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‘Scenes of Great Animation!’: Reflections on the Cruise Diary

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In July 1931, a woman named ‘Kit’ boarded the SS *Britannia* on the Clyde for an eighteen-day North Atlantic and Mediterranean cruise. During the journey, she made daily entries in a diary, including photographs and memorabilia. In this paper, I use this material, located at the Scottish Business Archive, to analyse how passenger subjectivity is articulated and co-constituted by the multimedia construction of the shipboard diary. I consider the diary a type of material-discursive practice in order to shift attention to the embodiments of leisure cruising during the interwar period in Scotland. I argue that Kit’s diary does not function as a passive reflection on her holiday from Glasgow, but rather plays a crucial role in shaping her subjectivity as a passenger and her experience of the cruise.

On the morning of July 1931, a woman from Glasgow identified simply as ‘Kit’ made her way down to the Clyde with her husband to board the Anchor Line vessel SS *Britannia* for an eighteen-day North Atlantic and Mediterranean cruise. Over the course of her journey, she made daily entries in a diary, pasting in photographs alongside memorabilia from the voyage. This record of her trip, stored at the University of Glasgow Scottish Business Archive (hereafter SBA) as part of their Anchor Line collection, donated by the company, provides a unique snapshot of the development of leisure cruising during the interwar period and an opportunity to reflect on how examining life-writing and other autobiographical practices can deepen academic accounts of Scottish maritime history and British modernity.

In this paper, I will use Kit’s diary in order to consider the question of *passenger subjectivity*. Life-writing scholar Anna Poletti has recently proposed that we ‘approach autobiographers not as writers of stories that are mediated in one form or another but as subjects formed and re-formed with media technologies’.[1] Taking up this suggestion I thus read the shipboard diary as a type of *material-discursive* practice – an approach that emphasises the ‘entangled inseparability of discourse and materiality’.[2] As Wanda J. Orlikowski and Susan V. Scott argue: ‘material-discursive practices are constitutive, they configure reality’ and focus ‘attention on the ongoing, dynamic, relational enactment of the world’.[3] Considering the shipboard diary as a material-discursive practice is to recognise that it is not simply a documentation of memories and experiences, or what

1 A. Poletti, *Stories of the Self: Life Writing After the Book* (New York, 2020), 56.
2 W. J. Orlikowski and S. V. Scott, ‘Exploring Material-Discursive Practices’, *Journal of Management Studies*, 52:5 (2015), 697–705, 699.
3 Ibid., 700.

autobiography scholar Philippe Lejeune has called the *retrospective teleology* of the 'unifying utopia of autobiography'.[4] Rather it is a type of assemblage produced by active articulations of space, time and matter on board the cruise ship. As the French philosopher Michel Serres has argued, a 'discourse is no different' than the 'matter' upon which it is written, and my approach to the history of voyaging on cruise ships proceeds from the idea that passenger subjectivity is co-emergent with embodied seafaring practices like diary-keeping.[5]

This paper thus contributes to an under-theorised dimension of both maritime studies and broader accounts of British modernity – the experience of cruising as both represented and produced by the practice of constructing shipboard diaries. I take up the suggestion of Susann Liebich and Laurence Publicover, who argue in 'Maritime Literary Cultures' that historians should pay closer attention to voyage diaries and other forms of private writing by passengers and crew in order to better comprehend the lives of those who travelled by sea.[6] In this case, Kit's diary was composed on a cruise during what is commonly called the 'Golden Age' of ocean liners and through the period in which Britain's view of itself as modern, 'peaked'.[7] Thus, examining the archival material at the University of Glasgow can not only illuminate the experiential realities of the interwar cruise but also allows us to re-examine those social classes who recognised themselves as, to use Marshall Berman's memorable phrase, the 'participants and protagonists of modernity'.[8] The neglect of the diary form in maritime studies attests to the disciplinary focus on the technological and economic aspects of seafaring and the few detailed academic accounts of the subjective experiences of life at sea tend to be approached through the biographies of 'great seafarers and naval captains'.[9] I am thus further motivated by the sense that close reading these supposedly marginal archival materials makes an intervention in maritime studies by performatively articulating some of the methods by which the field can be enriched by literary and cultural analysis.

Throughout my reading, I consider both how Kit's experiences are structured by the situated socialities and materialities that interact on board the SS *Britannia*, and how committing these experiences to diary shapes and reshapes her cruise. Paul Ashmore has argued that conceptions of ships as static and solid entities which transport passengers as 'pre-formed subjects' do not adequately capture the processual dimensions of the cruise and the complex interplay of social realities

4 P. Lejeune, *On Diary* (Hawaii, 2009), 168.

5 M. Serres, *The Birth of Physics* (London, 1980), 191.

6 S. Liebich and L. Publicover, 'Maritime Literary Cultures', *Topmasts: Special Issue* (2017), 21–4, 21.

7 R. W. Coye and P. J. Murphy, 'The Golden Age: Service Management on Transatlantic Ocean Liners', *Journal of Management History*, 13:2 (2007), 172–91, 174.

8 M. Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London, 2010), 24.

9 Liebich and Publicover, 'Maritime Literary Cultures', 21.

on board.[10] This is a crucial insight that is confirmed by the shipboard diary. Like the unstable rhythms and courses of the ship, the figure of the 'passenger' that emerges in the diary is a fluid and unpredictable entity in a state of perpetual *becoming*.[11] I explore the specific social and material realities of Kit's cruise through a discussion of how the diary is shaped by such disparate phenomena also stored at the SBA such as shipping company promotional discourses and advertising material, naval language, deck games and on-board dining menus. However, there are further materialities that shape the subjectivity of Kit as a 'passenger' in the diary narrative which includes aspects of ship design, non-human phenomena such as weather, as well as the spatial and temporal conditions that shape the act of keeping daily entries in a diary. Michel Foucault famously claimed that the ship 'is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself'.[12] However, as Heather Norris Nicholson foregrounds, Foucault also noted that it has the capacity for mobility and the freedom to cross 'the infinity of the sea […] from port to port, from tack to tack'.[13] The cruise ship is thus unique in that it is simultaneously a means to travel between sites of tourism *and* a port of respite for passengers who holiday afloat. The shipboard diary, composed of these assemblages and contradictory rhythms also exerts its own determination in the complex 'shipboard logic'[14] of social routines, activities and experiences on the cruise.

Unlike more conventional forms of life-writing such as autobiographies and memoirs, diaries are traces of a life as it unfolds processually rather than closed narratives. As Julie Rak puts it, a diary is a written record of a life 'in media res' – 'diarists compose life narratives as their lives are happening with no way to move the narrative towards the future'.[15] However, the form of the cruise diary complicates this framework given that the diary is composed within a temporal structure known in advance – the voyage *itinerary* articulates a self-enclosed form. Committed to a single temporal period and structured by a particular activity – 'leisure cruising' – it would be more accurate to describe the cruise diary as a 'partial diary'.[16] This actually helps to focus my analysis, which is not therefore concerned with the broader life narrative or identity of Kit herself, but rather the specific passenger-subject that emerges in the transcription of a

[10] P. Ashmore, 'Slowing Down Mobilities: Passengering on an Inter-War Ocean Liner', *Mobilities*, 8:4 (2013), 595–611, 609.

[11] Ibid., 596.

[12] M. Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986), 22–7, 27.

[13] Ibid., 27.

[14] H. N. Nicholson, 'Floating Hotels: Cruise Holidays and Amateur Film-Making in the Inter-War Period', in (ed.) D. B. Clark, V. C. Pfannhauser and M. A. Doel, *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places: Hotels and Motels on Film* (Boston, 2009), 49–72, 51.

[15] J. Rak, 'Dialogue With The Future: Philippe Lejeune's Method And Theory Of Diary', in (ed.) J. Rak and J. D. Popkin, *On Diary* (Honolulu, 2009), 16–28, 19–20.

[16] Lejeune, *On Diary*, 190.

delimited journey. This is a subjectivity that is obviously shaped by the broader 'life experiences' and identity of Kit, but is in no way entirely circumscribed by an pre-existing authorial identity. This is to say that I read the diary not as a broader reflection of Kit's personality nor as some *stage* against the horizon of her lifetime, but as a material-discursive practice which reflects and shapes the situated spatial, temporal and material dimensions of the leisure cruise. If, as Lejeune has persuasively claimed, 'the private diary is a practice',[17] then keeping a shipboard diary is part of the practice of travelling by sea. Therefore, in analysing the diary, I seek to pay close attention to the rhetorical and paratextual strategies by which Kit makes sense of her experience at sea as it unfolds, while always recognising that the construction of the diary on board the ship is in fact a crucial dimension of the experience itself.

Kit's diary is stored in an archive and this affords it a unique position as a literary document. Cynthia Huff notes that the placement of manuscripts in public archives, while making them theoretically accessible to all, 'nonetheless also indicates that they do not enjoy the traditional status of art', pointing to the problematic of documents deemed important enough to be preserved yet not duplicated or publicly circulated.[18] This 'aesthetic uncertainty' affects how I approach the diary, particularly in foregrounding the importance of resisting the urge to 'verify' its artistic value or flatten its fragmentation to make it fulfil some pre-existing aesthetic criteria.[19] A manuscript diary is of course handwritten, and before any analysis could take place, I transcribed the diary in its entirety to make the linguistic content legible. However, this was simply for purposes of clarification, since it does not capture the ways in which matter literally left its traces on the body of Kit's diary in the form of unintended ink stains, colour inscriptions and drawings, and various collage techniques.[20] These are all crucial dimensions of the construction of the diary as a *process* rather than a finished narrative. Similarly, it is crucial to pay close attention to the ways that visual fragmentation and utilisation of space in the diary are as much a part of the construction of the passenger-subject as any rhetorical and narrative strategies. I observe these problematics without any attempt to definitively resolve them – that lies outside the scope of this paper – but to draw attention to how the more contingent connections between form and content in the cruise diary require unique methodological considerations.

If maritime history sometimes demonstrates a poor understanding of social contexts,[21] then autobiography scholars can sometimes fail to recognise the

17 Ibid., 31.

18 C. A. Huff, 'Reading as Re-Vision: Approaches to Reading Manuscript Diaries', *Biography*, 23:2 (2000), 504–23, 509.

19 Ibid., 509.

20 SBA, UGD255/1/36/2, Summer Cruises: SS *Britannia*. Spain, Portugal, North Africa, Mediterranean & Adriatic. Photographs & Diary, 1931.

21 J. Law, 'Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics', *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (2009), 141–58, 150.

concrete circumstances that produce the diary as a particular form of social practice. Conceptualising the shipboard diary as a material-discursive practice seeks to resolve this dilemma by tracing the ways in which shipboard diary-keeping both reflects and reconfigures experiences at sea. In this sense, my reading of Kit's diary constitutes an *experiment* in conceptualising the diary as the sum of many determinations – a relational practice enacted on the differentiated terrain of the ship. We can now turn to a close reading of the opening pages of the diary to get a stronger sense of how these practices illuminate the messy materialities and discourses of the interwar period in Scotland.

Kit's diary is large and rectangular with a blue matte cover inscribed with silver cursive lettering: 'My Snaps' (Plate 1). The endpaper is marbled with a swirling variety of colours. This immediately frames the diary as a particular type of aesthetic object and not simply a written manuscript. The Turkish stone motifs on the endpaper lend an air of exotic otherness that is reinforced upon turning to the first page of the journal, adorned with an Anchor Line promotional flyer reading: 'Summer Cruises – Spain, Portugal, North Africa, Mediterranean & Adriatic'. Pasted above the written text is a watercolour portrait of an African man wearing a djellaba, a traditional Berber robe (Plate 2). In contrast to the prevalence of images of 'foreign' architecture and landscapes in the diary, the watercolour portrait foregrounds an individual. Its placement at the beginning of the diary is striking – it centres the individual 'other' as a site of desire. Furthermore, the incorporation of Anchor Line promotional material on the first page establishes paratextual cruise advertising as a discourse that the diarist will be in dialogue with and draw upon, both materially (in the incorporation

Plate 1 'My Snaps'. Kit's 1931 cruise diary. (Scottish Business Archive, Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow)

Plate 2 A 1931 Anchor Line promotional image for an eighteen-day Mediterranean cruise (Scottish Business Archive, Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow)

of textual material) and discursively (in the language with which she narrates her experience).

On the opposite page, the diarist has pasted a monochrome photograph she took of the ship prior to embarkation. Given that this photograph could only have been developed *after* the journey, this raises interesting questions about how the diarist conceptualises *space* within the diary with an eye towards the future 'completion' of the object. The page was kept blank in *anticipation* – Kit's construction of the very beginning of the diary paradoxically becomes possible only upon completion of the voyage. In this way, anticipation of the cruise ahead intersects with the expectation that she will return at some later date to its origins. The photograph frames the SS *Britannia* from a distance at a wide angle,

highlighting the full length and splendour of the 460 ft, 8,799 gross tons vessel completed at Alexander Stephen's Linthouse shipyard in 1926, as it sits in berth. Its scale dwarfs that of its surroundings and is further heightened by the page layout. Kit pastes the photograph flush centre of the rectangular panel, giving it a broad painterly quality amplified by its spatial reflection of the watercolour on the opposite page. The spatial organisation of these two images at the beginning of the diary establishes both the exotic pull of the voyage experience, by way of the Oriental 'other' waiting expectantly to be *seen* by the passenger, and the luxurious splendour of the ship itself as a material setting for the voyage.

As both a technology and environment of modernity, the ocean liner was marketed by shipping companies through the circulation of similar images of the grandeur of these 'floating palaces'.[22] Yet, the paradox is, of course, that once the passenger is on board the vessel there is no position from which to view the ship in such a way. So, throughout Kit's diary, she includes wide-scale photographs of the *Britannia* that were taken whenever she went for shore visits. This is suggestive of the experiential encounter with a spatial and temporal contradiction: the ship is a static setting for the passenger, whose leisure derives from the relative immobility of *relaxation*, one of the primary selling points of the cruise experience, even as the vessel moves across vast geographical distances. The view looking back at the ship as a total, unified setting – the *Britannia* as seen from the Bay of Biscay, from Gibraltar, from Palermo, and so on – recurs throughout Kit's diary as a metonymic representation of her *real* movement through space. Ports become the fixed co-ordinates through which Kit addresses the phenomenological contradiction arising from immense geographical mobility and delimited person motility. We shall return to this point, given that this contradiction is further heightened by the strictly regulated organisation of space on board the vessel itself.

Turning to the next page of the diary, the reader encounters another photograph taken by the diarist, captioned 'Promenade Deck'. Empty deckchairs line the right-hand side of the image, facing left over the deck, a design feature popularised a few years earlier by the Orient Line,[23] towards a wooden handrail that extends into the distance at the port side of the vessel. The view from beyond the handrail is grainy and overexposed, the light spilling onto the elegant wooden deck. Many posters from the 1930s evoked an idyllic atmosphere by picturing cheery passengers reclining and enjoying the sun on the promenade deck. Unlike those images, Kit's photograph of the deck has a serene, dreamlike quality. It aesthetically recalls the images contained in the promotional brochures rather than other forms of public advertising. The overexposure means that instead of an ocean view the left-hand side of the image appears as a type of

[22] B. Rieger, 'Floating Palaces: Victorian and Edwardian Ships', in (ed.) D. Finamore and G. Wood, *Ocean Liners: Glamour, Speed and Style* (London, 2017), 37–43, 40.

[23] B. Edwards, 'Shops on A-Deck: Transatlantic Consumption, the Masculine Tourist and the Metropolitanisation of the Ocean Liner', *History of Retailing and Consumption*, 4:3 (2018), 235–54, 236.

void, the spilling light exuding *promise*. The empty deckchairs are waiting to be filled by passengers; in fact, next to the chairs sit full cups of tea, with sugar and biscuits. The most striking feature of the photograph is the spectral *absence* of the passenger – it haunts the empty chairs and deck, and the 'outside' of the ship is visually rendered as a type of blank space. This reproduces the logic of the previous image of the *Britannia* – the ship observed from the *outside* – but this photograph marks a shift in the passenger's spatial relation to the cruise ship by foregrounding a different type of spectatorial desire. Once the passengers assume their position in the chairs, the photograph seems to suggest, they may become viewers of an almost cinematographic succession of images and scenes that will emerge from beyond the ship: landscapes, seascapes and the exotic 'otherness' signified in vivid watercolour a page earlier.

This succession of photographs depicts Kit moving physically closer to the ship up to and including boarding. At this point, the ship begins to disappear as a specular object and the perspective shifts. Once the ship departs, Kit's own movement is delimited, and the view *of* the ship becomes the view *from* the ship – therein lies the dialectic of the liner as both a technology and environment of modernity. Initially a grandiose symbol of the voyage ahead, a 'floating hotel' viewed in its luxurious totality, upon departing the wharf the ship undergoes a type of technological transformation in the diary, becoming a type of cinematic technology that links the camera in Kit's hands to the visual economy of leisure tourism.

The textual material I have discussed thus far demonstrates the importance of considering ephemera and recognising the multimedia aspects of the diary. These opening pages offer a fascinating glimpse into how numerous material and discursive factors intersect to structure the spatial and temporal experience of the cruise. The prominence of promotional material included in the opening pages bespeaks the influence of company advertising on Kit's expectations of the cruise. The most prominent effect of her construction is *anticipation* and the form that this takes shifts depending on her own relative spatial position – becoming a passenger is to move from the view from outside and *enter* the ship as an environment of modernity. It is at this point that the ship reveals itself as a particular technology of modernisation linked to the development of modern leisure culture and its other emerging technologies, most notably the portable camera. The ship is depicted as a setting of and for desire.

The following page is adorned by two cut-outs from an Anchor Line pamphlet: an itinerary that details the schedule of the eighteen-day cruise and a simple map that plots the ship's route through the Atlantic Ocean. Below is a header, double-underlined for emphasis: 'Thursday, 16th July'. For Lejeune, the only constraint on the diary is that of time: 'if writers do not date their entries, they are not keeping diaries'.[24] However, the itinerary and map above the date in Kit's diary demonstrates how the cruise diary problematises this conception. These features link the spatial to the temporal, framing the journal as a mobile

[24] Lejeune, *On Diary*, 6.

entity plotting the exotic experiences plotted on Kit's itinerary. If the necessity of the date is not simply an aesthetic constraint,[25] then the necessity of the *place* in the cruise diary is similarly existential: the cruise diary must move to exist.

The itinerary established, the entry dated, the writing begins:

> A sailing journey does not hold the same attraction to everyone, but when embarkation was possible within a few minutes of leaving home, without the trouble and expense of a train journey and typically a night in a hotel, it made the start of our holiday this year a very comfortable one. On 16th July, a taxi took us to the Anchor Line Sheds at Yorkhill Wharf where we went aboard the good S.S. 'Britannia'.

The literary phrasing of the opening line is immediately apparent. Kit introduces the thematic and emotive setting of the embarkation from Glasgow by detailing how Anchor Line made the experience of maritime leisure and foreign travel more easily available to those distant from metropolitan centres, such as travellers from Scotland. This illuminates how the maritime leisure industry was able to expand so rapidly in the interwar period by connecting consumers' local environments and also establishes the diary as working in what Louis A. Renza has called the 'memoir mode', in which the strategy of the diarist relies less on the narrating 'I'. As Andrew Hassam explains 'In the memoir mode, the autobiographer presents himself or herself in public, intersubjective terms.'[26] The opening entry of Kit's diary is defined by the repetition of collective pronouns as she presents herself as a collective subject – if the cruise does not hold the same attraction to everyone, then she belongs in that insider group that appreciates the 'sailing journey'. She subsequently writes:

> All around was a scene of great animation. Merry people were going up and down the gangway, luggage was being carried aboard, cranes were busy lifting last-minute cases of provisions, while above the din we could hear the sound of dance music played by a gramophone and relayed from large speakers on the promenade deck.

In these opening passages, and throughout the diary more broadly, events are defined by social rituals like the collective 'animation' of embarkation, Sunday mass on board the ship, the daily habits of deck games and dining conversations over set menus. Kit establishes her belonging to the 'merry people', that British social class who gladly entered into the temporal and spatial rhythms of the leisure cruise in the interwar period. She does not provide any personal information about her or her husband, and the narrative 'voice' of the diary is directed to an implied reader from the British middle classes, defined in this case by a particular pattern or form of elite leisure consumption in Scotland. As Hassam notes, all forms of narration – even the private form of the diary

[25] Ibid., 6.

[26] A. Hassam, '"As I Write": Narrative Occasions and the Quest for Self-Presence in the Travel Diary', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 21:4 (1990), 33–47, 38.

– presume an addressee.[27] So, the rhetorical tone of the diary is an important element of how Kit both reflects and produces her subjectivity as a passenger. In fact, the first dated entry of the diary avoids the personal pronoun 'I' altogether. Kit instead stresses her inclusion and belonging to the broader social class of the Scottish cruise passenger:

> by the time we stepped from the gangway on to the deck we felt that we were already far from home.
>
> Sailing punctually at noon we got a great send off. The decks were lined by passengers, and we threw paper streamers to our friends in the quay, and as the ship gently moved out the streamers broke and hundreds of coloured ends floated out in the breeze.
>
> It was an ideal day for sailing down the river and the passengers enjoyed the sumptuous lunch without any discomfort or thought of the morrow.
>
> We soon gathered way as we sailed down the Firth in delightful sunshine and as the day wore on the outline of the Irish coast became clearer. About 9.30 P.M. we slowed down at the entrance to Belfast Lough when a tender came alongside with about 40 passengers who came aboard, thus making up our full complement of 250.

This trend continues throughout the diary as a whole – Kit presents her experiences in 'intersubjective terms'[28] and constructs her 'identity' as a passenger through its discursive representation within a material assemblage of other shipboard texts like the 'autograph sheet' signed by the passengers that adorns the final page of the journal, and the on-board newsletters, ticket stubs and awards from deck games which she pastes in. Hassam has pointed out examples of this strategy in passenger diaries, whereby the 'memoir mode' works to efface the narrator through the presentation of an 'active, public self'.[29] Presenting passenger subjectivity in intersubjective terms reinforces a claim made by George M. Foster in his ethnographic study of cruise ship culture in the 1980s. Foster suggested that the observed behaviour and composition of passengers constitutes a specialised 'short-lived society' marked by unique cultural and social aesthetics and practices.[30] Although Foster's observations were made in a later historical context marked by different social and cultural forms, the presentation of subjectivity in the opening entry of Kit's diary does suggest that the sense of belonging to a ship's 'short-lived society' in the interwar period constituted a type of collective passenger identity.

The embarkation is presented in the opening diary entry as festive and carnivalesque. It is described as 'a scene of great animation': dance music

[27] Ibid., 37.
[28] Ibid., 38.
[29] Ibid., 38.
[30] G. M. Foster, 'South Seas Cruise a Case Study of a Short-Lived Society', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 13:2 (1986), 215–38, 216.

rises 'above the din', and 'merry people' and 'interested friends' throw paper streamers without any 'thought of the morrow'. She asserts the public status of the embarkation as a spectacle, a framing that strongly echoes both Anchor Line and Cunard promotional shipping material and newspaper accounts of ship launchings at the time. During the 1920s and 1930s, cruise advertising was enormously successful at overcoming the common cultural perception of ships as spaces of danger and disease.[31] A promotional pamphlet from 1932, entitled 'Anchor Line: Excursion of the Steamer', also archived at the University of Glasgow SBA, begins: 'There lay the *California* […] gaily and even grandly adorned and decorated in holiday dress, presenting a most pleasing and right royal appearance […] lending fluttering colours to heighten the joy of the occasion.'[32] The launch of a new ship and the embarkation of a cruise are by no means identical events, particularly in the disparity of scale and public coverage. However, the launch of the *California* was a large public event that also took place on the Clyde shortly before Kit's cruise and she thus draws upon the discourse of ship launches to produce an ecstatic mood. Her descriptions of the lively din and coloured streamers floating 'out in the breeze' rhetorically echoes the launch of the *California* as presented in Anchor Line promotional material.

If Kit stages the embarkation of the ocean liner as a spectacle to be witnessed, she also articulates a tension between the function of the ship as both a type of public stage and a private residence. Nicholson has identified the 'fleeting, arbitrary, and temporary nature of human contact within modern hotel settings'.[33] This contrasts with the inescapably collective experience of travelling on a cruise ship, a space closed in on itself. During the 1930s, 'Literary Offices', divisions of the liner companies, produced brochures and press releases that invested maritime travel with frisson and innuendo – 'it cast the ship as a seductive space for altogether conventional upper-class sociability'.[34] In the opening entry, the diarist faithfully reproduces cruising tropes of escape and luxury, while simultaneously acknowledging the desire for familiarity. She gushes about the *Britannia*'s 'glorious sailing' and the 'sumptuous lunch' enjoyed on the promenade deck, writing:

> As we stepped on board and found our way to our cabin we realised that we were in a new and very self-contained all-complete world. It was a floating hotel which would take us from shore to shore, visiting new lands and strange peoples, with no thought of how we were to get there and no worry of further packing and unpacking till we were to see the shores of Bonnie Scotland again.

The desire of the writer, her husband, and the 'merry people' aboard is to visit 'new lands and strange peoples', but only under material conditions that allow

31 Rieger, 'Floating Palaces', 40.

32 SBA, UGD255/1/22/2, Freight sailing cards: Glasgow to New York on TSS *Cameronia*, TSS *Caledonia*, TSS *Tuscania*, TSS *Transylvania* and TSS *California*, 1926.

33 Nicholson, 'Floating Hotels', 52.

34 Rieger, 'Floating Palaces', 41.

the passengers to enjoy the everyday comforts of their lives at home in 'Bonnie Scotland'. Crucially, Kit describes the *Britannia* as a 'floating hotel', echoing the promotional material of shipping companies who frequently cast their liners as 'floating palaces' or 'luxury hotels'.[35]

Importantly here, the formal structure of the opening written entry of the diary mirrors Kit's interest in the novelty of the ship as a 'self-contained all-complete world' – the beginning of the text and the account of embarkation follows the conventions of sequences and closure. This is to say, the diary is constructed, at least in its initial pages, as a self-contained text composed of discrete 'chapters', in which the body of the diarist 'stepping on board' is linked to the reader embarking on a textual journey within a self-contained all-complete representation.

The ways in which hierarchical class systems and spatial organisation of the ship structured the social reality of the leisure cruise are also established in the opening entry when the diarist turns to the workers on the *Britannia*:

> Nearby were half a dozen stewards, standing at attention in a row. They were black Goanese boys (from Goa, a small Portuguese possession in India, south of Bombay) dressed in dark trousers and white jackets, and they, with the dusky Lascars, who wore blue cotton shirts and tricky red turbans, gave the prosaic Glasgow wharf quite an Eastern air so that by the time we stepped from the gangway on to the deck we felt that we were already far from home.

She foregrounds the aesthetic function of the South Asian workers who are 'standing at attention' much like a military guard, wearing 'blue cotton' and 'tricky red turbans'. During the 1930s, workers on board ocean liners were frequently sourced from South Asia and paid below unionised wage levels,[36] and the diarist makes clear that these imperial maritime subjects from the colonial south served an ornamental function in addition to the value extracted from their labour by the shipping companies. Their bodies were ordered in such a way as to produce an aesthetic encounter for the passengers at embarkation, transforming the 'prosaic' Glasgow wharf into a stage marked by the racial and cultural otherness promised by the voyage, embarking for 'new lands and strange people'. P&O pamphlets of the time considered Asian crew members part of 'the picturesqueness of the steamer, with their red sashes and turbans, and the quaint adornments that they love'.[37] Kit's exoticised descriptions of the Asian crew members emphasise visual difference and speak to the persistence in Britain of social distinctions rooted in the logic of colonialism. The aesthetic link between the diarist's rhetorical depiction of the workers and the watercolour image of the Berber man in the djellaba that opens the diary is

[35] Ibid., 40.

[36] H. Finch-Boyer, 'Lascars Through the Colonial Lens: Reconsidering Visual Sources of South Asian Sailors from the Twentieth Century', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 16:2 (2014), 246–63, 248.

[37] Nicholson, 'Floating Hotels', 61.

unmistakable. Both signify and reproduce a consumer desire for otherness that was foregrounded in promotional shipping discourses of the 1930s. Kit thus demonstrates how passengers were serviced by a system of provision structured ideologically and spatially along lines of racial difference rooted in the *longue durée* of British colonialism and which reflected continuing inequalities in British society during the interwar period. What Nicholson calls the 'bounded space' of embarkation mirrors the cruise ship hierarchies in microcosm.[38]

The diarist mentions the crew again a few lines later. Interestingly, this is the final time they make an appearance in the diary: 'The heavy luggage was handled by members of the crew, Lascars, who lifted the trunks rather clumsily and disappeared with them into the various parts of the ship.' The two references to crew in the opening diary entry demonstrate how social and spatial segregation was central to the experience of the passenger, who makes clear that the cruise operates from the outset according to rigid ideological and material demarcation of labour and leisure. As Ashmore has noted: 'A central facet of travelling on an ocean liner is the particular socialities that coalesce in these places and the manner in which these are ordered.'[39] The same logic held true on the leisure cruise ship. The labourers subsequently 'disappear' into the bowels of the ship, neither to be seen nor heard from again in the diary, foreclosing any exposure to the working conditions that underlie the leisure experience of the cruise passengers. We can thus surmise that if the ship is 'a mobile space where the passenger is shaped and reshaped over the duration of the journey',[40] then the diary shows that one of the key elements by which this passenger subjectivity is structured is the social and spatial organisation of labour and leisure on board.

This brief discussion of the opening pages and first dated entry of Kit's diary has touched upon some of the key relationships that emerge in the material-discursive practice of composing a shipboard diary. In the opening entry that details her embarkation from Glasgow, promotional material, the cruise itinerary and personal photographs establish the multimedia construction of the shipboard diary, in which ephemera was collected and organised for transcription alongside the written narrative. Kit's 'voice', instead of avoiding the promotional rhetoric of ocean liner discourse, demonstrates how this rhetoric manifested in material practices shaped by the self-understanding of the passenger as participant in a type of collective subject, a short-lived society journeying from the Clyde to foreign lands; an insider group defined by a form of elite consumption and articulated in relation to the peculiar spatialities and temporalities of the leisure cruise.

Examining autobiographical documentation like cruise diaries stored in maritime archives such as the SBA thus helps us to reconsider the experiential

[38] Ibid., 61.
[39] Ashmore, 'Slowing Down Mobilities', 599.
[40] Ibid., 599.

realities of the interwar cruise and the (re)production of social class on the grand liners. In addition, the narrative of cruising also contributes to a narrating of Scotland's history – here, in relation to Glasgow's openness to the wider world and involvement in international flows of people, images and ideas as Scotland developed as a seafaring 'nation' in its own right. In their relational accounts of seafaring, and their multimedia format, these diaries are assemblages that depicted the ship as a complex heterotopia on which dramas of British modernity were played out in the interwar period. Class, race and gender are shown to play determining roles, alongside conceptions of modern technology, emerging practices of mobility, and the collision of emerging and residual forms of Britain on both international and domestic fronts. During the interwar period, ships were the technological and social means of connecting places such as Glasgow to ports across Europe and North Africa undergoing rapid, albeit uneven, processes of modernisation. A renewed engagement with autobiographical forms may lead to a stronger understanding of how individuals and communities recognised themselves as the 'participants and protagonists' of these processes which still shape the world we live in today. Kit's diary demonstrates how the cruise ship embodies the spectacular qualities of modernity, inviting the passenger to experience geographical mobility as leisure, to enjoy a marked material break with labour and the prosaic banalities of home life, and to anticipate further extension of new realms of freedom and 'scenes of great animation'. But as a document forged at the intersection of numerous, sometimes contradictory, tendencies, it also bespeaks those sublimations of modernity that Berman called 'the radiance of its own darker life within'.[41] The iconic promotional images of cruise passengers basking on promenade decks finds its counter-image in the fleeting glances at those 'Lascar' labourers whose exploitation was the condition of possibility for maritime leisure during this period of British modernity. The story of Scotland is in large part the story of its maritime industry, and this is indelibly bound to the history of British imperialism. Understanding the development of the leisure cruise thus profoundly affects our understanding of tendencies within Scottish capitalism and the classes that constitute/d its social relations of production. If, as the archaeologist Chryssanthi Papadopoulou recently suggested, the ship is a *cosmos* that 'transcends the descriptive categories of place, vehicle and artefact',[42] then the collective subject of the 'passenger' that emerges in Kit's diary constitutes a type of *constellation* that challenges us to map the many determinations that constitute its meaning.

41 Berman, *All That is Solid*, 138.

42 C. Papadopoulou, 'Ship Cosmology: An Introduction', in (ed.) C. Papadopoulou, *The Culture of Ships and Maritime Narratives* (London, 2019), 1–14, 2.