In the 5th century BC, Aelianus Claudius fulminated at length upon the "lies" of his fellow writer, Herodotus. Aelianus went so far to suggest that the man considered the first historian and travel journalist of the West would be denied a place on the Island of the Blessed.

Aelianus Claudius would have been baffled by the life of the modern-day travel writer, though he would have answered emphatically in the affirmative to Thomas Kohnstamm's Do Travel Writers Go To Hell?

Kohnstamm made the news after he made a flippant comment about how he wrote a Lonely Planet guide about Colombia without actually going there. He made other revelations about the guidebook writing business that, one suspects, had Lonely Planet and other guidebook publishers consider committing either ritual hara-kiri or justifiable homicide.

Kohnstamm clarified later that he had not been hired to write the actual travel portions of the Colombia guidebook, but to write the "desk" sections on the history of the country. He also clarified that not all the information he presented the Lonely Planet publishers came from "the chick" he was dating, "an intern in the Colombian consulate".

As the media debated the story back and forth, calling Kohnstamm a "fraud" or a whistleblower, depending on which version you read, travel writers the world over must have raised a collective, sardonic eyebrow and got back to work.

The issues that Kohnstamm raises poor pay, insufficient time, too much territory to cover have plagued the travel writing industry ever since the Egyptians, Arabs and Chinese sent off emissaries to see what the rest of the world was like. Contemporary guidebook

