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'This strange little floating world of ours': shipboard periodicals and community-building in the 'global' nineteenth century

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Abstract

Publishing a newspaper was a popular undertaking for passengers aboard intercontinental vessels during the nineteenth century. Although in almost complete isolation for weeks or even months, many travellers saw the need to issue a regular periodical. This article sheds light on the functions that these publications had for the ships' on-board communities. On the one hand, passengers used them to inculcate a sentiment of togetherness, no matter how ephemeral their community might initially appear. On the other, the periodicals also served to separate and create boundaries between different groups of individuals aboard. Focusing on these unique historical sources allows us to study the building and dissolving of a community feeling in transit in this era of globalizing intercontinental travel. This article shows that ship newspapers were simultaneously a space for social exchange and a means of establishing social boundaries at sea in an age of increasing global shipboard travel.

Keywords community, passengers, shipboard periodicals, transit, travel

Introduction

> When we took up the editorial pen, more than two months ago, our intention was to act the part of chronicler of this small community, to record all events of interest, to develop literary talent, and to make such criticisms upon men, women and things as might probably do good, but could not possibly do harm.[1]

These editorial remarks originate from a newspaper entitled the *Sobraon Occasional*, dating from 1875. They describe the intentions of the newspaper's editor, intentions that are neither

1 State Library of New South Wales, Sydney (henceforth SLNSW), 910.45/195, Tasma [no initial], ed., *The Sobraon Occasional*, 5, Melbourne, 1875, p. 58.

very extraordinary nor uncommon in this context: he saw himself as a chronicler and hoped that criticism within the columns of his paper would not do any harm. So far, nothing seems to be striking. However, the 'small community' referred to in these lines describes not the inhabitants of a village or a small town but the passengers of an ocean-crossing vessel. The *Sobraon Occasional* is one of many examples of a newspaper written, edited, and published by passengers aboard intercontinental ships in the nineteenth century. During the passage of the clipper *Sobraon* from England to Australia – taking no fewer than ten weeks – the passengers published five issues of their shipboard periodical, diligently chronicling the passage of their small community.

This article focuses on the central issue of how a ship's newspaper was simultaneously a space for social exchange and a means of establishing social boundaries at sea in an age of increasing global shipboard travel. I demonstrate on the one hand how individuals travelling together incidentally (since most passengers did not know each other before the voyage and were primarily linked only by the fact that they were all moving in the same direction) used the publication to inculcate a sentiment of togetherness, no matter how ephemeral their community might initially appear. On the other hand, I analyse how the passengers also used the periodicals to separate and create boundaries between different groups of individuals who came into contact with each other during the passage. I question whether and how the space of ships and the duration of the voyage represent a distinct context for establishing, negotiating, and maintaining a form of social order. In doing so, I focus on the passengers aboard, meaning every individual not officially working on the ship. In the following, I use the term ships' newspapers and shipboard periodicals interchangeably; the sources themselves, however, provide a number of self-designations, such as, among many others, gazette, magazine, chronicle, or journal (and see Figure 1 for a more unusual appellation).

Studying global history simultaneously implies a profound analysis of the local surroundings and an investigation of the effects of global structures, meaning that in most cases it is revealing to 'zoom in', to focus on local dynamics in order to locate the (local) actors of and within a global history.[2] Passengers aboard intercontinental vessels were evidently actors in the globalization processes of the nineteenth century, participating in the rapid transformations in transport and communication structures that linked distant parts of the world.[3] Yet, in the moment when ships' passengers edited these newspapers on the move, they found themselves in a period of extraterritoriality: between worlds, they no longer belonged to their place of departure, nor yet to their place of arrival. In the context of this special issue, my article brings into focus the fact that shipboard periodicals were not only a space for social exchange but also a product of this very exchange during the particular phase of being in transit. The processes through which these newspapers were produced had the power to form global 'shipboard communities', while constantly adapting and reshaping such communities to permanently shifting circumstances.

Following the invention of wireless communication at the very end of the nineteenth century, newspapers published on ships regularly reported news from the shores. In fact, the

2 See Angelika Epple, 'Globale Mikrogeschichte: auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte der Relationen', in Eward Hiebl and Ernst Langthaler, eds., *Im Kleinen das Große suchen: Mikrogeschichte in Theorie und Praxis; Hans Haas zum 70. Geburtstag*, Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2012, pp. 37–47; Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacott, 'Introduction', in Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacot, eds., *Transnational lives: biographies of global modernity, 1700–present*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 1–14.

3 See, among many others, Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, Munich: Beck, 2009.

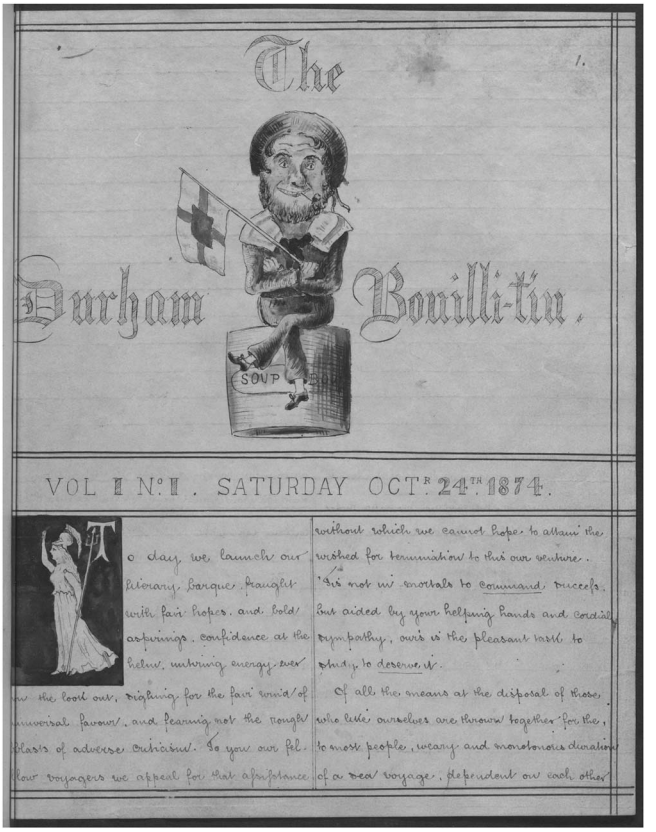
The
Durham Bouilli-tin.
SOUP
VOL I N°I. SATURDAY OCT.R 24.TH 1874.
o day we launch our literary barque fraught with fair hopes and bold outpurings confidence at the helm untiring energy over the boat our sighing for the fair smile of universal favour and fearing not the rough blasts of adverse criticism. To you our fellow voyagers we appeal for that assistance without which we cannot hope to attain the wished for termination to this our venture. 'Tis not in mortals to command success. But aided by your helping hands and cordial sympathy, ours is the pleasant task to study to deserve it.
Of all the means at the disposal of those who left ourselves are thrown together for the most people wearisome and monotonous duration of a sea voyage dependent on each other

Figure 1. *Durham Bouilli-tin*, 1, 1, 1874, p. 1. Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra, MS 44.

first communication via wireless telegraphy between the shores and a moving ship was established in 1899, an event which was then immediately chronicled in the ship's own newspaper.[4] Subsequently, from the early twentieth century onwards, passengers and crew could stay informed about the outside world through the newly established communication technology while crossing the oceans.[5]

Newspapers edited on ships existed prior to the invention of wireless communication, however.[6] The practice of writing a newspaper aboard an ocean-crossing passenger vessel

4 British Library, London (henceforth BL), 013918583 [no ed.], *The Transatlantic Times, published on board the 'St. Paul' at Sea, en route for England, November 15th, 1899*. See also G. E. C. Wedlake, *S.O.S.: the story of radio communication*, Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973, pp. 25–6; W. P. Jolly, *Marconi*, New York: Stein and Day, 1972, p. 85. For changes brought about through the introduction of wireless communication aboard, see also Roland Wenzlhuemer, 'The ship, the media, and the world: conceptualizing connections in global history', pp. 163–86 in this issue.

5 For ships' newspapers published after the introduction of wireless communication, see Dieter Möhn, 'Schiffszeitungen: Entdeckung eines Mediums', in Dieter Möhn, Dieter Ross and Marita Tjarks-Sobhani, eds., *Mediensprache und Medienlinguistik: Festschrift für Jörg Hennig*, Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2001, pp. 263–82; Noah Arceneaux, 'The ecology of wireless newspapers publishing on islands and ships, 1899–1913', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 91, 2, 2014, pp. 562–77.

6 See Roland Wenzlhuemer and Michael Offermann, 'Ship newspapers and passenger life aboard transoceanic steamships in the late nineteenth century', *Transcultural Studies*, 8, 1, 2012, pp. 77–121; Fariha Shaikh,

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appears to have begun in the 1820s, and by the 1860s had turned into such a popular undertaking that it had 'become quite an institution' such that 'Scarce a vessel arrives … that has not kept a record of this kind'.[7] I have identified over 200 different titles, often in several issues, published on different voyages nearly every year from 1850 to 1900. These represent only the ships' newspapers that are preserved today, so editing a shipboard periodical was clearly a widespread phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century. I begin in 1850 because this is when newspapers survive in good numbers, and end in 1900 because after this the spread of wireless communication to ships changed the nature of shipboard newspapers significantly.

As the publications in focus here were compiled without any news from the outside world, they mainly report about the little world aboard the ship itself. Apart from occasional calls in ports or coincidental meetings with other ships on the open sea, these vessels were completely isolated spaces. Therefore, shipboard newspapers did not have much of the content that characterized contemporary daily or weekly newspapers on land. Rather, they reported everyday life aboard, including concerts, auctions, debates, divine services, and schooling sessions, and made general announcements about births, accidents, marriages, and public notices. Additionally, ships' newspapers chronicled the voyage itself: they regularly stated the ship's progress and mentioned the regions through which it was currently passing. While most of the newspapers were edited on voyages between Great Britain and Australasia, there also exist some examples published on the passage to India, to a much lesser extent towards the Americas, and finally on routes between the American east and west coasts, circumnavigating Cape Horn: editing a newspaper was in many ways a global shipboard phenomenon.

One central purpose of such a publication was to idle away the long and monotonous hours that the passengers had to spend aboard without many tasks to fulfil. Jeffrey Auerbach's notion of 'imperial boredom' is very persuasive when picturing a mostly uneventful ship passage over the course of several weeks.[8] Ships' newspapers were therefore seen as 'amusement to beguile away the many weary hours on board our ship' and the editors regularly stated that it was their 'earnest desire to make the tedium of an ocean voyage less irksome'.[9] This function of shipboard publications was also mirrored in their style: they were typically written in a rather light-hearted tone and peppered with puns, conundrums, comical passages, and entertaining articles.[10] Despite this light style, ships' newspapers were important for the passengers: 'Although they

'*The Alfred* and *The Open Sea*: periodical culture and nineteenth-century settler emigration at sea', *English Studies in Africa* 57, 1, 2014, pp. 21–32, both of which analyse two shipboard publications. Eight handwritten newspapers on Arctic excursions, on British naval ships, and aboard ships en route to the Californian goldfields are described in Roy Alden Atwood, 'Shipboard news: nineteenth century handwritten periodicals at sea', *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (80th, Chicago, Illinois, 1997)*, ERIC, 1998, pp. 4–31. For an analyse of poems published in shipboard newspapers, see Jason R. Rudy, 'Floating worlds: émigré poetry and British culture', *English Literary History*, 81, 1, 2014, pp. 325–50.

7 National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (henceforth NMM), THP 3, [no ed.], *The Challenger Gazette*, 1828; SLNSW, 910.45/66, John Ferguson, ed., *The Lady Jocelyn Weekly Mail: a journal of a voyage from Melbourne to London*, London, 1869, unpaginated; SLNSW, Q656.509/V, F. E. Baily, ed., *The Vanguard Times: a weekly journal of amusement and instruction*, 1, Brisbane, 1867, p. 1.

8 Jeffrey Auerbach, 'Imperial boredom', *Common Knowledge*, 11, 2, 2005, pp. 283–305.

9 NMM, PBA0222, Digby T. Brett, ed., *The Maori Times: a paper containing the principal incidents which occurred on board the ship Maori*, 1, 1, Auckland, 1868, p. 1; SLNSW, RAV/FM4/853, [no ed.], *The Garonne Journal*, 1, 1879, p. 2.

10 See Wenzlhuemer and Offermann, 'Ship newspapers', pp. 104–5.

tended to be more entertaining than serious … their very existence suggests something about the importance of texts to the maintenance of shipboard society.'[11]

In contrast to ships' newspapers published after the invention of wireless communication, which were produced by the ship's printer or the wireless agent, periodicals written aboard ships in the nineteenth century were typically an initiative carried out by the passengers.[12] Despite the rather provisional circumstances of the production on board, it is obvious that the editors tried to copy regular land-based newspapers in many qualities. Accordingly, the newspapers all featured, for example, a typical newspaper heading, a regular date (or sometimes even a specific hour) of appearance, and continuous categories such as an editorial, weather reports, or specific headings recurring in every issue.

Most of the articles were composed by the passengers themselves; exceptions were the publication of the log (established with data provided by the crew), words of greeting from the captain, and reports about the general health on board, which were provided by a medical officer. The contributions were very diverse and could touch upon anything of interest to the travellers, including any happenings aboard, past travelling experiences, and general essays on a variety of topics, but also literary contributions such as short stories and poems. Because passengers were the primary readers as well as authors, there was important overlap between the creators and consumers of shipboard periodicals.

Between the worlds: passages through the oceans

During the passage, the travellers find themselves in what Arnold van Gennep, in his groundbreaking work *Rites of passage*, calls a phase of liminality, which describes a phase of transit or transition.[13] On the most basic level, the passengers performed a spatial passage, moving from one continent to another. But indisputably this transition was not restricted to a sheer geographical or physical experience. As Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston have argued, 'Travel is, of course, much more than just movement across space, it inevitably involves self-fashioning exercises that deconstruct and reconstruct the traveller in his new environments.'[14] Accordingly, the passengers traded their own, well-known living environment for a new and sometimes completely unknown one aboard the ship (and later also at the final destination).

The practice of editing publications aboard a moving ship during this phase can be perceived as a rite of passage: the phase of liminality affected every aspect of the passengers' lives and was perceived as so important that they chronicled it in their newspapers. The importance of the time spent aboard can be demonstrated by the fact that passengers meticulously chronicled it along the way. Through this chronicling, they not only dealt with their current living environment, but also negotiated their role in a 'shrinking' world, which formed their immediate surroundings. As all the

11 Bill Bell, 'Bound for Australia: shipboard reading in the nineteenth century', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *Journeys through the market: travel, travellers and the book trade*, New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1999, p. 137.

12 Many individuals aboard also kept personal diaries or commonplace books as well as the newspapers penned during the passage: see e.g. Tamson Pietsch, 'Bodies at sea: travelling to Australia in the age of sail', pp. 209–28 in this issue; Hester Blum, *The view from the masthead: maritime imagination and antebellum American sea narratives*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

13 Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, Paris: Nourry, 1909.

14 Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston, eds., *In transit: travel, text, empire: travel writing across the disciplines*, New York: Lang, 2002, p. 16.

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articles in this special issue demonstrate, the ship passage always had a formative character for the individuals. This means that the passenger who embarked, for example, in Liverpool was not the same, unchanged person disembarking months later in Melbourne.

This experience, however, was not an egalitarian one. Although most of the passengers on intercontinental passages were travelling in third class or steerage, the majority of the individuals involved in the making of an on-board newspaper were travelling first or second class, as so-called saloon or cabin passengers. Among them would have been colonial civil servants, commercial travellers, diplomats, and even recreational travellers or tourists on some routes.[15] Accordingly, these passengers were generally drawn from higher and relatively homogenous social strata of land-based society.

Shipboard publications might therefore appear to be a phenomenon relevant only to those interested in the so-called 'social elites'. But, even though many newspapers edited on intercontinental vessels were indeed the product of a bored group of saloon passengers, these were not the only type of periodicals written aboard ships. Publications which were the result of collaboration between different travelling classes also exist: 'Allow me to suggest through the medium of your paper that a committee, consisting of one of the passengers from the saloon, two from the second-class, and three from the intermediate and steerage, be appointed to get up amusements *for the benefit of all classes on board*.'[16] Finally, some of the periodicals were even exclusively produced for and by the third-class passengers travelling in steerage, many of whom were emigrants on their voyage between Great Britain and Australia.[17] Even if most periodicals were produced by better-off travellers, the fact that some were produced by passengers in steerage indicates the wide diversity of periodicals edited during intercontinental passages.

The realities and necessities of global nineteenth-century empires (in our particular case the British empire) provided perfect conditions for such an amateur press culture 'on the move'. Spread around the globe, the British empire made constant and frequent travel necessary for merchants, officials, their families – there was even a ship's newspaper written by and for children[18] – and numerous other individuals. For these reasons, the vast majority of extant shipboard newspapers come from ships traversing the British empire.

Shipboard periodicals attributed a crucial role to newspapers in society, regardless of whether they were at land or at sea. Statements such as 'One of the first necessities to a civilized existence is a newspaper' or 'The impossibility of any English community existing very long without a newspaper' are very common.[19] The production process of these newspapers often began very soon after the ship left port. Within the first weeks, and sometimes even within the first days of a voyage, passengers would form one or several committees responsible for

15 Geoffrey Nash, *From empire to Orient: travellers to the Middle East, 1830–1926*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2005; Emma Robinson-Tomsett, *Women, travel and identity: journeys by rail and sea, 1870–1940*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013; Marjorie Morgan, *National identities and travel in Victorian Britain*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

16 SLNSW, DSM/042/P179, H. D. Vincent and W. Townsend, eds., *The Netherby Gazette: a journal published on board the ship Netherby*, Melbourne, 1866, p. 12, emphasis added.

17 SLNSW, A 1681, J. R. Grumm und W. Welch, eds., *The Zealandia Free Press: a mid ocean miscellany*, 1884.

18 SLNSW, MLMSS 2716, Mabel Maffey et al., eds., *The Parramatta Journal*, 1882. For families 'commuting' between India and Great Britain, see Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire families: Britons and late imperial India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

19 SLNSW, RAV/FM4/853, [no ed.], *The Ligurian*, 1, Cambridge, 1882, p. 1; SLNSW, DSM/Q910.42/C, [no. ed.], *The Carthaginian: a ship newspaper*, 1, Melbourne, 1885, p. 1. The latter quote is also an example to gloss the fact that not all newspapers refer to a British context but use the denomination 'English'.

the on-board entertainment. Sometimes this would happen on the explicit recommendation of the captain: 'as, for the times, we are a little world in ourselves, a committee of gentlemen has been formed, at the suggestion of Captain Macdonald, to conduct the above weekly budget'.[20] To do so, the passengers typically called a general meeting, during which the committee would be elected by ballot.[21] Although this was the most common procedure, there are also cases in which a ship's newspaper was founded *before* the actual entertainment committee. In these cases, the periodical was then used to spread the idea of forming an entertainment committee or to announce the formation of such a group: 'We are pleased to notice that during the week a Committee of Amusements has been formed to carry out and arrange the various concerts and entertainments, which we all look forward to with great pleasure.'[22] In these cases, the editorial board of the ship's newspaper was apparently not a genuine part of the committee but an independently working organ. In either case, however, the agency of the passengers was evidently immense, as they were in charge of the complete organizational process.

Editing and publishing the periodical aboard was a collective experience, which is revealed most clearly when investigating the production of the material artefact of the newspaper. The collecting of articles was typically organized through an editor's box, so that passengers who were not regular members of the editing committee could also contribute texts or illustrations: 'We would remind the ladies and gentlemen, that bags are suspended in the saloon, opposite the side board, and in the main hatchway, to receive communications for the journal.'[23] Figure 2 shows exactly this moment in the process of a newspaper's production: we see a person holding a rolled-up paper, approaching a box labelled 'Editor's box D. of P.' (*Duke of Portland* was the name of the ship) while being eagerly watched by some 'peepers'. This drawing from the *Portland Gazette*, dating from 1851, illustrates how contributions to the ship's newspaper through the editor's box were apparently rarely unnoticed by fellow travellers and how the submission of an article represented an important moment in the newspaper's constitution.

The financing of ship newspapers, however, was never an actual issue, as their production cost next to nothing: all that was needed was pen and paper, and the editors sometimes asked for donations for the latter: 'Paper! Paper! For the Great Britain Times! … He [the Editor] will, therefore, feel thankful if his numerous friends will either dispose to him, letter of foolscap paper, at a low rate, or present him with the same Free Gratis For Nothing, as it suits their convenience. The gift, however, will be preferred.'[24] In most cases the ship's newspaper was available free of charge, although some periodicals were sold for a small amount of money. For instance, the *Garonne Journal*, dating from 1879 and printed on board, was sold for one penny; the *Challenger Gazette*, published in 1828, was sold for 6d., despite being handwritten.[25] Although the vast majority of newspapers written aboard were handwritten, there were exceptions to that rule: on some ships which carried a printing press, the ship's newspaper could be printed.

20 SLNSW, MJ3Q17, [no ed.], *The Pioneer: a weekly newspaper published on board the S.S. Queen of the Thames*, Melbourne, 1871, p. 1.
21 SLNSW, 910.42/S, [no ed.], *The Sutlej Times*, 1, Melbourne, 1887, p. 2.
22 National Library of Australia (henceforth NLA), 2095396, W. G. Roberts and E. Quayle, eds., *The Cuzco Chronicle*, Portsmouth, 1882.
23 SLNSW, Q910.42/W, Henry Davy, ed., *The White Star Journal*, 6, 1855, p. 15.
24 BL, YD.2011.b.1007, George Ritchie and Henry Davies, eds., *The Great Britain Times*, 3, 1865, unpaginated, emphasis in original. See also NMM, PBA0222, Brett, *Maori Times*, 3, p. 9.
25 SLNSW, RAV/FM4/853, [no ed.], *The Garonne Journal*, 1879; NMM, THP 3, [no ed.], *The Challenger Gazette*, 1828.

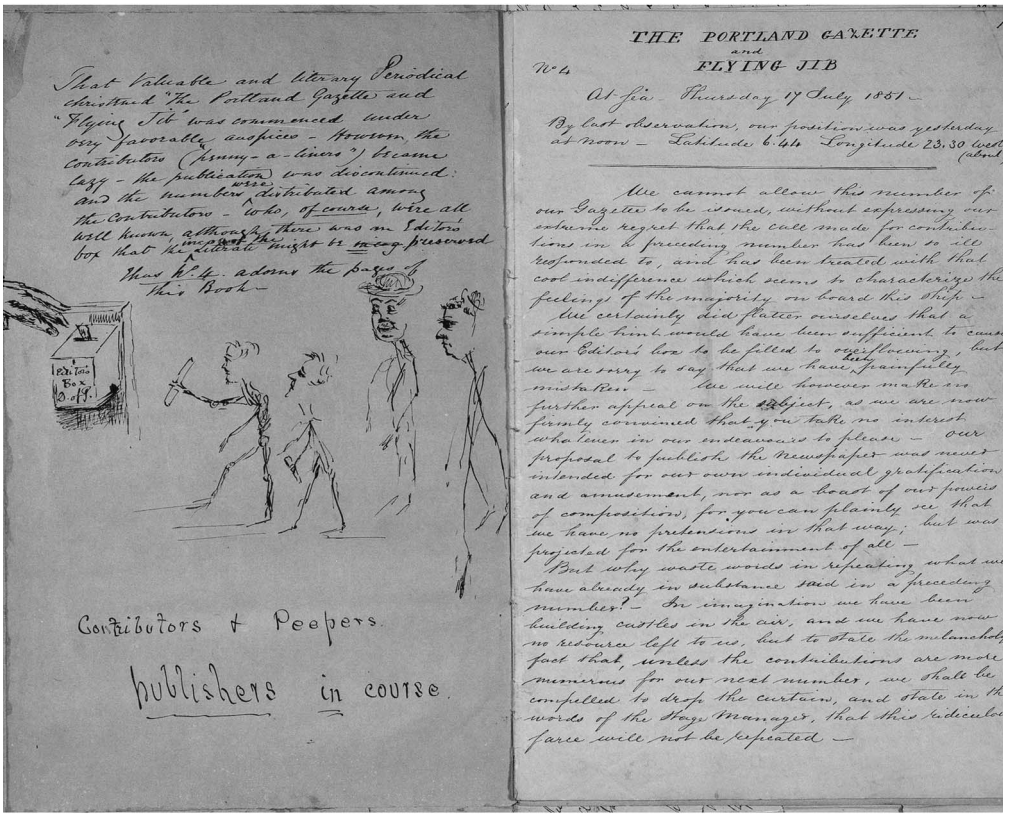

Figure 2. 'Contributors and peepers: publishers in course', in *The Portland Gazette and Flying Jib*, 3, 1851. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, E-455-f-035/036-2, Pearse, John 1808–82: Album 1851–56.

After the compilation of the latest issue, the newspaper would be circulated among the passengers, sometimes with the remark that they were not allowed to scribble comments on the actual newspaper and that all comments could be sent to the editor's box.[26] If the newspaper was not circulated from passenger to passenger, it could be laid out in a public space: 'The *Parramatta Times* is to be placed in the *Music Saloon*, and is *not to be removed* thence except by permission of the editors.'[27] Finally, the periodical could also be published by being read out loud, turning the appearance of the newspaper into an actual on-board event and public performance: 'The borrower is not to have it [the newspaper] unless on the understanding that he or one of his party will read it aloud for the benefit of those in his neighbourhood.'[28] Bill Bell even argued that reading aloud was one of the most popular shipboard entertainments in the nineteenth century.[29] This form of on-board publication is also described in Jules Verne's

26 NLA, MS 4221, [no ed.], *Monsoon Mail and Black-Ball Bulletin*, 1858, cover page.
27 SLNSW, MAV/FM4/10750, Peter Murray Braidwood and Alfred John Cape, eds., *Parramatta Times: issued on board the S.S. Parramatta during her voyage from Sydney to London, April 2nd to May 25th 1886*, Liverpool, 1886, p. 8, emphasis in original.
28 NLA, NK726, [no ed.], *British Empire Gazette*, 1, Christchurch, 1864, p. 1.
29 Bell, 'Bound for Australia', p. 136.

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A floating city, which first appeared in 1871. Although it is a literary work, his description of the scene gives a good impression of the publication process via the reading out loud of the newspaper:

> The concert opened with the 'Ocean Times'. The 'Ocean Times' was a daily newspaper, political, commercial, and literary, which certain passengers had started for requirements on board. Americans and English took to this sort of pastime; they wrote out their sheet during the day; and, let me say, that if the editors were not particular, as to the quality of their articles, their readers were not more so. They were content with little, even with 'not enough'. … The Honorable Mac Alpine, a dogmatical American, read, with earnest gravity, some rather dull lucubrations, which were received by his audience with great applause.[30]

This short paragraph vividly describes how the publication of a newspaper on board the ship turned out to be an actual event. The appearance of the newspaper would, on the one hand, structure the daily life aboard and, on the other hand, bring the cultural practice of reading a newspaper, which many passengers knew from their former everyday lives, to the yet unknown surrounding of the ship. Accordingly, the idea of a 'cultural continuity' constructed through the practice of editing a newspaper aboard is certainly useful.[31]

Borders and (imagined) communities

Looking for any sort of community means having to deal with different kinds of borders: imagined or constructed borders, but simultaneously also very tangible, material borders. This applies most prominently to the manifest limits of the ship: the ship as the main frame of consideration came into contact with other spheres only in an extremely selective way, when signalling with other ships during the voyage or when actually calling at foreign ports. In the specific situation of calling at a port, new borders with anything outside the ship needed to be negotiated. But within the quite substantial borders constituted by the material limits of the ship, other borders, such as spatial ones between different travelling classes, were formed through processes of negotiation. These processes of negotiation took place, among other ways, within the medium of the newspaper.

At first sight, the definition of a specific shipboard 'community' does not appear to be a particularly complex one: in its broadest and most basic meaning, such a community would simply include everyone present aboard the ship in question. This approach is too simplistic, however. The shipboard community was a multi-layered one: it could include or exclude different groups of individuals on different occasions and under different circumstances; only rarely did it include every person aboard the ship. This is also why it might be more useful,

30 Jules Verne, *A floating city*, London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searl, & Rivington, 1876, p. 92.

31 Erika Behrisch Elce, '"One of the bright objects that solace us in these regions": labour, leisure, and the Arctic shipboard periodical, 1820–1852', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 46, 3, 2013, pp. 343–67 (quote from p. 360). Indeed, newspapers on Arctic expeditions are an extremely well-researched phenomenon: see Eve Coppinger, 'Publishing on ice: personal experiences and incarnations of print culture aboard the HMS *Hecla*', *Constellations*, 2, 2, 2011, pp. 118–24; Elizabeth Leane, 'The *Adelie Blizzard*: the Australasian Antarctic Expedition's neglected newspaper', *Polar Record*, 41, 1, 2005, pp. 11–20; David H. Stam and Deirdre C. Stam, 'The function of periodicals in nineteenth-century polar naval expeditions', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 41, 4, 2008, pp. 301–22; Elaine Hoag, 'Caxtons of the north: mid-nineteenth-century Arctic shipboard printing', *Book History*, 4, 1, 2001, pp. 81–114.

despite thinking of nineteenth-century steamships as quintessentially 'global' objects, to speak of several shipboard communities, which coexisted at the same time, rather than one single shipboard community.

The group of passengers itself consisted of diverse social classes, travelling in different compartments or parts of the ship. As much research has shown, social hierarchies were not easily penetrable in nineteenth-century British society.[32] However, class boundaries among passengers, which were also clearly manifest, could sometimes lose their prominence and become replaced by distinctions based on other criteria – and by the raising of new on-board borders. The possible groupings of individual on-board actors and the distinctive marks between them are manifold. For instance, one can think of the distinction between the crew, for whom the ship was a working space, and the passengers, who used the ship as a means of transportation. Other distinctions could be drawn: for example, according to religion, when representatives of different religions organized services aboard the ship addressed to just some of the passengers; and to the same degree according to age.[33] Such distinctions can obviously also have been drawn according to gender, which becomes most evident when we think of those parts of the ship that were reserved for one gender exclusively.[34]

On-board newspapers played a role in both maintaining and blurring borders between groups. Andrew Hassam argues in his study on the social space aboard emigrant ships that the 'ordering principle on board ship [was] that of exclusion', while acknowledging that 'the ship was actively promoted as a community – as a unitary social space'.[35] Although these statements might appear contradictory at first glance, in reality they are not: different individuals and groups of individuals would constantly exclude other parts of the shipboard community, while we simultaneously find a visible promotion of a communal sense in the sources. This tension was even sometimes explicitly addressed in the newspapers' columns. The paper produced on a voyage from Melbourne to Liverpool in 1865, for instance, included the observation that 'Some four or five hundred souls … all here cooped up within the narrow limits of one vessel, and yet in many cases we know as much of each other as an Esquimaux does of a New Zealander.'[36] This illustrates how being confined to a limited space did not automatically lead to a sense of commonality between the passengers, let alone between the passengers and crew.

Connecting the community

It is important to acknowledge the different functions that a ship's newspaper may have had in contrast to a 'usual' newspaper ashore. Regarding the specific characteristic of community-building, ship's newspapers resemble, and can therefore be compared with, student newspapers, trench newspapers, or family newspapers, for instance, in their content, style, and promotion

32 There is an abundance of studies focusing on the social history of Victorian society: see, for instance, John F. C. Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain, 1875–1901*, London: Routledge, 1991; Daniel Gorman, *Imperial citizenship: empire and the question of belonging*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.

33 NLA, 2166147, J. H. Hosking, ed., *The Himalaya Observer*, 2, London, 1896, p. 22.

34 BL, 002826629, J. H. W. [no name beyond the initials], *The James Baines Times, published on board Her Majesty's mail ship 'James Baines', during the passage from Melbourne to Liverpool*, 5, 1, 1856, Birmingham: J. Tonks, pp. 2–4, for a detailed description of this ship, mentioning the fact that not even the captain needed to enter the ladies' cabins in order to communicate with the wheel-house, owing to the well-thought-out architecture.

35 Andrew Hassam, '"Our floating home": social space and group identity on board the emigrant ship', Working papers in Australian studies 76, Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 1992, p. 18.

36 BL, YD.2011.b.1007, Ritchie and Davies, *Great Britain Times*, 2, unpaginated.

of a 'corporate feeling'.[37] In all these specific environments – a family, a university, or a soldier's unit – the practice of publishing a newspaper for a very limited yet well-defined group of individuals was strongly linked with processes of community-building.[38]

Travelling by sea provided a wide range of new experiences for passengers. Whether they were frequent travellers or were crossing the oceans for the first time, every passage represented an individual experience shaped by a number of diverse factors. The newspaper was an important tool insofar as it gave the shipboard community a platform to share, discuss, and document collective experiences, thereby often highlighting the fact that everyone was experiencing the same passage. In doing so, newspapers gave passengers the opportunity to share mutual experiences in the present moment, whereas writing a diary or letters typically led to such sharing of experiences only with a temporal delay and spatial separation. However, travelling in the first-class saloon would still be a completely different way of experiencing the voyage from travelling in steerage. This might be one of many reasons why ship newspapers were sometimes edited more or less exclusively for one travelling class: the passage and everyday life which travellers experienced aboard was simply not the same. This practice indicates that the newspaper could also exclusively connect single groups of the shipboard community.

At the centre of the news coverage typically was the current living environment shared by the passengers. The periodicals extensively reported on everyday happenings. In doing so, they simultaneously served to announce events and make them public to the wider audience aboard, and also to review them in the next issue and judge their success or failure. Accordingly, newspapers not only functioned as an opinion-former for the shipboard community, but also created a public sphere. Bill Bell calls this situation aboard the 'mimicry of a public sphere', in which events and incidents on the ship were constantly discussed and brought back to the public through the ship's newspaper.[39]

Everyday experience aboard the vessel was also prominently linked to the physical experience of individual passengers during the voyage.[40] This was reflected in the shipboard periodicals' reporting about the recurrent problem of seasickness, an issue that rendered the voyage quite uncomfortable and that was a problem that occurred in all travelling classes.[41] The climate is another bodily aspect extensively discussed in the ships' newspapers and strongly linked to common physical experiences aboard. Thus, typical notes in ship newspapers would read: 'Prickly heat is very troublesome, especially among the children. Change of air, to a colder climate, is recommended as soon as possible.'[42] For many people, travelling through different climate zones

37 For trench newspapers and their function for the soldiers, see Robert L. Nelson, *German soldier newspapers of the First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. For family newspapers, see Christine Alexander, 'Play and apprenticeship: the culture of family magazines', in Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, eds., *The child writer from Austen to Woolf*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 31–50. One of the most famous examples is probably the family newspaper written by Virginia Woolf and her siblings in the 1890s: Virginia Woolf et al., *Hyde Park Gate News: the Stephen family newspaper*, London: Hesperus, 2005 (handwritten in 1891–2 and 1895).

38 For shipboard encounters and communities on the route between Sydney and San Francisco, see Frances Steel, 'Anglo-worlds in transit: connections and frictions across the Pacific', pp. 251–70 in this issue.

39 Bell, 'Bound for Australia', p. 137.

40 See Pietsch, 'Bodies at sea'.

41 See, for instance, NLA, 2511612, James Edward Alexander, ed., *The Albatross: record of voyage of the 'Great Britain' steam ship from Victoria to England in 1862*, 1, Stirling, 1863, p. 2; SLNSW, 910.42/P, George Arthur Musgrave, ed., *The Parramatta Sun: a serio-comic magazine, issued fortnightly, during the voyage of the ship 'Parramatta' from London to Sydney*, 1, Sydney, 1879, p. 3.

42 NLA, 2200823, [no ed.], *The Sobraon Mercury: an occasional journal published at sea during the voyage of the ship 'Sobraon' from Melbourne to London*, 3, London, 1877, p. 43. See also NLA, 2896974, Francis

was a new experience often perceived as unpleasant, but it was also an issue which could be experienced by any passenger, regardless of age, gender, or social status. By repeatedly referring to the fact that everyone was undergoing the same experiences, the shipboard periodicals emphasized collective experiences instead of highlighting differences.

The ubiquitous presence of the ship itself in the on-board publications by the passengers is also notable. This indicates the importance of the vessel as the crucial material frame of reference for all individuals aboard. Indeed, in the periodicals the ship was approached in various ways: through acrostics related to the ship's name, poems about the vessel, or alphabets in which every letter corresponded to an object or a person aboard.[43] The recurrence of these references suggests that editors were aware, despite divisions of class, race, gender, or age, that the material object of the ship, as articulated and visualized by the newspapers, constituted a common discursive ground for all passengers, without exception. Not only was the ship mentioned and referred to as the current living environment of the passengers, but it was very frequently represented and depicted as their 'home'. It was commonly called a 'floating homestead', 'our temporary home', or 'our present floating home', to name just a few formulations.[44] These frequent references help us understand how travellers perceived a passage from one end of the world to the other – namely a global connection – as 'home'.[45]

Thus, passengers sought a present and familiar frame for their experience of being in transit. In the particular case of those who were migrants, it is crucial that, during this very transit, they actually did not have any other home but the ship. So, although passengers in general were aware of the fact that this home was but a temporary one, they still referred to and depicted the ship as their home. This can also be perceived as a reflection of an attempt to create some form of stability in a situation that was largely characterized by uncertainty, lack of knowledge, metaphorical and physical movement, and fluidity. Additionally, if the ship itself was proclaimed as the current homestead in the shipboard periodicals, we might presume that it affected the relationships between fellow travellers: they did not remain the strangers that they certainly were at the beginning of the voyage, but now were fellows sharing the same home. In this way, the mutual feeling of a shipboard community was again emphasized.

Sometimes editorials and articles explicitly used and proclaimed the notion of a community aboard, and in doing so constructed it in the first place. Indeed, this could happen in a 'tongue-in-cheek' manner, as for example in the case of the *Cuzco Torpedo*, which stated that the appearance of the newspaper 'seems to have bound the first and second saloons together by giving both one great central object of admiration'.[46] In other cases, this 'binding together' of the passengers was proclaimed in a more direct way: the sense of a community aboard existed

Whitfield Robinson, ed., *The Marco Polo Chronicle: a weekly journal of events arising during a voyage from Liverpool to Australia*, 3, 1854, p. 2.

43 SLNSW, RAV/FM4/853, [no. ed.], *The James Baines Times, published on board Her Majesty's mail ship 'James Baines', during the passage from Melbourne to Liverpool*, 1, 3, Birmingham, 1856, p. 2; SLNSW, F656.505/J, [no ed.], *The John Elder Times and General Advertiser*, 2, 2, London, 1879, p. 5; SLNSW, DSM/Q910.42/C, [no. ed.], *The Carthaginian: a ship newspaper*, 3, pp. 31–2.

44 SLNSW, 910.42/O, [no ed.], *Our voyage: extracts from the Sobraon Gossip: a weekly newspaper published on board the Sobraon during the passage from Melbourne to London*, London, 1875, p. 60; NLA, 2200823, [no ed.], *The Sobraon Mercury*, 1, p. 9; NLA, 2166147, Hosking, *Himalaya Observer*, 4, p. 49.

45 For one quite special case of sea travelling and the notion of 'home', see James R. Ryan, '"Our home on the ocean": Lady Brassey and the voyages of the Sunbeam, 1874–1887', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32, 3, 2006, pp. 579–604.

46 NLA, 5299711, [no ed.], *The Cuzco Torpedo: an explosive magazine*, Sydney, 1885 (Christmas double number), p. 1.

in any case and, by implication, was nothing worth talking about. The term 'community' itself was used abundantly, and in many cases it was directly linked to the production of the ship's newspaper. One illustration for this phenomenon was an article published in the *James Baines Times*, which states: 'Our ship we view just now as a town, our passengers and crew its community, and wherever civilized communities exist in the world, the press is sure to be found varying in its powers and effects, according as their constitutional construction vary.'[47] Here, the broad notion of the community is explicitly linked with the existence of the press, meaning the on-board newspaper. The editors are not only convinced that any self-respecting community would need a newspaper, but that the publication of a periodical also represented a distinguishing characteristic, making the community (obviously already pre-existent aboard in the eyes of the editors) a 'civilized' one.

Such a binding together of the individual passengers through the shipboard publication could also happen by fostering 'a kindly feeling', as requested for example in the periodical *Sketches at Sea*: 'It will be our constant and earnest wish to foster and encourage kindly feeling throughout our little community, by interesting all on board, and by affording a medium for communicating amusement and instruction to one another.'[48] The editors were obviously of the opinion that there already was a community aboard, and therefore they do not explicitly focus on that aspect but emphasize the maintenance of that community by implementing a friendly style in the publication. In doing so, they attempted to prevent an open display of an inner conflict inside their publications. This was especially important because any form of conflict was a serious issue aboard a ship, where, owing to both the isolation and the crowded situation, nobody could remove himself or herself, or ignore the other social beings. The editors were very well aware of the rhetorical power they wielded based on their publications. By repeatedly forbidding open criticism and conflict and by applying a paradigm of harmless style and friendly tone, they were keenly interested not to use their journals as a platform for conflict between the passengers. However, this noble ambition did not always succeed, as we shall see below.

The connection between a shipboard publication and a communal feeling can finally be found in the understanding of the ship's newspaper as a communication platform, a tool to interact with and within the community. This function of shipboard publications is by no means a subtle one. We find numerous references in the sources themselves, as for example in the *Great Britain Times* dating from 1866: 'This journal has among other objects that of being a medium of communication between all ranks and classes.'[49] Evidently, a shipboard newspaper should never be seen only as a one-way street of editors and authors communicating to their fellow travellers, but rather as a platform in which information, opinions, and reactions constantly moved in both ways. This also applied to many land-based periodicals, but the specific editing process which took place in the isolated social microcosm aboard a ship, and the fact that editors, authors and readers would personally have known each other and have had many opportunities for feedback within their daily interactions, make this feature overtly manifest in the case of shipboard periodicals. The characteristic that ship newspapers were used as a means for communication is rooted in their publication practices, which

47 SLNSW, RAV/FM4/853, [no. ed.], *The James Baines Times,* 1, 3, p. 1.
48 NMM, PBH3685, William A. Smith, ed., *Sketches at sea: a periodical issued on board the ship 'Young Australia'*, 1, Brisbane, 1864, p. 1.
49 BL, YD.2011.b.1007, Ritchie und Davies, *The Great Britain Times*, 3, unpaginated.

were elaborated on at the beginning of this article. As a result of these practices the line of demarcation between the editorial team on the one hand (which also consisted of passengers) and the readers on the other became extremely blurred. In many cases, not all passengers were given the opportunity to drop contributions in the editor's box – for example, when it was located in an area of the ship prohibited to the steerage passengers. Yet this aspect accords with the definition of a shipboard community as not necessarily including every individual aboard.

It is important to highlight the role of the newspaper as a platform for on-board communication when analysing the connection between the formation of community feeling and these publications. Through these periodicals, the passengers were given the possibility to communicate and discuss conflicts concerning their everyday lived experience. Recurrent issues concerned, for example, the noise made by fellow passengers, the rules regarding the lights, the cleanliness of travel companions, and, very commonly, the spatial arrangement of the different travel classes. All these potential trouble spots openly discussed in the newspapers were directly linked to the fact of the ship being extremely densely populated. Accordingly, a passenger complained in his ship's newspaper:

> Life in the steerage begins very early in the morning, and the busy hum, often assuming the character of a thundering noise, lasts till late at night. Indeed life is never altogether dormant with us, thanks to some young Garibaldians, who evidently wish to show the influence of a southern clime on the development of their lungs. The baby cries, the mother, by way of soothing, gives it a spanking, the babe will not be silenced by such arguments, cries the louder, other babies join in the chorus; soon a competition between English and Italian lungs arises; the passengers begin to grumble, to remonstrate, to shout[.][50]

This short account gives a lively description of the soundscape that surrounded the travellers in the crowded steerage. Interestingly, the author of this article not only complains about the noise of the babies in general but specifically refers to both the Italian and the English babies aboard, as if their nationality made their noise more or less bearable. Noise, just like smells, could not always be hindered by walls and barriers between different travelling classes.[51] Accordingly, it was not only passengers travelling in the crowded steerage who complained about the ubiquitous noisy soundscape: 'Is it absolutely necessary that the bell should be rung furiously for nearly five minutes, all round the saloon and cabins, at least eight times a day? The gentleman in number 132 complains that the steward always stands, full half a minute just outside his door, and has nearly broken the drum of his ear by the noise.'[52]

Next to the noise disturbance, space was a highly contentious topic aboard a busy ship.[53] One revealing example is the case of the *Netherby Gazette*, in whose columns emerged a proper discussion about the question of who had the right to be where. A letter to the editors published in the periodical's very first number reads:

> Dear Sir, – Lately the second class passengers have not been permitted to walk on the windward side of the poop; well, if they could have the leeward side to themselves it

50 *Cuzco Torpedo*, Christmas double number, p. 6.
51 See Pietsch, 'Bodies at sea'.
52 SLNSW, 910.42/G, George Hodgson Wayte, ed., *The Great Britain Miscellany*, Melbourne, 1862, p. 25.
53 For the relation between physical and social space aboard emigration ships, see Hassam, *Our floating home*, pp. 4–8.

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> would be all right; but instead of that it is blocked up by the school and the steerage passengers, so that they cannot move about comfortably. They dare not go on the forecastle, for if they did, they would be tied up and have to pay five shillings to be let off. They cannot go on the main-deck, as that is occupied by the steerage, so now I appeal to the public, to say where they are to go.[54]

Here, many different aspects simultaneously come into play. First of all, this letter is a complaint from a second-class passenger who sees the need to find his place inside the shipboard community. While he does not want to mingle with the steerage passengers, he is also not allowed to be on the forecastle, a space reserved for passengers travelling first class. Most important, however, is the fact that the author explicitly wants to render this issue a public affair, also asking the 'public' to offer a solution. It is crucial not to underestimate this 'public', as established through the publication of an on-board newspaper, to which passengers communicated and in which they interacted. Moreover, this letter to the editors represents one manifest way in which passengers negotiated borders, in this case spatial ones. The clear expression of the discontent about how the current (spatial) borders divided the community represents an obvious process of negotiation. In the very next issue 'a voice from the steerage' reacted to the letter published before:

> We husbands in the steerage cannot see any grounds for complaint. Live and let live. … Next, we find our little friend finding fault with the space allotted to him …. But we cannot for the life of us see the reasonableness of this complaint, unless he wishes to monopolise the entire length and breadth of one side of the poop to himself.[55]

What we find here is the open outbreak of conflict within the shipboard community's different travel classes, manifested in the discussion of space. Earlier in his reaction, this member of the steerage mentioned that the author of the first letter brought this issue '*before the world* through the columns of your paper'.[56] Just as in the first letter, the author explicitly refers to the public, even in such a small, isolated world as that of a ship.

Interaction through the newspapers was a primary and crucial tool for on-board community-building processes, because only those who were given the possibility to interact and communicate could form a community other than an imagined one. However, as these examples show, the mere provision of a communication platform did not necessarily foster a closer community feeling between all the passengers, since the very opposite was also possible, especially when the medium was used to express offence and to lay out trouble spots. This illustrates that the aforementioned desire to keep conflict out of the paper appears not always to have matched reality. Perhaps most importantly, in a truly global space such as a ship, we find the borders of 'the world' being negotiated not exclusively according to national boundaries, but according to those of class and, in reference to the 'husbands' and children, gender and age.

Dividing the community

In addition to the different connections between the publication of a shipboard periodical and its influences on the binding of the community aboard, it is just as important to study how these

54 SLNSW, DSM/042/P179, Vincent and Townsend, *Netherby Gazette*, 1, pp. 7–8.
55 *Ibid*., 2, p. 13.
56 *Ibid*., emphasis added.

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processes worked in the other direction: the circumstances under which on-board newspapers were used to establish or foster borders within the shipboard community, and also between the shipboard community and everything outside of the ship's world. Bill Bell picks up this idea of how a newspaper aboard a ship can at the same time unite but also divide the community aboard, when stating: 'Shipboard newspapers … allowed for tangible expression of sociability while still creating a rhetorical distance between those involved in their production and circulation.'[57]

The fostering of borders within the shipboard community itself can be detected in many cases, most obviously when there were two newspapers published aboard the same ship during a single passage. As I have demonstrated above, the production of the ship newspaper was often closely linked to differences in class, meaning that passengers who travelled in different classes would not always be allowed to participate equally in the publishing of the newspaper. This provoked a situation in which the production of a newspaper could easily drive a wedge between different groups of the shipboard community, namely when some of the passengers or the crew were openly excluded.

One illustration of this process is the *Zealandia Free Press*, explicitly published as an 'opposition newspaper' against the already existing shipboard periodical written by the first- and second-class passengers, called the *Look-Out*.[58] The *Look-Out* was not allowed to be circulated among the steerage passengers, who likewise were prohibited from contributing. When the *Zealandia Free Press* was established, its editors explained that they first heard rumours 'that a paper was about to be started for the whole ship, without *any invidious distinction of sex or class*', but when they found out that the *Look-Out* would be circulated exclusively among the first- and second-class passengers, they decided to produce their own periodical.[59] Although the editors stated that their 'aim is to establish a genuine and friendly rivalship between the two papers', the saloon's journal *Look-Out* was no longer published after the appearance of the third issue of the *Zealandia Free Press*.[60] Consequently, on the fourth cover of the *Free Press*, we find an illustration depicting the tombstone of the *Look-Out* being tearfully bemoaned, certainly meant in an ironic manner (see Figure 3). This development is surprising, insofar as the newspaper published by the steerage passengers seems to have been more successful than the publication for and by the first- and second-class passengers. Although it is difficult to identify the actual reading habits of the first and second class (or of any person regarding this matter), it seems that they did not see the need to publish 'their' newspaper after the publication of the third issue of the *Free Press*.

The case of the *Zealandia Free Press* and its counterpart the *Look-Out* is revealing because it illustrates in a vivid way that one cannot simply assume that the publication of a ship's newspaper automatically brought the shipboard community closer together. On the contrary, the practice of publishing an on-board newspaper could have very divisive effects. Interestingly, the publication of two newspapers aboard the same ship during one single passage was by no means a rare phenomenon: there are nearly a dozen more ship newspapers which were explicitly published as a counterpart to an already existing newspaper aboard the ship.[61]

57 Bell, 'Bound for Australia', p. 137.
58 SLNSW, A 1681, Grumm and Welch, *Zealandia Free Press*, preface.
59 *Ibid.*, 1, unpaginated, emphasis added.
60 *Ibid.*, 2, unpaginated.
61 See, for instance, *The Man at the Wheel* and the *Vanguard Times*, both published during a passage from London to Brisbane in 1866 aboard the ship *Vanguard*: SLNSW, Q656.509/M, S. Pole, ed., *The Man at the*

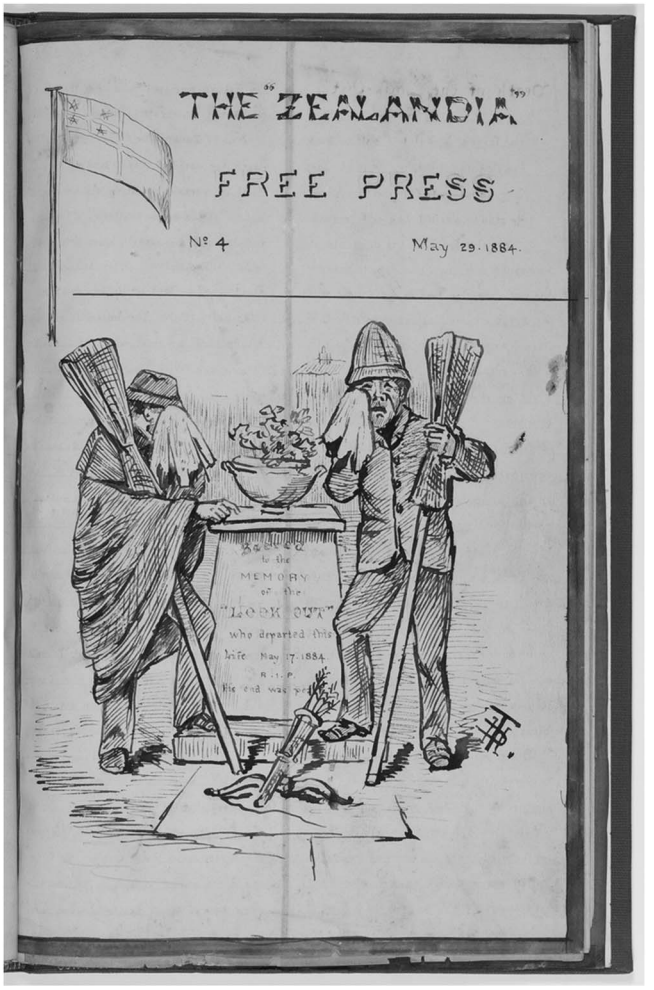

Figure 3. *Zealandia Free Press*, no. 4, 1884, cover page. Source: State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, A1681.

For instance, the newspapers *Young Australia Times* and *Etches and Sketches* were both published aboard the ship *Young Australia* on a passage from London to Brisbane in 1864.[62] While the *Young Australia Times* was mostly penned by passengers of the first travelling class, the *Etches and Sketches* was 'a periodical produced by the 2nd cabin passengers … chiefly'.[63]

Wheel, Brisbane, 1867; SLNSW, Q656.509/V, [no ed.], *The Vanguard Times*, Brisbane, 1867. Or the *Argonaut Times* and the *Argonaut Critic*, both published aboard the *Argonaut* on a voyage from London to Adelaide in 1878: SLNSW, DSM/Q910.42/A, [no ed.], *The Argonaut Times* [n.p., n.d.], although there is no existing copy of the *Argonaut Critic*, so that we only know about its existence through the recurring mentions in the *Argonaut Times*.

62 NLA, SRq 387.54205 Y68, George Grimley, ed., *The Young Australia Times*, Brisbane, 1864; NMM, PBH3685, William A. Smith, ed., *Sketches at Sea: a periodical issued on board the ship 'Young Australia'*, Brisbane, 1864 (issued as *Etches and Sketches* on board the *Young Australia* but as *Sketches at Sea* when printed because the printed version did not include illustrations).

63 NLA, SRq 387.54205 Y68, Grimley, *Young Australia Times*, 9, p. 21.

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Although emerging out of different travelling classes and appearing concurrently, the newspapers on this particular ship were still meant to 'appear … for the amusement *of all aboard*'.[64] Both periodicals repeatedly refer to each other, sometimes simply to announce the rival publication, but sometimes also to mock the opponent, for example when hinting at the lack of contributors in the other paper.[65] This criticism is particularly intriguing knowing that the editor who made that (joking) accusation admitted in his personal diary about his own publication that 'with the exception of one or two small articles … I have all the writing for it [*Etches and Sketches*] to do myself; though I try to make it look as if we had a large staff, by writing under different nom de plumes'.[66]

Finally, a last case of opposing newspapers worth discussing is the *Sierra Cordova Magpie*, which depicts the lively competition between two competing newspapers with colourful illustrations.[67] This handwritten paper dates from 1901–02, and was published on the way from England to Rangoon aboard the *Sierra Cordova*. On the cover of the August edition, we find an interesting representation of both periodicals published aboard: the *Sierra Cordova Magpie* and its opponent, *The Lyre*, are depicted as two cranky babies, shaking their fists at each other. The illustration is accompanied by the caption 'The Cordovian Twins'. It is a rather jolly representation, hinting at the quarrelling aboard between the two shipboard periodicals in a tongue-in-cheek manner and comparing it to a little competition between toddlers craving for the attention of a limited audience. In the October issue of the very same periodical, however, we find a more direct illustration about the very same topic. This drawing depicts a visit by the editor of *The Lyre* in the editorial rooms of the *Magpie*, resulting in a punch-up including smashing chairs on each other's backs. Apparently, the competition between the two papers aboard the *Sierra Cordova* had become more than a simple quarrel. These drawings illustrate the situation of two coexisting newspapers aboard a single ship. Although there might be an ironic touch to it, these examples reveal the fact that the publication of a newspaper did not necessarily bring the passengers together, but could pull the community apart by constructing situations of competition and rivalry.

Shipboard newspapers also sometime heightened distinctions between the crew and the passengers. Although the captain and the surgeon-superintendent would in many cases be asked to contribute greeting words or reports about the medical conditions of the passengers, the group of more or less 'common' crew members would rarely even be mentioned in the shipboard periodicals, let alone asked to contribute texts or illustrations. This especially applied to Indian seamen (the so-called lascars in particular[68]) and to non-European seamen in general: although shipboard publications generally acknowledged that lascars composed 'the most of the crew', these individuals barely found their way into the columns of the ship's newspaper.[69] Even though they were present and, if working as servants, represented a group

64 *Ibid.*, 8, p. 22, emphasis added.
65 Grimley, ed., *Young Australia Times*, 3, p. 22 (announcement); NMM, PBH3685, Williams, *Sketches at Sea*, 3, p. 9 (mockery).
66 State Library of Queensland, TR 1815, William A. Smith, Diary 1864, p. 155.
67 NMM, NWT 5, R. J. Hough, ed., *Sierra Cordova Magpie*, 1901–02.
68 For the different meanings that the term 'lascar' could carry, see Gopalan Balachandran, *Globalizing labour? Indian seafarers and world shipping, c. 1870–1945*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012, esp. pp. 28–30.
69 SLNSW, DSM/Q910.42/C, [no. ed.], *The Carthaginian*, 3, p. 32. For the late nineteenth century, Frances Steel, *Oceania under steam: sea transport and the cultures of colonialism, c.1870–1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011, pp. 105–25, speaks of 15% of the sailors aboard a British ship being lascars. See also Balachandran, *Globalizing labour*.

of people the passengers interacted with on a daily basis, they were only rarely mentioned. An article entitled 'The lascars' in the *Shannon Times and Maregraph* represents an uncommon exception.[70] Interestingly, this article does not refer to the actual lascars present aboard the ship, but only gives a general overview about where lascars originated from and what their typical tasks on a ship would be.

This is surprising, insofar as one might expect the ship's newspaper to report on these 'foreign' people aboard the vessel, if only owing to the fact that passengers were constantly complaining about the ubiquitous dullness and monotony of sea travel. However, the newspapers typically stayed focused on the passengers; if they included members of the crew, this would be the captain and officers of the higher ranks.[71] Common seamen, including lascars and other non-European sailors, were only rarely explicitly featured.

Ships' newspapers not only heightened distinctions aboard the ship itself, but could also enhance those between the community aboard and anything outside. This was most tangible when the shipboard world established contact with the outside world, which would happen during the occasional callings at ports.[72] Calling at a foreign port was an exciting event during a prolonged monotonous voyage through the seemingly endless ocean. Ships' newspapers therefore often extensively reported on such stops (in fact, even if the ship was just passing by without actually stopping, the shores still remained an important point of reference for the passengers). Typical stops on the route from England to Australia and vice versa (the passages from which most of my sources emerge) were, for example, Cape Town, Colombo, and, after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Port Said and Aden.[73]

Despite them all being port cities, it is impossible to find a common ground in how these very different places are represented in the different ships' papers. Not only did the places differ in many ways but the perceptions of the travellers were also shaped by a large number of factors. Accordingly, descriptions of contact with the locals during such stops would be influenced, for example, by whether passengers found themselves on a homeward or an outward voyage – meaning whether they were travelling towards Europe or towards the colonies.[74] Additionally, perceptions of foreign places and people changed across time. The level of knowledge and information about places and people outside Europe rose considerably during the nineteenth century, as more and more people were able to travel and reported on their experiences.[75] Lastly and most importantly, the experience of being in contact with the locals during the intercontinental passage in a port city was mainly shaped by the particular

70 NLA, 1078016, S. R. Groom, ed., *The R.M.S. Shannon Times and Maregraph: weekly journal during voyage from Sydney to Gravesend in April, May and June 1883*, 3, London, 1883, pp. 15–16.

71 See, for instance, an interview with the midshipman Gerald O'Brien about his career in NLA, 757455, Frank Madden and Gillmore Goodland, eds., *The Ormuz Optic*, 1, 2, 1895, p. 42.

72 Port cities and their role in processes of globalization have already been the topic of many historical studies. See, for instance, Markus Vink, 'From port-city to world-system: spatial constructs of Dutch Indian Ocean studies, 1500–1800', *Itinerario*, 28, 2, 2004, pp. 45–116; Dilip K. Basu, *The rise and growth of the colonial port cities in Asia*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985; Frank Broeze, ed., *Gateways of Asia: port cities of Asia in the 13th–20th centuries*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1997.

73 Valeska Huber, *Channelling mobilities: migration and globalisation in the Suez Canal region and beyond, 1869–1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

74 For a specific group of travellers – Australian women going to Great Britain – and their perception of 'locals' in port cities, see Angela Woollacott, '"All this is the empire, I told myself": Australian women's voyages "home" and the articulation of colonial whiteness', *American Historical Review*, 102, 4, 1997, pp. 1003–29.

75 See Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Distanzerfahrung: Darstellungsweisen des Fremden im 18. Jahrhundert', in Hans-Joachim König, Wolfgang Reinhard, and Reinhard Wendt, eds., *Der europäische Beobachter außereuropäischer Kulturen: Zur Problematik der Wirklichkeitswahrnehmung*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1989, pp. 9–42.

experience of different individuals. Reports about such encounters were profoundly influenced by the unique circumstances which occurred during the single stop and, just as with any human encounter, the experience of contact with people ashore was anything but consistent.

In fact, in the articles which report about visits to foreign ports, we find everything from open dislike, through interested observation, to enthusiasm. In the *Parramatta Times*, for instance, written during passage from Sydney to London, an article of nearly six pages appeared after the one-day stop in Colombo, It complains about the 'many pertinaciously suppliant beggars', that 'can be got rid of with very great difficulty' and states that 'One receives an impression of unconquerable contempt and dislike for the entire race so mingled, and this feeling is never shaken off.'[76] On the other hand, similar articles could evidently also feature interested observation, when describing a visit to 'the native quarters',[77] or sheer enthusiasm, when for example describing Cape Town as 'extremely picturesque'.[78] To discuss *how* these foreign places and people were perceived goes beyond the scope of this article, but my argument here is that the 'otherness' which passengers experienced ashore was used to point out the homogeneity of their community on board. The representation of 'the other' thus simultaneously shaped and influenced the idea of the 'self'. The practice of reassuring oneself by distinguishing everything 'other' was not a feature unique to ships' newspapers, of course, but rather a common phenomenon of inter-cultural interaction and experiences. As Edward Said has noted, 'The construction of identity … involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us".'[79] Such processes of identity construction of the self, and here also of community, in opposition to 'others', are evident in many of the ships' newspapers.

The editors used their publications to mark distinctions between the community aboard and everything associated with the world that surrounded their 'present floating home'.[80] Accordingly, the passengers assured themselves of their 'Western community' aboard, in contrast to the 'oriental' world they experienced when they went ashore – inevitably, in a very selective way. Most interestingly, the passengers even seem to have been aware of and reflective about their shaped perception, for instance when stating: 'Everything here seems upside down – *at least to our Western notions*.'[81] When applying Said's ideas to the very specific situation aboard a world-crossing vessel, we find evidence that a passenger community could see itself as a general Western, as a European, or as a more exclusive British imperial community. In the last case, national differences, even aboard British ships, could still be manifest and negotiated within the ship's newspapers. It is hard to say, however, what the most dominant frame of reference for these passenger communities was, as the sources mention all of them. Additionally, different passengers could perceive and describe their community in different ways. This should not be surprising, however, as these frames of references are not necessarily conflicting ones, but can have important overlaps. Ship newspapers

76 SLNSW, MAV/FM4/10750, Braidwood and Cape, *Parramatta Times*, pp. 25 and 126.
77 See, for example, SLNSW, MAV/FM4/10751, [no ed.], *The Oroya Times*, Melbourne, 1889.
78 SLNSW, 910.42/E, B. Ashburner and P. S. Taylor, eds., *The Elderslie Lucifer: a weekly journal of facts and fancies*, 2, 4, Oamaru 1887, unpaginated.
79 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, p. 332. Since the work's first publication, countless scholars have reacted and responded to Said's ideas.
80 NLA, 2166147, Hosking, *Himalaya Observer*, 4, p. 49.
81 SLNSW, PAM 89/1132, Gilbert Watson and Joseph Coats, eds., *The Gothic Weekly Chronicle: being contributions on board R.M.S. Gothic*, 1, Wellington, 1897, p. 13, emphasis added.

offer us an entry into the negotiations of these frames of references, into how 'the world' was experienced during global passages.

Finally, the seemingly ephemeral shipboard community had a temporal life beyond the passage itself, as becomes more evident when considering the production and circulation processes of shipboard periodicals after a vessel had reached its destination. The communities' periodicals did not lose their significance after the end of the voyage and the arrival at the final port. In fact, on most of the ships the passengers organized a professional reprint of their newspapers (in most cases originally handwritten), to be carried out by a local printer once the ship had arrived. Thus, everyone interested in keeping a souvenir of the passage had the possibility of keeping such a reprint version; apparently it would have been an overly tedious task to copy the ship's paper by hand during the passage. In this way, the shipboard periodical completely changed its function, from being an up-to-date chronicle of the voyage, a platform for communication aboard, and a mouthpiece for the shipboard community, to being a lasting narrative of the passage. In these souvenir reprints, we find slight changes in the content, as for example when illustrations and drawings were not reproduced for financial reasons, or when advertisements and mock market reports were no longer included because they were perceived to hold only 'temporary significance'.[82] Apparently these would not, at least in the eyes of the editors, interest anyone who had not been aboard personally.

This shows that the audience of these professional reprints shifted significantly, as the newspapers were no longer exclusively addressed to the people present aboard the ships but were now explicitly meant to be shown to friends and family. Since these later, reprinted newspapers were specifically designed to extend beyond the actual passage, they also constructed a narrative of a community which stayed alive beyond the experience of the passage itself. I argue that Andrew Hassam's idea of identification is also valuable for the ships in question here: 'it is likely that once the voyage was over identification with others who had sailed on the ship, whatever their class or nationality, grew'.[83] Apparently, as soon as the voyage was over, passengers would not identify with their own mess or travelling class anymore, but develop a broader notion of community and start to identify with the whole ship.[84] In retrospect, the concept of a community might even have grown stronger through the shipboard newspapers than it initially had been during the passage itself.

Conclusion

Passengers aboard intercontinental vessels were people on the move, who were, however, confined to the restricting limits of the ship for weeks or even months. Trapped in this almost overwhelming isolation they published newspapers under the most provisional conditions and with basic means. As this article has shown, such publications were closely linked to community-formation processes aboard these intercontinental vessels. Even though the passengers appear, at a first glance, to have been a quite momentary group of individuals,

82 SLNSW, DSM/910.42/H, [no ed.], *Horae Marinae: a journal issued on board the Queensland Steam Navigation Company's steam ship 'Lady Bowen' on her voyage from Glasgow to Brisbane*, Brisbane, 1864, Preface [no pagination].
83 Hassam, *Our floating home*, p. 20.
84 *Ibid.*

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randomly placed together, there were evident practices of constructing some sort of 'corporate feeling' through the periodicals during the voyage.

On the one hand, by focusing on experiences shared by all individuals aboard, by promoting the ship as a home, and finally by providing an actively used communication platform for the passengers, the production of an on-board publication contributed visibly to the emergence of a shipboard community. On the other hand, shipboard periodicals could also do the opposite, creating divisions. This could affect both the shipboard community itself (applying equally to the forming of different communities of passengers and also to the division between passengers and crew) and the relationship between the ship and the shore.

During intercontinental passages, the individuals aboard were confined to the space of the ship for a long period of time with a small group of other people. Under these very specific circumstances, land-based cultural practices such as editing a newspaper could be used as a tool to render this community of fate manageable and understandable, and to organize it in the first place. The passengers needed some sort of community or at least an idea of 'collective belonging' while crossing the ocean, as they would otherwise have lacked a stable frame of reference during the state of intermediate space. Such a community offered them some sort of stability while in transit. Ships' newspapers illuminate how passengers dealt with this situation, how they negotiated their role during this phase of being in transit, and how they saw themselves in the globalizing world they crossed. Shipboard periodicals are therefore immensely valuable: they help us to detect globalizing processes in the microcosm of an intercontinental ship.

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