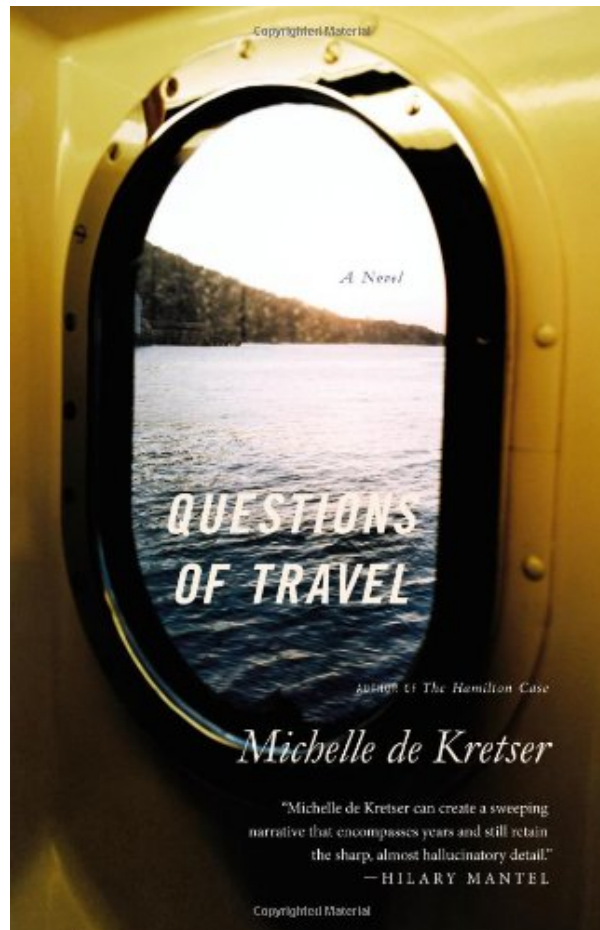
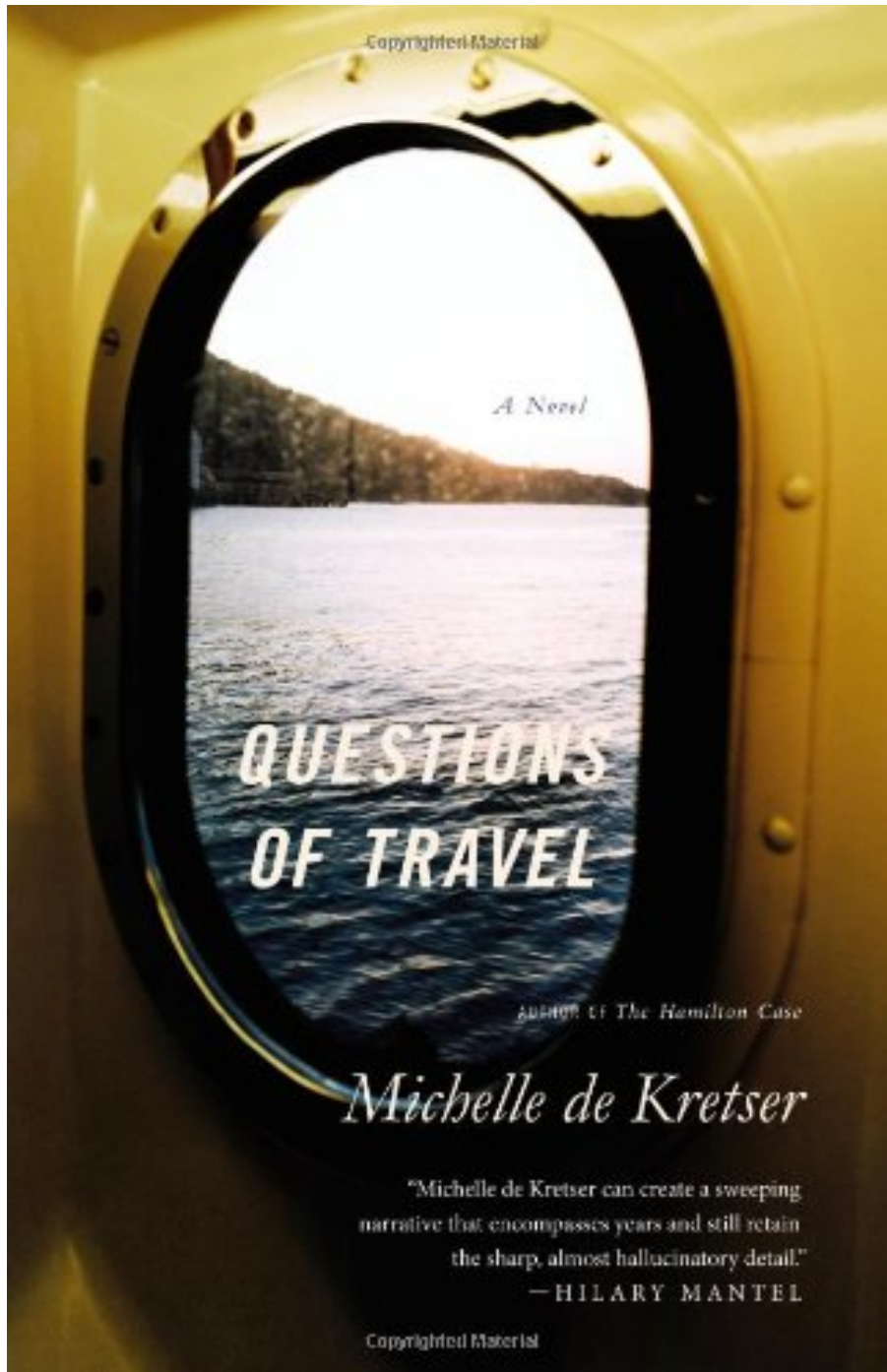


QUESTIONS OF TRAVEL: A NOVEL BY MICHELLE DE KRETZER



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From Booklist

After his human-rights activist wife is slaughtered with her little son in Sri Lanka, Ravi flees to Sydney, Australia, where he faces prejudice as he applies for asylum and gets a job in computers with a big travel company. Laura works for the company as a tourism writer, having returned home from London, where Australia, with stars, aborigines, and cities so secondhand they need the outback, is regarded as exotic. More than all the multiple personal intricacies in Ravi's and Laura's alternating narratives, the contemporary work scene will grab readers—the corporate drivel (Moral indignation is not managerial), the office politics with the daily e-mails, the technician who installs new software and cannot explain how to use it. Best of all is the wry take on tourists. As a travel writer, Laura knows they do not want ordinary life: That is what they were on holiday from. Forget the unwilling travelers like Ravi, the soldiers, and the millions made homeless. This ironic, contemporary view of finding home makes for heartfelt drama. --Hazel Rochman

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Praise for Questions of Travel

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"It is not really possible to describe, in a short space, the originality and depth of this long and beautifully crafted book."--A.S. Byatt, Guardian
Laura Fraser grows up in Sydney, motherless, with a cold, professional father and an artistic bent. Ravi Mendis lives on the other side of the globe--exploring the seductive new world of the Internet, his father dead, his mother struggling to get by. Their stories alternate throughout Michelle de Kretzer's ravishing novel, culminating in unlikely fates for them both, destinies influenced by travel--voluntary in her case, enforced in his.

With money from an inheritance, Laura sets off to see the world, eventually returning to Sydney to work for a publisher of travel guides. There she meets Ravi, now a Sri Lankan political exile who wants only to see a bit of Australia and make a living. Where do these two disparate characters, and an enthralling array of others, truly belong? With her trademark subtlety, wit, and dazzling prose, Michelle de Kretzer shows us that, in the 21st century, they belong wherever they want to and can be--home or away.

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- Binding: Hardcover
- 480 pages

From Booklist

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Most helpful customer reviews

41 of 41 people found the following review helpful.

Has stayed with me

By Rose Scott

I'm pretty old now. I've read a lot. Knowing life is short, I do not hesitate to abandon books that have failed to engage me after a couple of chapters. I must admit that I wondered at first whether *Questions of Travel* would make the cut.

It features two unprepossessing characters, utterly separated - in terms of geography, character, social milieu, race and most certainly in terms of their experience of travel - for almost all of the book. Neither is really loveable, yet I grew to love them both. The sense of each sits with me now, two weeks after finishing the book. As in *The Hamilton Case*, de Kretser has nailed something profound about human experience - things I have not found nailed elsewhere in fiction. In the earlier novel, it was something about how dealing with an unloveable parent can make a grown child nastier still. In this book - and I haven't processed it yet, it is all still swirling - it is something about being alone in the great world and about how it is possible to function there having no future whatsoever.

It includes a cracker of a satire on a Lonely Planet-like publishing company. Forgetting the profound bits, at regular intervals these bits made me snort with laughter.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

moving and thought-provoking

By Cloggie Downunder

Questions of Travel is the fourth novel by Sri Lanka-born author, Michelle de Kretser. This novel follows, from childhood, events in the lives of two people: in Sydney, Laura Fraser, inspired by her Great-aunt Hester's travel stories, uses a bequest from Hester to travel the world, eventually making a career in travel guide publishing; in Sri Lanka, Ravi Mendis's life is turned upside down by devastating events, causing him to flee for his life. Ultimately, their paths cross, although this does not happen until almost three quarters of the way through the book. de Kretser is skilled at conveying atmosphere and mood: she captures the feel of Sydney summer beautifully and her intimate knowledge of Sri Lanka is apparent. de Kretser slowly builds her story around a set of complex characters: I really wanted happiness for these two, but they seemed determined to thwart their own contentment at every turn. de Kretser's novel will have the reader thinking about travel in its many different forms: travel for pleasure, for work, as migration, and in flight from persecution or war. At one point, Ravi realises that "Immigration was the triumph of geography over history." de Kretser juxtaposes the superficiality of tourism with the life of locals in those destinations: the global rich in the context of the local poor. There is some beautiful prose: "Antennas were suspended above tiles - or were they the bones of fish? Clouds parted, and a great rib of light reached into a valley like an illustration from a Bible story." And "Ferries passed, lit up like cakes. The bridge went on holding the two halves of the city apart." The last paragraph is a completely unexpected twist. Powerful and thought-provoking.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Question of 'Why Read?'

By Lee W

Very good writer, good wordsmith and for that I stuck it 70% through the book before giving it up as a loss. Two separate stories, far, far too detailed [oh where was the editor with the blue pencil] and the excessive detail gave the book an endless feel. I kept thinking the two totally separate stories had to get together at some stage but getting there was simply too unrewarding. The author is a good writer but needs a good editor to get the story to a readable level. SOMETHING, anything, has to happen sometime.

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