' (2011, p. 37) as Breitbach writes of the usefulness of photographs as objects. There is an obvious edifice to the travel writing form (as with all non-fiction writing, I would argue) as it is constructed to fit with the specifications of the publication. To better capture the sense of place, so as to transport the reader, 'photography provides a means of catching the shadows cast by ephemeral objects of our world, which we can then analyse later at our leisure' (Brown 2004, p. 24) so as to create a more arresting final work.

Figure 1: What remains of Selkirk's hut on Isla Robinson Crusoe. Photo by Ben Stubbs

Figure 2: The view that inspired Daniel Defoe and highlighted Selkirk's isolation for 4 years. Photo by Ben Stubbs

After the relative success of the Robinson Crusoe experience, I subsequently utilised a more purposeful awareness of objects in my latest book *The Crow Eaters: A Journey Through South Australia* (2019). This awareness provided me with an opportunity to test out how an object could help me to write more engaged and rigorous travel writing that still maintained creative intrigue. Subsequently the story of the 'Crow Eaters' was instigated by an object I found in my garden:

> The history of this place was in my hands, hiding just beneath the soil. I pulled up a curved lip of clay from beneath a tangle of old roots and wriggling worms; it was the edge of a brick. Over the next few days gardening in my backyard I pulled up more than thirty shards of old bricks and pottery from the earth. (2019, p. 5)

I discovered that the bricks I found dated back to the Coppin Brothers brick works, which occupied the space around my house in the 19th Century. Once I looked closer at the village I live in within the Adelaide Hills and read through the archives in the local library, I realised that this now normal suburban locality once had a railway station, a traveller's pub, a tannery, and a much more significant submerged history. This book project also offered me the opportunity to look at my role as an outsider and to spend time charting my own journey to better understand the place I called home, beyond simply a surface appraisal.

To add depth to this project I utilised Hemley's 'Experiment' prompt where 'the writer includes the self in order to write about the world' (2012, p. 9). This was not the 'footsteps' motif of the Robinson Crusoe episode, nor of Chatwin's blending of history and familial experience. Hemley further supports the search for self as a binding goal in many immersive styles. He calls the process, 'kind of an archaeological dig, an excavation of the layers of self' (2012, p. 59).

Upon arriving to South Australia from the eastern states, I was struck by how much the image of the state was shaped by lazy clichés and surface appraisals of it being a location with nice wine and a lingering reputation as the murder capital of Australia. Having spent my early career travelling around the world and looking closer at places in order to get a more nuanced appreciation of them, I was now struck by the symbolism of these bricks and how they offered me the opportunity, both creatively and from a narrative structure point of view, to dig deeper and uncover some of the more authentic and original stories of South Australia in the process – to intentionally address the plurality of the form that Baine Campbell provoked. The bricks became the initial prompt for my entire narrative, and while there is nothing particularly remarkable about their discovery, it made me determined to explore the question: 'What are the other stories of South Australia lying beneath the surface waiting to be excavated?' (2019, p. 5). What followed was a two-and-a-half-year exploration into the 1 million square kilometres of South Australia. From the discovery of the bricks in my yard, I drove 12,000 kilometres around the state and met palaeontologists, Indigenous park rangers, and scallop divers on Kangaroo Island. I visited former nuclear testing sites in Maralinga, and I was a guest at Afghan cameleer reunions in the northern desert in order to go deeper and better understand South Australia.

As I had learned from the Robinson Crusoe story, the importance of photographs as significant objects in the writing of this travel was also part of the process. Seeing as I had so much material to get through, I again used the method of allowing photos to let me relive these experiences when in the writing phase. As Breitbach notes:

> Photos seem to lend a vicarious stability and substantiality to fickle memories, providing structural support, factual evidence, and narrative coherence to human biographies. They are convenient biographical props to be (re)appropriated by human subjects and put into the context of their lives in the present tense. (2011, p. 37)

Interestingly with this travel writing project though, I did not have the ability to include the photographs in the finished work as I did with the Robinson Crusoe piece. While no less important, these became objects of personal significance that were invisible except within the subtext of the final work.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates how artefacts can play a defining role in the history, narrative shape, and contemporary relevance of the travel writing form. Travel writing, as an extension of journalism, history writing, and creative non-fiction is often overlooked within scholarship (Stubbs, 2015), though there is a clear opportunity to witness how a closer focus on the objects of travel can aid the development, understanding, and continued relevance of travel writing.

From an historical point of view, there are numerous examples of objects being instrumental in the telling of travel stories, thus increasing our understanding of place long before conventional travel writing was recognised, whether this be as an extension of Indigenous Dreaming stories in Australia, the discovery of written accounts on pharaoh's tombs or in the journals of Herodotus in the 5th Century BCE.

From a contemporary point of view, the examination of the importance of objects has also revealed a useful auto-analysis of my own practice as a travel writer and how certain works have influenced my practice.

This influence was seen with the South American exploration in *In Patagonia* by Bruce Chatwin, where his quest to fill in the gaps about his great uncle was inspired by a piece of giant sloth hide, and carried out with the employment of a 'footsteps' travel narrative. It is also evident in the nuanced journey through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq with Christopher's Kremmer's *The Carpet Wars,* where he uses carpets as objects to demonstrate the deepening impact of the conflict on the region alongside his own development and understanding of the places he visits as an outsider.

In my own travel writing, the importance of objects became clear through the story of Alexander Selkirk. Selkirk was marooned on the remote Chilean island *Mas a Tierra* in 1704 for four years, where the building of rock shelter to allow him to watch for passing ships was central to his survival. This story inspired Daniel Defoe to write *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719 where objects, including the building of a similar shelter in the cradle of a high valley, were important narrative inclusions. Finally, the confluence of these two stories and the possibility of the shelter still remaining encouraged me, as a travel writer, to visit the location nearly 300 years later to complete this exploration in narrative form and to appreciate the enduring significance of objects to this story.

The realisation of the importance of objects in the authenticity of travel writing also has revealed personal significance, as it continues to impact the style and creative choices in my own work, as seen in *The Crow Eaters* (2019). This realisation of the importance of objects also offers suggestions for how future travel writers might adopt the ideas of Brown (2001), to look closer at the artefacts within the places they visit, rather than always gazing through these objects and towards their next destinations. This object-focused travel writing has the potential to expand the boundaries of what the form traditionally entails – of it being more than just a recount of an exotic voyage or thinly veiled advertising, and to provide significant cultural and creative contributions to the genre.

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