

8 CASE STUDY: IDENTITY

JOURNALING IN TRAVEL RESEARCH

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This chapter explores the development of identity through the practice of literary travel writing in a learning environment. It gives the background and details of the development of blended learning materials that emerged from an ERASMUS+ mobility programme between Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Travel stories that came from learners on the course are reproduced and an analysis is provided to engage readers and visitors with this very particular approach to recording or journaling memories and travel experiences.

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8.1 Introduction

During lockdown, the magazine, *Travel Writers Online* (ISSN 2753-7803) ran a summer school to allow experimentation with the delivery of blended teaching and learning. The aim was inclusive communication and acquisition of communication skills in tourism, specifically the skills to find narrative in the learners' own experiences of place and travel. To improve inclusivity in an online environment, only free software tools and the free platform from Google, called Google Drive were used for the online journaling, the lessons and sharing of students' own writing. Since YouTube is free to use by freelance workers, the teaching videos were uploaded here for a wider group of learners (YouTube, 2023).

Over the period of the course the new travel writers worked on set pieces from the teacher, then grew to develop a whole story of their own. Two of the stories are presented here. They both originally appeared on the magazine pages of *Travel Writers Online*, ISSN 2753-7803.

8.2 The Writer's own Imaginary as a Point of Departure

The summer school began by exploring the theoretical work of Jean-Paul Sartre, using his concept of the Imaginary, where the imaginary is a noun, rather than an adjective as it is normally used in UK English (Lennon, 2015). The learning aim was to help learners to realise that their own store of narrative knowledge is rich and valid when creating new cultural artefacts, which, in this example is, literary non-fiction testimony. This is an inclusive approach since it does not demand initial high levels of personal cultural capital (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014) of the type normally acquired through an arts or humanities degree at university.

As the learners began to make notes, or more formally, to commence their journaling, they were introduced to the process of close reading of very small excerpts of modernist literary travel writing and testimony. Two key pieces were explored in detail. They were from Simone de Beauvoir's travel memoir, *The Prime of Life*, published in originally in French in 1960 (Beauvoir, 1994), and Walter Benjamin's published travelogue-style vignette of Marseille from 1928 (Benjamin, 2009). European authors were chosen whose work can easily be found in German, French and in English translation so that the lessons could be adapted more easily

by other European teachers and learners. Later, too, an example of literary travel writing from W G Sebald was discovered and added to the resources for the learners (Sebald, 2016). The travel literature of W G Sebald is widely translated into European languages, and it is hoped that this will facilitate the adoption of our pedagogy across Europe.

8.3 Platform Technology for Remote Blended Learning through Dialogue

Technical instruction was required to ensure that the group of learners could find and navigate their way through the Apps needed to write and share on the Google Drive platform. Web 2.0 technologies mean that users with a free login account can easily type their work directly into online pages that are accessible in real-time with their peers, their teacher and, if required, stakeholders in the travel industry. Although Google Docs is classed technically as an asynchronous technology, the response time during editing and journaling is so fast that learners enjoy the effect of writing in the same document at the same time as others in the class. Lessons and writing workshops could therefore be planned with Google Meet or with YouTube Go Live and run simultaneously within a shared single Google Doc to explore texts and students' writing in an immediate way. Additionally, problem-jostles, using only the live Google Docs App were run at planned times to develop writing and communication skills. In 2022, Google also made its Google Chat App free to users who did not have a paid-for Google Space account. This additional application has extended the platform to offer a more complete environment for learner dialogue, and allows learners to work with tourism industry professionals in museums and businesses.

8.4 Literary Terms

Once the learners had set down their initial recollections from their imaginaries about a place they knew well it was time for the teacher to introduce some of the ways literary language creates affect in readers. From work with a colleague through the ERAMSUS+ teacher mobility scheme, we had perfected a pedagogical approach to using past tenses with learners in tourism communications to enrich and problematise their initial present-tense field-notes. This was applied in this teaching and the trainee travel writers found that they could create narrative as they recounted

their testimony of travelling to a place or exploring a destination on foot. As a research finding, we discovered that tourism experiences are held as a type of narrative knowledge by visitors and can be elicited by asking in a dialogue learning environment for the activities to be recounted. It seems elementary but we were astonished by the richness and detail of the qualitative information stored when a holidaymaking visit is experienced, then recounted to an interested listener or responsive reader group.

Finally, two very specific literary techniques were taught; these are drawn from theories of space in text and literary geography and often occur in published travel literature. These are the novelist's use of concision in a deictic structure, and interpellation by the story. These are quite complex, but as the course progressed the learners were enthusiastic to take on-board new methods for making their writing both more affecting, and to be more precise in how they communicated their own personal experiences of place.

Regular dialogue, mainly through posing questions, created a demand in the learner for new methods to bring out more knowledge from their writing. This increased their readiness to engage with literary methods they had not previously recognised in novels or poetry. Dialogue, initiated by the teacher, then, after training in good questioning by the peer group is well-documented as a productive approach to learning (Nesari, 2015); applying dialogue learning across a digital platform does extend the approach into the sphere of written communication. One of the present authors undertook an academic literature review on journaling and dialogue, more as research tools rather than for teaching but uncovered a rich published literature on applications of Bakhtin's theory for teachers of rhetoric and narrative writing. This quotation from Bialostovsky demonstrates the valuable link between Bakhtin's dialogism and the teaching of writing composition:

In academic writing it is conventional to revise oral presentations for publication by suppressing those figures of thought through which speakers register the presence of their auditors and the remarks of participating colleagues. Such revision deletes the signs of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the dialogizing background of the utterance to generalize the contexts of its reception and universalize the appearance of its claims. It is also conventional to cover up the signs of such revision, presenting the argument as unified and the self that underwrites it as of one mind about it. Such

silent revision enhances the appearance of authoritativeness and hides the possibility that the author did or could think otherwise. These conventions of published authority are part of what we teach in teaching academic writing, and my failure to abide by them in this chapter anticipates my questioning of that pedagogy. I foreground the occasions and the revisions of this piece, then, as part of my attempt to redialogize the practice and teaching of academic writing.’ (Bialostovsky 2016, loc 3297 eBook)

8.5 The Book from the Course

A pocket textbook which works through the course was initially produced as an eBook; then, in 2023 a new paperback edition containing all the written material and using QR codes to link to online resources was made available. Details are given in the references section at the end of this chapter (Mansfield, 2020). This chapter turns now to the presentation of the two literary travel stories which were developed through the dialogic approach and from journaling during the summer school for travel writers online. Note, in the first travel story, two types of French included as heteroglossia (Bialostovsky, 2016), both of which are part of the narrator’s spoken language range along with contemporary British English.

8.6 Retour au pays natal by Clarisse Chicot Feindouno

I woke up excited. I had hardly slept because I was thinking about the journey ahead. I had packed everything carefully two days before so I wouldn’t forget a thing. I had travelled to France a week ago to avoid rushing and panicking.

The day arrived quickly, I was impatient and worried. What were things like after 11 years? Probably different now, with new buildings everywhere. I would soon find out. We made our way to the airport. People’s driving skills left much to be desired. I watched the buildings as we drove by and all of the advertisement panels. 'Souriez, filmez, partagez' with SFR, the new Xiaomi 10, 5G phone for just 1 euro, hmmm, interesting.

I suddenly remembered, I forgot to check if my Sky network would work once I got there! We pulled into the airport, and I registered the luggage. I sat in this restaurant for my last coffee. I said goodbye to my husband. The kids said their goodbyes to

their dad. I heard the announcement: 'Good afternoon passengers, this is the pre-boarding announcement for flight TX541 to Pointe-à-Pitre. We are now inviting passengers with young children to begin boarding at this time, gate 10. Please have your boarding pass and identification ready. Thank you!'

I made a move and walked toward gate 10. We boarded the plane. I sat in the middle, and I had a boy on each side. They slept throughout the journey. They were used to travelling now. The flight lasted eight hours then I heard the pilot speaking in the PA: 'Mesdames et Messieurs, nous allons bientôt atterrir, veuillez remettre vos ceintures jusqu'à ce que l'avion s'arrête!'

Finally, we landed. We got out of the plane and went through the immigration control. As the officer looked at all of our IDs, he asked me: 'I need proof that these children are yours. I suddenly remembered, I used my maiden name on the boarding pass and the boys had their dad's name. I showed him my passport which had both my maiden and spouse name. I thought to myself, thank God, I went to London to renew my passport. He was satisfied and made a joke: How can you make the difference between P and M? They look exactly the same!! Double trouble you have there!! I smiled and left the airport impatiently with the boys. At last, we were outside, breathing the Caribbean air. Guadeloupe, here I come, I shouted quietly. I looked at my phone, and the network had changed from sky to orange.

I found a cab, so the kids and I made our way. Nobody knew we were here; it was a surprise. As I sat in the cab, things were indeed different. The hospital was no longer there. I asked the driver: 'What happened to the hospital? oops exkisez mwen, kay pasé lopital la? I forgot I had to speak creole or French now. He answered in creole: 'I pran difé!!' (it burned down, he replied).

The driver started a political conversation, complaining of the inadmissible state of what is left of the hospital, the water shortage in some of the cities but his voice quickly became distant as I looked at the state of my beautiful island through the car's window. Buildings were in a dilapidated state, and I barely recognised the area. I wondered if Port-Louis had changed as much. I am sure it had after so many years. We made it. We were in the Nord Grande-Terre. Some of the cities were the same. More buildings were erected. The boys woke up: 'Mum, we are hungry!' I suddenly realised we had not eaten since we left the airport. We stopped and I bought KFC

for the kids, as for me I ate a nice 'agoulou', a delicacy I missed eating. The saltiness of the omelette was enrobed with the seasoning of the salad mixed with the sweet, thick and huge burger bread. It was delicious.

We finally arrived in my city. It had changed, for the better. Now, there was a high school, and they had turned the old sugar cane factory into a tourism site. We were at my house and as I got out of the car, I saw the look on my dad's face. He cried. Mum wasn't there. I paid and thanked the driver. I woke the boys up and got them out of the cab and they went through the gate. They found a football; I rolled my eyes. I was tired but there was no time to rest as I hurried to go to the beach.

I left the boys with dad who also took care of my luggage, and I went to the beach. As I walked toward the beach, I felt the sun on my skin and the white tuff and the distorted gravels underneath my bare feet. The beach was two minutes away, so I enjoyed the closeness of nature under my feet. I picked up seven gravels to play this game called pichine. My mum taught me, and I was going to challenge her on my return.

I saw a lady selling pistachios and coconut sorbet and I wanted to buy some when I got back. I walked past the swimming school, and I remembered my kayak lessons when I was 11. Not a great experience. I fell in the sea as I lost control of the kayak and my teacher shouted at me: 'Get back in the kayak or swim to the shore!' I was petrified and chose the latter. I finally arrived on the beach. I put my towel on the sand, and I sat down in front of the open ocean. The view was fantastic, but it was time for me to go swimming. As I entered the deep green sea, the wind blew past me. It gave me a little chill. I stood still for a couple of seconds as the waves brought the water up to my knees. It was cold, so I dived in to not feel the temperature. La Plage du Souffleur: 'How I missed you!'

8.7 Déjà-vu by Philipp Wassler

The hike up to the castle was familiar. I used to call it a déjà vu because I had done it innumerable times since one of my university classmates brought me here almost 20 years ago. The entrance to the theatre area was rather unassuming - a narrow little alleyway squeezed in between yellow and brown stone buildings, facing one of the busiest roads in Verona. Like a little door to another planet I thought. Or better, like a little door to the past. My past and Verona's past. Or the other way around.

I smiled as I entered the alley, remembering the many visitors I brought all the way up to the castle. How many times we had to stop with the Asians, taking pictures of the bright pink orchids growing from the old, cracked stone walls. Apparently the occasional foreigner found its way here also without me, I thought, as I passed sweaty-looking and rather heavily breathing visitors of Northern European appearance on the first set of stone steps, winding narrowly along the buildings. Here we go, I mumbled to myself - the climb begins, old man! There is something fascinating about walking up a long set of stairs, I thought, as I passed the first stone blocks and column fragments which once belonged to the majestic Roman theatre built on the hillside leading up to the castle.

People don't like to show their weaknesses. I smiled, as I saw the first group of exhausted tourists resting about one fourth up the way. Of course, not resting - they were pretending to take pictures of what once was probably a lion sculpture. Or an eagle, maybe? It did have a pointy nose or snout, I thought. I looked forward to reaching the little gallery halfway up. Another good excuse to slow down the journey. I always liked to read the graffiti on its damp, musty walls. My favourite was "I hate people and people hate me: but I hate them more". I smiled as I passed by this masterpiece of modern satire. I had always wondered who wrote this. Maybe someone with a good sense of humour. Or a serial killer. Either way, the first drops of sweat paid off as slowly I reached a good elevation on the winding stairs. To my right, the stone ranks of the theatre emerged through a sea of sun beaten blocks and pillars, while the afternoon sky turned into the first shades of bright orange. "Under the skies of an Italian summer", I thought to myself smiling. Those were the lyrics to the title track for the 1990 Football World Cup in Italy, which I fondly remembered watching with my father. This and my heavy breathing about three quarters up the stairs were a testimony that time was passing faster than I thought. The roar of the traffic seemed further away now and the chit-chat of the crowd on the massive plateau a lot closer. Hope at last.

About 5 minutes later, I sat on the terrace of Castel San Pietro, a renaissance hillfort on top of a 2000-year-old Roman theatre complex in Verona, Italy. The sunset was painting the city in shades of orange and red. I was assuming it has done so for millennia – it certainly has for decades, as this has been my retreat of choice for at least 15 years. The evening breeze was pleasant, and one could hear the city traffic faintly, like a whisper in the distance. I thought that even traffic can be beautiful if it

fits the scenery. It felt like time was standing still, looking at the roman stones which had stood the test of time. In my rollercoaster-life, this place remained strangely unchanged. As I sat here, I remembered the countless times I had watched the sunset in the city before, with people who have come and gone sitting with me. Maybe I missed some of them, maybe I just missed the person I used to be when sitting with them. But then again, the certainty that these stones will be here long after I am gone and that I was just a piece in the millennial puzzle of this city gave me a strange comfort. As I smiled, I realized that thousands must have found it before me in the very same spot.

8.8 Building Networks and Trust

Integrating literary travel writing of this genre into the tourism management and development process was the next step in the research that had grown out of the ERASMUS+ teaching mobility between the University of Plymouth and the University of Maribor (Dr Natalie Semley & Dr Charles Mansfield, UoP; Dr Jasna Potočnik Topler, UM). Stories written in first-person narrative form, as the two examples above, provide an opportunity to establish and build trust with museums, city councils, cafés, restaurants and tourist attractions on the route taken by the visiting travel writer or student writer. By establishing a dialogue with these stakeholders, the writer can more readily research and engage in experiences when out in the field. In spring 2023, a project to explore this in the Slovenian town of Brežice was completed.

The key stakeholder that engaged with the project was the local museum, based in the castle of Brežice, The Posavje Museum. Initially, two important cultural artefacts were identified by the travel writers researching the museum's collections; this approach is taken from the travel writers' textbook:

' [...] information about an observed object's histories, functions, its roles in our lives, is crucial; it is tour guides and travel writers who provide that significant information. Consequently, much is dependent upon how the presentations of objects and attractions are recounted by writers, reviewers or guides. In fact, the travel writer's information plays a central role in the perception of a townscape or museum artefact' (Mansfield & Potočnik Topler, 2023, 41).

The first focus was on a painting by a local Slovenian artist, Miroslav Kugler, of hay-drying racks and a crop of buckwheat in flower. The museum promoted this painting as part of a special interpretation display, and for the writers a connection could be made between the crop of buckwheat and local food, in the form of štruklji; these are rolled pieces of buckwheat dough, filled with cheese and potatoes and baked in a sauce. Thus, a travel writer could be fairly confident that these two objects could be found and enjoyed during a walk around the town.

The choice of an additional museum artefact was allowed to emerge during the fieldwork. It was a bronze-age vessel called a situla. Here below, the travel writer includes the discovery in a blog post. Publishing blog posts in English during the visit, continues to build that trust with the museum, whose intended audience are Anglophone visitors from the US and UK. For the readers of the travel blog the continued use of the first-person narrative communicates the identity of the travel writer. The readers begin to see the interests of the writer and they can share the writer's knowledge through the narrative of the experiences rather than consulting a reference book or guidebook. The reading of narrative creates a rhythm between emotion, or personal reaction and new, often specialist information but the movement of the writer's visit provides a constant impetus to continue. Aristotle's notion of plot is that the text should set up the question of why. This why can be answered by the writer, or, as in detective fiction, postponed until the dénouement. The second paragraph of the example blog post below, shows how the travel writer provides reasons why the visit to the museum is structured in a certain way. This will provide plot for the readers. They will begin to trust that the text contains reasons or explanations.

8.9 Fieldwork in Brežice, Slovenia (Blog Post)

Our first day of fieldwork was Monday 15th May 2023. We made a walk into town along Old Justice Street, Ulica stare pravde, and made a stop at the water tower, Vodovodni stolp Brežice. The weather was brightening all the time after a couple of rainy days.

I made my first visit to The Posavje Museum in Brežice just before 5 o'clock on Tuesday 16th May 2023. That was my reconnaissance visit aiming to look in almost every room for first impressions and to see if any artefact would stay in my memory

for later detailed investigation. I also had in mind the painting from the museum's web list, of the hay-drying racks and buckwheat in flower by Miroslav Kugler because we had discussed that on the dialogue platform before my visit to the university tourism faculty. Alas, I could not find Kugler's painting but I wanted to keep moving rather than make a focussed study at this initial stage.

On Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 11h43 I was writing in the Kava Jazz Pub at 2 Trg Izgnancev, working on an elliptical tabletop, sipping a Hausbrandt coffee in a branded cup. I made this Step 2 Journaling entry sitting at this writing plateau, 'The buildings on this west side of the Road of the First Fighters are only 10 to 15 metres in depth. Then behind them, on the western edge of Brežice, the ground drops away again, leaving the whole street as a combe ridge. Placing a settlement near the top of a combe suggests a Celtic origin for the site of the town, and the location of Brežice is on the south eastern extent of the early Iron Age period of proto-Celtic culture, from around 450 BCE. Vessels decorated with narrative scenes emerged in this era, for example, the Slovenian Vače Situla vessel, made of bronze, 23.8cm high and holding about 2 litres of liquid. Horses and people are depicted in bas relief on this Celtic artefact'.

8.10 Riverbank or Slope

That something happened to the land level just behind the main street was apparent when I explored the alley called Holyjeva steza or Holly's path. I speculated that the town's name, Brežice might mean ridge or combe. I asked Jasna via text message, a rapid reply 'It means breg - riverbank, slope'.

A connection had been made from my memory of the museum visit of the day before, when I had noticed, but not spent much time with, the Etruscan situla held in the museum along with the fibulae fastening pins, which served as buttons on Celtic clothing before buttonholes were invented. A Taurisci Celtic site from between 250 BCE and 150 BCE was discovered in 1948 when the huge veterinary clinic was built in Brežice. This helps position, at least the cemetery of the tribe, on today's town layout, but not perhaps their Iron Age dwellings.

I walked from my hotel, the Pr'Šefu at Prešernova cesta 17 along to the animal clinic and the lie of the land became clear on foot. The ground here drops away and levels towards the river Sava, well south of the town's combe ridge. End of blogpost.

8.11 Note on Space and Topography

The other complex writing structure to look for in the preceding blog post uses the concept of plot, too. The postponed explanation of the geomorphology of the town creates a tension from the elaborate opening sentence, which begins just beneath the side-heading in the post: Riverbank or Slope, it begins: 'That something happened to the land level [...].' It is a literary or complex sentence that slows down the easy reading of the piece, and it leaves the readers without a clear explanation. No immediate reason is given. Perhaps, sufficient information accumulates by the end of the blog post, but for the literary travel writer one aim is to leave clues that are solved in a more satisfying way by the visitors in the tourism space. By naming specific streets, and publicly accessible buildings the writer provides a route and locations where the experiences of discovery can be realised by the readers when they are there on location in the holiday destination.

The literary travel writer shares their own embodied experiences at precise locations to enact the physicality of the layout of the land, as in this example from Tim Hannigan's travel book on Cornwall:

'The water was shallow here, glittering over stone, but what I was contemplating seemed horribly transgressive. I stood there for a long while, wondering whether I needed to take my boots off, then went for it without doing so: four or five mincing steps, a handhold on an exposed root, a brief and muddy scramble and I was over the border. There was no abrupt change of atmosphere. No one challenged my trespass. Crossing over was not as hard as I might have thought.' (Hannigan, 2023. Unpaginated eBook).

The narrator in this scene above, takes the readers through the literary process of catacosmesis in his emotions from the 'horribly transgressive' to the resolved calmness of 'not as hard as I might have thought'. Framing this same scene of movement is a further complex reference to borders, and in another literary process Hannigan mixes hints of other border crossings from other writers and times with

this simple scramble across a shallow stream. We explore more of this literariness in the Methodology section below.

8.12 The Methodology

It was on a research mobility with the University of Nantes that Mansfield first began to formulate a specific methodology that would communicate tourism space to a wider audience than the usual academic peers (Mansfield, 2015). Then through the mobility link to the University of Maribor, we progressed towards a process methodology that yields knowledge in a narrative form to communicate the tourism experience and the literary space of destinations. This is fully explained in the book, *Travel Writing for Tourism* (Mansfield & Potočnik Topler, 2023).

An experienced and skilled travel writer, like Tim Hannigan, collects notes in the field and also works to develop ideas and texts at later points in a writing project. In our process methodology we wanted to formalise that for new writers who are learning to, and deciding whether to, build a career in travel publishing and communications. We therefore opened up the process into a series of steps (Mansfield & Potočnik Topler, 2023, Table 5.7, 96). This relieves the learning writer of trying to complete finished, polished and complex textual artefacts at a single point in the field. We call the final step, ‘Step 3 Back in Lab’, so that the novice writer has time to consider their emotions from their field notes and experiment with ways of communicating them to their readers. This allows exploration of literary techniques to increase the repertoire of the student-writer.

In this lab stage, the students are in dialogue with their peers, with their lecturers and with people who may be in their story and with whom they have built trust. The novice writers will have published some blog posts during the fieldwork step of their projects, Step 2, and they will be able to read these back and elicit comments on these from others to give them a better comprehension of how readers understood those small, published fragments. Often this leads to recalling and recounting emotions felt during encounters in the field. For example, the blog post describing the Bronze Age vessel lacks any of the intense feelings it engendered in the longer viewing. This could be remedied in a lab session by asking more of the sensibilities of the writer through dialogue with a writer’s editor. If the resulting small story were

skilfully composed, it would offer readers a catalyst for their own connection with the ancient artefact.

Finally, our current research at the time of writing is on heteroglossia. How can we add other voices to our literary travel writing? It is a natural progression for our process methodology, which we call Dialogue Journaling, since dialogism and heteroglossia are combined in the theoretical work of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose concepts inform literary writing today (Bialostosky, 2016).

8.13 Conclusion

This work responds to the growing number of travel writers and bloggers who have joined the tourism industry as well as holidaymakers who gain satisfaction when they contribute their own writing as customer reviews on social media channels and platforms. Our aim is to help contributors to explore and develop their own identities through a widening and deepening of their sensibilities. A continuous process of literary understanding is one route to develop and attune to these sensibilities as it increases the range and expressiveness of one's own writing. In a time of experience co-creation, the creation of literary artefacts in the form of travel stories is another way of making souvenirs of your own travel and being part of place-making.

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