A Cultural Analysis of Mobile Communities on Board Cruise Ships

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Aboard and Abroad

By

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CHAPTER 1

LEAVING PORT: AN INTRODUCTION

> "There is perhaps no form of life in which men and women of the present day frequently find themselves for a time existing, unlike their customary conventional life, as that experienced aboard the large ocean steamers".
> (Trollope 1867 / 1985: 75)

Maritime life is not restricted to the myriad species that inhabit oceans and seas, lakes and rivers. It also encompasses human beings who, although not naturally equipped to dwell among the planet's aqueous zones, have devised various ways of exploiting the resources below the water and traversing its often, recalcitrant surfaces. In living on, close to, and off the maritime parts of their planet, human beings have immeasurably extended the parameters of their terrestrial existence, though, it needs to be added, not without some considerable ecological cost, especially since the industrial revolution when the exploitation of the planet's maritime resources has accelerated to unsustainable levels. One factor that undoubtedly contributed to the development of the maritime sphere was the development of various craft enabling human beings to utilise the aqueous environment as a medium for movement and travel, trade and exploration, migration and pleasure. For although human beings have always been able to swim, they were not *natural* swimmers; hence, there were limitations on how far they could swim and at what they could accomplish while swimming, which the advent of seacraft, in all shapes and sizes, for all manner of purposes and thalassic conditions, overcame and transcended.

Even though the first essays in sea craft were relatively small and drew on natural modes of empowerment, such as wind, to drive them, their achievements were still impressive and should not be underestimated. Though modest in dimensions, by today's standards and lacking any of the navigational aids that are now taken for granted, ships were used as vehicles of trade in antiquity, not just in the Mediterranean but also in Asia, and between Asia and Europe. Equally impressive were the achievements of sailors in Micronesia, who devised strategies utilising the feel of the waves

below a canoe for navigating the Pacific (Gladwin 1970; Mack 2011, 115), thereby enabling them to travel between its sparsely distributed islands and archipelagos. By the conclusion of the eighteenth century, sailing ships had explored most parts of the world, save perhaps its Polar regions, and had enabled Europeans to colonise most of the world's continents. With the development of steam ships in the early parts of the nineteenth century, travel at sea underwent an industrial revolution paralleling that on land. The iron horses of the oceans provided the foundations for globalised trade and population movement on an unprecedented scale, not just for mercantile and migration purposes, but also for pleasure and for seeing the world, travel for its own sake in other words. The industrialisation of the maritime endeavour also saw the establishment of many of the world's major shipping lines (e.g., Cunard, P&O, Holland America Line), many of which, if in name only, continue to dominate the shipping business. They were dragooned into facilitating another important function: that of carrying human freight, often in the most appalling conditions, of transporting millions of European immigrants who yearned to realise their dreams in what they perceived to be a transatlantic utopia, the United States (Maxtone-Graham 1992, 5).

Absent, thus far from this account of the evolution of maritime transport is the social construction of the sea itself, the medium on which boats and ships travel, which has been variously represented, throughout history, as a place of nothingness, as a void, as the very antithesis of civilization, as land's veritable other (Cusack 2014, 1; Steinberg 1999, 410; Steinberg 2001, 118). Hence, contemporary attempts to subject this, hitherto, anarchic space to the rule of law, and to regulate the activities of ships and to protect vulnerable seas from further environmental and ecological degradation, pollution and piscatorial extinction. For make no mistake, notwithstanding the fierce competition from terrestrial and aerial transport, the oceans remain an important medium of transportation for ships and boats of every variety and size, be it for the purposes of pleasure and trade, food and resources.

Though the manifold forms of maritime transport have played and continue to play, a significant role in the development of modern culture and society, their role has not received the scrutiny it deserves—not at least when compared with their land-based equivalents. One probable reason for this neglect stems from the terrestrial biases inherent in the social sciences and the humanities, which have favoured land-based phenomena, and stationary ones at that, as the primary subjects of their scholarship (Anim-Addo, Hasty, and Peters 2014, 340). And, although the so-called "mobility turn" in these disciplines, which occurred in the first decade of the new millennium, has endeavoured to correct their stationary focus and to

examine the important role motion and transport plays in culture and society, not just that of people and goods, but also ideas and symbols (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007), much of the scholarship and research inspired by its various paradigms still has a terrestrial emphasis. Hence, there is a hardly a domain of movement on land (and in the air) to which the mobility lens has not been assiduously and sedulously applied. As a consequence, there now exists an extensive and impressive corpus of literature analysing the complex cultures and social practices associated with automobiles, buses, trains and planes (e.g., Bissell 2018; Budd 2011; Dennis and Urry 2009; Jain 2011). It also includes biomechanical modes of mobility, of which cycling is the preeminent example, and that most primordial mode of biological mobility, walking, which remains an integral element of accessing and reconnoitring machine-driven modes of mobility (Lorimer 2011; Spinney 2007). It also encompasses those "go-between," threshold spaces such as railway stations and airport terminals that facilitate, as well as regulate passenger ingress and egress to and from trains and planes (Adey 2004; Richards and Mackenzie 1988). And where, after demonstrating their eligibility to travel, passengers are allotted spaces in vehicles where the existential conditions are abnormal, subject to extreme compression, climate control, pressurisation, temporal dislocation, acceleration and intensified velocity. The modern passenger constitutes a distinctive form of "mobile subjectivity," whose social construction stems from the advent of the railway (Adey et al 2012, 174).

But one mode of transport that is not given its due, especially given its importance in the cultural and social history of humankind, in the new paradigm of mobility analysis, is the nautical variety, which despite being overshadowed by trains and planes along with automobiles as the principal vehicles of passenger travel in the contemporary world, still holds its place as an important mode of mobility. Most of the world's physical trade is still undertaken by ships, whose carrying capacities, since the advent of containerisation, have increased to unprecedented levels; indeed, it has been argued that containerisation helped facilitate, and continues to remain a predicate of economic globalisation (Broeze 2002; Birtchnell, Savitzky, and Urry 2015). While the cargo ships that once transported goods across the globe have not entirely vanished from the nautical scene, for they continue to supply the world's remotest islands such as those in the Pacific, they have for the most part been supplanted by container ships carrying the ubiquitous 20-foot-long boxes, which now convey goods across the world. And though most intercontinental and long-haul travel, of the type that crosses large stretches of water, such as oceans, is now undertaken by aeroplanes (the line voyages of yore have long since vanished), ferries, many with the capacity

to carry road vehicles, are still used for short-haul travel across relatively narrow stretches of water such as channels and straits. Further, ferries, as attractive alternatives to road and rail transport, are still widely used for commuting in harbour-based cities (of which there are many) and by the many tourists who visit them. While some mobility scholars have engaged with ferries and the particular conditions experienced by their passengers and crew (Vannini 2012a), that tends not to be the case with this book's principal subject, the cruise ship, that is, the contemporary one, not the one of old. It has, by and large, been ignored by scholars, that is, those utilising a mobility paradigm for their analysis. In part, this is because cruise ships are undertaken for life-style purposes, by those with the requisite time and money to do so, by those who desire to go to sea, not because they need to! Unlike the passenger ships of old, they do not go anywhere in particular, and usually return, after undertaking a few port visits, to the places from whence they came. The cruise, in other words, is the ultimate form of travel for its own sake, that undertaken primarily for its intrinsic qualities. Its attraction is that it offers its aficionados a lifestyle of unfettered indulgence, a regimen of continuous cossetting and coddling, once only the preserve of the leisure classes.

Nor are cruises new, for cruising had its provenance in the early decades of the nineteenth century, when shipping conditions for passengers, as the writers Charles Dickens and Henry Adams noted, were very spartan and parsimonious, were the very antithesis of what they are today (Coons and Varias 2003, 4). Though not completely, for one of the abiding themes of the book is the notion that there is an intergenerational continuity between the cultural practices and protocols of the past and present found on cruise ships, that they are reproduced from one generation of its ships to the next. The nature of the contemporary cruise has its roots in that of the past—both in terms of its material and social architectures. Nonetheless, there are limits on how far back this history can be traced. For example, transportation on a ship was once a form of punishment rather than pleasure, a means for conveying recalcitrant members of the population, ones held guilty of the most trivial crimes, to the far-flung reaches of the planet, to places like the United States and Australia, never to return. It was only with the coming of the innovations associated with the steam engine, in the early parts of the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution was at its peak, which not only transformed the manner of production, but also the mode of travel, leading to travel on an industrialised scale, on trains and then ships (which increased in size and speed), that travel for pleasure took on a more egalitarian face. Not at first, for such travel was still restricted to the wealthy elites. That began to change after the mass migration of populations, mainly

from Europe, seeking a better life in North America in the new ships, but who were forced to travel steerage, in conditions most held to be dire and appalling, ceased. The trade in such human cargo had been ended by the promulgation of a series of immigration acts in the United States, in the 1920s, that in effect prohibited mass migration. It meant that the shipping lines were forced to diversify their markets, to reinvent themselves as the purveyors of travel. For example, they turned the steerage accommodation, which had been occupied by immigrants into third-class cabins, thereby helping to build a market for mass tourism, particularly among teachers and students (Coons and Varias 2003, xxi). It was also the time of the so-called "booze cruises," which were undertaken by American citizens to the Caribbean to circumvent the draconian Prohibition Laws that existed in the U.S. at the time (Cartwright and Rushton 2010, 27; Garin 2005, 18). At the same time, there was a shift from coal to petroleum as a mode of propulsion which made ships less prone to the catastrophic fires to which they had been vulnerable. This, plus the installation of electricity along with radios and telephones, brought their facilities in line with those of the terrestrial world and helped increase their palatability to travellers. The new ships made travelling overseas as easy as travelling overland (Rennella and Walton 2004, 370). The changes, which also included improving the facilities of accommodation and services available to the lowest grade of passenger, worked: the shipping lines attracted the new passenger demographic they sought, which led them to building larger, faster ships—so much so, that the interwar years are now generally held to be the halcyon days of ship travel. With the cessation of hostilities in 1945, many of these same ships, which had been marshalled into service as troop carriers and hospital ships during World War II, returned to normal service, with their passenger lists "as grand as ever" (Coleman 1977, 178). The passenger market flourished with the same degree of economic success as it had during the interwar years, that is, until the advent of the subsonic jet-airliner. Its introduction in the 1960s entailed that even the most remote locations on the planet were accessible within twenty-four hours of each other, instead of four weeks plus, as was the case between those of Europe and Australia. The Boeing 707, along with its wide-bodied successor, the Boeing 747, which reduced the cost of airline travel, all but rendered the passenger ship, which was increasingly seen as a "quaint relic of a slower time" (Garin 2005, 19), extinct. Its plight was further exacerbated by the "oil crisis" of 1972, for what ships there were that continued to ply the waves were less than fuel-efficient and the costs of fuelling them rose to astronomical, meaning uneconomic levels (Maxtone-Graham 2000, 347; Woodman 1997, 264). This only served to drive the lines owning them into further levels of debt,

rendering the passenger ship an all but moribund species of mobility—though predictions of its demise proved somewhat premature.

That it did not become extinct, was the result of the interventions from several inventive entrepreneurs who revived what remained of the cruise industry and catalysed what was, in effect, a cruise renaissance. Many of the vessels that participated in the revamped industry were ramshackle and anachronistic ones, not designed with the new era of cruising in mind. Eventually, new ships were commissioned that were. They were much larger than their predecessors and contained many more facilities, a trend that has continued through into the new millennium. Size and technological facilities aside, which make their predecessors look primitive by comparison, there is, nonetheless, a historical continuity of sorts between them, especially in terms of the cruise's social organisation, particularly its spatial and temporal elements, whose grounding principles, arguably, were established during the 1920s and 1930s. On one level, the history of the cruise industry is indicative of the way a particular mode of mobility lends itself to commodification—even when it was on the verge of becoming an anachronism. On another, it demonstrates the way the corporate players involved in the cruise industry have been able to periodically reengineer and reinvent its fundamentals and principles in such a way as to recognise the new demands of the marketplace and the exigencies of competition, and to broaden the appeal of travelling at sea by taking advantage of the economies of scale, such that it has attracted a broader, more egalitarian demographic. Cruise ships are, in many respects, nothing more than container ships for human beings—ones where pleasure is produced and consumed on an industrial scale and at a fraction of the cost of its equivalent on land. For a mere outlay of $US150 per day, which includes the cost of food, accommodation, travel, and entertainment (Garin 2005, 4), it is little wonder that cruising now attracts a huge following, something like 30 million passengers per annum, and is projected to grow in the foreseeable future. It is no accident that the same economic principles, the majority drawn from the fundamentals of neo-liberalism, which include reducing labour costs and registering ships under flags of convenience, are precisely those that underpin the contemporary cruise industry's success.

While there is a considerable corpus of literature on cruise ships, some already cited, analysing the important roles they have played, and continue to play, in the tourist industry, it has been produced, predictably, by scholars working in the fields of tourist studies and tourist geography. One should not, however, downplay the value of this literature. Much of it has been critical of the cruise industry, of its impact on the tourist economies and ecologies of small island nations, which are far from being benign (Garin

2005; Pattullo 1996; Trist 1999). Cruise ships consume immense amounts of fuel, enough to power, according to one estimate, a U.S. house for one hundred and eighty years, and release a range of hazardous pollutants into, often, pristine waterways (Garin 2005, 4; Klein, A., 2002, 117–118; Mahoney and Collins 2019, 287), although the use of newer, less polluting and more efficient fuels along with improved treatment of ship waste have moderated some of the more pernicious and devastating of these impacts. That some nations have introduced legislation to curb emissions from ships has also acted as an incentive for the cruise industry to improve its 'green' credentials.

A Cruise through Contemporary Cruising

Passenger-carrying ships were saved from becoming nautical dinosaurs by two inventive entrepreneurs, one from the United States, Ted Arison and the other from Norway, Knut Kloster, who purchased two moribund ships that had been withdrawn from service to mount cruises in the Caribbean, from ports in Florida, principally Miami (Cartwright and Rushton 2010, 78; Garin 2005, 42–3). They flew in passengers from all parts of North America and offered them a style of cruising that was somewhat more egalitarian and more focused on its patrons having fun and being entertained than its predecessor varieties. Also helping to popularise and advertise the revamped cruise, was the appearance on American television, in the 1970s, of the *Love Boat* series. A nautical soap-opera, much of it was filmed on a ship belonging to Princess Cruises, one of the lines that had helped to catalyse the cruise renaissance (Dickinson and Vladimir 1997, 28). The series depicted cruises as affording endless opportunities to fall in love, either with other passengers or the ship's officers, albeit with some dramatic machinations along the way, but always with fairy-tale endings. It is of note that the appearance of the series resonated with the so-called permissive society, where sexually more libertarian values were in the ascendancy. The love-embellished-with-fun formula appeared to work, so much so, that the ships that were purchased to reflect the new era of cruising were soon brimming over with passengers hoping to realise their dream holidays. In many instances, they were hoping to meet the stars featuring in their beloved TV series, which, by this stage, was being watched by over 40 million Americans (Miller 2016, 11). However, given the age of the ships, and the fact they that were not often constructed with cruising in mind, they lacked the facilities, such as swimming pools and state-of-the-art theatres, required to fully implement the new philosophy of cruising. Hence, a new generation of cruise ships was eventually commissioned, which were much larger than

their predecessors and contained facilities that were new to the cruise experience—that shared more in common with theme parks than the five-star hotels on which the traditional cruise ship had been modelled (Douglas and Douglas 2004, 20). This is especially true of the current generation of juggernaut cruise ships, sea monsters in the real sense of the words, which, as the jumbo jets of the oceans, can accommodate upwards of six-thousand passengers and contain climbing walls, shopping malls, miniature golf-courses, and myriad other facilities.[1] Indeed, they now have so many facilities that cruise ships have become "destinations in themselves" (Douglas and Douglas 2004, 85; Ritzer 1999, 18–19). The only reason for them leaving port is the opportunity afforded to sail into international waters, where they take can advantage of the "flags of convenience" that the majority of them sail under. Thereby, they can flout local labour and environmental laws, and their concomitant economic imposts—thus allowing them to reduce the costs of cruising and make cruises more affordable and, hence, even more popular (Douglas and Douglas 2004, 35). This, plus the fact that they do not have to pay taxes to the nations where their headquarters are located, has enabled cruise corporations to become among the wealthiest on the planet, one of the star industries of the early twenty-first century (Dowling 2006). By the same token, passengers have numerous opportunities to buy duty-free goods, both on board and at the ports they visit, at a fraction of the cost they would be at home. In short, the cruise industry is a plutocrat's dream come true, a recipe for making massive amounts of money from its passengers and for them to travel cheaply in a relative state of luxury, just like the aristocrats of old. And, although there is a proposal currently on the drawing board to take the destination-in-itself notion to its logical end and build a cruise ship on terra firm, one of behemoth proportions, which would accommodate fifty thousand guests and have its own airfield (Cartwright and Rushton 2010, 90), it seems that, for the foreseeable future, the traditional cruise ship, albeit in a modernised format, will continue to ply the world's oceans.

From small beginnings then, the cruise industry has grown in scale in terms of the magnitude of its ships and sheer magnitude of the numbers travelling and working on them. It has also undergone some considerable diversification and it now exhibits a more varied diverse menu of options than ever. A well-known guide to cruising and cruise ships, published annually, estimates that there are around 350 cruise ships currently operating (Ward 2017, 9), a number which is likely to expand in the future; and that does not include the river cruise sector, which is also expanding rapidly and for which a companion guide, by the same author, exists (Ward 2016). They offer something like thirty thousand different itineraries,

travelling to over two thousand destinations in the process (Ward 2017, 37). Nor do all the cruise lines involved necessarily employ economy of scale as a design-guiding principle, for some lines operate very small ships, accommodating, at most, two hundred passengers—though the costs to cruise on them are priced accordingly, and are nothing short of extortionate by comparison, which limits their access to the very wealthy. Also, revealed by Ward's guide, is that the ships undertaking cruises not only range from the very small to the very large, and everything in between, but also encompass every imaginable type of propulsion (save nuclear) including wind power. For there are several cruise lines that have resurrected the thalassic technology of old and, in the interests of saving fuel and utilising renewable sources of energy, operate sailing ships, though they include more normal forms of propulsion should their vessels hit the doldrums. Further, there is hardly a body of water, large or small, including some of the world's most inclement and intractable, such as those encircling the polar regions, on which it is not possible to cruise. But, in order to do so, specifically equipped ships are required, ones with the capacity to break ice. To allow their passengers to make contact, with what are often remote shorelines, which have at best attenuated port facilities or, at worst, none at all, they are required to utilise zodiacs.

Another facet of the diversification is specialisation: that, as well as catering to the mass market, cruise lines have taken to catering to various minority, niche markets. It was always a little thus, for it was always possible for special interest groups to hire cruise ships, but this has increased in recent years with ships hosting special events, at sea, for such groups as country music enthusiasts, film fanatics, lovers of classical music and epicureans. The opportunities afforded to encounter concentrations of like-minded passengers, sharing a similar range of passions, are the principal drawcards of such cruises. It is almost an irrelevance as to where their ships are actually going. In the case with that other developing niche, it is the latter that is the drawcard, the more so if it is a location to which few travellers and tourists have ventured, such as the islands, south of Australia and New Zealand, in waters close to Antarctica. These are the so-called "expedition cruises." Their itineraries generally include not just places, as it were, off the beaten track, or to be precise, the maritime analogue of that cliché, but places imbued with natural and geomorphological attractions, ones that are only accessible by sea.

Missing at Sea

Through mapping the various departments of the cruise industry, the foregoing sections have demonstrated that there is an abundance of literature dealing with the industry, that most aspects of the cruise phenomenon have been researched and studied, moreover, intensively. There is, however, one notable absentee from this literature, who appears to be missing from the conspectus of themes that it has examined, and who, arguably, is the most important player in the large cast of actors associated with the theatre of cruising, and that is the passenger. True, there is now a wealth of statistical information about their broad demographics, as to who cruises, in terms of their age, race, ethnicity and social-economic background. It reveals that it tends to be mostly North Americans and Europeans who cruise, and that those who do so are, by and large, white, middle-aged and middle-class (Douglas and Douglas 2004, 4; Wood 2000, 354). As to when and where: it is mostly warmer climes, the Caribbean and Mediterranean that are the main geographical magnets of cruising, areas that are mostly impervious to the climatic discomforts of the northern latitudes (Marti 2004; Rodrigue and Notteboom 2013). Cruising is, thus, by and large a seasonal phenomenon; hence, with the onset of winter in the Northern Hemisphere many of its participating ships retreat to the Southern Hemisphere, to take market advantage of the summer season in the Antipodes.

However, there is more to being a passenger on a cruise ship (indeed, any form of transport) than being a statistic or number. Indeed, it is especially true of being on a cruise ship, for the journeys undertaken on them tend to be of longer durations than those on other modes of transport, much longer, for example, than the longest long-haul flight or longest, long train journey—save, perhaps, that on the Trans-Siberian railway, in its most luxurious translations. Indeed, whereas the trend has been, through the acceleration of their celerity, to abbreviate their journeys, to truncate the time spent travelling in the air or on the ground, that spent on the sea, on cruise ships, has gone in the opposite direction, it has been increased rather than decreased. Their celerity has been slowed. For though the ships themselves are capable of far higher speeds than they normally travel, which is around fifteen knots, cruise lines want their passengers to remain on them as long as possible, for much of the revenue from cruising is secured from their ship's on-board cafés, bars, boutiques and casinos. Given, then, the prolonged nature of cruises, the "mobile communities," to adopt a phrase that the author has employed elsewhere (Symes 2007), on cruise ships tend to be more robust and interactive, than those formed on trains and planes, where the communication between passengers, due in no small measure, to

the relative ephemerality of the journeys involved, is at best perfunctory and, at worst, non-existent. Indeed, they could be said to hardly qualify as communities at all.

Yet the mobile communities on cruise ships and the passengers from which they are constituted have been studied but infrequently, and rarely *in situ*. The few such studies that have been undertaken are either very dated and / or limited to short cruises not the long, grand ones that are the principal foci of this book (Foster 1986; Mahoney and Collins 2019; Rocha, Rocha, and Rocha, 2017; Yarnal 2003; Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005). Though there are some broad similarities between the two, for they are undertaken in many of the same ships, arguably, their considerably longer duration subjects their passengers to exigencies, mainly relating to their stamina to withstand many days at sea without demur, that are mostly absent from brief cruises. No sooner are they faced, and the cruise is complete. That is not the case on long cruises, where the exigencies are reiterated, over and over again, which, as the author discovered, can prove "testing" for some members (not for all, it needs to be stated, for some revel in the prospect of being at sea for a prolonged period) of its mobile community.

On a Personal Note

Another possible reason for the absence of "longitudinal" studies of extended cruises is that researchers and academics do not ordinarily have the requisite time to undertake them. Long gone are the days when academics (from Australia, at least) undertaking their sabbaticals would have undertaken a long voyage—funded by their university—to their elected places of "study," usually in North America or Europe, using the many days at sea as opportunities to complete books or write academic papers.[2] Now they just fly! Or they could, as the author did, in 2010, use their Long Service Leave, a statutory entitlement that all tenured Australian workers enjoy. Somewhat similar to a sabbatical, it entitles workers to two months leave after ten years of continuous, full-time service with a single employer, thereafter, accrued on a pro-rata basis of one month per five years of further service. It was a right that public service workers had enjoyed since the 1860s. In 1955, it was extended to the working population in general (Burgess, Sullivan, and Strachan 2000). One reason for doing so, was that it allowed the large number of European migrants, who relocated themselves and their families to Australia, following World War II, to return home to their countries of origin. This was before the era of mass air-travel, when the main mode of travel to Europe was still a ship, which took at least a month. Hence, a migrant with at least three months Long Service Leave, could spend one

month travelling to Europe, one month at home and another month returning to Australia: at least that was the intent.

Armed with the requisite amount of accumulated Long Service Leave, the author, accompanied by his wife, Claire, attempted something analogous; they undertook a journey that would allow the author, who had originally migrated to Australia in 1972, on a ship, the RHMS *Britanis*,[3] to return to the United Kingdom for a visit and to return by the same means. To use the words of another Australian author, he wanted to use ships as they used to be used, "… to go from one place to another" (Halligan 2010, 141). He wanted to prove that it was still possible to make a voyage from Australia and back, that is, without flying, without ever being airborne or leaving the ground! For reasons outlined earlier in the chapter, airline travel has long since usurped the role once played by the line voyages that once brought migrants and visitors to Australia or took Australians overseas. Since the late 1970s, when line voyages to Australia, not to mention many other places around the world, all but ceased, it has been almost impossible to travel in and out of Australia by ship. This is especially the case during the winter months, when they were proposing to commence their global circumnavigation, which is what their eventual trip proved to be, for the handful of repositioning cruises leaving the island-continent and that might have otherwise shipped them to the Northern Hemisphere, had long since departed. However, there was another nautical option, that of travelling north on a cargo ship or freighter, though container ship was, in effect, what it was, which crossed the Pacific throughout the year, on their way to North America and Europe. Just a few of them offered cabins for passengers who hankered after the joys of travelling at sea and / or were opposed, for various reasons, to be being shot through space at near MACH 1 speeds. These included the actual fear of flying (which is very common) and environmental objections, that jet airliners are ecological nightmares (something the aviation industry downplays), that they pollute the atmosphere with prodigious amounts of carbon dioxide and other gaseous toxins (Gössling and Peeters 2007). Travelling by container ships, which though are by no means ecological paragons,[4] also appeals to the growing fraternity of slow travellers, who, adopting an idea contained in Ivan Illich's writings, believe that twenty-five kilometres per hour, the speed of an average bicycle, is, to employ two of his central concepts, the most "convivial" speed of travel and that any speed beyond that is "manipulative" (Illich 1974). With the movement for slow travel beginning to gather apace, the supply of berths on container ships is never enough to satisfy demand. Hence, would-be passengers have to book months, sometimes years in advance to secure them. It was their voyage on such a ship, from Sydney to Philadelphia, on

the CMA CMG *Utrillo*, the first leg of their projected circumnavigation of the planet by sea, which forms the genesis of this book. It was followed by another voyage, this time, just for contrast's sake, on the RMS *Queen Mary II*, across the Atlantic, from New York to Southampton. Then there was the third and final leg, back to Australia, which was undertaken, on the MV *Athene*, a ship that was launched in 1946, before going through numerous changes of name, refits and refurbishments, prior to being assigned its current name and "outfit." As its destination was Fremantle, Western Australia, it meant that in order to satisfy the no-flying part of their circumnavigation contract, they were required to travel from Perth to Sydney, by rail, on the Indian-Pacific—but that is another story, not chronicled in this book. There was no alternative: the days of passenger ships between these two cities have long since passed—rendered obsolete by the ascendancy of rail (Lee 2010, 29). Following the relative success of their first planetary circumnavigation, another was taken in the first half of 2015—after the author had nominally retired from his academic position and was somewhat freer to choose his time of travel. Its first leg took advantage of another repositioning cruise, out of Freemantle, on the MV *Astor* which was returning via the Cape of Good Hope to its home port, Bremerhaven in Germany. After a two-month sojourn in Europe, they boarded the MV *Sea Princess* in Southampton, where it was commencing the second half of its world cruise, returning to Sydney, across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans via the Panama Canal. In various ways, the experiences obtained from all five voyages, though not always referred to directly, inform the book's narrative, especially its second, more ethnographic section, and are used to mount and form its central arguments.

Methodology Matters

One of the arguments is that the way that cruise ships are promoted and advertised in the lavish brochures and other publicity materials cruise lines produce to attract prospective customers,—namely, as utopias, as places where freedom and pleasure, hedonism and lotus-eating prevail night and day—while not entirely spurious, disguises the fact that they are also places in which control and regulation, invigilation and surveillance are all pervasive. Not that the controls and regulations are particularly overt. For cruise ships are not by any means particularly authoritarian and despotic; the controls that operate throughout their mobile communities are for the most part discrete, invisible yet omnipresent, behind the scenes ones that operate on their passengers without them knowing. Were it contrariwise, cruising would be far less thrilling, and would have much less appeal. Plus,

many of the controls are installed with passenger welfare in mind. For make no mistake, being on a ship, even more than on a train or plane, is not without hazards and dangers, for passengers have more direct contact with the medium through which they are travelling than they do when on a plane or train. And there is always the possibility of being forced to abandon ship, for which there are dress rehearsals, obligatory under International Maritime Law. Plus, there are internal hazards, stemming from the enclosed nature of mobile communities on ships, of being under one "roof" for a prolonged period of time. Of these, the principal one is the possibility of a debilitating respiratory or gastrointestinal infection spreading throughout the ship's company. Such infections, and Covid-19 was an instance, common on cruise ships, are not a good advertisement: hence, the manifold measures taken to staunch their outbreak (Carling, Bruno-Murtha, and Griffiths 2009). Nor should one downplay the human threats that such environments pose, that cruise ships, despite being portrayed as utopias, are not exactly free of unruly and dangerous behaviours that have resulted, sometimes, in murder and death (Gaouette 2010; Garin 2005).

Unearthing and unravelling the regime of control that underpins life aboard a cruise ship entailed the author going undercover, conducting what, in the context of similar research undertaken on commuter trains in Sydney, he has designated "sociological espionage" (Symes 2013). It involves assuming a dual identity: that of passenger and researcher, of being both an insider and outsider, but keeping the latter under wraps, in so much as it was possible to do so. For fear that it might refract the "naturalness" of the passengers being watched, heard, listened to, and conversed with, there was no admitting to the espionage that was underway. He also deliberately avoided undertaking any formalised modes of inquiry that would expose the passenger as a researcher. As one of the "mobile methods" frequently employed to gain a better understanding of not just being mobile but also the contexts in which the mobile subject is embedded, these methods draw on techniques of participant-observation and auto-ethnography. With the researcher at the heart of any inquiry, albeit discretely in the background, the authenticity of its subjects as they played out their various roles as passengers, crew members and so on, are thereby protected. It also entailed a deep immersion in as many facets of the cruise experience as was possible, no matter the time of day or space of when and where they happened—easy to do on a ship where there is no escaping the field of research! There is no going home, at the end of the day, on a cruise ship. Various forms of self-narrative, written on the move, in situ, are a critical element of such research. To this end, the researcher compiled copious field notes (abbreviated as FN in the text) of what he witnessed and observed and transcribed pertinent

content from the conservations he was either part of or overheard. Events were recorded as they happened, there and then, on the go, before they evaporated (Büscher and Urry 2009, 109). The ship's media landscape, which consisted of daily bulletins and newsletters along with in-house or rather in-ship television programmes and constituted the main form of communication between passengers and the ship's management, were avidly read and watched. Anything of pertinence to the conduct of passengers was noted. Holding it to be a critical feature of passenger choreography, of the ship's centre acting on the most distant members of its mobile community, he also took note of the ship's "linguistic landscape" and its various semiotic features. It plays a vital role in overseeing the movement of passengers, in them coming to know their ship, as well as their place within it.

In order to avoid the dangers inherent in self-focused and self-centred research, that of its auto-elements, thereby shifting its character closer to biography than ethnography, the author has endeavoured to contextualise his findings of being there with those "out there" in the literature on cruising and mobility in general. This exemplifies the interdisciplinary tenor of much of the book's argument, that it draws on, when and whenever appropriate, history and sociology, geography, and even literature to embed its analysis. For example, one of the other perennial themes explored in this book, related to that of one of its other themes, that of control, is that ships, even cruise ships, exhibit features in common with other "total institutions" such as prisons, schools, and hospitals (Goffman 1968). As others who have reached similar conclusions, not only are a ship's enclosed spaces, moated communities in the very real sense of the phrase, whose mobile communities are separated, albeit, in the case of ships, only for a short period of time, from mainstream society, but the spatial and temporal regimens, found therein and thereon, are subject to more intense forms of calibration and organisation. This also applies to the social fabric of "total institutions", which are marked by a profound sociological divide. On a ship, for example, there is a marked division, analogous to that between treated and their treaters in the more regular form of the total institution, between the passengers and the crew, the shipped and those doing the shipping, the "shippers" and who, by dint of their own efforts, are also being shipped (Annim-Addo, Hasty, and Peters 2014, 338). But, unlike their equivalents in other "total institutions," the crew are unable to return home after the completion of their shifts, only to their quarters below decks. In this respect, both passengers and the crew are, as it were, in the *same* boat. Further, the division between the shipped and their shippers is subject to further calibration—that of the shipped in terms of the quality of their

accommodation, which, with the advent of suites and mini-suites, is becoming ever more pronounced (Mahoney and Collins 2019, 287), that of the shippers in terms of their rank and position in the ship's company. The officers enjoy most privileges, including access to passenger areas, while members of the crew, have the least privileges, and frequently do not. Such disparity is seen as critical to the maintenance of discipline on the ship (Thomson 2002, 335). The division is also reflected, as in any "total institution", in the terms of the dependency of the former on the latter for the basic needs of quotidian life such as food. Their capacity to fend for themselves in many areas is suspended. As such, a ship is a socio-technical construct, that is, its material fabric provides a context for a particular type of community to flourish—one that passengers are keen to join. That they are, reflects another dominant theme explored in this book, that their interest in joining ships for the various cruises that they mount is in large measure promoted rhetorically, through such textual devices as brochures and various forms of travel writing. None of this is new: in the 1920s and 1930s, passengers were subject to the same rhetorical and visual allures, the same techniques of "hidden persuasion" (Packard 1962). Hence, it is important to stress the historical continuities that exist between cruises then and now, that there were just as many "love boats" plying the oceans between the wars as there are now!

There is one other pertinent methodological matter, that of the text itself. Language, more than any other socio-cultural artefact, is a vast repository of maritime expressions and idioms, many still in everyday use, many transposed to other linguistic contexts. That planes depart from air*ports* and that we *navigate* the web are but a few examples of how the language of the sea permeates vernacular expression and idioms (Klein, A., 2002, 10). The fact that it does so reflects humankind's long history of contact with the sea and ships. By way of paying homage to that history, the author is not averse to harnessing these expressions and idioms, even if it is only, by exploiting their potential for double entendre, to leaven the seriousness of the overall tone of his narrative.

A Brief Cruise Through *Aboard and Abroad*

Though contemporary cruise ships are the main focus of this book's analysis and inquiry, not all of its chapters deal with the cultures and the passengers embodying them, of such ships. The book's initial chapters for example, focus on various texts associated with cruising and ship travel in general. It is argued that such texts mediate the way cruise ships and cruising are received by their users and patrons. They variously act as linguistic go-

betweens, perform liminal functions, which assist to frame the nautical experience and influence how it is perceived—a not significant word in this context, since many of the documents involved are copiously illustrated with photographs, showing life at sea, on a contemporary ship, and what there is to see and do when not at sea, in ports and nearby places. Chapter 2 literally starts at the beginning with an onomastic analysis of the names deployed on ships, not just those displayed prominently, in large typographies, on their exteriors, on their hulls and sterns, but also in their interiors, in those that are applied to prestige cabins, restaurants, theatres, and other facilities. It is argued that they mark a radical departure from the style of names that once graced ships, and that invariably paid homage to the major places and historical figures from whence the ships hailed. Today's names, with some notable exceptions of course, are invariably devoid of any obvious geographical or historical antecedence. Instead, they tend to invoke the "atmospherics" of contemporary cruising, of the affect regimes within which passengers will be immersed on cruise ships. Hence, the majority of them invoke the feel-good atmospherics that supposedly course through the architectural veins and arteries of every modern cruise ship. Such onomastic interventions are underwritten by impression management strategies, and the resultant names are socio-textual constructs designed by marketing departments in anticipation that they will enhance a cruise line's profits, and lead to significant positional advantage being attained in the crowded markets associated with contemporary cruising.

Chapter 3 provides a more detailed examination of these socio-textual constructs as they are represented in the lavishly illustrated brochures, some of which are quite voluminous, published and issued by cruise lines to promote their vessels, to vaunt the virtues of their cruises and to marshal interest in undertaking a cruise with them rather than some other cruise line. Along with employing a similar formula of enticement, that is, that cruises provide numerous opportunities to escape from the taxing routines of ordinary life and to renew spirits jaded by being worked to death, it is argued that they tend to employ a similar genre and narrative structure—that the experience of turning and reading pages of a cruise brochure, irrespective of the line issuing it, is broadly similar. Nor is such textual promotion new, for it harks back to the very beginnings of the cruise industry, though these days the character of its forms, as it has taken advantage of media landscape afforded by social media and the internet, have diversified considerably. What significant differences there are between the brochures generally pertain to the demographics of the passengers they are seeking to attract. For example, a number of lines have begun to spotlight in their brochures the fact that their ships, as distinct from their competitors, in due

acknowledgement that some passengers regard their presence as liabilities, are child- and casino-free ones.

Chapter 4 marks a departure from these analyses of what are, for all intents and purposes, cruise propaganda texts, and examines the representation of cruise and passenger ships in travel writing, specifically that dealing with thalassic mobility. Among other matters, it examines the cultures of "ocean liners" before they were given over to cruising, when they were still used "to get from one place to another," that is, during the 1930s, when ships were almost the only form of long-haul travel. It also examines the genesis of writing about cruises and other nautical travel, which began in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, when the shipping companies began commissioning eminent writers to write about their travels at sea, on board their ships. The existence of such writing is a reminder that sea voyages, beginning with Homer's *Odyssey*, have been the stuff of storytellers and literary raconteurs since the dawn of literature and provides, in the absence of any other notable cultural archive or record, invaluable insights into maritime life of the past. Most often though, as in the case of relatively modern exemplars of the genre, Richard Dana, Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad, it is written from the perspective of being a seafarer. Moreover, it does so in the guise of fiction rather than fact—even though the material on which their novels are based has, for the most part, an autobiographical provenance (Mack 2011, 23) and, in the absence of anything more authentic, constitutes a form of proto-ethnography. Passengers did not often figure in pre-nineteenth century sea voyages: hence, their absence from sea fiction and other nautical writings. When they begin to appear, it is in travel writing—that specifically devoted to being a ship's passenger. Two of the earliest examples of such writing are from two writers better known for their novels, namely, William Makepeace Thackeray (using the sobriquet, Michael Angelo Titmarsh) and Mark Twain who at the time was conducting a world "lecture tour" and who provides an entertainingly, witty account, full of insights into what happens to passengers quarantined aboard a ship for a prolonged odyssey. Titmarsh was commissioned by P&O, in the hope that he would write a favourable account of one of its cruises (a hope that proved forlorn), thereby establishing a long tradition of such commissioning and sponsorship, which continues through to the present. The writings of two more recent writers involved in such commissions are also examined in the chapter, Evelyn Waugh and Paul Theroux, who also, like their nineteenth-century counterparts, undertook Mediterranean "tours." Finally, the chapter examines the writings of Jeraldine Saunders, the author whose experiences gave ascendancy to the infamous TV series, the *Love Boat* which helped to spur the zeal for

cruising. Its value as "literature" derives primarily from the fact that it provides insights on cruising from the perspective of being a member of the crew, moreover, in a role, that of cruise director, which enabled her to observe the lives of the passengers and the crew that serviced (a word that has particular salience in this connection) them on a day-to-day basis. Whilst, technically, her chronicle of everyday life on a modern cruise vessel might not meet the criteria of being auto-ethnography, it is very close to being so!

Chapter 5 represents a departure from texts that record or promote the experience of cruising, and deals with that of actually being a passenger, though not on a cruise ship. Unlike the first half of the book which examines the texts associated with cruising, it looks, as does the remainder of the book, at the contexts that inspire such texts. In this instance, it examines the context of being a passenger on a container ship, a vessel designed primarily for the carriage of goods rather than people, in conditions best described as being ascetic rather than aesthetic. As working ships, rather than leisure ships, there are no fancy restaurants and cafes, swimming pools and shops, theatres and gymnasia on container ships (or if there are, they are very limited in scope), for passengers are expected to entertain themselves on such ships. Nor do they "call in" on particularly fancy ports, or if they do, then it is to some of their least prepossessing and attractive areas, which are where most container terminals are located. The primary focus of the chapter is what passengers do with their time on such ships, how they adapt to an environment where most of the normal existential inputs to quotidian life are, at best, truncated and, at worst non-existent, and how they eventually achieve a measure of temporal self-sufficiency. It also develops a framework to describe the structure of journeys, not just those at sea but in the air and on land, which is alluded to throughout this book.

Chapter 6 engages more thoroughly with the nature of the contemporary cruise. Also based on studies undertaken *in situ*, it argues that in contradistinction to the impression presented in much of the advertising and promotion associated with cruise ships, they are not geographies of complete freedom and licence. To the contrary, they are places where strict controls are in place, ones that regulate and circumscribe the activities of the mobile communities congregated within their midst. Some of the controls, such as those governing the abandonment of the ship, are mandatory under International Maritime Law. Most of the controls though, operate below the radar, in a discrete rather than an overt fashion. Hence, most passengers would hardly be conscious of the degree to which their behaviour and conduct is regulated—not just from the "top," by the ship's hierarchy, but also from the "bottom," by the passengers themselves, who,

through their own actions, help to reinforce the ship's control regime, and are complicit in the various processes of micro-management. As is demonstrated in the chapter though, sometimes the "top" might have to assert its "reserve powers" to terminate what is perceived as transgressive behaviour sections of the "bottom," especially when it has negative consequences on the ship's mobile community.

Chapter 7 extends the analysis of the previous chapter and argues that the most overt form of control on passengers is manifested in their dress. Cruising, in other words is a form of theatre, of staged events and scripted performances, in which passenger raiment plays an undoubted role. Its most evident manifestation in the sartorial divide that exists between passengers and crew, in the fact that, when they are on duty, the latter are expected to don a uniform, whereas the former are free to dress as they please, though there are limits. For example, passengers are required to dress for dinner, that is, if they wish to dine formally. Further, they are expected to wear appropriate dress when undertaking shore excursions—to "dress down" rather than "up," to avoid attracting the interest of street criminals. The remit of control also extends to the passenger's body, for in the interests of preventing the spread of communicable diseases, passengers are required to apply hygiene unguents to their hands before entering restaurants, buffets, theatres, climbing stairs, after visiting the toilet, and so on.

Chapter 8 returns to some of the themes explored in Chapter 5, namely those relating to a ship's temporal conditions, especially as they impinge on passengers. After an exploration of the basic chronometry of cruising, the chapter then turns to the day-to-day organisation of time on a cruise ship, which it argues bears some striking parallels with that found in other total institutions, especially schools. For, as occurs in most schools, the cruise day is filled to capacity with activities, designed to engage the passenger mind and body, virtually from the moment he or she wakes to the moment they retire. Moreover, the time allocated to these activities, between forty-minutes and an hour, approximates to that allotted to most school lessons! Further, the classes themselves often manifest pedagogic features, a reflection, no doubt, of the fact that many of their presenters are either ex- or practising teachers. There is one salient difference, though, between the school and the cruise ship day, and that is passengers are not obliged to attend the "classes" organised on their behalf, nor undertake any tests or examinations at the end of the cruise! Nor do they receive any diplomas for their attendance, as they do for some of the activities undertaken on board! The existence of a daily programme of things to do, it is argued, reflects the fear, widespread among some passengers, that they would not otherwise be able to tolerate the many days at sea. Not that all passengers avail themselves