“Fresh fields of exploration”: cultures of scientific knowledge and Ida Pfeiffer’s second voyage round the world (1856)

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"It might be thought that there was no rôle in life which a woman was less fitted to fill than that of an explorer", observed a contributor to the British periodical *Good Words* in December 1901.[1] Yet if scientific exploration still demanded the robust attributes of "cool nerve, dauntless courage and a constitution of iron", they were no longer the preserve of men alone. Numerous women of the previous century had also excelled at "scorning dangers which would have dismayed any but the most intrepid" to make discoveries which "added materially to the world's knowledge".[2] One such traveller was Ida Pfeiffer (1797-1858), an Austrian woman of indomitable energy and perseverance, who undertook five major journeys in her lifetime: to the Holy Land and Egypt, to Scandinavia and to Madagascar, as well as completing two full circumnavigations, which involved travel through British India and the Dutch East Indies. Over the past three decades, historians of women's studies and scholars of travel writing have done much to restore Pfeiffer's role as an adventurer – an "Abenteurerin" – positioning her alongside other pioneering European women travel writers such as Mary Kingsley, Freya Stark and Ida Hahn-Hahn.[3] Pfeiffer was a best-selling author of her day and it was her unusual destinations, unique viewpoint and rich descriptions which, Helga Schutte Watt has argued, made her travel narratives so intriguing.[4] The unorthodox nature of Pfeiffer's travels as an unchaperoned Western woman in the East, her claim to give "a plain description of what I have seen" rather than the "conjectures and reasonings which may […] become the pen of a learned man", and her scientific activities as a collector of exotic fish and insects have caused her to be seen as one of the more remarkable women travellers of the period.[5]

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[1] E. Hobson, "Celebrated Lady Travellers: Ida Pfeiffer", *Good Words*, 42 (1901), pp. 482-485 (at 482). Other women travellers in the series included Isabella Bishop (née Bird) and Ménie Muriel Dowie (Mrs Henry Norman).

[2] Hobson, "Celebrated Lady Travellers: Ida Pfeiffer", p. 482.

[3] Key works on Pfeiffer's correspondence and biography still remain Hiltgund Jehle's *Ida Pfeiffer: Weltreisende im 19. Jahrhundert* (Münster/New York: Waxmann, 1989) and Gabriele Habinger's *Ida Pfeiffer: „Wir leben nach Matrosenweise" – Briefe einer Weltreisenden des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Promedia, 2008). More recent contributions that emphasise Pfeiffer's adventurous spirit include Heidemarie Zienteck's "In Eile um die Welt: Ida Pfeiffer 1797-1858", in Lydia Potts, ed., with assistance from Uta Fleischmann and Marianne Kriszio, *Aufbruch und Abenteuer: Frauen-Reisen um die Welt ab 1785* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), pp. 37-57.

[4] Helga Schutte Watt, "Ida Pfeiffer: A Nineteenth-Century Woman Travel Writer", *German Quarterly*, 64, no. 3 (1991): 339-352 (at 341).

[5] Ida Pfeiffer, *A Woman's Journey round the World, from Vienna to Brazil, Chili, Tahiti, China, Hindostan, Persia, and Asia Minor*, trans. William Hazlitt, 4th edition (London: N. Cooke, 1854), p. 18. See also Véronique Dallet-Mann, "Kulturkonflikte in den Reiseberichten der "kühnen österreichischen Reisenden" Ida Pfeiffer", in Jean-Marie Valentin ed., with assistance from Elisabeth Rothmund, *Akten des XI. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Paris 2005: „Germanistik in Konflikt der Kulturen"* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 359-364; Jennifer Michaels, "Ida Pfeiffer's Travels in the Dutch East Indies and Madagascar", *Austrian Studies*, 20 (2012): 60-74.

Yet despite this consistent emphasis on Pfeiffer's exceptionality as a woman voyaging in exotic climes, few of her achievements as a *scientific* traveller have been investigated in any detail. As the reviewer in *Good Words* emphasised, her urge to travel was driven by an intellectual curiosity that fuelled her constant quest for "fresh fields of exploration".[6] Scholars have, admittedly, been swift to recall that the Berlin Geographical Society, the *Gesellschaft für Erdkunde,* elected her an Honorary Member, and that the King of Prussia awarded her the Gold Medal of Arts and Sciences in 1856, on the advice of Alexander von Humboldt. Scientific statistics also speak for themselves: she brought home an impressive 2500 specimens from her second world voyage alone, some of which now bear the species classification "idae" or "pfeifferi" in recognition of her work.[7] But this rehearsal of Pfeiffer's scientific awards and discoveries does little to clarify how exactly Pfeiffer conceived of her role as an amateur collector, what kinds of creatures she was (un)able to acquire and prepare for onward transport and how, ultimately, these specimens represent the raw material underpinning some of the most influential biological theories of the nineteenth century. Michaela Holdenried has been rare among critics to expatiate on the precise economics of scientific collection – as described in Austrian ministerial council reports from the 1850s regarding the apportionment of funding to science – that increasingly became the financial motivator for Pfeiffer's travels and collection activities.[8] While a clearer picture of Pfeiffer's involvement in British, German and Austrian scientific networks is therefore now beginning to emerge, scholars have still remained remarkably silent about how her travels through the Dutch East Indies contributed to the making of knowledge in the Dutch-speaking scientific community.

The present chapter is therefore concerned with understanding how Pfeiffer cast herself as a female Austrian explorer travelling through Dutch colonial territories, how her travel writing resonated through the Dutch press, and how she essentially promoted the Dutch East Indies as a magnet for scientific collectors, particularly those seeking to understand the systems governing variation and change in a given species. Hugo Hassinger, whose account of the contribution by Austrian explorers to scientific discovery still remains the authoritative work on the subject, argues that at mid-century a ferment of scientific activity was taking place on an institutional level in and around Vienna.[9] This saw the establishment of the *Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften* [Imperial Academy of Sciences], founded in 1846, as well as numerous societies, libraries and museums.[10] Pfeiffer's

[6] Hobson, "Celebrated Lady Travellers: Ida Pfeiffer", p. 485.
[7] Mary Somers Heidhues, "Woman on the Road: Ida Pfeiffer in the Indies", *Archipel*, 68 (2004): 289-313 (at 294).
[8] Michaela Holdenried, "Botanisierende Hausfrauen, blaustrümpfige Abenteuerinnen? Forschungsreisende Frauen im 19. Jahrhundert", in Anne Fuchs and Theo Harden, eds., *Reisen im Diskurs: Modelle der literarischen Fremderfahrung von den Pilgerberichten bis zur Postmoderne* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1995), pp. 152-170; also "Die „tollkühne Reisende" Ida Pfeiffer" in Christa Riedl-Dorn, *Das Haus der Wunder: Zur Geschichte des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1998), pp. 137-48.
[9] Hugo Hassinger, *Österreichs Anteil an der Erforschung der Erde* (Vienna: Verlag Adolf Holzhausens Nfg., 1949), pp. 134-136.
[10] Hassinger, *Österreichs Anteil*, pp. 134-137.

explorations were thus timely and potentially most productive contributions to the development of the geographical sciences in the land-locked states of the Habsburg Empire that had no perspectives for colonial expansion. However the almost total absence of women from Hassinger's extremely comprehensive account is also illustrative of just how anomalous a figure Pfeiffer must have been to Austrian eyes. Indeed, among publicly recognised female Austrian travel writers Pfeiffer only appears to have been preceded by Clara von Gerstner, who journeyed through the United States between 1838 and 1840 with her husband, a railroad engineer.[11] Thus while in Britain women had clearly consolidated a position for themselves in the natural sciences by the 1830s – the preserving, classifying and editing skills of the ichthyologist Sarah Bowdich (1791-1856) most immediately spring to mind, to say nothing of work by the prodigious botanists and entomologists Maria Jacson, Sarah Hoare, Jane Loudon and Priscilla Wakefield – Austrian scientific culture had not yet embraced their inclusion.

I take as my central point of reference Pfeiffer's second voyage round the world (1851-54) which she began at the grand age of fifty-four and which was published as the four-volume *Meine zweite Weltreise* [*My Second Voyage around the World*] in Vienna in 1856. It was swiftly translated into a host of European languages, including an English version by Jane Percy Sinnett, *A Lady's Second Journey round the World* (London: Longman, 1855) and a Dutch edition, *Mijne tweede reis rondom de wereld* (Amsterdam: Sulpke, 1856). Pfeiffer's account was summarised by the writer in *Good Words* as an engaging narrative of peril and risk: "She proceeded to England, took ship for Sarawak, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, walked unattended right into the very heart of Borneo, visited Java and Sumatra, lived in peace and amity for a time with some cannibal tribes, sailed from the Moluccas to the heights of Chimborazo and Cotopaxi, and after a tour through the United States landed in London in 1854".[12] But as Mary Somers Heidhues notes, Pfeiffer's travels also occurred soon after the decision by the Netherlands to expand and consolidate its rule over the Indies as a whole:[13] from the 1860s onwards territory in Borneo and Sumatra was increasingly ceded to the Dutch. The Dutch East Indies therefore constituted a particularly vibrant "contact zone", to use Mary Louise Pratt's term, in which Pfeiffer could report, from the subaltern perspective of a Viennese travelling woman, on its administrative systems, settlements and plantations, schools and missions. In this chapter I shall be exploring the complicated nature of Pfeiffer's agency both as a purveyor of textual and material scientific information on the Dutch East Indies. I start by looking at how her account was instrumentalised by her Dutch audience, before moving on to examine the contribution that her collecting activities made to the sciences of ichthyology and entomology at mid-century. Finally I reflect on the role that the specimens collected by Pfeiffer may have played more broadly in inspiring

[11] Hassinger, *Österreichs Anteil*, p. 172.
[12] Hobson, "Celebrated Lady Travellers: Ida Pfeiffer", p. 485.
[13] Somers Heidhues, "Woman on the Road", p. 297.

further investigation of the wildlife of the Dutch East Indies and, ultimately, in contributing to larger developments in nineteenth-century scientific thought.

An Austrian Abroad: "Dutch India, where I was so kindly received"

On 16 February 1852, the *Javasche Courant* [*Java Gazette*] enthusiastically reported on the most recent leg of Pfeiffer's journey from Sarawak to the Dutch regions of Borneo, following her stay with Rajah Brooke in British Borneo. Subsequently publications of this same account in the *Nederlandsche Staatscourant* [*Dutch State Gazette*] of 18 August that year and again in the *Leydse Courant* [*Leiden Gazette*] a couple of days later, illustrate just how eager the Dutch press was to report on the findings of the "vermaarde reizigster" [renowned lady traveller], on a national and regional level.[14] As the Dutch translation neared completion, her publisher Sulpke whetted readers' appetites by publishing an extract in the refined journal *Leeskabinet: Mengelwerk tot gezellig onderhoud voor beschaafde kringen* [*Reading Room: An Anthology for the Sociable Entertainment of Polite Circles*].[15] While a detailed textual analysis of the Dutch translation of the German original lies beyond the scope of this chapter, *Mijn tweede reis* is a particularly intriguing example of the use of translation by a given nation to extend its purview of its *own* identity by deliberately drawing on perspectives from outside. As Wendy Bracewell has cogently argued, such translated accounts open up "international circuits of communication, influence and interaction" to scrutiny,[16] and I investigate here who introduced Pfeiffer's account into which kinds of knowledge circuit and how this reflected back on her reputation in the Netherlands as an intellectually curious woman.

While the account of her first voyage round the world, *Eine Frauenfahrt um die Welt* (1850) [*A Woman's Journey round the World*] had carried no dedication, *Meine zweite Weltreise* was addressed to "Den Holländern in Indien namentlich den Holländischen Beamten und Offizieren daselbst aus tiefster Erkenntlichkeit" [To the Dutch in the Indies, in particular the Dutch officials and officers there out of the deepest gratitude]. This paratextual material was readily published in the Dutch edition. Pfeiffer's mediatory role was certainly complicated by its heavy reliance on the goodwill of Dutch officials for letters of recommendation, offers of accommodation and help in ensuring safe passage. Her narrative is therefore forcibly shaped by an awareness of her pro-Dutch commitments. As she observes in the preface:

> [...] ich [wurde] von den Holländischen Beamten und Offizieren jedes Ranges und jeder Stellung so zuvorkommend aufgenommen, so thatkräftig unterstützt, daß ich Reisen ausführen konnte, wie es mir bisher noch in keinem Lande der Welt möglich gewesen

[14] *Nederlandsche Staatscourant*, 195, 18 August 1852: 2-3 (at 2).
[15] *Leeskabinet: Mengelwerk tot gezellig onderhoud voor beschaafde kringen*, 6 (1855), no. 4: 226-237.
[16] Wendy Bracewell, "The Travellee's Eye: Reading European Travel Writing, 1750-1850", in Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst eds., *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 215-227 (at 216).

> war, und daß ich, wie gesagt, jene Männer als die Schöpfer dieser meiner zweiten Reise um die Welt betrachten muß.[17]
>
> […] I was so kindly received and so effectually supported by the officers of government, from the highest to the lowest, that I was enabled to carry my plans into execution better than in any other country in the world; and I must regard them as virtually the authors of my Second Journey.[18]

By casting her ground-breaking voyage as a collaborative Austrian-Dutch effort, Pfeiffer would of course have endeared herself yet more to a reading public in the Netherlands, even if she described herself "als Deutsche" – "als Duitsche" in the Dutch translation – which could have been misinterpreted as indicating that she was German.[19]

The *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen, of Tijdschrift van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* [*Dutch Literary Exercises, or Journal of the Arts and Sciences*] in particular praised her contribution to the furthering of contemporary ethnographic knowledge:

> ... haar werk [bevat] menige bijzonderheid, die als eene belangrijke bijdrage tot de volkerenkunde beschouwd kan worden. Daaronder vooral hare mededeelingen betreffende de Dajakkers op Borneo en de Battakkers op Sumatra, over welke grootendeels nog geheel wilde, kannibalische volkstammen onze kennis zeer beperkt was.[20]
>
> [… her work contains many a detail which can be considered to make an important contribution to ethnography. In that regard particularly her reports on the Dayak people of Borneo and the Bataks of Sumatra, to a large degree almost completely wild, cannibal tribes, about whom our knowledge was very limited.]

Her social documentation of the Dayaks' daily routines and domestic life, their head-hunting and cannibalistic practices, their ceremonies and decorative artefacts (notably jewellery made from human teeth), their polygamy and their refusal to be converted by passing missionaries (some of whom ended up in the pot), made for fascinating and persuasive reading. Pfeiffer had not hastened through the region, despite considering her life in danger on several occasions: rather, she had lived among them,

[17] Ida Pfeiffer, *Meine zweite Weltreise*, 4 vols (Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1856), I, unpaginated.
[18] Ida Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Second Journey round the World*, trans. Mrs Percy Sinnett (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 2 vols, I, p. vi.
[19] See for example Pfeiffer, *Meine zweite Weltreise*, I, p. 52; Ida Pfeiffer, *Mijne tweede reis rondom de wereld* (Amsterdam: Sulpke, 1856), 3 vols, I, p. 41.
[20] Anon., "Mijn tweede reis rondom de Wereld. Door Ida Pfeiffer", *Vaderlandse Letteroefeningen, of Tijdschrift van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, (1857): 233-36 (at 235).

sharing their food, living in their dwellings and taking their children on her lap. Susan Bassnett warns against the essentialism of categorising women's travel writing as always about relationships within the domestic sphere versus the public discourse of male travellers.[21] But in Pfeiffer's case we can definitely identify a particular interest in private spaces which would have cultivated an appropriately domestic feel for a female travel writer. Such "everyday interactions with people and objects", Gillian Rose suggests, enables individuals to "develop certain kinds of knowledge".[22] It was precisely this knowledge about the Dajak tribes, set comparatively against Pfeiffer's experiences with the Malay, which ensured her account was widely quoted and discussed in popular, but also more "serious", scientific literature in the Netherlands.

The 1860 edition of the popular science magazine *Album der natuur: een werk ter verspreiding van natuurkennis onder beschaafde lezers van allerlei stand* [*Album of Nature: A Work to Disseminate Knowledge of the Natural World to Polite Readers of All Classes*] illustrates particularly well the merit accorded to Pfeiffer's ethnographic observations. Borneo was largely *terra incognita* to the Dutch, particularly its heartland and the regions to the north. As the Dutch physician and toxicologist Alexander Willem Michiel van Hasselt observed in his two successive articles "Studiën over Borneo en de Dajak's of zogenaamde koppen-snellers van dit eiland" [Studies on Borneo and the Dayaks or so-called headhunters of this island], Pfeiffer's account was useful precisely because it recounted details of the peoples inhabiting the interior of the land rather than those in the more easily accessible coastal regions.[23] Van Hasselt clearly did not consider her account in any way less credible than those by male travellers. Indeed, he frequently named Pfeiffer in the same breath as far more prominent figures such as the German geologist Carl Schwaner, the Dutch Baron van Lijnden and the British ruler Sir James Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak, who, like Pfeiffer, had found the Dayak people to be welcoming, warm-hearted and simple in their ways.[24] Van Hasselt was particularly interested in her description of interiors, partly because Pfeiffer managed as a woman to gain access to spaces from which male travellers were barred. He was also intrigued by the more grisly incidents in her account which were both ethnographically interesting and darkly entertaining:

> IDA PFEIFFER werd bij het binnentreden van een groot Dajaksch huis eens diep getroffen door het zien van 30 opgehangene schedels, aan elkaár geregen bij wijze

[21] Susan Bassnett, "Travel Writing and Gender", in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 225-41 (at 227).
[22] Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993), p. 20.
[23] A. W. M. van Hasselt, "Studiën over Borneo en de Dajak's of zogenaamde koppen-snellers van dit eiland", *Album der natuur: een werk ter verspreiding van natuurkennis onder beschaafde lezers van allerlei stand,* vol. 9 (1860): 65-81, 97-118, 129-146.
[24] A. W. M. van Hasselt, "Studiën over Borneo en de Dajak's", 79.

> van eene guirlande, en een andermaal werd haar als eereplaats een nachtleger aangewezen nevens een pas buit gemaakt doodshoofd.[25]
>
> [IDA PFEIFFER was on one occasion deeply shaken by entering a large Dayak house and seeing 30 skulls hung up, strung up next to each other like a kind of garland, and on another she was given as her sleeping quarters pride of place next to a severed head from their fresh spoils.]

Van Hasselt was also aware that the practise of headhunting brought with it its own myths. He used Pfeiffer's account, amongst others, to counter the assertion that among the Dayak people a groom brings his bride a severed head as wedding present: "deze meening wordt door HELFERICH, IDA PFEIFFER, GROLL, VAN LYNDEN, en SCHWANER eenstemmig en bepaald tegengesproken en tot het rijk der fabelen verwezen" [this assertion is unanimously and decisively contradicted by HELFERICH, IDA PFEIFFER, GROLL, VAN LYNDEN, en SCHWANER and relegated to the realm of fantasy].[26] For Van Hasselt, then, Pfeiffer's account belonged among the authoritative accounts of Borneo that were gradually beginning to make this region more familiar territory to a European audience.

Pfeiffer's account of the Dutch East Indies continued to resonate through the Dutch press well after her death in 1858. Indeed until the end of the nineteenth century it remained one of the most respected accounts of the hitherto unknown customs and practices of the peoples of Borneo and it also remained the only travelogue by a woman of this area until Anna Forbes' *Insulinde: Experiences of a Naturalist's Wife in the Eastern Archipelago* (1887). As accounts by male scientists of Borneo, Sumatra and Java began to supersede Pfeiffer's *Meine zweite Weltreise*, her account was clearly held as a yardstick against which these more recent expeditions were judged. While work by the British biologist and theorist of natural evolution Alfred Russel Wallace was well received – *The Malay Archipelago: The Land of the Orang-utan, and the Bird of Paradise* (1869) appeared in Pieter Johannes Veth's Dutch translation *Insulinde. Het land van den orang-oetan en den paradijsvogel* between 1870 and 1871 – the same could not be said of the American naturalist Albert Bickmore's *Travels in the East Indian Archipelago* (1868), which appeared in Dutch translation in 1873. Bickmore had himself voiced admiration at Pfeiffer's foray beyond the point where missionaries had hitherto penetrated the territory of the Batak people of northern Sumatra: this particular passage was quoted by the reviewer in the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* precisely to highlight the shortcomings of Bickmore's own account.[27] For those who only knew the Dutch East Indies superficially, the critic remarked, Bickmore's work might well be praised as one of the few readable sources on this archipelago. But those *au fait* with current research and who knew what Pfeiffer had

[25] Van Hasselt, "Studiën", p. 139.
[26] Van Hasselt, "Studiën", p. 143.
[27] Anon., "Boekaankondiging: Reizen in den Oost-Indischen Archipel, door Prof. Albert S. Bickmore", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 3, vol. 1 (1874): 230-37 (at 235).

achieved would recognise the altogether limited scope of his travels: "In de nog ons schier geheel onbekende binnelanden van Noordelijk-Sumatra en van Borneo bijvoorbeeld waagde hij zich niet" [he did not, for example, venture into the interiors of Northern Sumatra and Borneo, which are still completely unknown to us].[28] It was high time, the critic argued, that the Dutch should put more resources into exploring these territories and undertaking centrally organised expeditions. [29] Indeed, the scientific honour of the Netherlands was increasingly at stake as other nations headed out to explore the North Pole or their African and Vietnamese colonies, while the Dutch knew comparatively little of the Indian Archipelago "voor wiens bezit zij bijna drie eeuwen gestreden en geijverd hebben" [for the possession of which they fought and strove almost three centuries].[30]

Preserving Scientific Knowledge: Pfeiffer as Collector in the Dutch East Indies

While Pfeiffer's account of her second circumnavigation enjoyed a warm reception in the Netherlands, her amateur gallivants around the Dutch East Indies left both Austrian and British critics cold. The *Athenaeum* scorned her first account as "seldom accurate" and "superficial" and *Sharpe's London Journal* sneered that it was "perhaps to be regretted, that, to her many natural qualifications, Madame Pfeiffer did not add that of such a course of previous study as might have enabled her to obtain more valuable results from her uncommon opportunities".[31] The *Wiener Telegraf* [*Vienna Telegraph*] was even less flattering. In a caricature published in 1855, following her return from her second voyage round the world, it presented her as a learned female traveller – "eine gelehrte Reisende" – pursuing a native American with a telescope and a reticule of sock-knitting over one arm and a basket with coffee-grinder in the other. Ida, speaking to him, says "Lauf nicht vor mir davon, ich fürchte mich nicht vor Wilden" [Do not run from me, I am not afraid of savages], while he, literally running for the hills, replies "Aber ich" [But I am].[32] Pfeiffer's strained relationship with Austrian funding bodies may well have sparked such a critical reception. As she unflinchingly observed in the preface to *Meine zweite Weltreise*: Der Betrag aus meinem kleinen Vermögen, über den ich gebieten konnte, war sehr unbedeutend; die Oesterreichische Regierung vermehrte ihn zwar mit einem Zuschuß von 150 Pfund St.; doch würde die ganze Summe dessen ungeachtet zu einer so großen Reise nicht ausgereicht haben [The sum that my small property enabled me to devote to

[28] Anon., "Boekaankondiging: Reizen in den Oost-Indischen Archipel", p. 236.
[29] Anon., "Boekaankondiging: Reizen in den Oost-Indischen Archipel", p. 237.
[30] Anon., "Boekaankondiging: Reizen in den Oost-Indischen Archipel", p. 237.
[31] Anon., "A Lady's Voyage round the World [Eine Frauenfahrt um die Welt]", *The Athenæum*, 1232 (1851): 602-4 (at 602); Anon., "A Woman's Voyage Round the World", *Sharpe's London Journal*, 14 (1851): 96-102 (at 97).
[32] Image reproduced in Jehle, *Ida Pfeiffer*, p. 222. Pfeiffer was also satirised in the British magazine *Punch, or the London Charivari* although here it was her industry and wanderlust at which *Punch* poked fun in a spoof New Year's resolution: "IDA PFEIFFER (spricht): Here, MINNA, child, listen and attend to me. You must run directly, and get me fifteen reams of paper, one quire of blotting ditto, six quart bottles of black ink, and five hundred Magnum Bonum steel pens. To-morrow is New Year's Day, and I intend starting on a trip round the World for the third time. You must call me at five o'clock". *Punch*, Saturday 5th January 1856, p. 8.

travelling expenses was very small, and, even when increased by a grant of 150*l*. from the Austrian Government, was still inadequate to such an extensive journey].[33] Earlier complaints by Pfeiffer about the lack of support from her homeland had already circulated in the German-speaking scientific community. In the Berlin Society of Geography's *Festschrift* of 1853, two letters had been published which she had sent to Carl Ritter from Batavia, in which she remarked – unwisely, opined Humboldt – that support of a different order might have been forthcoming, had she not had the misfortune to be Austrian.[34]

Pfeiffer's dealings with the Dutch scientific community were not complicated in quite the same way. As the Dutch professor of geography Pieter Veth (Alfred Russel Wallace's Dutch translator) noted in 1854, the year Pfeiffer returned to Europe:

> Dat de reizen van mevrouw Pfeiffer voor de wetenschap niet onvruchtbaar zijn, kan onder anderen de verzameling van visschen uit de Kapoeas bewijzen, die zij te Pontianak bijeenbragt en, tijdens haar verblijf te Batavia, aan Dr. Bleeker ten behoeve zijner ichthyologische studiën afstond.[35]
>
> [That Mrs Pfeiffer's travels have not been unproductive for science can be proven by, amongst other things, the collection of fish from the Kapoeas River that she assembled at Pontianak and, during her stay in Batavia, donated to Dr. Bleeker for the benefit of his ichthyological studies.]

Indeed Pfeiffer's name cropped up repeatedly in contributions to the *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* [*Natural Historical Journal for the Dutch East Indies*] in the early 1850s by the enthusiastic Dutch ichthyologist Pieter Bleeker (1819-1878). He had arrived in Batavia (Jakarta) in 1842 as a "third class military surgeon" and left the colony in 1860 as one of its most distinguished residents.[36] Bleeker, a physician in the army of the Dutch East India Company, swiftly developed an interest in ichthyology, having read widely on natural history in the library of the museum in Haarlem. His perseverance in this field and eagerness to acquire further knowledge was such that he had already started work on a comprehensive account of the fishes of the East Indian Archipelago in 1845, a project that was sustained by frequent exchanges of fish specimens with his many

[33] Pfeiffer, *Meine zweite Weltreise*, I, unpaginated; Pfeiffer, *Lady's Second Journey*, I, p. v.
[34] Quoted in Ulrich Päßler, ed., *Alexander von Humboldt/Carl Ritter: Briefwechsel* (Berlin: Akademie, 2010), p. 135: "Welche Unterstützungen würde man mir zukommen lassen, hätte ich nicht das Unglück, eine Oesterreicherin zu sein. Meine Regierung thut wenig, meine Landesleute gar nichts." Humboldt's remark that such comments were unfortunate, p. 133.
[35] Pieter Johannes Veth, *Borneo's wester-afdeeling: geographisch, statistisch, historisch, voorafgegaan door eene algemeene schets des ganschen eilands* (Zaltbommel: Joh. Noman en Zoon, 1854), 2 vols, vol. 1, p. lxxxix.
[36] Kent E. Carpenter, "A Short Biography of Pieter Bleeker", *The Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*, 14 (2007), pp. 5-6 (at 5).

correspondents.[37] In 1850 he established the *Koninklijke Natuurkundige Vereeniging in Nederlandsch-Indië* [Royal Scientific Society in the Dutch East Indies, abbreviated to KNV]. This government-funded society was the main channel through which research in the Netherlands Indies was promoted and its journal – in which many mentions of Pfeiffer appear – was a central organ in the dissemination of a colonial scientific culture.[38] Bleeker's monumental, multivolume *Atlas ichthyologique des Indes Orientales Néerlandaises* [*Ichthyological Atlas of the Dutch East Indies*] (1862-77) was one of the first works to reveal the diversity of sea life in the Indo-Australian archipelago to a European audience and gain him an outstanding international reputation in his lifetime. [39]

Bleeker was unstinting in his gratitude to those scientific collaborators whose skills at collecting and preserving specimens furthered his research. Pfeiffer can scarcely have been in the Dutch East Indies for a few weeks before their paths crossed. As Bleeker recorded in an article on the fish of Borneo in the July 1852 edition of the KNV's journal, the *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*:

> In het begin van Junij 1852 had ik het genoegen te ontmoeten mevrouw Ida Pfeiffer, de beroemde reizigster, die toen juist was teruggekeerd van Borneo, waar zij met eenen in eene vrouw nauwelijks denkbaren moed, alleen en zonder bescherming de Dajahsche stammen van het stroomgebied der Kapoeas heeft bezocht. [...] Deze merkwaardige vrouw houdt zich ook onledig met het maken van verzamelingen van natuurlijke historie, en met bijzondere welwillendheid heeft zij, tijdens haar verblijf te Batavia, aan mij afgestaan eene kleine verzameling van visschen uit de rivier Kapoeas, welke zij te Pontiniak had bijeengebragt.[40]
>
> [At the beginning of June 1852, I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs Ida Pfeiffer, the famous lady traveller, who had then just returned from Borneo, where she had visited the Dayak tribes in the river basin of the Kapuas alone and without protection, demonstrating a courage scarcely conceivable in a woman. [...] This remarkable woman keeps herself busy with compiling natural historical collections, and with particular benevolence she passed on to me, during her stay in Batavia, a small collection of the fish from the Kapuas River, which she had gathered together in Pontianak.]

[37] Brian Saunders, *Discovery of Australia's Fishes: A History of Australian Ichthyology to 1930* (Collingwood: CSIRO, 2012), p. 83.
[38] Lewis Pyenson, *Empire of Reason: Exact Sciences in Indonesia, 1840-1940* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), p. 7.
[39] Saunders, *Discovery of Australia's Fishes*, p. 83.
[40] P. Bleeker, "Zesde bijdrage tot de kennis der ichthyologische fauna van Borneo. Visschen van Pamangkat, Bandjermassing, Praboekarta en Sampit", *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 3, no. 3 (1852): 407-42 (at 408).

Pfeiffer therefore introduced her specimens into natural historical collections in two rather different ways. Since money was perennially tight, she could not afford to rise above commercial concerns. She knew for sure that well-preserved specimens were extremely desirable to museums, which by the mid-nineteenth century were operating in a cultural marketplace that had grown ever more skilled at attracting potential visitors.[41] Yet despite being acutely aware of the economic value of her specimens, she clearly also nurtured personal networks by gifting specimens to aid individual scientists in their work.

By May 1853, Bleeker had moved on to an article titled "Diagnostische Beschrijvingen van Nieuwe of Weinig Bekende Vischsoorten van Sumatra" [Diagnostic Descriptions of New or Scarcely Known Fish Types of Sumatra] in which Pfeiffer was again to feature prominently, as he thanked her for supplying the many new species of fish described: "Ik heb ze voor een groot gedeelte te danken aan de beroemde reizigster mevrouw Ida Pfeiffer, welker vriendschap ik mij tot eer reken en welker verdiensten mijn' lof niet noodige hebben" [I owe them to a large degree to the famous woman traveller Mrs Ida Pfeiffer, whose friendship I consider to be an honour and whose achievements do not need my praise].[42] Pfeiffer's name recurs throughout the article, not because any new species were named after her, but because she supplied details of the habitat where each specimen was found and this information was logged at the end of each detailed Latin description of the fish in question. In January 1854, Bleeker turned his focus to fish of the Celebes, and thanked Pfeiffer for 37 species collected in the waters from Macassar to Maros.[43] A month later he was again thanking her, this time for fish from the island of Ambon following her journey to the Moluccas, and for one hundred different species of fish received the previous summer, which he now listed in some detail.[44] In October 1855, almost a full year after she had returned from her second voyage round the world, she received a final mention from Bleeker in the *Natuurkundig tijdschrift* for her help in collecting species for an article on the freshwater fish of Pontianak and Banjarmasin in Borneo.[45] Bleeker's exchange with Pfeiffer may well have carried scientific significance beyond their contact in the 1850s. Correspondence now held in the Natural History Museum Archives in London shows that he was sending large numbers of fish specimens from his own collection to the British capital throughout the 1860s – 131 different species donated to the British Museum in February 1862, 47 in April 1864, and

[41] Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, "Science in the Marketplace: An Introduction", in Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 1-17 (at 1).

[42] P. Bleeker, "Diagnostische Beschrijvingen van Nieuwe of Weinig Bekende Vischsoorten van Sumatra", *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 4, no. 2 (1853): 243-302 (at 243).

[43] P. Bleeker, "Vierde bijdrage tot de kennis der ichthyologische fauna van Celebes", *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 5, no. 2 (1854),: 154-62 (at 153).

[44] P. Bleeker, "Vierde bijdrage tot de kennis der ichthyologische fauna van Amboina", *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 5, no. 3 (1854): 317-28 (at 317).

[45] P. Bleeker, "Negende Bijdrage tot de kennis der ichthijologische fauna van Borneo. Zoetwatervisschen van Pontinanak en Bandjermasin", *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 9, no. 5 (1855): 415-30 (at 416).

an astonishing 174 in April 1866.[46] Bleeker's finely-penned lists which name every single specimen in the shipment unfortunately give no further indication of original provenance. But it is not inconceivable that some fish collected by Pfeiffer in the 1850s eventually formed part of the most important European ichthyological collections of the day. Bleeker, then, was a most appreciative supporter of Pfeiffer's efforts as a scientific collector on an individual level, while also acting as an important agent in circulating information about her specimens on an international level.

Pfeiffer was not a woman made in quite the same mould as her British counterpart Sarah Bowdich (1791-1856), who, as Mary Orr's pioneering work demonstrates, was an author-illustrator at the forefront of ichthyology in the 1820s and highly successful in the public dissemination of her own contributions to science.[47] Pfeiffer did not share Bowdich's good fortune in marriage to a scientifically-minded husband, nor did she spend sufficient time in scientific circles to acquire Bowdich's highly specialist scientific knowledge, which could have made the Austrian traveller a more confident commentator on the natural history of the Dutch East Indies.[48] We can only assume that she was largely self-taught and acquired her collecting and preserving skills in those brief moments of contact with the European scientific community, such as with George Waterhouse, a member of the mineralogical branch of the department of natural history at the British Museum, who "instructed me in the mode of making collections" as she passed through London on the way to the Cape.[49] In private correspondence she highlighted the extremely difficult aspects of knowledge "capture". Describing fish caught during her time in Singapore which she had been unable to preserve, due to insufficient stocks of chemical, she noted:

> Leider hatte ich auf meiner Excursion zu wenig Spiritus mit, es verdarben mir die größeren Gegenstände so sehr daß ich sie wegwerfen mußte, darunter war ein runder ganz schwarzer Fisch ohne Floßen, wenn man ihn berührte[,] war er so weich wie eine schwach gefüllte Blase, er gab von vorne und rückwärts eine weiße, schleimige Materie von sich, der ganze Fisch bestand im Innern aus Eingeweide, worunter eine Menge Gedärme von der Dicke eines starken Zwirnes und ganz weiß.[50]

[46] Correspondence of Pieter Bleeker, Natural History Museum Archives and Library, Natural History Museum, London, DF200/1/171-182, particularly letters 172, 175 and 184.
[47] Mary Orr, "Pursuing Proper Protocol: Sarah Bowdich's Purview of Scientific Exploration", *Victorian Studies*, 49, no. 2 (2007), 277-85; Mary Orr, "Fish with a Different Angle: *The Fresh-Water Fishes of Great Britain* by Mrs Sarah Bowdich (1791-1856)", *Annals of Science*, 71, no. 2 (2014): 206-40.
[48] On Bowdich's knowledge and skills as an ichthyologist, see particularly Orr, "Fish with a Different Angle", pp. 210-15.
[49] Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Second Journey round the World*, I, p. 16; Pfeiffer, *Meine zweite Weltreise*, I, pp. 20-21: "welcher [...] mich besonders über die Art des Sammelns belehrte".
[50] Habinger, *Ida Pfeiffer: „Wir leben nach Matrosenweise"*, p. 82.

> [Unfortunately on my excursion I did not have enough alcohol with me, the larger objects were so badly decayed that I had to throw them away, among them was a round, completely black fish without fins, when you touched it, it was as soft as a lightly filled bladder, a slimy white material oozed from the front and back ends, the whole of the insides of the fish contained entrails, including a large amount of gut the thickness of strong twine and totally white.]

Despite her failure to classify the fish or, indeed, to conserve it for those who could, Pfeiffer still tried to describe specimens in as much detail as possible, precisely because this information might be relevant to European specialists. Pfeiffer was therefore acutely aware of her potential usefulness "in the field", supplying international scientific networks with textual and material information that would enable scientists back home to gain a more comprehensive picture of the wildlife in these extremely under-researched habitats on the equator.

Promoting Science, Popularising Knowledge: Pfeiffer's Collections from the Dutch East Indies

"I have been making a small collection of crustacea from the market", noted the British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace to his natural history agent Samuel Stevens from Singapore in 1856, adding, "The small ones I can succeed with pretty well, but those of larger size will rot & fall to pieces notwithstanding all my care to dry them".[51] Confronted with the difficulties of preservation in such sultry climes, Wallace went on to query whether Stevens thought the British Museum was in the market for fish specimens from Singapore or the Indonesian island of Celebes (now Sulawesi): "How did Madame Pfeiffer preserve hers. She must have had a good many to fetch £25".[52] Wallace would go on to become one of the most successful collectors of his day, amassing a total collection of 125,660 specimens of insects, mammals and birds, and making his living from collecting good specimens to sell on the rapidly expanding European market.[53] His remark not only recognises Pfeiffer's skill at collecting and preserving specimens, the quality of which saw them snapped up by the British Museum. It also salutes her economic savvy and understanding of market forces, which ensured that she collected sought-after specimens which would attract high bidders.

A couple of years later, the entomologist Vincenz Kollar was likewise marvelling at the two crates of well-preserved scientific specimens from Mauritius and Madagascar which had just arrived in Vienna, destined for Austria's royal natural history collection, the *Hof-Naturalienkabinett*. Their contents – 122 types of insect, four arachnids, three crustaceans, twenty molluscs and a handful of

[51] Letter from Alfred Russel Wallace to Mr Samuel Stevens, 12th May 1856, John van Wyhe and Kees Rookmaker, eds., *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters from the Malay Archipelago* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 80.
[52] Van Wyhe and Rookmaker, eds., *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters from the Malay Archipelago*, p. 80.
[53] Van Wyhe and Rookmaker, eds., *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters from the Malay Archipelago*, p. xi.

reptiles – threw the Austrian scientific community into some excitement since Kollar, reporting to assembled members of the *Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften* on 22nd July 1858, declared a large proportion new to the collection. Their arrival in such good condition was testament to the experience Pfeiffer had gained on previous travels, not least her journey to the Dutch East Indies. Writing to Kollar from Singapore in November 1851, just before moving on to Borneo, she had expressed her hope that the latest crate of specimens would be "neu und brauchbar" [new and useful] for the museum, stressing the effort she had expended in finding useful insects, turning over rotting trunks and raking through leafage for more unusual creatures.[54] But her concern was not merely to collect. She also tried to understand more about the life cycle and habitat of the specimens she had gathered, noting, "In einem Glase werden Sie eine ungeheuer große weiße Raupe finden, sie kroch unter gefallnem Laub, ich konnte sie daher nicht mit nach Hause zum verpupen nehmen, da ich ihre Nahrung nicht kannte" [In one jar you will find an extraordinarily large white caterpillar, it was crawling among fallen leaves, so I could not take it home to let it pupate, as I did not know on what it fed].[55]

Pfeiffer's contribution to entomology is harder to trace, yet ultimately perhaps more ground-breaking than her ichthyological work. She certainly approached the activity of insect collection with great fervour, even encouraging the Dayak people of Borneo to assist her:

> Dann begab ich mich in den Wald, um nach Insekten zu suchen. Daß mir ein ganzer Zug der Eingeborenen, besonders der Kinder folgte, versteht sich von selbst. Sie wollten sehen wohin ich ginge, wozu mir das Schmetterlingnetz und die Schachtel diente, die ich zur Aufbewahrung der Insekten stets mit mir trug. […] Anfangs lachten sie mich wohl aus, wenn sie sahen mit welcher Emsigkeit ich nach jedem Schmetterlinge, nach jeder Fliege haschte; doch kaum hatte ich ihnen begreiflich gemacht, daß ich Arzneien daraus bereite, als aus den Lachern gewöhnlich eben so viele Suche wurden. […] Ich habe ihnen vieles von meinen Sammlungen zu verdanken.[56]

> After this I set off on a ramble into the forest, in which, I need hardly, say, I was accompanied by the whole troop of natives, with all their children. They wanted to see where I was going to, what I wanted with the butterflies, &c., what was the use of the box in which I preserved them, and which I always carried with me; […] At first they laughed at me amazingly when they saw me running after all sorts of "small deer;" but I had no sooner made them understand that these insects were

[54] Habinger, *Ida Pfeiffer: „Wir leben nach Matrosenweise"*, p. 82.
[55] Habinger, *Ida Pfeiffer: „Wir leben nach Matrosenweise"*, p. 82.
[56] Pfeiffer, *Meine zweite Weltreise*, I, pp. 94-95.

> useful in the preparation of medicines than the laughers became diligent assistants in the search, and I have them to thank for many valuable specimens.[57]

This notion of collection as a collaborative enterprise between indigenous peoples and Western scientists certainly reinforced Pfeiffer's anti-hierarchical stance regarding agency and the construction of scientific knowledge. By emphasising the ease which the Dayaks could offer assistance, she implies that they had a natural understanding of the value of the wildlife around them. Pfeiffer is quick to set the Dayaks' uninformed amusement at her collecting activities against the "ignorant ridicule" she encountered amongst young Americans, scornfully noting: "I could not help asking whether any of them had ever seen a museum; and if they had, whether they supposed the insects had needed to be caught, or had betaken themselves there of their own accord, out of zeal for science".[58] There was clearly a direct link in Pfeiffer's mind between her collection of specimens and their later display in a museum as objects of scientific value. She therefore implicitly cast herself in the role of educator, making accessible to an interested general public specimens both spectacular and intriguing which would nurture their curiosity about the natural world.

The insect collections which Pfeiffer sent on to Vienna clearly encouraged some young scientists, including the Austro-Hungarian naturalist Carl Ludwig Doleschall, to explore the richness of life in the Dutch East Indies. Doleschall, who would meet an early death from consumption, had studied medicine in Vienna and then gone out as a surgeon with the Dutch army to Java in 1853, before moving on to the island of Ambon. Reporting in the *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* on the tropical tarantula *Mygale javanensis*, Doleschall had noted:

> Het is eene der grootste spinsoorten, en in dezen Archipel de eenige representant der in Suriname zoo menigvuldige boschspinnen. Ik zag exemplaren van Mygale javanensis, door mevr. Pfeiffer naar Weenen gezonden, van meer dan 2 ½" lengte: ik zelf heb op Java niet anders dan onvolwassen voorwerpen gekregen.[59]
>
> [It is one of the largest sorts of arachnid, and in this archipelago the only representative of the forest spiders so numerous in Surinam. I saw specimens of Mygale javanensis, sent my Mrs. Pfeiffer to Vienna, of more than 2 ½" in length: I myself have never caught anything other than immature specimens in Java.]

[57] Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Second Journey round the World*, I, pp. 89-90.
[58] Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Second Journey round the World*, I, p. 90.
[59] C. L. Doleschall, "Bijdrage tot de kennis der arachniden van den indischen archipel", *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 13, no. 3 (1857): 399 (at 406).

Whether Doleschall saw this spider on public display or in the backrooms of the *Hof-Naturalienkabinett*, Pfeiffer's specimens were clearly so intriguing that they actively promoted the Dutch East Indies as a fascinating site of exploration.

The specimens which Pfeiffer sold on to London must have had a similar hold over Alfred Russel Wallace. A few months after Pfeiffer left the Dutch East Indies, Wallace, whose work on a theory of evolution by natural selection would rival Darwin's, set out on his own voyage bound for Singapore, Malaysia, Borneo, Java and Sumatra. John van Wyhe has described Pfeiffer as the "dark lady of Wallace's Eastern Archipelago", a forgotten, yet central, figure to Wallace's research.[60] A couple of informal letters written by Wallace in the 1850s give just a glimpse of the contribution that Pfeiffer's voyage to the Dutch East Indies made to Wallace's own awareness of the immense variety of species that inhabited this part of the world. Writing to his sister Fanny in 1855, Wallace remarked on the legacy of Pfeiffer's collecting work in and around Borneo:

> Madame Pfeiffer was at Sarawak around a year or two ago and lived in Rajah Brooke's house while there. Capt. Brooke says she was a very nice old lady something like the *picture of Mrs Harris in "Punch"*. The insects she got in Borneo were not very good, those from Celebes and the Moluccas were the rare ones for which *Mr. Stevens* got so much money for her. I expect she will set up [as a] regular collector now as it will pay all her expenses & enable her to travel where she likes. I have told Mr. Stevens to recommend Madagascar to her.[61]

Stevens, who ran a shop on Bloomsbury Street in London, was one of the best suppliers of entomological specimens to the young Wallace. Just as Pfeiffer's collection of fish specimens had greatly aided Bleeker in advancing ichthyology, some of the insects she acquired must have inspired Wallace to undertake his own extensive fieldwork in the Malay Archipelago only a few years later. But it was not only the specimens themselves which Pfeiffer recovered that gave Wallace food for thought. As he remarked in a letter to his fellow entomologist Henry Walter Bates in the spring of 1856:

> Celebes is quite as unknown as was the Upper Amazon before your researches & perhaps more so. In the B[ritish] M[useum] catalogues of Cetoniiadae, Buprestidae, Longicorns, Papibonidae, etc. there are no specimens from Celebes, & very few from the Moluccas, & the fine large insects which have long been known

[60] John van Wyhe, *Dispelling the Darkness: Voyage in the Malay Archipelago and the Discovery of Evolution by Wallace and Darwin* (Hackensack, N. J.: World Scientific, 2013), p. 38.
[61] Letter from Alfred Russel Wallace to Mrs Thomas Sims, 25th June 1855, Van Wyhe and Rookmaker, *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters from the Malay Archipelago*, p. 49 (Wallace's emphasis).

> by the old naturalists & some of which have recently been obtained by Madame Pfeiffer give good promise of what a systematic search may produce.[62]

The astonishing magnificence and variety of what Pfeiffer had found therefore caused Wallace to reflect on how this material could be classified and systematised in ways which would give "good promise" of understanding questions of evolution, diversity and selection with which Wallace would be occupied for much of the rest of his life. These remarks, written only a couple of years before Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1858) demonstrate the small, but nevertheless significant, part which scientific agents like Pfeiffer played in contributing material objects that would form the basis for some of the most astonishing scientific breakthroughs of the Victorian age.

Conclusions

That Pfeiffer has gone unmentioned in works such as Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie's *Women in Science, Antiquity through the Nineteenth Century: A Biographical Dictionary and Annotated Bibliography* (1993) has, I suspect, much to do with the publication of her writing as an account that was rather ambiguous in its style. It was, undoubtedly 'serious' rather than openly 'evocative', but Pfeiffer nevertheless aimed it to be 'popular' and attractive to a wider readership, thus generating much-needed income. While her contribution to the sciences of ichthyology and entomology at mid-century was significant, little evidence of this could be found in *Meine zweite Weltreise* itself. Indeed, Pfeiffer adopted a narrative persona in her travelogue that only really gestured in places to much more serious activities as a collector and preserver. She avoided Latin nomenclature and technical descriptions of ichthyological or entomological specimens, presumably to circumvent criticism that she was not sufficiently qualified to comment. Her focus on the domestic situation of the peoples of Borneo and Sumatra further reinforced her profile as a female traveller. Certainly Pfeiffer felt the need to draw attention to womanly proclivities and to disguise her intellectual endeavours. To some degree, then, Pfeiffer could be seen as a victim of mid-nineteenth-century gender norms, particularly those prevailing in the Habsburg Empire, where it seems that women were permitted extremely limited public engagement with science.

Yet Pfeiffer reveals another side to herself through her engagement in scientific pursuits which suggests that she did not consider herself a victim. Rather, she cast herself as an assertive, bold figure who both acknowledged the boundaries for women in society and in science, and at the same time negotiated her way around them. Indeed, she clearly earned her inclusion into the European scientific community on the basis of her demonstrable skills in specimen collection and preservation together with the international recognition she received from professionals in her field such as Bleeker and

[62] Van Wyhe and Rookmaker, eds., *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters from the Malay Archipelago*, p. 78.

Wallace. The fact that she derived substantial sums from her collecting work further testifies to it being a true profession for her. But this desire to be considered a "professional" is also, intriguingly, overlaid with a more "popular" concern that her specimens should open up the natural world to the museum-going public of London and of Vienna. Pfeiffer therefore carved out a deliberately ambiguous niche for herself. It gave her the freedom to pursue her own scientific interests and to gain fulfilment from them, to circulate as an "amateur" collector in the almost exclusively male scientific communities across Europe and to contribute in subtly important ways to the production of scientific knowledge in the nineteenth century. Traversing a variety of different positions, Pfeiffer was not only a skilled collector and preserver of specimens, but clearly an energetic networker who ensured the successful onward transmission of these objects which would play so crucial a role in issues of classification and systematisation, well before thorough national and regional surveys had been made. While historians of science may continue to consider Pfeiffer's contribution at best a form of 'assistance' to contemporary male specialists, she remains a figure who demonstrates the rigour, determination and ambition of women to transcend disciplinary, national and linguistic boundaries. As an Austrian woman who contributed greatly to the European understanding of biological diversity in the Dutch East Indies, she was indeed a figure who, as the author in *Good Words* so neatly put it, added "materially to the world's knowledge".