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Edited by

Diana Brydon, Peter Forsgren & Gunlög Fur

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## **Culture Bound and Unbound: Concurrent Voices and Claims in Postcolonial Places**

By Diana Brydon, Peter Forsgren and Gunlög Fur

One of the central concerns of the postcolonial effort has been to recover the voice and agency of the subaltern in an effort to find alternative articulations to monolithic imperial representations. Universalizing perspectives obscure their origins and threaten to silence alternatives, regardless of their validity or influence. How then, do we account for intersections, contentions, imbalances, and bridge-building as part of the manner in which human beings narrate and engage with their world?

This volume of *Culture Unbound* showcases contemporary postcolonial scholarship collected under the auspices of *Concurrences in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies*, a University Research Center at Linnaeus University in southern Sweden. The center gathers senior as well as postdoctoral scholars and graduate students from different fields interested in how colonialism and imperialism affected encounters in various contact zones across the globe. The *Concurrences* research looks for ways to expand the understanding of conflicting and simultaneous claims regarding culture and history. Influenced by the postcolonial concern with recovering the voice and agency of the subaltern, the principal purpose is to investigate various cultural archives – formal and informal, traditional and digital, fiction and documentary text – in order to map multiple and concurring claims of reality, experience and meaning in time and place.

We recognize that this is a challenging project for which there are few successful models or guidelines and propose that any viable response requires cross-disciplinary fertilization and widespread collaborative efforts. We therefore find it essential to employ and further develop theories and methods that legitimize, problematize and communicate multimodal and multivocal forms of concurrences without trivializing the contested power relations that influence who is heard, where and in what way.

The present collection of articles roams across territories, centuries, and disciplines, demonstrating the many varied settings to which colonialism bequeathed its legacy. They all struggle to make room for diverse and many-faceted processes, which cannot adequately be described in binary terms or easily delineated categories. As a result, they present different innovative methodological approaches to the study of cultural encounters inflected by colonialism and imperialism. They demonstrate, each in their own way, the bounded nature of Western interpretations of these encounters and of colonial systems of interaction. In doing so they

contribute to this journal by suggesting that colonial legacies constrict culture in specific ways, causing, as it were, a culture bound. That boundedness, however, can also be unbound, in part, through a recognition of those discrepant and concurrent modes of reading that characterize postcolonial approaches.

Historian Linda Andersson Burnett employs the concept of “ecology of knowledge” to interpret a patron-client system that demonstrates the formation and function of information gathering in late eighteenth century Britain. Focusing on the example of George Low, a Presbyterian Minister on the Orkney Islands in the North Atlantic, Andersson Burnett tells a story of a man with an abiding interest in natural history and environment. The network into which Low enters stretched far beyond his immediate context, revealing an ancillary system connecting scholars and explorers from England to Linnaeus and his system of categorizing the world, to European fascination with the “unknown” northern regions, as well as to British overseas colonies. It demonstrates concurring circles of knowledge that interlace and jostle one another in the assembling of information to feed the ferocious appetite for information concerning the natural world at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the period commonly associated with the birth of a modern and secular form of knowing the world. Andersson Burnett chooses to analyze these connections as an eco-system of knowledge transfers. This serves at least two purposes. On the one hand it moves the focus from “great” individuals (explorers, naturalists, scientists) to systems of circulation and dependence, transcending both class and geography; on the other hand it demonstrates the many ways in which global and imperial power intersected with local hierarchies and systems of knowledge. While not forgetting structures of inequality, the essay on Low’s gathering of Orkney information suggests a novel approach to interpretation and visualization of the many different forms of knowledge production.

Visual art scholar Melanie Klein discusses education as a contact zone in her study of art education for Black students in South Africa during the era of Bantu education around the middle of the twentieth century. Her search for an “antireductionist” perspective leads her to pay specific attention to “punctual evidence” forming patterns of temporary stability. Art education for Black students, primarily in conjunction with teachers training, was expected to advance civilization and modernity, at the same time as it emphasized and encouraged specific formulations of African authenticity and ethnicity. Black leaders and artists, however, did not always adopt or agree with these definitions. Through examples of the Black South African sculptor Job Patja Kekana and the white educator John Grossert, she demonstrates that artistic expressions and art education in apartheid South Africa had multiple and sometimes dubious origins and at times unexpected or contradictory consequences. Her methodology exposes “an alternative art historical narrative” with aesthetic concepts that are not fixed but instead point out struggles regarding artistic and intellectual self-definition.

Historian Hans Hägerdal analyses an early example of Swedish travel fiction, the novella *Swensken på Timor* (The Swede on Timor) from 1815, “translated” by the Swedish author Christina Cronhjelm from a purported English account. It is a tale of a Swedish sailor who after a shipwreck is adopted by an indigenous group on Timor, marrying a local woman and converting to Islam. Since there has been a tendency to reproduce ideas of *cultural otherness* in European travel writing, Hägerdal examines in what ways this novella relates to the European discourse of the tropical or Asian other. Hägerdal shows that some historical facts can be traced in the novella, but more than anything else the text is dominated by literary tropes of romantic exoticism, which explains its remarkably positive portrayal of the indigenous society and to some extent even Islam. At the end of the article Hägerdal underlines that the non-white protagonists of the novella are not merely exotic objects, but on the contrary stand out as subjects whose words and attitudes convey European ideas of natural life and love, and that the important thing with *Swensken på Timor* is that it gives a vision of a society at the margins of Asia which did not conform to the discourse of race and evolution that was taking shape in Europe around the time it was written.

Historian of ideas Mikela Lundahl examines some of the conflicting and competing historical facts and narratives connected to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Stone Town in Zanzibar, Tanzania, using the concept of *friction* as a way to analyze how various actors narrate “the same” event(s) in different ways, and interpret the other actors’ accounts as fantasies or fabrications. Lundahl compares the World Heritage narrative of global values and of (material) cultural fusion and harmonization with local narrations of loss and marginalization. The article raises questions about who has the power over historiography as well as questions concerning what the effects of heritagization are, especially if it silences other narratives that are concurrent and locally more important. Lundahl’s article participates in the theoretical discussion of the concept of *cosmopolitanism*, contributing to discussions elaborated by scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall and Robbie Shilliam who have redefined cosmopolitanism in different ways in order to give the concept a less Eurocentric definition, and a definition more related to global migration.

Literary scholar Piia Posti employs the concept of concurrence to address the simultaneous and sometimes conflicted allegiances of contemporary travel writing as exemplified in two texts by Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminate all the Brutes* and *Terra Nullius*. Through close reading of his work, she illuminates the challenges of writing postcolonial critique through the conventions of a genre long steeped in colonialism and argues further that globalization, anxiety about the genre of travel writing and the tension between fiction and non-fiction in such work may best be understood as interconnected discursive fields. Whereas most Western travel writing is conventionally complicit with colonialist habits of mind, Lindqvist sets out to critique colonialism. Yet despite these good intentions, the

achievements of these texts are mixed at best. Posti argues that what is interesting about Lindqvist's travelogues is that a tension emerges between the claims to authority of his postcolonial critique (based on his historical reading and analysis) and his role as travel writer (where he bases his claims on his experiences of travel). In these texts, she notes, "the privileged positions of the postcolonial critic and the contemporary travel writer concur" in ways that problematize his critique. She situates these travel narratives as in some ways concurrent with the postcolonial critique of literary theorists writing at the end of the twentieth century, using the decolonial theory of Ramon Grosfoguel to suggest a possible route forward beyond the impasse at which postcolonial thinking now finds itself. In particular, she finds inspiration in Grosfoguel's invocation of the Zapatista mantra, "walking while asking questions," with its potential for rethinking the concurrent relations among local, global, and universal in ways that can do justice to ways of knowing that were previously eclipsed by narrowly conceived conceptions of a Eurocentrically-based universal. Her sustained engagement with Lindqvist's work demonstrates the productivity of the concurrences model for understanding Swedish investments in understanding postcolonial critique and complicities beyond their current articulations.

The concluding essay also extends postcolonial critique into new geopolitical domains. In this essay, literary scholar Fedja Borcak addresses a particular form of writing back against imperial othering, which he terms "subversive infantilisation." In his view, this term describes strategies adopted in contemporary Bosnian literature depicting experiences of the 1990s war. Subversive infantilisation challenges paternalist Western discourses on Bosnia and Herzegovina, by "re-rigging" them, often by filtering them through the perspective of the naïve child narrator, to open up a space of undecidability for the reader. Citing Maria Todorova's coinage of the term *balkanism* (theorized on the model of Edward Said's *Orientalism*), Borcak explains that Western discourse on the Balkans has been to a large extent unchanged for roughly 200 years. Western discourse on the war and media depictions of it continued in this *balkanist* vein. Given this situation, Bosnian writers repeat this infantilizing discourse that casts Bosnia and Herzegovina as a child state, inhabiting and using it (through subversive child narrators) to "dissolve it from within."

Taken together, these essays illustrate the versatility and resilience of the concept of concurrences for enabling new readings of cultural production within and beyond the binding structures of discursive, geopolitical, and historical power structures.

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## **Re-rigging Othering: Subversive Infantilisation in Contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian Prose**

By Fedja Borčak

### **Abstract**

In this article I put forward the concept of subversive infantilisation to designate a phenomenon in contemporary Bosnian literature, which by using a certain kind of childish outlook on the world undermines paternalistic and balkanist Western discourse on Bosnia and Herzegovina. By analysing primarily the portrayal of the role of mass media in a few literary texts, principally books by Nenad Veličković and Miljenko Jergović, I highlight the way in which these texts “re-rig” and by means of irony and exaggeration illuminate the problematic logic inherent in the subject position from which one represents the other. Textual characteristics of subversive infantilisation are contextualised further and seen as a discursive continuation of experiences of the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Keywords:** Subversive infantilisation, balkanism, Bosnian literature, Jergović, Veličković, Samardžić

## Introduction

On 14 April 1992, with a voice void of everything save for the determination to deliver the latest news, the television reporter Senad Hadžifejzović confirmed to Bosnian-Herzegovinian viewers what they had feared would happen for some time: the outbreak of war, which would lead to the dismembering of the federation of Yugoslavia and put the Bosnian state in a political, social and ideological shock, which has not, even after two decades, eased off (see “Senad Hadzifejzovic - Rat Uzivo 1992-04-14”). However frustrating the slowness of the reconstruction has proven to be, the pace is unsurprising considering the complexity of the continuing conflicts, of which not only the fierce nationalist rivalry between the three major domestic factions (Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs) is the problem, but also the involvement of the international community (or “the Western governments and multilateral institutions controlled by those governments” (Bose 2002:6)), which has added further layers to the core of the problem.

This constant state of enmity has made Bosnian-Herzegovinian post-war society burst with opposing narratives, explanatory models of varying sophistication, and a range of possible (or impossible) solutions proposed to ease the tensions. Consequently, contemporary Bosnian literature dealing with the 1990s war reflects and contributes to this intricate discourse in different ways, either by criticising or by reiterating reactive collective (nationalist) identities, historical narratives, etc.

The attention of the present article will be directed at literary texts experimenting with ideological alterations, and producing new, differentiated claims which set out from an attitude highly critical towards ideological grand narratives, be they Titoist, nationalist or, more recently, the capitalist ones induced by the international community in connection with the end of the war and protected in the course of reconstruction (Kazaz 2004:138). What interests me is a particular cultural implication of what has been conceived as a deep “resentment at foreign paternalism,” a paternalism that is widely considered to be repressive and imperialist in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hunt 2001:239). I propose the concept of *subversive infantilisation* to describe a particular way of responding to such paternalistic Western political involvement and the discursive foundation supporting it. I argue that the cultural phenomenon of subversive infantilisation deconstructs American and Western European discourse on Bosnia and Herzegovina by shiftily “re-rigging” – i.e. imitating yet displacing the inherent logic in the implied Western epistemic statements regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. This re-rigging, I argue, can open up a way of thinking characterised by undecidability, which opposes absolute claims on, for instance, ethnicity and identity, and helps perceive possibilities in the world that do not yet exist, but which can be thought and potentially realised. This attitude of undecidability is especially important for a society impatient with the certainties of totalitarian narratives.

## The Event of War

In a 2004 survey, Enver Kazaz listed major tendencies in Bosnian post-war literature, one of them being what he called “the infantilisation of narration” (*infantilizacija naracije*), which he observed in the works of a number of authors across the spectrum of ethnical affinity, such as Tvrтко Kulenović, Bekim Sejranović, Aleksandar Hemon, Fadila Nura Haver, Goran Samardžić and Alma Lazarevska, among others. Two other authors producing infantilised narrations are also mentioned, namely Nenad Veličković and Miljenko Jergović, whose books *Lodgers (Konačari)* and *Mama Leone*, respectively, will be addressed in the course of this article. In infantilisation, Kazaz sees the construction of narratives that, with the help of ironic and hyperbolic (sometimes litotetic) oversimplification, portray historical courses of events with the aim of undermining stiffened and simplified discourse on Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. Most often this is done from the perspective of the child, or the “naïve narrator” (Avdagić 2012:140), in a fashion somewhat reminiscent of works like Voltaire’s *Candide*, Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, or Imre Kertész’s *Fatelessness*. Although the use of the child’s perspective is not a literary convention unique to Bosnian post-war production, its frequent recurrence in this literature is remarkable and demands to be explained with attention to the contextual circumstances of Bosnia’s ideological transition. Another key characteristic of infantilised narration is its way of changing authorial focus from retelling historical grand narratives built on ideological dogmata to telling stories about individual experiences of everyday life, thus affirming perspectives on “the bare elements of human life” (Kazaz 2004:163, my translation). According to Stijn Vervaeet, who addresses Veličković’s *Lodgers*, the infantilisation of narration enables “the author to tell his sarcastic truth about the war or at least to pose some sarcastic questions about how the war is understood and represented by the nationalist opposing forces as well as by the TV-watching West and its prejudices about ‘the barbaric Balkans’” (Vervaeet 2010:8).

However useful the notion of infantilised narration is, I would like to somewhat redefine the contours of the concept in the hope of going beyond the original definition’s limitation to “authorial” truths and strictly text-inherent features. Using instead *subversive infantilisation* underlines, of course, the phenomenon’s critical stance, and may furthermore help to open up the dimension of social mobilisation shaped spontaneously (pre-subjectively) in response to the historical event of war as well as circulating ideological templates, both domestic and foreign. It is important to recognise that although subversive infantilisation is a phenomenon dependent on the space of discourse, it does to a large extent spring from the non-discursive experience of the event of war. Not least of all, the range of studies focusing on memory in Bosnian post-war literature has shown how es-

sential it is to see much of the aesthetic production as a result of a traumatic break in personal and societal history.

This break has led to an increased level of pessimism with regard to totalitarian narratives, which, according to Kazaz, is visible in the strong focus on “small stories, personal confessions, intimate autobiographical narratives and testimonies of ordinary people” that work to preserve the “autonomy of the individual against the totalitarian ethno-nationalistic model of society” (Kazaz 2012:85). Personal remembrance is opposed to ideologically encoded social memory. A similar observation is made by Branka Vojnović (2008), who also stresses that these first-person accounts should be seen as important witness accounts resulting from the authors’ need to formulate and psychologically deal with an event that radically disrupted the sense of personal belonging and made it impossible to turn back time and return to established concepts of identity. The witness, in the words of Sibylle Krämer, is someone:

who is present (in the flesh) at an event, perceiving it with his own eyes and ears and therefore able to give an account to those without access to the event. The witness is medium and messenger in so far as he transmits; that which he transmits is a perception, a bodily experience which he has to “translate” into public speech. (Krämer 2005:19)

Testimonies qua literary enunciations can have no hope of actually catching the present which was once experienced bodily (non-discursively), which is why Krämer stresses the necessity to understand them as translations of experiences into archived perceptions. The witness metaphor is telling if its dimension of violence is kept in mind. In his event theory the philosopher Alain Badiou (2009) stresses that the political event (as a break in history) forces those witnessing it to witness and furthermore demands that they testify, or at least position themselves in relation to it. Bodily inscriptions thus turn into a matter of knowledge.

The novelty of an event is expressed in the fact that it interrupts the normal regime of the description of knowledge, that always rests on the classification of the well known, and imposes another kind of procedure on whomever admits that, right here in this place, something hitherto unnamed really and truly occurred. (Meillassoux 2011:2)

One should see the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an event not only in the sense of a profound human tragedy, but also as igniting the questioning and ultimately the dismissal of naturalised ways of thinking about a wide range of issues. In the renunciation of the mythologies offered by domestic nationalist occultism and the deconstruction of the liberal discourse coming from the West, subversive infantilisation should be seen as a reaction to an event – or better yet as a mobilisation of those subjects, as Badiou would put it, “faithful” to the event; those acknowledging it as a break in the tradition of what is considered true (Badiou 2009:53). At the same time as the faithful subject is constituted, it keeps the implications of the event alive; implications that can further question old truths and tentatively propose new understandings. In this sense, subversive infantilisation

does not merely record experiences of war, but also claims political space and deterritorialises dominant epistemic discourse, making possible undecidable, not yet known epistemic possibilities.

## Seeing as One is Seen

In the texts analysed in this article, the war is often the cause of disillusion and reevaluation of what was hitherto held to be true: the world reveals itself to be much more complex and a far more unsafe place than it had appeared at first, in childhood. It is not always the case, but for the most part the infantilising character of a text springs from the perspective of a first person child narrator, whose playful gaze on the world clashes, as soon as war strikes, with the “adult,” conventional way of understanding the surroundings. This type of child perspective is rather common in contemporary Bosnian literature and seems to be effective in posing questions about the complexities of post-war Bosnia. Not least of all, the frequent coming-of-age story, I argue, is often allegorically paralleled with the historical stages of the Yugoslav federation. If the child growing up in Yugoslavia prior to the war acts in a milieu characterised by social stability and personal care-freeness, the outbreak of the war entails the disillusionments coming with adolescence and the acute demand to reconsider many aspects of life that previously had been taken for granted. Vervaet argues that these texts

not only [try] to convey the experience of war but also [tend] to reflect on the ways in which war can be represented through literature and how the war experience often becomes a turning point in the life of people, influencing their understanding and framing of the past and its connections with the present. (2010:6)

One example of the event of war is found in Goran Samardžić’s 2006 novel *Šumski duh* (The Forest Spirit). In the first half of the book, the multi-ethnic narrator Kosta’s childish naiveté is portrayed with all its carelessness, creativity and joy. The second half, however, starts with Kosta’s homecoming to Belgrade after serving in the Yugoslavian military shortly before the war and his realising that his Serbian friends had changed while he was away:

My friends were no longer the same. They’d even gotten hold of a rifle, with an adjustable scope, and a pistol. We called them babies. I could ask them: “Where are your babies?”, and they would reply in concordance: “In a safe place, you Turk” (Samardžić 2006:85. My translation).

Never having been an issue earlier, Kosta’s differing ethnicity from the Serbian majority has now become a problem, excluding Kosta from his friends’ new games. Also new is the expansionist mindset of his friends: “To love and to protect our street corner alone was no longer enough for my friends. There was something drawing them yet further away. One could, it seemed, occupy oneself with just about anything, even with the love towards one’s own country” (Samardžić 2006:83. My translation). The sudden change in attitude reflects the quick spread

of nationalist discourse in Serbian society (as well as in other Yugoslav territories), and the weapons signify the gaining momentum of politicised militarisation preceding war. They also seem to point out a disturbing ambivalence in the adolescent transition: young men on the edge of adulthood playing with babies/guns. In its critical way of displacing the stereotypically masculine image of the brave warrior, this is one particular way of infantilising. The motif of children holding guns, and its function of displacing of stereotypes, can also be found outside the literary medium, for instance in the photography of Milomir Kovačević, who in a series called “Mali vojnici” (Small soldiers) photographed small children posing with real-life guns in the ongoing war. The most emblematic of these photographs is perhaps the one depicting a young boy with arms wearing a beret and a Mickey Mouse shirt (Kovačević 2012).

A different type of subversive infantilisation is found in Nenad Veličković’s novel *Lodgers* (2006), in which the reader follows the teenager Maja’s written account of her experiences during the siege of Sarajevo. As a first person narrator, she writes in diary form, not with the sole purpose of recording experiences, but perhaps primarily to make sense of what is happening around her, both for her own sake and for her readers’:

The war is being waged between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. Davor says that the war is being waged because the Croats have Croatia, the Serbs have Serbia, but the Muslims don’t have Muslimia. Everyone thinks it would be right for them to have it, but no one can agree where the borders should be. Dad says that Davor is a dunce and that the war is being waged because the Serbs and Croats want to divide Bosnia and kill and drive out the Muslims. I don’t know what to say.

[...]

No! I don’t think I’ll be able to explain objectively and impartially to an average foreign reader why war is being waged. Probably, like all wars, it’s about taking territory and plunder. But I can’t think of a *probably* for why a city of half a million inhabitants should be bombarded day after day from the surrounding hills. Why would anyone (in our case the Serbian artillery) destroy houses, burn libraries, and shatter minarets and the poplars planted around them? (Veličković 2006:9. Italics in original).

Asking her family about the increasingly acute political situation, Maja is presented with different explanations for the causes of the war. Although the two accounts given by Dad and Davor differ on which side is to be blamed for the war, they share a certain schematic simplicity. At first sight, this might seem to have to do with the older family members’ attention to Maja’s age and her level of foreknowledge. But considering that their explanations clash and that their versions are very much rooted in Bosnian society – people do offer similar explanations, as do domestic politicians and foreign administrators – they can very well be seen as equivalent to epistemic statements that are more or less discursively archived. Maja, however, instinctively distances herself and takes an undecided stance: “I don’t know what to say.” She does, however, not merely settle with the illuminating comparison of domestic nationalist narratives. In the second part of the pas-

sage quoted, she addresses her implied foreign readers – something she does regularly and with an ironic sense of humour. On this particular occasion, foreign readers are asked not to expect a clear-cut explanation for the situation, or to buy into simplistic narratives – which they might very well do, Maja seems to suggest, if they are not forewarned explicitly.

A few pages later Maja again stresses the foreign subject's lack of knowledge about the war and its contextual circumstances: "A foreign reader might well ask who they [the different domestic factions] are and how they differ. Just as I might, for instance, wonder what the difference is between Boers and Pygmies" (Veličković 2006:17). What Maja does here is to adopt the implied discursive position of the Westerner, and then subtly displace the formal logic of the – again implied – statement that seems to accompany such a subject position. The statement (*l'énoncé*) as a component of discursive play is here understood, according to Michel Foucault, as an archived epistemic claim found in a single enunciation or in a set of enunciations:

[T]he statement, as it emerges in its materiality, appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced. Thus the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry. (2002:118)

By constructing a representation of the others (Boers and Pygmies) which is parallel to the Westerner's implied – seemingly poorly informed – representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Maja appropriates a statement, or better yet, mimics a certain representational logic inherent in the portrayal of others. She positions herself in relation to Boers and Pygmies as would, in her mind, a Westerner do in relation to the different groups in Bosnia. Seemingly, she recognises foreigners' lack of knowledge of the Bosnian war situation as something natural and understandable: Bosnians are as other to Westerners as Boers and Pygmies are to her. She does not, however, appropriate the statement out of empathy, but rather illuminates and comments on the way the statement is constituted. What is targeted is the ignorance of local differences in the position of the "global" subject, i.e. the subject that perceives (the rest of) the world from a position of assumed privilege. In the parallel that Maja makes she is on the one hand a victim of the epistemic violence committed, and on the other hand a perpetrator making use of the very same logic in the representation of others. She both sees and is being seen. Her choice of others draws on colonial discourse: The term "Pygmy" is, of course, considered pejorative and lumps together different ethnicities persecuted throughout history, e.g. the Aka, Mbuti and Twa, on the basis of their relatively short height. The Boers are, in contrast, descendants of French, German and Dutch settlers who immigrated to South Africa in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In illuminating the lack of knowledge about others, Maja subtly

displaces the mimicked statement, hinting at the discursive circumstances in which the statement is articulated; the invisible subject position is marked out in what is sometimes called the “triangle of representation”. By highlighting the subject’s participation in the construction of the representation it is possible to draw attention to the contingent, rather than naturalised, character of a single representation or a particular discursive practice (Prendergast 2000:11). In the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, the authoritative statement is transformed from an “absolute dogma” to a “working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality” (Bakhtin 1981b:61).

In the act of subversive infantilisation, this sort of mimicking, displacing, and intentionally oversimplifying complex matters is highlighted, as already suggested, from the perspective of the child’s naïve play and generally childish uninformed outlook on the surroundings. Rather than being patronising or belittling, which is usually something associated with the term, infantilisation here entails play, spontaneity, and openness with regard to what may be the consequences of the naïve questions asked. Being a child, Maja is by design excluded from many aspects of social life. This is evident in that she hardly ever leaves the museum at which her family stays; all her anecdotes of what happens in different parts of the city are second-hand accounts of what family members or temporary visitors have experienced. This is not necessarily a deficiency, for what the perspective lacks in immediacy is balanced by how it benefits from fresh eyes and a sort of unconditional consideration. Her outsider position entails no real responsibility to the norm system of the adults, and her position as a child can be compared to the character type that Bakhtin called “the fool,” whose “right to be ‘other’ in this world” is based on the surroundings’ general acceptance of the character’s naïveté, which gives the character the possibility to express strange, even ridiculous, thoughts about social life. This dialectic outsider position enables a critical point of view, and the child as a character has the potential “to portray the mode of existence of a man who is in life, but not of it, life’s perpetual spy and reflector” (Bakhtin 1981a:161). The child, being someone who sees life “from below” and questions conventionality by turning naturalised views upside-down, is an ideal infantilising subject.

I believe that this outsider position is what ultimately makes readers forgive the young boy in the following scene from Miljenko Jergović’s *Mama Leone* from 1999. Sitting alone in the living room, the boy narrator finds a rather grotesque pleasure in watching news reports from the war in Vietnam:

I laugh whenever I see little slant-eyed mothers next to their little dead husbands on the TV. Saigon and Hanoi are the names of the first comedies in my life. I spell them out loud, letter by letter, laughing my head off. Those people don’t look like us, and I don’t believe they’re in pain or that they’re really sad. Words of sadness have to sound sad, and tears have to be like raindrops, small and brilliant. Their words aren’t sad, and the tears on their faces are too big and look funny, like the fake tears of the

clowns I saw at the circus. I'm just waiting for Mom and Grandma to leave the room so I can watch Saigon and Hanoi and have a laugh (Jergović 2012:62)

Images of the suffering Vietnamese in the 1960s do not affect the boy in the slightest; and certainly not in the way it “should”, in the way his grandmother is affected by the same images. His hyperbolic insensitivity even makes him suspicious of his grandmother’s sincerity: “Grandma loved the little slant-eyed mothers and pretended she understood them” (Jergović 2012:63). One is urged to ask why the boy is unable – despite the self-awareness of his anomalous feelings – to feel any empathy for the people depicted on the news, whose suffering, tears and language are questioned. Reasons for the apparent dehumanisation of the suffering other seem most likely to be found in the effects of the television medium, which fails to convey the immediacy of tragedy – the alienated reaction seems to depend on the logic of how the news report is constructed as a representation. This medial process of voyeuristic and imperialist possession of the depicted subject has been massively debated, for instance, by Susan Sontag in her seminal book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). It is indeed a frequent theme in Bosnian literature, where mass medial representations of the 1990s war have become emblematic for the general attitude of the international community towards the suffering in Bosnia. In *Lodgers*, for instance, Maja learns that soldiers defending Sarajevo have come up with the plan to injure or kill neighbourhood dogs in order to get the sympathy required to finally receive help from the international community:

In Germany, we could ask Granny, there wasn't a wealthy lady who didn't belong to a society for the protection of animals. In capitalism people didn't like each other. The less you liked your neighbour, the more you cared for your dog or cat. Just let ten ladies see Sniffy without legs and ears, and there'd be military intervention. (2006:105)

And here is another example discussing the role of media, from Semezdin Mehmedinović's book *Sarajevo Blues*, which addresses the Ferhadija Street Massacre on 27 May 1992, when 26 Sarajevans were killed and over a hundred people were wounded by artillery shelling as they stood queuing for bread.

Shots of the mass killing at Ferhadija circle the globe; pictures of the dead and massacred turn into an ad for the war. It doesn't matter that these people have names: TV translates them into its cool language, the naked image. The camera disembowels images of their psychological content to create information. And all the massacres that follow reproduce the same images. So the world can see what is going on here. But is this really possible when television sees right through the lack of compassion in human nature just as long as tragedy doesn't hit home? The sense of tragedy arrived with the body bags wrapped in the American flag, and not before then, not through TV reports from Vietnam. (1998:83)

Here, as in Jergović, the inability to mediate suffering is paralleled with American reactions to the Vietnam war, but what is perhaps more accentuated by Mehmedinović is the close tie between the Western attitude toward the suffering of the Bosnian population and the question of acting or not acting when presented with

information about atrocities taking place elsewhere. Among others, Thomas Keenan (2002) has addressed this matter quite directly, contrasting the international passiveness to the enormous amount of information available to governments and public opinion about the situation in war-torn Bosnia, and ultimately dismissing the humanist assumption that people are automatically moved to action if shown proof of human tragedy. With Badiou's event theory in mind, one is able to understand this sudden insight originating from the war as a "new truth," revealing what has always been the case, but not yet known.

What is interesting is that when the little boy narrator in Jergović addresses the Vietnamese tragedy, thereby raising questions of the logic of representation, he is also indirectly addressing the position of the Bosnian subject during the war, which was quite similar to the Vietnamese considering the situation in which one is being observed but not helped. Jergović lets the young boy assume the position of the passively gazing subject, and recreates a situation parallel to the scenario in which the Bosnian population appeared before a global audience for years. This staging, or re-rigging, is soaked in an exaggeration that functions as a way of drawing attention to the problematic subject position and the equally problematic logic of representing the other. The child's surprisingly uncanny laughter, infantilising the seriousness of tragedy, initiates the recognition of the dehumanisation of the people represented, be they Vietnamese or Bosnian. The global memory of the war in Vietnam functions as a support in articulating the memory of the Bosnian war experience, much like what Michael Rothberg (2009) has called multidirectional memory, which entails that memories of other atrocities, say the Holocaust or the war in Vietnam, contribute, by being borrowed, referenced or negotiated, to the way another tragedy is remembered and formed discursively. The process of multidirectional memory in this context is perhaps not primarily a matter of articulating a new narrative of one's own, which is what is emphasised by Rothberg, but of deconstructing Western attitudes.

### **The Balkanist Motivation**

Up to this point, the position of "the West" – this complex metageographical category targeted in subversive infantilisation – has been somewhat taken for granted. As I have only hinted at, the presence of the West in these texts is to a large extent implicit, or subtly implied. This is especially true for the imagined Western gaze, which, however blind to differences within Bosnian society, is portrayed as relying heavily on the fundamental otherness of the Balkan subject. I would like to argue that the infantilising texts depend on the reader's familiarity with Western discourse on the Balkans. Without this level of foreknowledge, the young boy's alienated view of the televised suffering of the Vietnamese in Jergović's *Mama Leone* does not fully make sense; neither does Maja's attentiveness to foreign

readers' ignorance of the ethnic differences in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Veličković's novel.

As Maria Todorova (who, inspired by Said's *orientalism*, coined the term *balkanism*) and others have noted (cf. Goldsworthy 1998; Norris 1999; Wolff 1994), Western epistemic discourse on the Balkans has in large measure been handed down from generation to generation to a large extent unchanged for some 200 years. During these two centuries the Balkans have been associated with "industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed capitalist West, irrational and superstitious cultures unmarked by Western Enlightenment" (Todorova 2009:11-12). Bakić-Hayden reminds us that "violence in the Balkans has been not only a description of a social condition but considered inherent in the nature of its people" (Bakić-Hayden 1995:918). The region has in some sense been a mythological "point of no return" similar to Romanian Transylvania, or "a multicultural Babel that just might be chaotic enough to make peaceful co-existence an impossibility" (Karakasidou 2002:576). Gregory Kent suggests that the lack of political will on the part of the international community during the war sprang from the discourse of balkanism, influencing – at the same time being fuelled by – the massive media coverage: "This inherently quasi-racist, pseudohistoric perspective appears to have informed the structurally embedded linguistic preferences of news organisations, as well as, less subtle, more direct, but still somewhat opaque, aspects of falsely balanced reporting" (Kent 2003). Discourse on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina regularly presented the violent determinism of the Balkan people as the sole cause of the destruction of Yugoslavia. When the political discourse, however, changed shortly after the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995 and started to focus on Serbian expansionist aggression, governments became more interested in participating more actively in the conflict resolution (Kent 2003). This interest did not become any smaller by the end of the war, and international involvement was stepped up with the beginning of the process of reconstruction.

Although the Western governments and institutions see themselves as the "flagbearer[s] of a vision of liberal internationalism in a place destroyed by competing particularist nationalisms" (Bose 2002:6), the international community must be regarded as a dominant player that actively participates in the power struggle (together with domestic ethno-nationalist groups), and that does so according to its own political and economic interests in Bosnia. The task of reconstruction has been described as a project to a large extent orchestrated according to the interests of foreign administrations, on many occasions resulting in what Sumantra Bose describes as "direct intervention in Bosnia's public life, especially through the person of the civilian head of mission who coordinates the multi-agency international effort, the 'high representative'", who has several times outright "dismissed elected Bosnian officials deemed 'obstructionist'" (Bose 2002:7).

Embedded in this structure, there is a balkanist notion of the Bosnian as deterministically infantile and incapable of structuring a stable society, which seems to justify a “helping hand”, or rather a colonial administrative organisation. Todo-rova stresses that balkanist discourse is a discourse on an “imputed ambiguity” rather than an orientalist “imputed opposition” (2009:17), and shows how the Balkans has had the status of “incomplete self” rather than “incomplete other”, meaning that people from the Balkans have been perceived less like the other than have, say, Turks or Arabs (2009:18). Historically, the self-perception constituted by intellectuals in the Balkans has indeed been characterised by a strong sense of in-betweenness, which has been manifested in different, often ambivalent ways in relation to the concept of European modernity; either as a lack (in comparison to the cultural capital of metropolises such as Paris and London), or as an asset (e.g. in not having any part in the imperialist machinery of modernity). The ambivalence has found expression in the emblematic metaphor of the *bridge* between civilisational horizons and stages of development, not least in Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić’s novel *The Bridge on the Drina*, which problematises the arrival of Austro-Hungarian modernity (bureaucracy, technology, ideas) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Milutinović 2011).

It certainly has hegemonic consequences that the potentially productive concept of in-betweenness is replaced by incompleteness in today’s political discourse. The concept of incompleteness is key to understanding how the Bosnian population on the one hand can be dismissed as deterministically uncivilised, yet on the other be wilfully encouraged to transgress this determinism by affirming liberalist ideas in order to become complete selves:

The degree to which various countries, authorities, social groups and individuals have embraced the free market and democracy – always evaluated by those powerful who set rules of the game – has become a yardstick for classifying different regions, countries and groups as fitting more or less into the category of “us,” i.e. “(post)modern-Western-liberals.” (Buchowski 2006:464–465)

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) calls this teleological narrative one of transition and emphasises European history as the yardstick: Western discourse excludes others from discursive equality by labelling other regions’ histories as examples of undeveloped and immature European histories. There is no doubt that the transition narrative plays a decisive role in many Bosnian discourses, not least the political one. Especially the European Union has become a symbol of the sought-after Western standard and has intimately appeared together with notions of modernity, civilisation and prosperity (Helms 2008:98). Bosnian society is constantly urged to transgress a number of negative labels (socialism, inefficiency, collective thinking, primitivism) in order to reach a set of good ones (capitalism, efficiency, individualism, modernity). Inherent in this notion of development, Linda Tuhiwai Smith says, “is the notion of progress. This assumes that societies move forward in stages of development much as an infant grows into a fully developed adult

human being” (2005:105). One might say that Bosnian society has been subjected to a patronising infantilisation ever since it parted from Yugoslavia and was encouraged to strive for progress and societal organisation according to liberalist values. The view of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a child state is made recognisable (or diagnosed) by way of subversive infantilisation, which inhabits and uses this very perspective to dissolve it from within.

## Final Remarks

In the response to this infantilising view, manifested through subversive infantilisation, the matter of illuminating and deconstructing balkanist discourse goes beyond the West’s general attitude to Bosnia as well as the reluctance during the war to take action. It is in the end a way of addressing the acute social problems of today, which are at least partly caused by international involvement (primarily the effects of the Dayton Peace Agreement). If the West, by affirming the Bosnian’s culture-deterministic primitivism and inability to organise a functioning society, has been able to justify the West’s self-acclaimed guardianship over Bosnia and Herzegovina, subversive infantilisation functions as a means by which it is possible to attack the very root of the problem, namely the logic of the current configuration of balkanism. What is interesting is that the infantilising texts are not concerned with arguing against Western statements in the form of “Bosnia is X” by creating similarly propositional statements like “Bosnia is Y”. Neither is the point to target specific enunciations, say the Dayton Peace Agreement or even less particular representations in mass media. As I have tried to show, the idea is instead to highlight the logic by which the dominant assertions in these types of enunciations are created. The literary texts experiment, in other words, with the authority by which one can claim “X” in the first place. They challenge dominant means of representation, as Ania Loomba would say, by appropriating and inverting the statement “Bosnia is X” in order to show that its simplicity does not correspond to the complexity of Bosnian social reality and that the authority invested in the representations is conditional rather than self-evident (Loomba 2005:63). The question concerns the *how* of representation, including the aspects of delimitation and control of the field of representation.

As it does not propose any more or less explicit alternative explanatory models, subversive infantilisation is open-ended and presents no predetermined answers that would simply work as counterstatements to Western statements. There is no new ready-made image of war, history or culture, nor a new messianic ideology waiting to be established. Rather, subversive infantilisation affirms an attitude similar to the Derridean concept of undecidability, thus rejecting any such politics that is in one way or the other teleologically determined. It seeks to maximise “differences, allowing them to come to the fore and allowing them to continue to thrive, while at the same time not absolutely fixing such differences or ascribing

them to the identity of a particular group” (Calcagno 2007:34). Undecidability also “points to the desirability of being willing to question and challenge what is currently accepted as self-evident in our ways of thinking and acting, while at the same time refusing to specify how we should think or act otherwise” (Patton 2007:770). In the example of Veličković’s *Lodgers* given earlier, the narrator Maja does indeed question and challenge the way of thinking inherent in those simplified explanations for the war that are given to her by members of her family, but at no point does she propose an explanatory model of her own. Subversive infantilisation is in this light neither parasitic nor nihilistic – in the sense that it settles with producing rubble – and remains patient enough to let the aporia be the space for a yet-to-come.

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## An Eighteenth-Century Ecology of Knowledge: Patronage and Natural History

Linda Andersson Burnett

### Abstract

This article analyses the construction and dissemination of natural-history knowledge in the eighteenth century. It takes the mapping and narration of Orkney as a case study, focusing on the local minister and amateur natural-historian George Low and his network of patron-client relationships with such prominent natural historians as Joseph Banks and Thomas Pennant. It focuses too on Low's network of informants and assistants among local island farmers, and argues that canonical natural-history texts were the products of collaborative and interdependent processes that included a large number of actors from all strata of society. To conceptualise how natural-history knowledge was created in this period, the article applies the metaphoric description 'an ecology of knowledge'. This approach enables a focus on a large number of actors, their collaboration and influence on each other, while also paying attention to asymmetrical power relationships in which competition and appropriation took place.

**Keywords:** Ecology of Knowledge, Patronage, Natural History, Scotland, George Low, Concurrent Narratives

## Introduction

In 1772 a ship stopped in Orkney on its return to Britain after an expedition to Iceland. On board were the prominent English botanist Joseph Banks and his companions – the Linnaean disciple Daniel Solander, the Scottish physician James Lind and the Swedish student Uno von Troil.<sup>1</sup> Banks and Solander were veterans of the first Cook expedition to the South Pacific in 1768-71, and these well-travelled natural historians now turned their gaze to the far North Atlantic, which they considered to be an unknown region worthy of exploration. To help them survey the Orkney archipelago the explorers enlisted a young local man, George Low (1747-1795), to be their guide. Low impressed Banks, who later recommended him to other prominent British natural-historians and antiquarians such as Thomas Pennant and George Paton, with whom Low entered into patron-client relationships and with whom he exchanged a large number of letters. The encounter between Banks and Low not only impacted greatly on the latter's life but also had a decisive bearing on how knowledge about Orkney, and its northerly neighbour Shetland, circulated in eighteenth and nineteenth-century texts – creating a cultural legacy that remains in operation today.

In this article I will analyse why eighteenth-century natural historians turned their gaze to regions within Britain such as Orkney, which were perceived as domestic hinterlands, and how natural-history knowledge about such places was constructed and disseminated. I will argue, using Low as a case study, that canonical eighteenth-century natural-history publications were the result of dynamic collaborative and interdependent processes that depended on a range of individuals and agencies rather than the independent and unaided observations of a small number of elite natural historians whose names have graced the library shelves. Eighteenth-Century Britain had, as Roy Porter and John Gascoigne have demonstrated, a decentralised natural-history tradition (Porter 1977; Gascoigne 2003). Unlike in continental Europe or Scandinavia, there was no formal training for scientists and natural history was therefore the domain of a large number of people. British natural history was, however, not unique in drawing on a multitude of voices. Natural historians from across Europe utilised local informants from all strata of society.

To conceptualise how knowledge about peripheral regions was collected, narrated and mediated in the eighteenth century, I will apply the metaphoric description of 'an ecology of knowledge'.<sup>2</sup> Used in biology to denote the relationships between 'living organisms and their environment', in the social sciences and the humanities the term 'ecology' has been applied to analyse interdependent, dynamic and hybrid relationships between people, groups and the environments in which they operate (Oxford English Dictionary 2008). An ecological approach permits us to move the focus of our enquiry beyond a prominent individual towards the wider system in which they function; a system where 'each factor and organism

has influence on the others, and many complex interrelationships are required to sustain [it]' (Weaver-Hightower 2008:155).

Low's close contact with members of the British natural-history elite provided him not only with intellectual mentors but also with powerful patrons who aided, or at least promised to aid, his career. By locating Low and these men within an 'ecosystem' of eighteenth-century knowledge production, I will also investigate the function of patrons and clients within that system. I will pay particular attention to the key role such patron-client relations played in bringing together people of different social strata, and in thereby facilitating the production and circulation of scientific knowledge. An important aspect of this system is the extent to which its 'organisms' adapted or evolved in order to work together. Originating in a farming family before becoming a minister residing on outlying Orkney, yet then discovered and supported by a pan-British aristocracy while still collaborating with local farmers and ministers, Low's case illustrates that during the eighteenth century the boundaries of social status and geographical location could be significantly transcended within the 'ecology of knowledge'. Although I focus on a domestic British context in this article, the ecology approach can also be applied when analysing European natural-history texts about overseas colonies in order to move away from a binary view of the European naturalist narrating the colonised subject's landscape.<sup>3</sup>

The usage of this metaphor does come with some caveats. It should not be interpreted as meaning that the relationships between people in the 'ecology' were either *natural* or preordained. The agency of individual actors was dependent on historically created conditions and relationships such as economy, traditions, ethnicity, status, religion and gender. Another point of caution is that although we can potentially imbue a large number of people with agency it is important not to deny the asymmetry of power that existed within the ecology, where some actors possessed more resources than others whether these were located within Britain or in overseas colonies. Patronage relationships, for example, were built on the principle of a powerful and influential patron collaborating with a client of lower social status. These actors could nevertheless work in symbiosis and co-operation, as Low did – initially – with his more powerful patrons. Yet, relationships in an ecology can also result in competition, appropriation or even elimination (Weaver-Hightower 2008:155-157). Through an analysis of Low's career I will discuss how conflicts often occurred when patronage relationships broke down or had run their course. Throughout the article, I will pay attention to competing claims of knowledge which came together but did not always concur.

## Exploring the Highlands and Islands: Developing an Ecology of Knowledge

In the second half of the eighteenth century, British intellectual activities revolved around the study of the natural world not only in the expanding overseas colonial territories but also domestically. The Highlands and Islands of northwest Scotland in particular attracted a growing number of naturalists who were keen to map and study a region that had up to that time often been imagined as a *terra incognita* by both Lowland Scots and Englishmen. Perceived from the fourteenth century onwards as a cultural and geographic region increasingly distinct from the rest of Scotland, the Highlands and Islands came to be imagined as a dangerous and savage place that early modern travellers often avoided unless they had to go there for political or religious reasons (Brown 1891; Rackwitz 2007). Although a tiny handful of earlier naturalists had started to map this region, such as the Gaelic-speaking islander Martin Martin (c. 1660-1719), who surveyed the Western Isles of Scotland and the physician and botanist Robert Sibbald (1641-1722), who collected questionnaires about flora, fauna, topography, and ethnographic data from local informants in his attempt to create a comprehensive natural history of Scotland, the Highlands and Islands was not really considered an attractive arena for natural-history exploration until the 1750s (Martin 1698 and 1703; Withers 2001: 80). This shift came about after the Jacobite followers of the exiled Scottish Stewart dynasty were defeated in their final attempt to restore the Stuarts to the British throne, from which they had been ejected in 1688-89. Although the Jacobites had come quite close to their ultimate objective of taking London, they were forced to retreat to their Highland heartlands and were destroyed in a showdown battle against the Hanoverian British army of George II at Culloden, north east of Inverness, in 1746. After Culloden, the Highlands and Islands region experienced severe reprisals for its support of Jacobitism, including military subjugation, the confiscation of land and the enforcement of acts banning traditional Highland weaponry and costume (unless worn by conscripts to the British army). With the eradication of Jacobitism heralding the break-up of the Highlands' often war-like traditional society and the region's subsequent depopulation, its threat to the British state was deemed to have been neutralised. It was now considered safe to be explored and exploited (Andersson Burnett 2012: 57).

Adhering to a discourse of utility and national improvement, British natural historians depicted the Highlands and Islands as a largely untapped larder of natural resources that could provide the growing English and Lowland towns with products such as kelp, wool, hemp, slate and fish, many of which could serve as substitutes for expensive foreign imports (Andersson Burnett 2012: 55).<sup>4</sup> They also proposed different schemes with regard to how best to exploit these resources, since the local population was deemed too ignorant or lazy to utilise them properly. Local people were also the object of natural-history travellers' inventories. In

an age before disciplinary demarcation the naturalist not only collected, studied and classified plants, animals and minerals but also studied antiquities and collected ethnological information about human society. Natural historians' surveys of the Highlands and Islands therefore functioned not only as inventories of potential economic resources that could be exploited but also provided a new positive narrative of a region that had previously been imagined in negative terms as threatening and violent (Andersson Burnett 2012).

A considerable influence on British natural historians' expeditions and writing, and therefore another key actor in the knowledge ecosystem, was the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus was admired by British natural historians not only for his taxonomies that introduced order and consistency to the natural world but also for his northern expedition to Lapland in 1732. In *Flora Lapponica* (1737), and in his published Uppsala University lecture on travel, Linnaeus emphasised the importance of domestic exploration and he directed the attention of naturalists across Europe to 'hinterlands' in which the educated naturalist could produce inventories of regions and their inhabitants previously relatively unmapped by the state (Andersson Burnett 2012; see also Withers 1995; Eddy 2008; Albritton Jonsson 2013).<sup>5</sup> Having their 'own' northern and mountainous hinterland to explore, several of the British naturalists who surveyed Scotland corresponded with Linnaeus and informed him about their expeditions. Walker told Linnaeus that little of Scotland had been 'surveyed' but that he was now rectifying that. Linnaeus instructed him to: 'Continue, as you have begun, and enter the hidden places of Nature, and conquer new kingdoms there' (Linnaeus, 1762La III, 352/1).

This wave of British natural historians extolled the uniqueness of their Scottish expeditions and the hardships they endured. Walker, who carried out a total of six tours of Scotland between 1760 and 1786, wrote in a letter to the influential lawyer and scholar Lord Kames in 1764 that the Highland landscape was 'as inanimate & unfrequented as any in the Terra australis' (in Withers 1995: 137). In his autobiography *The Literary Life of the Late Thomas Pennant*, published in 1793, Pennant likewise emphasised how unusual his trip to the Highlands in 1769 had been and the endeavour it involved: 'This year was a very active one with me; I had the hardiness to venture on a journey to the remotest part of *North Britain*, a country almost as little known to its southern brethren as *Kamtschatka*' (Pennant 1793: 11; Andersson Burnett 2012: 58): Such reminiscences echoed Linnaeus, who likewise loved to dwell on the hardships and dangers he had endured during his Lapland expedition and who compared Lapland with Asia and Africa (Linnaeus, 1811 vol.1: 283).

Writing about natural-history travel, Pär Eliasson has emphasised this trend among eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century natural historians for extolling their own importance in surveying allegedly solitary and unknown landscapes:

Natural historians seem to walk about in a landscape empty of people and unknown to anyone until it was seen and analyzed by themselves, cast in the role of perceptive

scientists. The landscape and its constituent parts are somewhat created anew in the descriptive process, the region becomes possible to comprehend as it is articulated or narrated. (Eliasson 2002:127)

Mary Louise Pratt, likewise, has noted that eighteenth-century scientific systems of knowing, which Linnaeus pioneered, not only silenced indigenous narratives outside Europe - by re-labelling plants with Latin names for example - but also had the same effect on local and rural narratives and repositories of knowledge in Europe (Pratt 2008: 12). British natural historians did, as discussed, elevate their own knowledge and scientific gaze. Although they often looked down at local knowledge, while having no qualms about utilising local people as guides and carriers, they also actively sought the knowledge of local and stationary amateur natural historians who tended to be ministers or local lairds and whose knowledge they often trusted and which therefore also became a part of the ecology.

In contrast to the situation in Enlightenment France, there was a firm alliance between the Church and Science in both Scotland and in England during this period and there was a particularly close relationship between the moderate wing of the Scottish Kirk (Church) – which included such prominent thinkers as Adam Ferguson, William Robertson and Hugh Blair – and the Enlightenment (Sher 1985). However, the Kirk’s scientific influence extended beyond the university cities and should not be viewed solely in terms of its relationship to the big names of the Enlightenment. The Kirk sponsored several ‘Enlightened’ schemes, such as Walker’s tours and surveys of the Scottish Highlands and Islands and they also ran the *Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge* (SSPCK) which operated under the principle that the ‘primitive’ Highlander needed help from Presbyterian outsiders in order to progress (e.g. Withers: 1988).<sup>6</sup> Another example is Sir John Sinclair’s *Statistical Account of Scotland* in the 1790s, in which the Scottish clergy wrote lengthy reports in answer to a long list of questions concerning their local environment, the parish’s history, and the beliefs, occupations, and health of the parishioners. The church as an institution was therefore also part of the natural-history ecology of knowledge.

The prominence of the parish minister as a natural historian amounted also to more than merely organising and providing information; rather, it often entailed enthusiastic and hands-on involvement in natural-history studies. Ministers were not only university educated, they tended to have time on their hands and a regular income, which meant they could devote themselves to the social and scientific study of their parishes (Rendall 2009:125). Natural-history studies, which often included antiquarian studies, also provided ministers with stimulation and a relief from boredom in what could often be isolated and solitary rural locations. The same applied in rural Scandinavia. Linnaeus had, for example, recommended that students studying theology at Uppsala also attend his lectures on natural history. One of them was Eric J Grape who experimented with improvement schemes on his land and wrote about his parish Enontekiö (Andersson Burnett 2012:187-188;

Koerner 1999: 78). In Norway, likewise, regional ministers such as Hans Strøm narrated the natural history of their localities (Løvlie 2008).

In Britain, these stationary, well-educated and often eager observers were frequently used as informants by leading metropolitan natural historians such as Banks and Pennant who incorporated the ministers' local observations into their national and international natural-history accounts. The English minister and natural historian Gilbert White noted in 1770 the merits of local observers, commenting: 'no man can alone investigate all the works of nature, these partial interests may, each in their departments be more accurate in their discoveries, and freer from error than more general writers' (White 1850: 91-92). Metropolitan natural historians accessed the knowledge possessed by ministers both remotely, through letters and questionnaires, and in the field, where ministers pointed the visiting natural historians to places of interests, lodged with them, and shared their knowledge with them. Although questionnaires were also sent to gentlemen and nobility, ministers often provided, as Rosemary Sweet has argued, the most detailed responses (Sweet 2004: 51). The information provided by ministers was, however, treated with ambivalence; it was accepted as valuable, and yet could be ridiculed as quaint, parochial and inferior to metropolitan scientific knowledge (Withers 1995: 154; Fielding 2008: 9; Andersson Burnett 2012: 129). The minister also risked having his work appropriated by the more established natural historian.

Working frequently in conjunction with the clergy in the attempt to map natural resources and 'civilize' the region were the Highland and Island lairds, who discussed issues of agricultural improvement and implemented them on their estates. A large number of these increasingly metropolitan lairds, who were educated in the Lowlands or in England and who spent large parts of the year away from the Highlands, , experimented with the planting of new crops, introduced the enclosure and drainage of land, and were even involved with town planning. Their motivation came from a desire to expand both their personal purses and the wealth of the nation (Gascoigne 2003:18). One of the most influential and popular texts on improvement was Lord Kames's *The Gentleman Farmer; being an Attempt to Improve Agriculture by Subjecting it to the Test of Rational Principle*. Kames also served as one of the many aristocratic patrons of John Walker and there was a 'symbiotic relationship' between improvement-minded aristocratic patrons and naturalists (Eddy 2002: 432). Whereas the landed elite took interest in the works of naturalists in order to improve their estates and earnings, the naturalists gained access to lands where they could examine points of scientific interest such as rock formations and received patronage to further their careers. The appointment of Walker as professor of natural history at the University of Edinburgh in 1779, for instance, was secured through his connections with the elite (ibid).

## The ‘Director’ of Banks’s Orkney Tour: Introducing George Low

George Low was one of the many ministers who compiled and circulated natural-history information in the eighteenth century. He was born and grew up in Edzell, Angus, where his parents were tenant farmers and his father a church officer. At the age of 15, two years after his father died, he began a university education in the faculty of arts at Marischal College in Aberdeen. He spent one year there before enrolling at the University of St Andrews in 1763 where he studied philosophy for three years and divinity for a further one year. Low’s university studies reflect the relatively democratic eighteenth-century Scottish education system in which boys from modest rural backgrounds had access to university degrees (Anderson 2001: 612-613).

Having completed his studies Low moved in late 1767 or early 1768 to Orkney, where he remained for the rest of his life. He worked there initially as a tutor to the children of the merchant Ballie Robert Graham of Stromness (Anderson 1879: xiv-xiv; Cuthbert 1995: 25-26). The Orkney into which Low arrived was not merely on the periphery of Britain, it was also on the northernmost fringe of Scotland. Orkney, and to an even greater extent Shetland, remained outside the burgeoning tourist circuit of the Highlands, which took off in the late eighteenth century. This exclusion was due in part to the islands’ distance from the mainland and the lack of regular ferries (Cuthbert 1995: 28; Fielding 2008: 131-132). It was also due to complex cultural factors. Having belonged to the Danish-Norwegian crown until the 1460s, the Orkney archipelago retained a much stronger Scandinavian cultural orientation than the Western Isles or northwest Highland seaboard, which were ceded by the Norse to Scotland almost two centuries earlier. In addition to its lingering Nordic identity, moreover, Orkney was paradoxically set apart from the rest of Scotland and Britain precisely because its recent past was otherwise much less contested and controversial than the Highlands and Western Isles. The latter areas’ strong Catholicism and Jacobitism, which for generations had put them beyond the pale of the British establishment, became after the defeat of Culloden a benign source of fascination. There followed an explosion of metropolitan interest in the Highlands, yet this process of cultural conciliation did not extend to Orkney and Shetland. By the 1760s the Northern Isles therefore remained a remote and ambiguous hinterland that was not yet fully incorporated into the nation. Orkney and Shetland offered instead an alternative or even binary cultural narrative, in which their Scandinavian heritage was celebrated (Fielding 2008: 131, 136). As with the Highlands and islands, though, Orkney society was slowly changing and modernity making inroads into island life. This applied especially to Stromness, which was turning into a lucrative trading port where ships stopped for a last time before setting off to Britain’s overseas colonial territories in Canada. Indeed, Low’s employer Graham was one of an increasing number of wealthy merchants who were modernising the islands (Cuthbert 1995: 28).

Having settled into island life, Low came to express a strong dislike for the tutoring job that had brought him there and repeatedly referred to his work as cumbersome and laborious (see Low, NLS, Adv.MS. 29.5.8. Vol.III ff. 59-60).<sup>7</sup> His real passion was the study of natural history. Writing in 1772, he expressed this love: ‘I think there is no study more rational at the same time that it is amusing, than that of the works of Nature, I confess it fills up many a dreary hour to me with pleasure’ (Low f. 53). With his teaching taking up a large amount of his time, Low resorted to studying natural history late at night and early in the morning, and he constructed his own microscope in order to study marine life. He was also a very skilled ink drawer, and made copies of the plants that featured in Linnaeus’s *Flora Lapponica* (Anderson 1879: xv; Cuthbert 1995: 19). Around 1770 he started researching and writing what was to become his major work, a *History of Orkney*. In line with the ethos of the broad church of natural history the book contained historical, antiquarian, ethnographic, and natural history information.

Banks’s arrival in Orkney, who had already placed Linnaean natural history at the centre of British intellectual and imperial activities, would have been an exciting event for this budding natural historian who was appointed as Banks’s guide (Low f.54). The arrival of Banks and his entourage also illustrates the shift that had occurred in the mental mapping of the northern isles of Scotland, which now were deemed worthy of investigation. Low, writing in his *History of Orkney*, noted this change: ‘Till of late years these islands have been little known or frequented, by many they were thought barbarous and a very insignificant part of the kingdom’ (*History of Orkney*: 431). Banks expressed his gratitude to Low by providing him with both books, including Linnaeus’s *Species Plantarum*, and by recommending Low to his influential friends, Thomas Pennant and George Paton, with whom Low was going to correspond with over the next twenty years. Low, writing to Banks, responded that he would do whatever it took to contribute to ‘the Advancement of Science’ (Qtd in Gascoigne 2003: 65).

## **Correspondence, Patronage and Knowledge Circulation in the Ecology of Knowledge**

Considering the informal nature of the natural-history discipline in Britain, correspondence networks between keen amateurs who exchanged knowledge, specimens, artefacts, books and manuscripts were of key importance. This was not unique to Britain: the exchange of letters between scholars – such as Linnaeus, Buffon and Banks, for example – was *the* vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge across Europe in the eighteenth century. Naturalists shared their observations, asked each other for information and promoted their work. It was not unusual, as the case of Low illustrates, that people from different social strata corresponded with each other. The gentlemanly code was that this had to be a reciprocal relationship – in other words, both partners had to benefit from the corre-

spondence and both had to have something to offer. In the case of Low, it was his great knowledge of the Orkney Isles that allowed him entry into the Republic of Letters. Social status was not forgotten – at the heart of patron-client relationships in these correspondence networks was an asymmetry of power between the powerful patron and his/her client – but as long as conversations focused on the shared interest in natural history and antiquarian studies, relationships across strata could be sustained (Sweet 2004: 60-61).

One of Low's most important correspondents was the antiquarian, natural historian and book seller George Paton (1721-1807) who lived in Edinburgh. Paton was not as wealthy as Banks or Pennant, but he had an impressive library and was known as someone who promoted and aided the careers of other natural historians (Sweet 2004: 57-58). Many English natural historians and antiquarians viewed Paton as their first port of call for Scottish queries and he functioned as an agent who facilitated contact between natural historians on either side of the border (Sweet 2004: 62). In his first letter to Paton, in August 1772, Low showed his deference to this well-established antiquarian by playing down his capabilities while at the same time offering his knowledge:

I am very much obliged to my kind friends who have recommended me to you as capable of giving information anent the Natural History of the Orknies. I should be sorry if they have overrated my very small abilities by a mistaken kindness; however I should think myself very unworthy of their favour, and that I paid a very ill compliment to their recommendation, if I did not everything in my power to advance your plan, tho' I am afraid I can be but of little service as I have not studied natural History in too systematic a manner, to serve your present purposes; what comes in my way I shall be sure to communicate. If on this or any other occasion you want any particular specimens of Birds, etc, etc, I shall do my utmost endeavour to procure them for you.

(Low f. 52).

In a letter sent the following month, Low also asked Paton to inform him if he made any mistakes since he was not an experienced natural historian (Low f. 53). Low's claims of inadequacy were, however, carefully balanced and mitigated with assertions of knowledge and hard work, as a letter sent in November shows: 'My list of Plants is always coming nearer perfection [...] I think I have a much larger Catalogue than has been given by any Orkney genius Before' (Low f. 54).

To maintain their relationship Low also sent Paton local gifts such as butter, smoked geese and eggs, the latter being collected by local men who specialised in rock climbing (Low f. 60). In return for Low's observations; his natural-history specimens and local gifts, Paton lent Low books that the latter could not get hold of on Orkney such as Pennant's *British Zoology*, Percy's *Northern Antiquities*, Pontoppidan's *Natural History of Norway*, Linnaeus's *Flora Suecica* and *Systema Naturae*, and Olaus Magnus's *History of the Northern People*. Low also requested Sibbald's work, which contained a seventeenth-century account of Orkney by the minister James Wallace. Having read it, however, Low deemed Wallace not to be

a reliable source, thus asserting the need for his own studies to his patron (Low ff. 58-60 and 66).

Through receiving a large number of natural-history books from Paton, but also Banks, which influenced his thinking and writing, Low's knowledge continued to expand. His observations on Orkney, appreciated for their local quality, were therefore at the same time both local and global in their concerns and nature. By adopting a Linnaean taxonomy, for instance, Low placed his regional observations in an imperial ecology that set out to organise nature in accordance to a global system. The influential eighteenth-century naturalist Gilbert White, whose parochial outlook in his descriptions of Selborne in England has been praised by recent scholars, also participated in this global ecology of natural history-knowledge, as Menely has argued (Allen 1976; Worster 1977; Menely 2004). As with Low, White did this through being a Linnaean scholar who read and participated in international debates while at the same time extolling the merits of detailed local observations.

Another of Low's key epistolary relationships was with Pennant, whose prestigious international network of natural historians included Linnaeus, Comte de Buffon and Peter Simon Pallas. Pennant was, however, equally interested in gaining information from local Scottish informants. Before his tours of the Highlands Pennant had sent out, for instance, questionnaires to local ministers, and the landed elite, in order to get 'LOCAL HISTORIES' and to get 'fuller and more satisfactory Account of their Country' (Pennant 1772:302).

In a letter from Low to Pennant in November 1772 it is clear Low was very excited to be corresponding with such an esteemed natural historian, and he expressed his eagerness to help with improving British knowledge about the islands. Low also sent Pennant lists of the fauna, insects and plants he had identified on Orkney (Cuthbert 1995: 37-38). In return, Pennant sent Low books and asked Low to do a paid tour of Orkney and Shetland, where Pennant had not been himself, in order to include it in a second edition of his *Tour in Scotland*. Pennant compiled a list of requests for Low which included some of the following instructions about how to conduct his research: 'visit personally every Orkney and Shetland Isle' and 'keep a regular journal'. Low was also asked to make drawings and write down his observations about minerals, language use and manufacture (Low Memorandums). Pennant further promised that he would arrange for a report of that tour to be published (Anderson 1879: xxxviii). Low duly brimmed with enthusiasm. Writing to Paton in November 1773 about the proposed 'jaunt' he stated that he would 'go to the end of the world to serve the men who are so obliging' (Low f. 65).

The tour unfortunately could not happen until the summer of 1774 because of Low's tutorial work. Low, who had been licensed to be a minister by the presbytery of Cairnston in 1771, was anxiously waiting for a parish to become vacant since ministers not only had time for scientific studies, but also had life-time ten-

ure, their own houses and good salaries (Low f. 60; Goodfellow 1903: 72). To secure his own parish he had to be noticed by the feudal superior of Orkney; namely Sir Laurence Dundas (1710-1781), the owner of the Earldom of Orkney, who had the right of patronage, which meant that it entitled him to appoint ministers of his liking to vacant churches (Rendall 2009: 244).<sup>8</sup> Dundas had made an immense fortune from his career as a contractor to the Hanoverian army. With his wealth he purchased a baronetcy, a parliamentary seat and land in Scotland, England and Ireland. His portfolio also included two slave estates in the West Indies (Fereday 2008). Despite being an absentee owner and rarely visiting Orkney, Dundas wielded great power. He was not only in charge of church patronage but he also opened doors for lairds and their families to posts on the islands such as clerks or administrators of justice, as well as jobs in the legal profession in Edinburgh and posts in the British army and navy, or posts with the East India Company (Thomson 1987: 231-3). Dundas's patronage therefore operated in regional, national, and imperial arenas.

Low was hopeful that his new and influential natural-history patrons would aid his selection, with Banks, for instance, being a friend of the Dundas family. Low therefore started a 'campaign' for patronage before he set out on his tour. Writing to Paton on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1773, he expressed that he hoped 'thro influence in our great man Sir Laurence to be placed in a situation' where he had more time for natural history, an existence 'so consonant to the life of a Clergyman' (Low f. 59). Still a tutor, but full of hopes for the future, Low finally set off on his tour in May 1774.

### **Low's Great Tour**

Armed with letters of introduction from his prominent patrons and books by Linnaeus (*Flora Suecica* and *Systema Naturae*) and Pennant (*British Zoology*) among others, Low visited the many islands of Orkney and Shetland (Cuthbert 1995: 59). Due to bad weather, he could not visit northern Shetland but eventually went there in 1778 to complete his inventory. During his tours Low carried out geological, ethnographic, antiquarian, zoological and botanical observations.

Low's observations and his collecting and recording of local knowledge were only made possible through the participation of Orkney and Shetland people, who should therefore also be read as important actors in the ecology of knowledge about the isles. Low expressed, in his writing, most gratitude for the help and information that he received from educated informers, who came primarily from the clergy and the landed elite and whose opinions he trusted and respected (Low *Tour*:193-194). This is illustrated by him tending to name only those informants who belonged to these higher strata of society. Low wrote, for instance, that he had received instructions, reports and papers from the following people: Mr Sangster (Dundas factor); Mr Jack (minister); Gideon Gifford (Esquire); Mr William

Archibald (minister) and Andrew Bruce (Esquire). Writing to Paton from Walls on Shetland, Low also informed his patron that the local clergy and gentry had been very willing to help and assist him with his queries (Low f. 76; *Low Tour*: 29). Low did not always think highly of his fellow ministers, however. He complained, in several letters, about local ministers being ‘lazy’ and lacking an interest in answering the scholarly queries that he circulated to them on behalf of Paton (Low ff. 58-59).

Low’s knowledge gathering depended equally on his collaboration with people further down the social ladder such as local farmers and fishermen, though these people are not imbued with the same significance. Low informed Paton before his 1774 trip, for instance, about his plans for utilising local people, which included hiring a ‘Lad’ (young boy) to carry his belongings. He further noted that he would then hire people when he required them: ‘When I need to employ Rockmen [for the collection of birds or eggs], or others to examine any Grave, or other antiquity these must be employed where they are to be found’ (Low f. 71). The people who helped Low would have done so because of a number of reasons such as being paid, which, in the case of the lad was, in Low’s words, ‘a trifle [sic]’; out of kindness, or simply because their landowners ordered them to help (Low f. 71; *Low Tour*: 193-94).

The hired Orkney ‘lad’ is absent from Low’s narrative – he is a silent facilitator of the trip rather than someone who is imbued with agency and a voice. The rockmen who climbed the islands’ steep rocks for eggs and birds, likewise, remain anonymous in Low’s letters and manuscript. Low did, however, name one farmer informant, whose knowledge he recorded and discussed in detail. This was William Henry, an old farmer whom Low encountered on Foula, the most westerly island of Shetland, in 1774. Henry taught Low some Norn words (an old Scandinavian language which was by the eighteenth century becoming extinct in Shetland) and recited a long ballad (Low f. 81).<sup>9</sup> At this time it was only farming people on Shetland who still knew some Norn. Low would not have gained any knowledge about Norn from the ministers or lairds to whom he normally turned for information. By naming the man Low, moreover, added veracity to the old Norn ballad. Low would no doubt have been aware of the controversy surrounding the authenticity of the alleged ancient Ossianic poems that James Macpherson collected in the late 1750s and 1760s and he would therefore probably be keen to include a detailed narrative of how he came across this old ballad in order to verify it.

Low’s co-operation with Henry should not merely be read through a utilitarian lens, however. The two men clearly enjoyed talking to each other and it was a reciprocal encounter in which their interests happily concurred. In return for Henry’s knowledge, Low provided the old man with gin and he was a receptive and appreciative audience. This can be seen in Low’s description of the man as:

an honest country man... who could neither read nor write but [who] had the most retentive memory I ever heard of... when I saw him he was so much pleased with my curiosity and now and then a dram of Gin that he repeated [and] sung the whole day’.

(Low f. 81; Low *Tour*: 107)

Although Low primarily socialised with the local elites during his tour, the episode with Henry illustrated that he also enjoyed and praised the warm hospitality that he received from farmers. In return for the hospitality he was shown in general on Foula, Low preached twice on the island to ‘a most attentive audience’ (Low *Tour*: 96, 117). Low’s own rural background is likely to have helped him communicating with people from more modest social backgrounds.

Low also exhibited a revealing degree of deference towards local knowledge. Although he did ascribe scientific and Linnaean names to local plants and animals, recording that he had for example ‘observed the *Alchemilla alpina*, FL. Suec. 142 [and] *Polygonum viviparum*, FL. Suec. 340’, he also paid respect to local names by recording them too. Discussing the bird the ‘white and dusky Grebe’, for example, Low noted both its description in Pennant’s *British Zoology*, and that its local island name was the ‘Little footy arse’ (Low *Tour*: 139, 28). There is no doubt that clear power relationships were at work in the creation of natural-history knowledge, in which ‘educated’ knowledge and observations by ministers and lairds carried the greatest clout, yet Low’s writing about his tours shows the entangled relationships that existed between people of different strata in the eighteenth century – relationships that did not always overwrite the knowledge of common people but instead could take on board and disseminate it.

This can also be detected in Low’s ethnographic observations. Low’s collaborators were not only his informants: they were also his objects of study. Low collected ethnological observations such as descriptions of the islanders’ health, physiognomy, clothing, their work ethos and beliefs. Low, unsurprisingly considering his intended career path, paid close attention to and described local beliefs in superstition and witchcraft, which although declining were still prevalent on both Orkney and Shetland. The islanders on Hoy, for instance, were described as ‘much given to superstition’ and Low dwelled on the continuing beliefs in fairies (Low *Tour*: 7, 81-82). Here Low’s world view clashed with another epistemic community and its concurrent beliefs, which Low perceived and depicted as unenlightened. Albeit condemning their practices, by recording and narrating them Low included traditional peasant beliefs and customs into the ecology of knowledge about the isles.

Low was, in addition, dependent on the willingness of the islanders to share their knowledge and artefacts with him. In a discussion of the local belief that fairies could kill cattle through the use of flint weapons (‘Elfshots’ or ‘Elfarrows’), Low recounted how he tried in vain to acquire one of these alleged weapons. The farmers refused to part with these since they believed that as long as they

possessed them, the fairies could not attack them or their cattle (Low, *Tour*: 7-8, 17). In this incident Low therefore had to accept epistemological diversity and the locals' wishes and concerns.

### **The Minister's Quest for Publication**

Low firmly believed that his career as a local natural historian was dependent on him getting his own parish, and worked assiduously to achieve this goal. During the early stages of his first tour, having travelled only as far as Holm, one of the south isles of Orkney, Low found out that Mr Sutherland – the minister of Birsay and Harray, an inland parish 14 km north of Stromness – had passed away. Low wasted no time in drumming up support for his candidature. In a letter to Pennant from Holm in May 1774, he asked for 'assistance' with Laurence Dundas (Cuthbert 1995: 60-61). Low also wrote to Paton that he had 'never stood more in need of an extreme effort of your experienced friendship than now' (Low f. 75). Paton, who had a strong network on Orkney, helped Low by contacting Andrew Ross, for instance, a factor to Sir Laurence and the Chamberlain of Orkney. Low's campaign to be noticed by Dundas paid off. Staying with his friend James Alison, he received news that he was to be put in charge of the parish of Birsay and Harray through the patronage of Dundas (Doig 1955:342).

After Low finished his tour he was ordained minister of Birsay in December 1774. There is no recorded opposition to Low's appointment. Although resentment of aristocratic patronage would eventually split the Scottish church in 1843, when many left the Church of Scotland to set up the Free Church of Scotland, there were no great schisms on Orkney in the eighteenth century (Goodfellow 1903: 71; Anderson 1879: xlix). This is not to say that the local population meekly accepted the ministers that were presented to them by their feudal superior. In fact, the islanders had something of a tradition of expressing their strong dislike of any imposed ministers they regarded as unsuitable.<sup>10</sup> Considering the feisty tradition of the Orkney congregations, Low must have been regarded as acceptable since his appointment seems to have passed without incident.

Settled in his manse, Low started composing and editing the manuscript of his tour travelogue, for which Pennant was going to secure a publisher. Low also continued to write his *History* and other manuscripts including a *Fauna Orcadensis* and a *Flora Orcadensis*, that he hoped Pennant would also help him publish. During this time it was essential for him to continue to have a thriving relationship with his natural-history patrons in order to make sure that his manuscripts were published. Despite the rise in publishing houses and a commercial printing culture, the patronage of the aristocracy and the cultural elite still mattered and patron-client and commercial cultures existed concurrently throughout the eighteenth century (Sher 2008: 203; Griffin 1996: 10). Low was therefore dependent on the clout and willingness of his powerful patron Pennant, which is reflected by

the large number of letters exchanged during the period 1775-1783 between Low, Pennant and Paton – the latter often working as a mediating middle man – about the publication of Low's *Tour* manuscript. This was also, however, a period of growing tension between Low and Pennant.

Initially the discontent between the two men revolved around Low's remote location, with Pennant showing little understanding of Low's geographical distance from mainland Britain. Pennant complained, for example, when Low's letter took a long time to appear. This delay was often caused by gales which prevented the sailing of ferries carrying the letters (Thomson 1987: 238; Cuthbert 1995: 65). The same lack of understanding was shown when Low was going through personal difficulties. In 1776 Low was seriously ill and whereas Paton was genuinely concerned, Pennant seemed more concerned about the 'loss the public will sustain' by Low not working on his manuscript (qtd. Anderson 1879: liv). Likewise, when Low's wife Helen, whom he had married in 1776, died after giving birth to a stillborn child in December that year, Pennant sent his condolences but again seemed to be more worried about the effect this would have on Low completing his manuscript of the *Tour* (Cuthbert 1995: 77). Pennant's relationship with Low, as these episodes illustrates, was always instrumental and centred on him receiving information that Pennant himself could not access.

Whereas Low's relationship with Pennant gradually broke down, his connection with Paton thrived and developed beyond flattery into a genuine life-long friendship. Paton and Low met for the first time in Edinburgh in 1775 when Low attended the Church of Scotland's General Assembly and they subsequently met up on other occasions too. Their friendship was, however, primarily maintained through their frequent correspondence. Although much of it continued to deal with their shared interest in books and in natural history, they also wrote about their personal feelings and their language became increasingly familiar and less formulaic. Their letters now started, for example, with 'My dear friend' rather than 'My dear Sir' (Low f. 78). Another important indicator of their increasing intimacy was that they wrote to each other partly in Scots using terms like 'ye ken' (you know) rather than formal English (Low f. 86; see also Doig 1955: 343). Paton, unlike Pennant, showed great compassion when Low's wife died. Their friendship illustrates that there was at least a potential for genuine friendships to emerge from distant patron and client relationships.

Low sent his *Tour* manuscript and sketches to Pennant in September 1777. Pennant informed Low that he would offer the manuscript to his friend the bookseller Benjamin White. At around the same time, a new man entered the Low-Paton-Pennant network. This was Richard Gough, a wealthy antiquarian, leading reviewer of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and the director of the Society of Antiquaries. Gough frequently asked Paton for information about Scottish antiquaries and also requested his help to locate books and manuscripts (Sweet 2004: 62). One of the manuscripts Gough wanted access to while he was writing his

*Anecdotes of British Topography* was Low's tour manuscript. Pennant, who wanted exclusive use of the manuscript, did his best to prevent this from happening. Although Pennant referred to it as Low's property, he also expressed that he had special rights to it since he had initiated and funded Low's tour. Pennant, however, gave in and Gough was allowed to see the manuscript in March 1778 (Anderson 1879: lx-lxi; Doig, 1955: 359, 381).

When Gough published his *British Topography* two years later he referred to Low's manuscript and stated that it was going to be published under Pennant's patronage which signalled the beginning of a campaign by Gough to make sure Pennant honoured his commitment to Low (Doig 1955: 362). Writing several times in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Gough provoked Pennant by calling on him to fulfil his promise and to explain why he had apparently 'deserted this deserving man' (Qtd *ibid*: 386). Pennant and Gough ended up falling out over their interests in Low's manuscript and each accused the other of using it in order to boost their own careers rather than that of Low. Amid the turmoil, the manuscript went missing for a few years. Low, unfortunately, had not transcribed it and therefore did not have a copy of his own.

The manuscript remained unpublished. Pennant did make some attempts, which he emphasised in his defence, but these did not lead to anything. One publisher, Mr Benjamin White & Son, complained that the text contained errors, which probably were Scotticisms and some poor grammar, something that Paton had urged Pennant to revise (Doig 1955: 377). Pennant also pushed for the manuscript to be published by subscription, but Low rejected this since he did not believe, considering his location in Orkney and his status as a minister, that he had a powerful enough network to make subscription a viable option. Low was also reluctant to dedicate the work to Lawrence Dundas, which Pennant suggested, since Low feared he might be 'unknown' to Dundas despite having received the latter's patronage – thus underlining that his patron-client relationship with Dundas, who did not live on Orkney, had been the result of his powerful friends' efforts rather than a personal relationship. Low had no savings of his own that he could use to invest in the publication either (*Ibid*: 365, 369, 372). In the end, it appeared that the manuscript could only be published if Pennant was prepared to invest in it himself, a financial risk he refused to take despite his promise to Low and his great wealth (see also Anderson 1879: lxxvii; Doig 354). Meanwhile, Paton's attempts to come up with new solutions as to how the manuscript could be published came to no avail, and despite Low's membership of scientific societies, where his observations were discussed, Low's location on Orkney meant that he could neither find suitable new patrons nor build up personal relationships with publishers and was therefore dependent on his existing network.

Here it is interesting to compare Low with the English minister Gilbert White, who also corresponded with Pennant and whose epistolary work *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, which consisted of letters exchanged between

White, Pennant and the naturalist Daines Barrington, was a great success. White, who resided in Hampshire, not only actively participated in London's scientific circles, but his brother was Benjamin White, the influential publisher of natural history works who Pennant had approached about Low's manuscript. In addition to White's very close and personal access to publishers and scientific communities, he was also a better writer than Low, whose manuscript required more intensive efforts of an editor. White intermingled his systematic and detailed observations with charming and evocative accounts of his locality that have enthralled readers since the work was first published in 1789 and would therefore have been an easier product to sell than that of Low (Mabey 1986; Menely 2004).

While Pennant's enthusiasm for getting Low's manuscript published was evaporating, he still found it useful for his personal career development. He informed Low in 1783 that parts of Low's manuscript were going to appear in the introduction to his completed *Arctic Zoology* that also used much of Low's work on the Orkney fauna and several of Low's illustrations. Pennant argued that this inclusion would in fact publicise Low's works and help him secure a publisher:

Your MS is of great use to an Introduction I am forming to my Arctic Zoology: but I shall rob you of nothing that can hurt, indeed as my work will appear first I shall serve you, by referring to it, and mentioning your design if it is to take place.

(Qtd in Cuthbert: 1995: 19)

Low had had high expectations from his patron and client relationship with Pennant, which got off to such a good start, but he ended up feeling very let down by Pennant's futile attempt to get his *Tour* in print and he did not accept Pennant's version of why the manuscript was not published. Writing to Paton in March 1783 Low expressed his thoughts about Pennant: 'as to Monsieur Pennant I have given up all thought of his patronage' (Low f. 92). In a later letter to Paton sent in February 1788, Low wrote that Pennant years back had 'promised mighty things' but that these had come to nothing (Low f. 96). He further rubbished Pennant's claim that the inclusion of Low's material in *Arctic Zoology* would help him find a publisher in this powerful statement: '[W]hat is to be published? not all published already? One has taken a leg, another an arm; some a toe; some a finger; [and] Mr. P. the very Heart's Blood out of it' (Ibid). Low was correct. Pennant had used in *Arctic Zoology* not only Low's excellent illustrations but had also included, without references to Low, a large amount of Low's observations on the isles. In the eyes of any prospective publishers, therefore, a large amount of Low's material had already been published which would make it a less attractive text to publish.

Pennant had created an image for himself as someone who supported the careers of young naturalists while also advancing scientific knowledge. His fall-out with Low suggests that Pennant promised too much too readily and he had, in this case, failed to live up to his promise. To Pennant, Low was a remote figure on Orkney he did not need to worry too much about once Low had provided Pennant with his surveys of Orkney and Shetland. However, Pennant, to some extent,

showed a similar disregard to people from the higher echelons of society as can be seen in his argument with Joseph Banks. Banks's career had initially benefited from Pennant's patronage, which introduced the young Banks to natural historians across the world, and Banks in turn had supplied Pennant with data on, for example, his expeditions to the Scottish island of Staffa, Newfoundland and Iceland. The two men fell out after Pennant in his *Arctic Zoology* published, without Banks's consent, drawings that Banks had commissioned of Iceland. Pennant had defended this act by referring to himself as a 'public man' who wanted to disseminate knowledge (Gascoigne 2003: 98). Banks replied angrily that it did not entitle Pennant to publish other people's property without their consent. He also referred to Pennant as 'an indefatigable searcher after other men's Observations' (ibid). By the 1780s, moreover, Banks, who had become the President of the Royal Society in 1778, no longer needed Pennant's patronage and could therefore afford to fall out with him, illustrating the strategic aspects that were at the heart of many patron and client relations in the ecology of knowledge (Ibid: 94-98).

To add to Low's anguish, his mental and physical health worsened from the 1780s onwards. Writing to Paton in March 1781 he informed his friend about his poor mental health: 'I have been tormented with a nervous disease shall I call it, which has kept me almost entirely from sleep even for weeks together, except a mere dose which is every moment interrupted by stark & foolish fancies which frights me even to set pen to paper' (Low f. 91). Low also suffered from pleurisy, rheumatism and failing eyesight, which left him almost blind. Yet, he managed to provide, with the assistance of a clerk, a lengthy entry on his parish for Sinclair's *Statistical Accounts*, thereby continuing his contribution to the dissemination of knowledge about Orkney.

Despite his failing health, Low also spent the last decade of his life focusing on his parish – an area of responsibility he had to some degree neglected earlier. He had, for instance, celebrated communion only three times during his 21-year-ministry despite the General Assembly's recommendation that it be celebrated once a year. Low's preaching supposedly improved once his eyesight went and the people in his parish are said to have grown fonder of him (Goodfellow 1903: 75; Rendall 2009:129). Alongside caring for his parishioners, Low continued to maintain his friendship with Paton. In his last letter to Paton, sent on 15 January 1795, Low lamented that bad weather had prevented him from travelling and meeting his friend (Low f. 100). Low passed away less than two months later, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March.

Low's work was never published in his name during his lifetime. Instead it was partly appropriated by others or published posthumously. After Low's death most of his manuscripts ended up with Paton in Edinburgh. When the latter died in 1807 they were sold off at auction and continued to be used by other writers. The Rev. George Barry, Minister of Shapinsay on Orkney, for example, published in 1805 his *History of the Orkney Islands*, which used much of Low's writings with-

out any references to Low. Later nineteenth century writers such as William Elford Leach and Samuel Hibbert also used Low's manuscripts but did not acknowledge and reference Low. The *Tour of Orkney and Shetland* was finally published in Low's name in 1879. The text was edited by Joseph Anderson, who also included in his introduction a large number of Low's letters (Doig 1955: 386-88). For contemporary scholars interested in Orkney and Shetland, and the discipline of natural history, Low's original manuscripts, correspondence, and revised editions with commentaries are available. When historical accounts discuss eighteenth-century Orkney, in particular, Low is almost always used as a reliable—and much quoted—source and he has now received the recognition he so longed for.

At a time of intense mapping of regions perceived as British hinterlands, Low came into contact with leading eighteenth-century British natural historians and antiquarians through his initial encounter with Joseph Banks. His subsequent forays into patronised natural-history studies has been used in this article as an illustration of both the continuing importance of allegiance, or patronage, networks in the eighteenth-century ecology of natural-history knowledge and to highlight the participation of people from all strata of society in the production of natural-history surveys. A close reading of Low's *Tour* manuscript has shown the collaborative efforts that underpinned natural-history expeditions with local farmers, ministers, and landowners helping Low. This was not always a smooth process but at times involved precarious negotiation. Beliefs held by farmers, in particular about the supernatural, came into conflict with 'scientific' beliefs and the informant's social status and standing in the community played an important role in the value attached to observations and beliefs. Yet, even when there were clear epistemic clashes, knowledge labelled as quaint or even deviant was included in the ecology of knowledge by being recorded. Although not imbued with the same significance, different ways of knowing and approaching the natural world were incorporated into the ecology.

Through his patron-client relationships, Low's knowledge and observations circulated widely during his lifetime in books by Pennant and Gough, in debates in scientific societies and in newspaper articles, and through these outlets Low's work shaped how people perceived the northern isles of Scotland, their geography, nature and people. He was therefore an important actor in the expanding natural-history ecology of Scotland and illustrates how knowledge was requested, produced and shared. Yet, this came at a personal cost since Low's knowledge was mediated and appropriated by other writers, rather than being published in his own name as he had dearly hoped. While his geographical location on Orkney made him a valuable commodity as a natural historian and therefore provided him with an 'entry ticket' into an elite scientific network, his remoteness also limited his ability to form new patron-client relationships and to find a publisher on his own. Despite the ecology of natural history knowledge containing openings for people of different strata, one of this ecology's defining characteristics, shared

with the society in which it functioned, was an uneven distribution of power. This hierarchy applied whether knowledge was recorded and disseminated within the British Isles or by naturalists in the British Empire. Low's enduring and flourishing friendship with Paton does demonstrate, however, that the knowledge ecosystem could sustain genuine feelings and respect alongside the utilitarian hunt for knowledge.

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## Notes

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- <sup>2</sup> My application of the metaphor draws in particular on an essay by Marcus B Weaver-Hightower (2008) who has used it to analyse educational policy.
- <sup>3</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos has for example successfully applied the metaphor to his post-colonial studies (Santos 2007).
- <sup>4</sup> Among the canonical natural-history travellers who narrated the Highlands and Islands in the second half of the eighteenth century, making them key actors in the ecology of knowledge about Scottish natural history, were men such as John Walker, Thomas Lightfoot, Joseph Banks and Thomas Pennant
- <sup>5</sup> The British public could read Linnaeus's lecture in Benjamin Stillingfleet's *Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Natural History* (1762).
- <sup>6</sup> The SSPCK had been founded by a Royal Charter in 1709 to further promote the Protestant faith, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, where superstitious beliefs were believed to be particularly strong. This was to be achieved by building schools and sending missionaries.
- <sup>7</sup> The Low letters are in the Paton Manuscript collection at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh: Adv.MS. 29.5.8. Vol. III, f. 52-100. These will be from here on shortened in the text as Low, f.
- <sup>8</sup> Dundas had purchased the Earldom in 1766 from the 14th Earl of Morton for £ 60.000 and in return for purchasing Orkney he got a parliamentary seat (Rendall 2009: p. 231; Goodfellow 1903: 223, Thomson 1987:232).
- <sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Norn, see Rendboe 1987.
- <sup>10</sup> In the case of James Tyrie in the 1740s they destroyed peat banks, barricaded the minister out of his own church and heckled him. Similarly, in 1745, a new minister called Mr Reid was welcomed with a riot since the islanders did not understand 'his tongue' (accent) (Rendall, 2009: 99-101, 118).

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## Friction or Closure: Heritage as Loss

By Mikela Lundahl

### Abstract

Heritage is a discourse that aims at closure. It fixates the narrative of the past through the celebration of specific material (or sometimes immaterial non-) objects. It organizes temporality and construct events and freezes time. How does this unfold in the case of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Stone Town, Zanzibar? It is a place of beauty and violence, of trade, slavery and tourism, and the World Heritage narrative does not accommodate all its significant historical facts and lived memories. In this article I will discuss some of these conflicting or competing historical facts.

The anthropologist Anna Tsing has developed the concept-metaphor *friction* as a way to discuss the energy created when various actors narrate “the same” event(s) in different ways, and see the other participants’ accounts as fantasies or even fabrications. I will use my position as researcher and my relations to different sources: informants, authorities and texts, and discuss how different accounts relate to and partly construct each other; and how I, in my own process as an analyst and listener, negotiate these conflicting stories, what I identify as valid and non valid accounts. The case in this article is Stone Town in Zanzibar and the development and dissolution going on under the shadow of the UNESCO World Heritage flag; a growing tourism; a global and local increase in islamisation; and the political tension within the Tanzanian union. My main focus is narratives of the identity of Zanzibar since heritagization constructs identity.

**Keywords:** Identity, Zanzibar, cosmopolitanism, friction, history, heritage, memory

It is always the past that remembers (Mudge 2013)

## Tanzania in Our Hearts

Tanzania is a favourite among African countries by many western governments, famous for its relative peaceful and harmonious postcolonial history. It is not by accident that when President Barack Obama travelled to Africa in 2013 he included Tanzania (the other two visited states were Senegal and South Africa) in the tour. Scandinavian countries have strong relations to Tanzania and many Scandinavian individuals have personal experience from shorter or longer stays in different capacities: as missionaries, aid workers, scholars, volunteers, or just as travellers/tourists (Eriksson Baaz 2005). One reason for the Scandinavian interest is that Tanzania was a relatively unimportant colony for its former colonizer, United Kingdom, and therefore “open” to neo-colonial engagement from other parties. Tanganyika, the mainland part of the union Tanzania, became a British colony quite late, after the First World War, when Germany lost all its colonies in the Versailles Treaty. Kenya and Uganda were always more important colonies in the region for the British Empire, and still are as post-colonies. The independence era’s moderate socialist leader Julius Nyerere and his leadership is another reason, since he was seen as an excellent example of how Scandinavian social democrats imagined the new postcolonial Africa. A Tanzania ruled by African socialism, and the principles of *Uhuru na Ujamaa* (Nyerere 1968), appealed to Scandinavian benevolence. These circumstances have shaped my own image of Tanzania, both Tanganyika and Zanzibar alike, even if their histories, their identities, their place within the Tanzanian union, differ substantially.<sup>1</sup> One token of the outstanding place Tanzania has in Scandinavia is the fact that both Swedish and Danish aid agencies have kept Tanzania as one of their main target countries for third world aid in times of austere politics.<sup>2</sup>

But there are many reasons why this image needs an update: The image of the peaceful and equal country becomes distorted once you look beyond the majority of the population. Anthropologists have shown that even if the model of *ujamaa* might have done some good for the vast majority that was either farmers or urbanised, it did not suit nomadic minorities at all – especially the smaller and lesser well-known groups: the strong focus on farming and land was counterproductive and unsupportive of their way of living and making their livelihood (Holmqvist & Talle 2005).

Another conflict regarding majority and minority is the one between the mainland Tanganyika, and the other part of the union, Zanzibar. Often Tanzania is in fact referring rather to mainland Tanganyika and the Zanzibari archipelago is more or less forgotten. For example in a recent Swedish thesis on democratisation in Tanzania, the author (whose expertise on Tanganyika is indisputable) states in the opening that “Tanzania has been independent in 2011 for 50 years.” (Ewald

2011: 7) *Tanganyika* had been independent 50 years in 2011 but *Tanzania* did not exist in 1961, and its other part, *Zanzibar*, became independent in December 1963. This mistake is very common, and usually not taken very seriously. Even Zanzibaris talk about “Tanzania” as something external, referring to “mainland” or *Tanganyika*, not really including themselves in it. The name *Tanganyika* does not have the same status as *Zanzibar* anymore, the latter still being the main referent to *Unguja* – the name of the main island of the Zanzibari archipelago, as well as to the second island, *Pemba*.<sup>3</sup> *Tanganyika* is the old and official name of the mainland, which is rarely used nowadays. Naming is, as we know, not innocent; in this case these usages of names is complicit in marginalising *Zanzibar* in relation to the “mainland”, in confirming the fiction that *Tanzania* is more or less identical with *Tanganyika*.

### **Zanzibar, the Oriental Pearl of Africa**

When I first arrived in *Zanzibar* in 2011, I thought I had come to this pearl of *Tanzania* – a part of Africa, but with a mystic touch of the Orient. That is how the tourist industry sells *Zanzibar* to the world, and the narrative consists of a mixture of western imageries and projections including pristine beaches and oriental delight. And it is of course “true” in one sense. The beaches *are* long, white and fringed by palm trees. Many of the hotels all over the island enact beautifully the western idea of the orient, and evoke fantasies about the kind of pleasure that scholars (Said 1978; Campbell 2001) have described as essential to western narratives about the orient. The references are subtle, since “[i]magination must take the strain when facts are few” and the goal is “to seed fantasies about sex, submission, jealousy, power and violence” (Campbell 2001: 37) without being too blunt about what it is that attracts tourist to the exotic faraway, as well as not disturbing the actual oriental part of *Zanzibar*, the highly religious Muslim community. Both urban and rural *Zanzibar* bears signs of that Muslim community, but in most cases reality does not live up to the commercialised orient that attract the tourist gaze (Urry 2002).

But it is Stone Town – *Mji Kongwe* –, the old part of the capital, *Zanzibar City*, which has attracted the world’s interest and which became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. Stone Town is situated on a cape on the east coast, facing mainland and the old port of *Bagamoyo*.<sup>4</sup> The town consists of a number of outstanding buildings along the waterfront such as the House of Wonder, the Palace Museum, and the Old Fort etcetera. Beyond these, more anonymous houses together constitutes the famous labyrinth inner part of Stone Town, one-family townhouses mixed with bigger apartment houses. There are two churches (one Catholic and one Anglican), two Hindu temples, and around 50 mosques. The estimated habitants are 20.000 but many more spend their days there coming from the outskirts, or the surrounding *Zanzibar city*, home to some 200.000 people.

Most of the buildings in Stone Town are built in the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however some are significantly older, at least partially. These houses were usually homes to Arabic and Indian tradesmen and their families and employees or slaves. In 1832 the sultan of Oman decided to make Stone Town of Zanzibar the capital of the sultanate to which Zanzibar belonged already since 1698. In 1890 the British Empire made Zanzibar a protectorate with the sultan as the official leader but under the British governor, an arrangement that lasted until Zanzibar became independent in December 1963. Only a month later a revolution over-threw the Arab-dominated order that was installed by the Britons as they left governance, and in April 1964 the union with Tanganyika was established. During the pre-independence years Zanzibar was a flourishing cultural and intellectual hub for East Africa, which withered away during the 60s and 70s, as more focus and resources in Tanzania were channelled to mainland and Dar es Salaam. Many of the intellectuals were either killed during the revolution or exiled in its aftermath. In the late 80s and early 90s, the until then the quite sleepy island became a hotspot for backpacking tourists and a growing fascination for the historical and decaying place begun that eventually led up till the nomination and listing of Zanzibar Stone Town on UNESCO's World Heritage list in 2000.

This is what UNESCO agreed on as *Outstanding Universal Values* (OUV) in Stone Town:

- *Criterion ii*: The Stone Town of Zanzibar is an outstanding material manifestation of cultural fusion and harmonization.
- *Criterion iii*: For many centuries there was intense seaborne trading activity between Asia and Africa, and this is illustrated in an exceptional manner by the architecture and urban structure of the Stone Town.
- *Criterion vi*: Zanzibar has great symbolic importance in the suppression of slavery, since it was one of the main slave-trading ports in East Africa and also the base from which its opponents such as David Livingstone conducted their campaign.<sup>5</sup>

Obviously “history” is everywhere in Stone Town since it is a heritage site. But it is not only the aspects of history that is acknowledged in the UNESCO criteria for the site, and was considered significant for the World Heritage nomination, but other aspects of history, as well as other epochs is present in the town. What interests me is the relation between the international/global discourse and governance and the local effects/affects that became significant in and through conversations. Utterances and expressed feelings that I was confronted with in Stone Town during fieldwork and interviews is my point of departure. The fieldwork took place mostly during two visits, one in November to January 2012–2013, and one in June and July 2013, but also during a follow up in July 2014. My informants are members of Reclaim women’s heritage – a quite diverse group, but dominating are well educated middle aged women who run the centre but there are also some newly recruited women who are the “target group”: women who could benefit

from their activities. Other informants are mostly men who live in my neighbourhoods and who I know as neighbours, or as workers or managers at, or owners of the cafés or restaurants that I frequently visit. Their backgrounds are very diverse, some have been abroad for years and has returned to run a business or take positions in public administration, or they are mainlanders who came to Zanzibar to find a work in or close the tourist industry, or they are locals who struggle everyday to get some small money in relation to tourism, as drivers, boatmen, sellers of curiosa etcetera. Their age differ from late teens to middle age. I also talked both formally and informally to staff at Stone Town Conservation and Development Authority (STCDA).

### **History, Heritage, Memory**

The historical events I did expect to encounter and that would matter to Stone Towners were related to the above listed criterions: the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when most of Stone Town was constructed as a result of the “cultural fusion” between the Arabic, Indian, Portuguese and African influence. Many significant buildings originated in this era, and they are what one encounter everyday in Stone Town. This structure that emanates from many centuries of “seaborne trading activity between Asia and Africa” and that led up to this cultural fusion is also possible to get a sense of strolling around in Mji Mkongwe (“old town”). The heydays of slave trade have been made visible through a questioned installation named “the slave market”.<sup>6</sup> But that was not what was on most peoples’ mind once I begun to engage with what most Zanzibaris talk and are passionate about. In the beginning of most conversations where I usually told them that I was in Stone Town to investigate what the World Heritage nomination had led to for the inhabitants, the informants politely would answer my questions and serve me brief comments or maybe become a bit upset about what it didn’t give them (like no possibilities to buy everyday necessities in their neighbourhood because all the former shops had been turned to tourist shops run by foreigners, or to develop their properties to fulfil their current needs). However, it usually didn’t take long until the conversation turned to other topics, usually leading to passionate micro lectures about the Tanzanian union, which I soon learned was intensively discussed at public spaces as the famous Jaw’s Corner where mostly men gather to exchange news and gossip. That topic quickly led to conversations about events some 50 years ago that engaged most of my informants – most of them not born or old enough to have their own memories – and the present consequences of these events. The historical period that keeps coming up in conversations – and also in literature once my gaze was turned in that direction – is the era of independence and the unresolved events of that period, such as the revolution and the constitution and the conditions of the Tanzanian union. In daily conversations on the street, at cafés and tourist shops, as well as with professionals in different capacities in the heritage site, topics related

to this turmoil were touched upon, one way or another. This era is not a part of the UNESCO documentation and therefore insignificant for the *actual* heritagization of Zanzibar.<sup>7</sup> Both the era in itself but also the widespread assumption that something was lost in that process is absent from the official narrative. What actually was lost does not form a coherent narrative, and maybe it is just loss in itself that is the main content in these narratives: a shared experience of loss. Much of this experienced loss can be related to what in Islands Studies is referred to as “to island”: which among other things refers to the change of identity once the island becomes a part of a bigger mainland. Marginalisation and the experience of being an extension to this bigger unity rather than to something in itself becomes central the new identity built upon *islandness*. The experience of loss is a part of becoming an island, as a consequence of the decline of oceanic community and the rise of continental, and the feeling of marginalisation or difference emerged as one of its core traces in how it relates to the world and to its mainland.<sup>8</sup>

### **Friction as a Thicket Path**

My focus in this study was planned to focus on the present and near history: what the UNESCO World Heritage nomination had brought to Zanzibar during its little more than one decade of existence. However it turned out that it was impossible to stay in the present and recent past. Or at least in the sense I was expecting, and that the world heritagization directs our gaze towards. As Sharon Macdonald writes in *Memorylands. Heritage and Identity in Europe today* about field methodology: it

goes beyond simply recording “native voices” but entails a rigorous commitment to trying to grasp the patterns of relations of which utterances, practices, feelings and so forth, are part; and what they may be linked with. This frequently involves or leads to reflexivity about categories of analysis and forms of knowledge production – including the role of scholarship itself. (Macdonald 2013: 9)

I set out asking whether (world) heritagization, with its highly directed and designed version of history, aiming to fit in the UNESCO format, were benefitting the people living in the site, or whom it fit/unfit. Does the heritagization silence other stories, more relevant and locally important? Who has the power over historiography? This is not only a matter of concern for these people, but also a prerequisite to maintain the qualities of the World Heritage site if it shall remain a living site and not a museum. My preconceptions of which other stories could hide behind the World Heritage narratives were vague. With the anthropologist Anna Tsing’s concept of friction, developed to study “the productive friction of global connections” (Tsing 2005: 3), I was offered a tool to resist temptations of simplified confirmation and closure (White 1979). This is how she came up with the concept:

The metaphor of friction suggested itself because of the popularity of stories of a new era of global motion in the 1990s. The flow of goods, ideas, money, and people would henceforth be pervasive and unimpeded. In this imagined global era, motion would proceed entirely without friction. [---] In fact, motion does not proceed this way at all. [...] These kinds of “friction” inflect motion, offering it different meanings. (Tsing 2005: 5f)

The notion of, as well as the factual, Tanzania, that mostly includes Zanzibar as an exotic appendix, creates *friction* whenever Zanzibaris interact with non-zanzibaris, westerners or others. With the help of the concept I could see that the preconceptions of Tanzania I brought to this study was not only a problem. Obviously they obscured my gaze to some degree, but they also turned out to be productive and challenging due to the friction that occurred when met with contradictory ideas, and hence challenged. If ideas and conceptions from the field hadn't been put in relation to my preconceptions, I might have ignored them since they didn't fit into my research design. Or I might have accepted them too readily, whereas friction pushed me to dwell, to stay in these uncomfortable places, to deepen my understandings, and also took me to new places, places that I did not plan or expect to go. As Tsing writes:

Roads are a good image for conceptualizing how friction works: Roads create pathways that make motion easier and more efficient, but in doing so they limit where we go. The ease of travel they facilitate is also a structure of confinement. Friction inflects historical trajectories, enabling, excluding, and particularizing. (Tsing 2005: 6)

As a Scandinavian researcher, with the background I sketched above, the narratives that questioned the legitimacy of the Tanzanian union, appeared provocative and disturbing and my immediate impulse was to resist them. I produced all sorts of counter narratives to make sense of these statements. Some of the narratives I categorised as expressions of a feeling of declassification from (former) privileged people, where the context and legitimating framework of the privileged classes got lost in the transformation brought by independence, the revolution, and the unionisation. Or the loss of a time when class differences were not questioned or challenged, when their privileges were not challenged by socialist notions of equality and *ujamaa* (nor integrated in the new postcolonial power structures). Others could be understood as statements coming from uninformed poor people who are either declassified or who don't feel that they have benefitted from the socialist Tanzanian union and believes they would have been better off in an independent nation-state of Zanzibar than in the union with Tanganyika. They seem to be oblivious of the fact that the wealth and cultural richness that is attributed to pre-independence Zanzibar was not equally distributed, and they would most likely have been as poor as they are now with or without the union. These arguments, my “explanations”, probably hold some truth. However I acknowledged my resistance and begun to consider its power, and how it was distorting the narratives. When I instead looked at the friction they caused, sometimes visible in my replies

(even if I tried to not “talk back”), I could hear and understand these notions differently.

### **Stone Town as World Heritage. The Tale of a Heritagized Town**

To be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site is to be identified as something extraordinary, and the international community has agreed that the site has *outstanding universal values*, which are of relevance for all humanity and shall be protected for an indeterminate future (Rao 2010; Frey & Steiner 2011). Obviously it is an important event for that locality and for the nation-state, who is the official stakeholder, and the nomination will eventually (at least that is what most actors aim for) bring status and more visitors, tourists, and money, to the site and to the region. More interesting from the perspective of this study, however, is that a UNESCO World Heritage nomination has performative powers: the site (or rather its agents) has agreed to perform as it self – a self constructed by the nominators based on what they saw as possible to transform to a world heritage – in the future. A self that has been defined in the nomination procedure by a small group of professionals whose most important competence is benchmarking in accordance with UNESCO’s values (Ronström 2008). In this particular case that means to perform as “an outstanding material manifestation of cultural fusion and harmonization”. Even if it is the built heritage that this refers to, it still affects the inhabitants who are expected to live and reproduce that very environment. As the anthropologist Rosabelle Boswell writes, with the example from another island in the Indian Ocean, Mauritius, which has a UNESCO World Heritage site:

This obviously required residents of Le Morne (ethnically and socially diverse) to be cast as cultural subjects and to Perform a version of Creole identity, as well as to draw upon publicly articulated memories to inform their identity. (Boswell 2011a: 172)

One question this raises is how to manage *culture* at a World Heritage site? So far what has been done in Stone Town is efforts to preserve the material structure. But what about “the cultural fusion”? How do you manage that? Many professionals argue that it is solely the built environment that is a concern for the nomination, and that the question about managing culture therefore is of minor interest. That might formally be right. But is it possible to separate the two? Can we imagine material structures where actual people live that are conceptually and practically separated from each other? Is not the latter a prerequisite for the former? How can one expect people who live in a site, maybe unaware or uninterested in UNESCO policies, to be a part of the preservation of the town? Somehow this boils down to if materiality constitutes culture or the other way around, or what is more valuable than the other. This is of course a rhetorical question. We know that actual people rarely can compete when money, income, “bigger issues”, are at stake. But if we forget that, and assume that the cultural fusion that UNESCO has

defined as an OUV is produced and reproduced by the people living it, rather than by engineers, architects, managers, etcetera, would not a focus on this *lived* cultural fusion be a priority, if only as means to preserve the built material? It seems as many actors in the field assume that the causality goes the other way around, how else can one understand the fact that for example the Swedish Aid Agency would engage in heritage preservation at all: the expectation must be that the effort to preserve the built environment in Stone Town will bring tourists, money and development to the region, and therefore minimize poverty. As the anthropologist Tania Li has shown, there is a strong tendency to focus on materiality, on engineers, on some kind of technical support, when it is actually social and cultural support that was the aim for the project from the start. The latter being so much more unpredictable, uncontrollable, more difficult: better, as in easier, to put the money and time in yet another machine, infrastructure, that is somewhat measurable within the given project time – what happens after the project is finished the funder is not accountable for (Li 2007).

There is awareness among the staff at STCDA about the need to work with culture as well and their lack of competence in that area.<sup>9</sup> So far there is not much available knowledge on how to work on cultural resilience, and it was not really considered when the institution of World Heritage was outlined. Even if it still is the built environment that is protected, the maintainers are the inhabitants.

### **Stone Town as a Site of “Cultural Fusion”**

There is not one single narrative of the cultural fusion Stone Town is characterised by, but many competing and sometimes even conflicting stories, depending on who is telling it and for what reason, and in which context and time. There is no certainty on exactly when and how different groups of people first came to the zanzibarian archipelago – which shares its history with the so-called Swahili coast, or the Swahili corridor. In some accounts Zanzibar belongs to the Indian Ocean culture, or the Dhow culture – that widespread area where the traditional sailing boat named dhow sailed, from the east African coast all the way to the Philippines – rather than to continental Africa. In one obvious sense, which we soon shall return to, Zanzibar is of course a part of Tanzania and Africa.

Those who inhabit the islands today are descending from many different groups: Africans from the mainland began to come more than 2000 years ago, mostly as fishermen, and later they were brought as slaves. During the 800<sup>th</sup> century Asians started to come, the first commonly believed to have come from Persia – and their heritage is referred to as Shiraz, even though there are no available hard facts to support that there actually came people from that part of Asia. The groups have intermarried and merged during the centuries, and the descendants are referred to and identifies as Afro-Shiraz. This group is quite diverse since there has been a constant flow between the mainland and the islands and new

waves of Arabic and Indian migrants have been absorbed. Sometimes the Afro-Shiraz is referred to as Swahilis – as in contrast to people identifying and identified as Arabs or Indian. Arabs mainly from Oman have frequented and settled the islands and the coast for many centuries as traders, and Indians from the Indian subcontinent came as workforce and traders mainly during British rule. Since Vasco da Gama rounded Cape of Good Hope in 1498, Portuguese, Britons, Germans and other Europeans, have traded and settled along the coast.

This hybrid society, in “these coastal and island communities”, is often described as “cosmopolitan in flavor” due to its extensive trade relations both with the interior of Africa, the Middle East and Asia.<sup>10</sup> The “cultural fusion” that the UNESCO nomination refers to is often understood as “cosmopolitan” – which is an interesting label, given that many scholars consider cosmopolitanism being a privileged western state of being (Cheah 2006). The cosmopolitanism that is ascribed to Stone Town, in and through UNESCO, can partly be understood as a result of the touristic gaze and as a projection. Yet, it can be relevant to describe Stone Town as a cosmopolitan place in the sense that a small elite – which of course is not unique for this place since cosmopolitanism is most often used to describe different elite lifestyles – of varied background has dominated the town and its culture during its whole existence. The story of the Zanzibari Princess Salme is a good example of that, which might partly explain why it is used in many contexts: one exhibition is devoted to her in the Palace Museum in Stone Town, and her autobiography, *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess*, is for sale all over Stone Town. Also the House of Wonder has an exhibition space about her, which in Boswell’s phrasing “appear to have obliterated the role of Arabs in the persecution and enslavement of Africans” and she argues that its “[n]ostalgic and romanticized accounts of the Arab descendant princess Salme blur the memory of slavery.” (Boswell 2011a: 173) The story about her is also used as a way to promote hotels and give an orientalist air to them.<sup>11</sup> But there are other ways to understand cosmopolitanism. Stuart Hall described the Caribbean identity in terms of a history of uprooting and violent unsettling which has created diverse and mixed societies, with no grand narratives of the nation-state giving meaning to their existence, but still with a of unity, that can be described as “‘becoming’ as well as [...] ‘being’” (Hall 1994: 394). The uprooting in itself, and the forced coexistence with strangers in an alien place became another “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) that Caribbean societies share in spite of other differences. Robbie Shilliam develops that idea further when he appropriates the term cosmopolitanism, that used to point at privileged peoples lifestyles transcending the nation-state, and describes Caribbeans as truly cosmopolitan in how they have come to live together and negotiate differences (Shilliam 2011). In his writings about creolity Tomas Hylland Eriksen has shown that the concept is not only valid for the West Indies, but also for the Indian Ocean, which since many hundred, if not thousands of years, has been a very creolised part of the world (Eriksen 2007).

A recurring claim is that the town pre-revolution was divided in ethnic/racial enclaves. This narrative is stressed by the Women's heritage group, both in conversations and in their documentation, and the underlying assumption is one of a lost imagined harmony, almost in opposition to the idea of "cultural fusion" – or maybe the prerequisite for the cultural fusion.<sup>12</sup> (2009) A claim contested by William Cunningham Bissell who argues that the idea of the division is oblivious of the fact that even if houses were owned and mainly inhabited by Arabs (a quite unstable category in itself since ethnic lines did not exactly follow racial) they usually had Afro-Shiraz people working and living in their households, or earlier on, descendants of African slaves. And there were also poor people of Indian and Arab descent who lived in the poorer parts of the town according to Cunningham Bissell, so the urban geography was more blurred than these nostalgic narratives acknowledge. It is a part of the colonial nostalgia to stress the assumed harmony in the colonial society (Bissell 2011: 66f). This "nostalgia" can also be a cover for more strategic narratives supported or even created by the British colonial administration that here as elsewhere used ethnic divisions as a means to split and govern. According to Sharae Deckard it was a part of British colonial politics to project an image of an ethnified town, a projection that had performative powers:

The British colonial regime saw Zanzibar in racial categories expressed directly in spatial terms. Zanzibaris came to use those categories to their own ends. The decade Zanzibaris call the *Time of Politics* (1954–64) that came at the end of colonialism, in particular, was a time of politics orchestrated explicitly around race and racial geography in the city. (Myers 2011: 173)

The influence went in many directions and the ethnic identities were manifold and opposing each other in intricate patterns, and "[...] Arab-Islamic dominance was not totalizing." Even if colonial European historians tended to see "direct Arab influence in every aspect of the East African urban culture" (Deckard 2010: 100) the reality is that they were much more hybridized and diverse. Further, the

relationship of the Swahili to the people of the coasts and the interior was not one of the unmitigated exploitation, but rather a more fluid negotiation of ethnicity and social positioning. Most Arabs who settled on the coasts gradually adopted Swahili culture and speech. A vertiginous array of markers characterized the social hierarchy of nineteenth-century Swahili culture, where ethnicity became a vehicle for distinguishing between the different groups that composed coastal towns. Established residents, recently settled immigrants, and new arrivals were ranked in terms of how indigenous (*wenyeji*) or how foreign (*wageni*) they were perceived to be [...] The fluidity of these ethnic categories, whose boundaries were continually in the process of negotiation, sharply contrasts the rigidity of the racial hierarchies constructed by Germans and British in their "divide and rule" policies. (Deckard 2010: 100)

The Zanzibari/Swahili identity has been in constant flux, and political and economical changes are important factors in regulating this fluidity.<sup>13</sup> Regional power structures, growing and declining nation-states, empires, have had great impact. The union and the semi-autonomous status of Zanzibar has been questioned since

the birth of the union, and now in 2014, 50 years later, there are serious political processes to renegotiate the conditions for the union to grant more independence to the two parties of the union. But what is it in all this diversity that UNESCO refers to when they use the term “cultural fusion”? As stated above “culture” for UNESCO refers rather to the built heritage where different styles and elements have merged, in one building or in how houses next to each other “in harmony” reflects “cultural differences”, but the relation to the actual people and their culture that produced this is not really considered.

### **Unresolved Memories of a Revolution**

The fact that 1832 Stone Town became the capital of the sultanate of Oman and one of the leading towns of the Arab world is still a strong narrative. Even if already in 1890 that changed, since Zanzibar became a full British protectorate, the Sultan kept ruling the country but now under British “supervision”, the infamous indirect rule of British colonisation, a construction that remained until independence 1963. Even if that meant big changes there is a tendency to see continuity from at least 1832 (and before) until the union, and to place the big discontinuity to the years following independence.<sup>14</sup> During British rule racial segregation in Zanzibar went from an informal to a more formal condition, and Whites, Indians and Arabs in that particular order were favoured. Swahilis with African descent were attributed a stronger connection to mainland Africa and were placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, under the Afro-Shirazi. The years heading up to independence therefore formed a political landscape of

two camps: the anti-Sultanate, Africa-oriented, and secular Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) with a stronghold in the densely populated areas of Unguja; and the pro-Sultanate, Arab World-oriented, and explicitly Islamic Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) [...] At independence, the British handed power to the two parties friendliest to the Sultanate and the status quo: the ZNP and [its ally the] ZPPP.<sup>15</sup>

When Zanzibar became independent the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1963, the British transferred the power to a party supported by the Sultan. This transfer was provoking to the majority of the Afro-Shirazi, who identified it as a strategy to maintain as much of the stability and continuity as possible into the post-independent era (Burgess 1999). Only one month later, the Sultan was overthrown in a bloody revolution led by the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), and the People’s Republic of Zanzibar was proclaimed. The autonomous republic lasted less than four months, and in April 1964 the union of Tanzania, Zanzibar together with Tanganyika, was born. These are the events that keep occurring in conversations on the island.

The Afro-Shirazi Party staged their revolution only one month after the independence of December 10<sup>th</sup>, the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, as a reaction to the British effort to make a smooth transition from protectorate to independence, with the goal to maintain good relations to the ruler – who was the same sultan (or his successor)

who had been “leading” the country under British “protection” since 1890, and in succession since 1832. The ambition was to secure continuity, and that must be understood as a part of the making of the new *Eurafrica* that European leaders had come to realise was the only possible (and desired) way forward, since it had become obvious that colonisation as we knew it had become obsolete (Hansen & Jonsson 2014). The 1964 revolution had stirred worries that Zanzibar should become the (revolutionary) Cuba of Eastern Africa, in Europe as well as in the United States. Zanzibar could become that spark that would ignite the radical fire that would turn the whole African continent communist. Understood in this way the objective with the union was to domesticate the revolutionary Zanzibar and to save Africa from the communist flare which was a substantial (real or imagined) fear of the 1950s and 1960s, and which would have brought an end to the strong bonds between Europe and its former colonies, and therefore undermining the intention to keep up the trade between Africa and Europe (Burgess et al. 2009). During the revolution, in January 1964, ethnical cleansings, as well as political, took place, and many non-blacks, of Arabic and/or Indian descent, fled or were killed (between 5.000–10.000). And again, when the union became a fact, many of the revolutionary leaders and intellectuals were also killed, or forced away, to exile in Europe and elsewhere. In spite of colonial ideas about the “white man’s burden”, it is obvious in this case that the British were more interested in securing power than looking out for the poorest in the colony, or in this case, the protectorate. Zanzibar was ruled in a classical divide and rule style, and it was the Arabs that according to the British had the potential to be leaders.

The independence and the turbulent years that followed changed the whole archipelago, but perhaps particularly Stone Town, since it had until then been a place dominated by wealthy Arabs, of whom many were killed or forced into exile. Many of their townhouses were left empty, and little by little they became inhabited by Afro-Shirazis coming from the suburbs, the countryside, or by migrating mainlanders. As late as in the 1990s there were still abandoned empty houses, before heritagization and tourism boomed. Those transitory years in the 1960s are a strong heritage and a strong memory, which is retold by Zanzibaris in many different versions and contexts, and are used as an explanation to many of the experienced changes and shortcomings since then. This is the era referred to when experiences of loss are expressed. In the Women’s heritage group there has been a focus on collecting childhood stories, and of memories of public spaces.<sup>16</sup> These stories contain nostalgic memories that reflects moments that refers to a lost happiness that is told as belonging not only to “childhood” but to a specific childhood where the sultan played the role as the patriarch. For example during one of the meetings I participated in (January 2013), playgrounds as a public space and scene from childhood were discussed, as childhood and public space is one of the topics that they have used when collecting memories among women from Stone Town. The women talked about memories of swinging and the Sultan is under-

stood to have been supplying and maintaining the swings and the playgrounds – in contrast to the current republic government – where no swings are available in public spaces (Boswell 2011b; Boswell 2011a). In anecdotes like these, seemingly without reason, the conversation touches upon the transition from colonial to postcolonial times. More often than I would have thought, colonial times are privileged, and again my preconceptions are provoked, and my ideas on what should and should not be privileged. Postcolonial time ought in my mind be privileged before colonial since it meant independence; republic rule over royal since it meant peoples' rule instead of monarchy. I cannot say that I really can reconsider that from a general point of view, but I have to accept the fact that independence and the union is not experienced as a success story, and that it has failed in making itself meaningful and relevant to many Zanzibaris, and many Zanzibaris that I spoke to, expressed a wish that the sultan – who is still alive, in exile in UK – should return.

Another example of this ultra modernity in nostalgic dress, relates to the (lack of) infrastructure in the town. Stone Town was once considered among the most modern African cities, the installation of the first elevator in the House of Wonder, being one often referred to example. Typically however, the elevator has not been in use in decades. The streets of Stone Town had electric lighting before the streets of London. Another more crucial thing is water distribution: there are a number of big water distributors in Stone Town, that every household – if they do not have a private well on their property or common backyard – has to connect to, with their own pipes to the street. This creates a chaotic system of pipes (mixed with electric lines) some three meters above the ground all over Stone Town. That is neither practical, nor aesthetically in accordance with what one would expect from a World Heritage site, where the regulations on how one can repair or rebuild one's house is quite detailed and restricted. But there was a functional water distribution system “before independence”, before the assumed mismanagement of the town, that is described as beginning with the revolution/unionisation and lasting at least until the heritagization process begun in the early 1990s. This fact, that there used to be a more developed water system is integrated in the narratives of loss, and is also typical in the process of *islanding*. Islands tend to create narratives of a glorious prehistory *before* the integration into/with the nearest mainland.

Those examples show that the pro-independence years are idealized, and since it is also the time of the sultanate, with its stronger political, cultural and economic bonds to the Arabic peninsula than to the “mainland”, these narratives contribute to the on-going orientalisation of Zanzibar. The independence and the revolutionary years serve as point of nostalgia, both for those generations who remember life in town during the sultanate, and for those who experience the revolution as loss (Bissell 2005; Lowenthal 2013). This loss also entailed losing a radical well-educated elite, with influences from all over the Indian Ocean Area and East

Africa, and Zanzibar as the intellectual, political, and cultural metropolis of Eastern Africa (Burgess et al. 2009).

## Shifting Frontiers

There are many contradictions in the political landscape and its uses of identity and belonging, since nowadays it is the “mainland” in itself, as well as the “mainlanders” presence on the island, that is questioned, and work as an agent in the reinvention of Zanzibari identity. During the time of revolution and the fight for independence the antagonisms between Africans and Arabs grew strong as citizenship during the years before full independence was a crucial question, and became quite politicised. As Thomas Burgess argues there was an interest among many of the Arabs, whom mostly belonged to the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) to consider their marginal position in terms of numbers. They argued that more “recent African migrants from the mainland” should be excluded from the electoral rolls, whereas the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) wanted to include “mainlanders”. Both positions must be related to the fact that “only 17 percent of the total population identifying themselves as ‘Arabs’ in the 1948 census”, and that the question on how to construct the zanzibarian identity was a hugely political one (Burgess 1999: 32). ASP on their part meant that ZNP was put into power maintain Arabic economic and political domination, which could be traced back to the enslavement of Africans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ZNP argued that they were “the only genuinely anti-colonial, multi-racial, Muslim party”. What was at stake according to Burgess (1999: 32) was the “the very identity of Zanzibar”. ASP claimed the ties to Africa and the continent, whereas ZNP imagined Zanzibar’s future as a “multiracial Muslim state with its strongest cultural and political ties with the Arab Middle East” (Burgess 1999: 32). Translated to the current political landscape the distancing from the mainland has become naturalised, and seem to be shared by most Zanzibaris, and to claim Zanzibari identity as a non-mainland, and even non-African identity, has become mainstream. This opposing identity is explained in cultural as well as in historical terms. As one of my informants stated while discussing the eventuality of a future separation between Tanganyika and Zanzibar:

We were always mixed, and we are therefore more developed. [...] We overthrew the Britons ourselves, we *took* our freedom, but on the mainland it was given to them.

The statement was uttered as a part of a discussion about the difference between the Zanzibaris and the mainlanders. In it he, a man from Stone Town, in his thirties, who spent almost a decade in Europe, is expressing a similar idea of what is typical for Zanzibar as the one formulated in UNESCOs criteria about the cultural fusion, and he attributes to it a worldliness, an understanding of how to deal with the complexities of the modern and globalised world. Further he implies that Zan-

zibaris has agency (enough to overthrow their oppressors), and knowledge, and contrasts that to mainlanders who are assumed to be backwards, simpleminded, and passive victims, of history and globalisation, due to their lack of long-term interaction with many different modes of thoughts and lifestyles. But the statement also shows discrepancy with historical facts: the independence was “given” equally to both the countries, and a couple of years earlier to Tanganyika than to Zanzibar. Nonetheless it is a revealing utterance of how Zanzibaris/Stone Town inhabitants use history and the past to tell a story about cosmopolitan heritage.

Questions surrounding who the Zanzibaris are and where they came from are deeply problematic. Although the questions originate in a very distant past, it is a past dredged up daily in Zanzibar, articulated with the rise of mass tourism as the mainstay of the city’s, and the island’s, economy, and the consequent commodification of history. It is a past reconstructed regularly across the diaspora as well, across many forms of media and in everyday conversations. (Myers 2011: 172)

Identity and the question of whom is Zanzibari and who is not, is on the table everyday. Yet there seems to be an agreement that a “real” Zanzibari can come in many colours, ranging from very dark to almost white, and can belong to different ethnicities: Afro-Shirazi, Swahili, Indian, or Arabic, as well as of mixes of these. That said, one should not be tempted to believe that there are no frictions to the coexistence of these different identities. But they are all accepted as Zanzibari in contrast to mainlanders or expats. As Myers frames it, Zanzibar is “a fractured homeland and a fractured diaspora.” (2011: 173) And Zanzibar

is particularly politicized in its complications. There is a Zanzibar that belongs to the United Republic of Tanzania, and a Zanzibar that belongs to history as many different things. [...] Zanzibar is claimed by pan-Africanists and African nationalists and communist revolutionaries and Arab nationalists and Islamists and Pempanists and human rights activists and hip-hop artist. [...] What unites Zanzibar, what is held in common as Zanzibar, or who belongs to *what* Zanzibar, and who gets to decide which Zanzibar is which? (Myers 2011: 173f)

The UNESCO statement “The Stone Town of Zanzibar is an outstanding material manifestation of cultural fusion and harmonization” might be true when it comes to “cultural fusion”, but the “harmonization” is not obvious from all corners – if we are not restricting our conversation only to how “Indian” balconies are harmoniously attached to “Arabic” houses.

Identity is a burning issue almost everywhere, which takes different forms and is used to different ends. The last couple of decades “identity politics” have been widely questioned by many scholars. Yet, identity matters for people, politics, culture, life, and resistance. In most societies politics is mediated through identities, and it is often through identity one is interpellated and affected by social or religious movements, political parties etcetera. From the case of Stone Town, and its “cultural fusion” it is obvious that “ethnic identities [...] represent only ‘a small fraction’ of the many identities mobilized in postcolonial Africa” and that

time, and political, social change plays in to how identities develop, or are developed (Myers 2011: 30).

In Zanzibar the concept of indigeneity is not often used, but when it is, it refers to the Afro-Shirazi, who are understood to have been first on the islands, and that is in the political context of the ASP – Afro-Shirazi Party. It seems as if different ideas of mixed or parallel identities is more fitting to understand and describe how Zanzibaris understand identity: *creolity*, *hybridity* (Bhabha 1994; Hall 1994; Eriksen 1995). But it might be that ideas of *cosmopolitanism* is a better way to describe the way people live “side by side” – as Homi Bhabha formulated it recently, also asking for new ways to think urbanity as a cosmopolitanism that is based not in elites, but in all migrants over the world:

What does it mean to be at home in globalization? What forms of solidarity and alliance are made possible by living side by side with difference and alterity? Must we live in the shadow of sovereignty, or can we surpass it, or are we caught in its ambivalence? (Bhabha 2013)

Also Robbie Shilliam suggest that we redefine the concept of cosmopolitanism and bring it out of its Eurocentric worldview that makes us understand it as an impulse emerging from the west, when it can be argued that cosmopolitanism has been growing in many hybridized, creolised societies, far from the western metropolis (Shilliam 2011). This shall not be understood as if cosmopolitanism is the norm elsewhere, but a possible future that is not necessarily Eurocentric. As Burgess argues “Zanzibari revolution [...] was a violent rejection of Zanzibar’s cosmopolitan heritage” (Burgess et al. 2009: 1) and that it broke with 150 years of Arabic and south Indian economical and cultural hegemony and aimed at bringing Zanzibar “back” to a more monocultural “African” community. Many hoped for the revolution to heal the wounds and tensions caused by the slave trade and colonisation, which it didn’t. Instead it can be argued that it overshadowed it, and created new tensions and fractures, and the union that followed became another example of how the problems with identity politics, can not be solved either through the installation of a new identity – African instead of Arabic – or by unifying ideas as that of the Tanzanian unions: *ujamaa*, if the inherent conflicts are not dealt with, and given its proper space in the collective memory. But the Swahili identity shows its resilience, and its capacity to, as all creolised cultures, survive in new circumstances, as itself, but different.

## Epilogue

As I do the final editing on this article I am back in Zanzibar, and Stone Town is, in July 2014, getting closer to be put on the list of danger, due mainly to two interventions, one that has been a concern since I came here for the first time in 2011, and one new: the first being the big new hotel at the seafront on a former public space. The second threat is the planning of a new or extended harbour that

will eat into the northern part of the seafront (as well as of the mangrove forest north of town). Is that something spoken of? Not really. When I try to ask about it, people are unaware of the significance and when I explain they agree that it is not a good thing... but still, development is more important. The on-going discussions about changing the constitution for the union stirs up much stronger sentiments, than any threat against the World Heritage status. To not getting more autonomy in the union is considered a definite threat.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I want to thank Dr Anna Bohlin at School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, and the seminar at Centre for Africa Studies, University of Cape Town, for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this article.
- <sup>2</sup> Tanzania is the Swedish Aid Agency's (SIDA) biggest receiving country with ca. 800 million SEK, <http://www.sida.se/Svenska/Har-arbetar-vi/Afrika/Tanzania/Samarbetet-i-siffror/> (retrieved 24 July 2014), almost the same amount, 640 DKK, is Denmark's development cooperation (DANIDA) contribution to Tanzania: <http://um.dk/da/danida/det-goer-vi/aarsberetning2012/danmarks-udviklingssamarbejde-i-tal/danmarks-bilaterale-bistand-til-afrika-2012/> (retrieved 24 July 2014).
- <sup>3</sup> When I in this article refer to Zanzibar it is Unguja that is implied.
- <sup>4</sup> Bagamoyo used to be the capital but when the harbour of Dar es Salaam grew Bagamoyo declined, but now Chinese investors is building a new harbour. In the old days it used to ship out slaves and ivory, whereas the future goods will be crops, petrol, gas and minerals.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/173> (retrieved 24 July 2014).
- <sup>6</sup> Many locals and scholars dismiss this as an authentic slave market, and the caves that are narrated by guides as spaces to accommodate slaves, probably contained food and other supplies, rather than people. The actual slave market was held in the open, close to the waterfront in the area of Shangani.
- <sup>7</sup> World heritage is as much a national business as it is international. The original intention was to protect objects that were of universal interest, but it has become a way to promote national status and it is the nation-state that nominates and who is responsible for the world heritage sites. In this case it is important that the nation-state is not Zanzibar but Tanzania, and that there is no public interest to highlight the memories that people are most occupied with. I cannot go further into this political aspect of the heritagization of Zanzibar here but I think it is relevant for anyone who wants to understand the heritagization, that there are many layers in every site and what is possible or desirable to heritage might not be what actually matters to people. One must also take into account that (intangible) memories are often considered as of lesser political as well as scholarly value than (tangible) heritage.

- <sup>8</sup> In the first issue of *Island Studies Journal* it is stated that “Islands are platforms for the emergence of national identity and for the affirmation of cultural specificity: critical resources, especially in a context of sweeping globalization and the death of cultures and languages. As prototypical ethno-scapes, islands have spearheaded the study of the production of locality”. Baldacchino, Godfrey (2006): “Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal”, *Island Studies Journal*, 1, 3–18.
- <sup>9</sup> In interviews with two engineers employed at STCDA that was conducted in July 2013.
- <sup>10</sup> <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/tanzania/history> (retrieved 24 July 2014).
- <sup>11</sup> One example is how the story of the 19th century Omani Princess Salme is exploited, in the advertisement by one boutique hotel: <http://www.thezhotel.com/on-the-footsteps-of-princess-salme-of-zanzibar/> (retrieved 24 July 2014). Recently also the famous Emerson on Hurumzi exhibit a Princess Salme show.
- <sup>12</sup> Reclaim women’s heritage space is an NGO founded in cooperation with former Swedish Gender Studies of the university college of Gotland, and earlier funded by SIDA but nowadays on their own, trying to survive both as a supporting group for women’s business, and as a stakeholder of the world heritage. <http://reclaimzanzibar.blogspot.com/>
- <sup>13</sup> Compare the discussion Jean-Loup Amselle has in *Mestizo Logics*, where he claims that people in West Africa before colonisation tended to use the “tribal” belongings quite fluidly, depending on which belonging was most beneficial at a certain time and place. Amselle, Jean-Loup (1998): *Mestizo logics: anthropology of identity in Africa and elsewhere*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- <sup>14</sup> Erik Gilbert makes an argument in the same line, in his investigation of the colonial economy: “If there was a fundamental continuity between Zanzibar of 1860 and the Zanzibar of 1960, Zanzibar in 1970 was a totally different place” Gilbert, Erik (2004): *Dhows & the colonial economy in Zanzibar, 1860–1970*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- <sup>15</sup> <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/tanzania/history> (retrieved 24 July 2014).
- <sup>16</sup> See Reclaim (2009): *Reclaim Journal. (Re)claim Women’s Space in World Heritage 2004–2009*. Genderinstitut Gotland, Reclaim Women’s Space in World Heritage Association, p 65–86. But it was also something they told me about at one of their Saturday meetings that I attended, and they showed me some samples of drawings that were produced during these memory workshops.

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## **Concurrences in Contemporary Travel Writing: Postcolonial Critique and Colonial Sentiments in Sven Lindqvist's *Exterminate all the Brutes* and *Terra Nullius***

By Piia K. Posti

### **Abstract**

Recent research highlights contemporary travel writing's complicity in global politics, and the genre is claimed to reproduce the discourses that constitute our understanding of the world. It has also been argued that the genre holds a possibility to help us gain further knowledge about contemporary global politics, as it may work as an arena where global politics is commented on, intervened with and reshaped. With this double view, current research exemplifies how scholars today grapple with the challenge of accounting for simultaneous and sometimes conflicting histories and conditions that are altered and affected by colonial contacts, practices and ideologies, and by recent globalisation. This article explores this double characteristic of the travelogue through the concept of concurrence, and discusses how this concept is useful as a tool for a new understanding of the genre. How can this concept be employed in an analysis of travel writing that is deeply engaged in a critique of colonialism and its legacy in today's globalism but is simultaneously enmeshed in and complicit with the legacy that it critiques? "Concurrence" is introduced as a concept for such analysis since it contains both the notion of simultaneity and competition. It is suggested that "concurrence" provides a conceptual framework that allows us to account for controversies, intersections and inequities without reinscribing them into a reconciled and universalizing perspective. In exploring the concept of concurrence, this article provides an initial analysis of two contemporary Swedish travel narratives by Sven Lindqvist. The analysis is focused on the genre's tension between fact and fiction, its discursive entanglement in colonialism, and the problem and possibility of writing postcolonial critique by use of this genre.

**Keywords:** Concurrence, complicity, decolonisation, Sven Lindqvist, postcolonial critique, travel writing, universalism

## Introduction

“Are we there yet?” Debbie Lisle asks at the end of *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Lisle 2011: 276). Echoing the traveller’s curiosity, impatience, and urgency of arrival, Lisle’s question refers to her call for a new form of travel writing that would “resuscitate” the genre as “a crucial site for political debate and resistance” (Lisle 2011: 276). While arguing that “travel writing is a form of global politics”, as it “reproduces the same discourses of difference that hold our prevailing understanding of the world in place”, Lisle also suggests that the genre holds the possibility to “help us understand the discursive terrain of global politics” (Lisle 2011: 277). In addition, she argues that because of its involvement in the reproduction of difference, its occasional participation in debates about global politics, and it being widely read, travel writing as such carries within it “the opportunity to comment on, shape and intervene in the ‘serious’ events of global politics” (Lisle 2011: 1, 276-7).

However, in her wider analysis of contemporary travel writing, Lisle identifies a number of issues that need to be addressed if the genre is to realize this opportunity. Pointing to the genre’s historical affiliation with the colonial project as being a fundamental problem that travel writers consistently fail to address, and showing that the encounter with and construction of difference are both the driving force and predicament of travel writing, she concludes that the genre is still “a profoundly *uncritical* literary formation”; it lacks a level of “*meta-conversation*” and self-reflexive questioning about the prevailing popularity of the genre and what role it plays in shaping and disseminating contemporary views of globalisation (Lisle 2011: 261-67, original emphases). It may not come as a surprise then that her answer to the question of arrival is negative. Despite the promise contemporary travel writing holds, the possibility of debate and resistance is yet to be fulfilled. Notwithstanding these points, and this is the strength and originality of her study, Lisle still refuses to forward a final analysis of the genre as “corrupt”. Nor does she provide a formula for evaluating or judging travel writing. Instead, she emphasises the “profound opportunity” to push at the boundaries that contemporary travel writing provides, and contends that the genre holds “the potential to re-imagine the world in ways that do not simply regurgitate the status quo or repeat a nostalgic longing for Empire” (Lisle 2011: xi).<sup>1</sup>

Such re-imagination seems to be the objective of Swedish writer, literary scholar, and political debater Sven Lindqvist who in *Exterminate all the Brutes* and *Terra Nullius: Journey through No Man’s Land* makes use of the travel narrative as a frame for what is principally a history and searing critique of the colonial project, and its legacy of racism and genocide.<sup>2</sup> Both narratives were clearly written with the intent to contribute to a discussion of global politics. In *Exterminate all the Brutes*, Lindqvist sets off on a journey through history, scientific tracts, literature, 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialism, and the “deadest area of the Sahara” in order

to uncover the origins of Kurtz' chilling words "exterminate all the brutes" in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Lindqvist 2007a: 2). In *Terra Nullius*, he travels through central and western Australia, telling yet another story of colonial brutality and genocide while visiting significant places in the history of white Australia's mistreatment of the Aboriginal peoples. The point of *Exterminate* is clearly stated, we already have the knowledge, "[w]hat is missing is the courage to understand what we know and to draw conclusions" (Lindqvist 2007a: 2). Lindqvist's narrative is meant to provide that courage. Likewise the story about the mistreatment of the Aboriginal peoples is well known; what Lindqvist hopes to achieve is to encourage a confession of the crime so that it can "be changed", rethought and reconciled, be given a "new setting and a new significance" (Lindqvist 2007b: 213). With such objectives, Lindqvist's travelogues may indeed belong with the travel narratives that Lisle envisions capable of commenting on, shaping and intervening in global politics.

However, Lindqvist's two travel narratives are not included in the travel writing that Lisle discusses in *The Global Politics*. Translated into English in 2007, *Terra Nullius* was not available to an English readership until the year after the publication of her study. However, *Exterminate all the Brutes* was translated in 1996, and it is unfortunate, though perhaps not surprising, that Lisle seems to have missed it despite the fact that it was widely acclaimed, was chosen as one of the best books by the *New Internationalist* in 1998 and described as a "beautifully written integration of criticism, cultural history and travel writing, underpinned by a passion for social justice" (*New Internationalist* 1999: par 5).<sup>3</sup> The travelogues span the same period of the 1990s and the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that Lisle studies and would have complemented the analysis. Like the travel narratives by Jennie Diski, Amitav Ghosh and Harry Ritchie, which Lisle argues are more critically aware and thus come closer to providing a site for debate, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* clearly "acknowledge ... the constraints of traditional history telling" (Lisle 2011: 259), as Lindqvist combines historiography and travelogue in order to provoke his readers to acknowledge what they "already know" and "draw conclusions" about the legacy of colonialism.<sup>4</sup>

Convening thus at the intersection of European imperialism, political debate, global politics and travel writing, Lisle's study and Lindqvist's travelogues provoke further discussion about the challenges of writing postcolonial critique. They provide a site for re-addressing significant questions about the possibilities and constraints of writing postcolonial critique, questions which writers, scholars and critics as diverse as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Walter D. Mignolo already discussed in the early 1990s but which still remain topical in the field of postcolonial studies today. At the core of the discussion is, what Mignolo calls, "the locus of enunciation constructed by the speaker or writer" or the "what where and why" (Mignolo 1993: 122). Thus, what these critics brought to early attention is that geographic location, cultural entanglements, and epistemo-

logical privilege (or disprivilege) need also to be considered intrinsic parts of the act and praxis of postcolonial critique.

This article aims to re-examine the complexity of writing postcolonial critique through a close reading of Sven Lindqvist's two travelogues, set in relief against Debbie Lisle's study. Beside the reviews from the time of their publication, there is very little research or published criticism on *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*. While adding to the scholarship on Lindqvist's travelogues, this article does not provide room for presenting an outline of Lindqvist's literary and scholarly production, or for providing an in-depth analysis of the narratives as such. Instead, the main objective is to let the comments on the narratives function as stepping-stones to a more general discussion of the challenges of voicing postcolonial critique through the particular genre of travel writing.

The impetus of this study is the basic question: How is it that Sven Lindqvist's postcolonial critique has elicited such ambivalent response by its reviewers? The question may also be formulated as how is it that Lindqvist's critique can be so compelling to the reader while at the same time the mode in which it is written is considered so disturbing? The thesis of the study is that this ambivalence is neither a weakness nor a flaw of the narratives, but a necessary effect of Lindqvist's chosen genre of writing and a prerequisite for his postcolonial critique.

Implicit in this article is a theory of concurrences that takes globalisation, anxiety about the genre of travel writing and the tension between fiction and non-fiction as significant and interconnected discursive fields. I will explore how their interconnectedness becomes a constitutive feature of the postcolonial critique that Sven Lindqvist articulates in *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*.

## The Global Present of the Colonial Legacy

The narratives of *Exterminate all the Brutes* and *Terra Nullius* were written with the ambition to contribute to a discussion of global politics. Their historiography does not merely constitute a digest and explanation of patterns in the colonial past, it also forms the claim that these patterns are still at work in the present. Moreover, this present is a global present. At the end of *Terra Nullius*, it is implied that white Australia needs to understand that its historic debt to the Aboriginal peoples is not solely a local and past matter but part of a current global condition.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the reader is prompted to draw the conclusion that Lindqvist's critique in *Terra Nullius* should not be read as simply a critique of white Australia's inability to deal with their local history but also as a critique of the global now. Similarly, the concluding points in *Exterminate* maintain that we must not read the different instances of oppressive colonial regimes as "unique" and "one-of-a-kind phenomenon[a]", nor continue to deny that these regimes were part and symptoms of a massive colonial ideology and practice that had and continues to have global ramifications (Lindqvist 2007a: 171 and ch. 166-168).

## Lindqvist's Affinities with Postcolonial Criticism

With this insistence upon a global now of the colonial legacy, Lindqvist's travel narratives promote a perspective on the contemporary world order that is similar to the revisions of colonial historiography that emerged in the 1990s and redefined the "post" in postcolonialism. No longer understood or used as a periodising term, "'post-' in 'postcolonial criticism'", to borrow a definition from Neil Lazarus, became "directed against the assumptions of the 'ideological discourses of modernity'" instead of denoting "a 'cut' or break in time, such that one could speak of a colonial 'before' and a postcolonial 'after'" (Lazarus 2012: 12). Thus, by maintaining in the preface to the English translation of *Exterminate* as well as in the travelogue itself that there are decisive links between the colonial project of "European world expansion" and "new outrages" such as the Holocaust (ix), Lindqvist displays his affinities with the postcolonial criticism that is formulated in the 1990s by scholars such as Homi Bhabha, who at the time described the postcolonial perspective as "formulat[ing] critical revisions" of the historical narratives and as bearing "witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (Bhabha 1994 : 171). Thus, following Lazarus' analysis, "post-colonial", as employed by Bhabha, "is a fighting term, a theoretical weapon that 'intervenes' in existing debates and 'resists' certain political and philosophical constructions" (Lazarus 2012: 12).

Although Lindqvist does not explicitly claim to be a postcolonial scholar or historian, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* undoubtedly carry the ambition to "intervene" and "'resist' ... political and philosophical constructions" when Lindqvist rewrites European histories of genocide as deeply enmeshed in colonialism, and Australian settler colonialism as genocide. Moreover, Bhabha's notion of postcolonialism as a "fighting term" is also appropriate for describing the fighting stance of Lindqvist's texts, which make use of scenes and imagery of combat when describing his research and travels, so that "fighting" becomes a trope in the texts.

## The Battle of Research, Travel and Truth

What kind of a traveller is Sven Lindqvist; why does he travel? To Lindqvist, travel is always secondary. First and foremost, he is a reader and a researcher.<sup>6</sup> Travel is, however, integral to his writing, and Lindqvist's method of writing has been described as a two-step process: first he reads in the library, second he travels to find out whether the books told the truth or not (Lundqvist 2004: 7). His travels thus take place either to authenticate or to challenge what he has discovered in between the covers of the books, and on the shelves and in the boxes of the archives.

Lindqvist is also a writer who is resolute about finding and telling the truth, which many bear witness to and his own writing takes as a central theme. In *Röster om Sven Lindqvist* (Voices on Sven Lindqvist), a collection of papers and conversations from a symposium in 2002 about Lindqvist and his authorship, several of the contributors present Lindqvist as a seeker of the truth. For instance, literary scholar Horace Engdahl takes the matter of truth as the topic for his paper as he argues that Lindqvist not only seeks to find and report on the truth, he also wishes to bear witness to it. Engdahl then continues to point out that Lindqvist's "truth" in *Exterminate* oscillates between two irreconcilable kinds of truth: the researcher's "be convinced" and the traveller's "believe me" (Engdahl 2004: 30, my translation). Research, travel and truth are thus interlinked in Lindqvist's writing.

Furthermore, Lindqvist himself emphasises this interlinking as he often frames his search for truth as an intellectual as well as physical battle and uncovering that takes place at the moment of travel itself. Already at the outset of *Exterminate*, reaching truth is described as a struggle that takes place in a colonial-postcolonial site that is simultaneously material and ideational, as the traveller-researcher has to fight Algerian soldiers for a seat on the bus whilst being encumbered by the embodiment of his collected colonial history, his computer:

You fight your way to a seat in competition with a dozen or so soldiers in crude army boots who have learned their queuing technique in the close-combat school of the Algerian army in Sidi-bel-Abbès. Anyone carrying under one arm the core of European thought stored on an old-fashioned computer is obviously handicapped. (Lindqvist 2007a: 2).

What may at first read like the everyday bustle on crowded desert buses turns out to be a metaphor for both Lindqvist's research and postcolonial critique in general. The traveller-researcher must not only fight for a seat on the bus; but also, that fight is directly related to the legacy of colonialism, which is literally his luggage. Fighting his way among the soldiers whilst carrying "the core of European thought", Lindqvist's fight for a seat is also a fight with and against the political and philosophical constructions of which he has set out to explore and learn the truth.

In *Terra Nullius*, the struggle to unravel the ramifications of European thought takes place as a fight against Australia's collective amnesia about the treatment of the Aboriginal peoples. And, as in *Exterminate*, it is a struggle that takes place on site. Here, the narrative opens with a short note on the meaning of *terra nullius* and how it was "used to justify European occupation of large parts of the global land surface" and in Australia "legitimiz[ed] the British invasion" (Lindqvist 2007b: 4). This section is then followed by the story of the writer's attempt at finding Moorundie, the "site of the first fighting between whites and blacks in South Australia". However, the site turns out to be very difficult to find, and by juxtaposing the concept of *terra nullius* with the story of finding the site, Lind-

qvist establishes the association that the contemporary struggle is a direct consequence of the colonial mindset that dispossessed the Aboriginal peoples of their land in the first place. The difficulty to uncover the site becomes emblematic for Australia's forgetfulness, something that sorely needs to be fought against and rectified by the writer, since Moorundie is marked on no "maps or itineraries", and neither the South Australian Museum (which we are told offers an Indigenous Australians exhibition), two tourist offices, nor "the RAC in Adelaide . . . know anything about it" (Lindqvist 2007b: 4).

### **The Rhetoric of Peril and Discomfort**

Opening both narratives with images of struggle, Lindqvist thus links his writing to the notions of fight and intervention in postcolonial criticism and signals that he is engaged in a critical pursuit in more than one way. The pursuit is critical as he writes a critique of the global condition. In addition, it is critical, as in being dangerous and life threatening, as he inscribes his traveller-researcher into the rhetoric of peril, of the dangers of exploration and hardship of travel, which is so often found in travel writing.

Images of fear and perilous adventure appear frequently in *Exterminate*. Stepping off the bus in the middle of the night near the desert town of In Salah and unsure of which direction to take, Lindqvist remembers that it was in this very place that "the Scottish explorer Alexander Gordon Laing was attacked and robbed", and expounds in great detail on the brutality and "dreadful gash[es]" of the "five saber cuts" the explorer suffered, effectively linking his own exposed situation as a lone stranger lost in the dark desert to the plight of his predecessor (Lindqvist 2007a: 3-4). And in the subsequent chapter, the topic is fear in Conrad and Hobbes, which leads on to Lindqvist pondering on his own fear of travel (Lindqvist 2007a: 5). In addition, on his way to Arlit, Lindqvist suffers a sand storm that makes him fear for his life: "Suddenly, I realize this is my very last moment. That this is where I have come to die" (Lindqvist 2007a: 95).<sup>7</sup>

As Carl Thompson points out in *Travel Writing*, a recent introductory guide to the genre and current debates in the field, this rhetoric of peril is not only common in travel writing, it has a function of lending authenticity to the narrative:

[A]n air of conspicuous hardship and peril will also frequently serve a useful rhetorical purpose for travellers and travel writers. By this means, a journey may be presented as a genuine challenge, and so as a genuine learning experience, for the travelling self. This in turn allows the journey to be presented as a form of pilgrimage or exploration, rather than some sort of self-indulgent jaunt. One might suggest, therefore, that dangers and discomforts often function principally as the *markers* of the supposedly "authentic" travel experience, and that they are therefore sometimes deliberately sought out so as to strengthen the traveller's claim to have acquired a more authentic and insightful knowledge of both self and Other. (Thompson 2011: 124, original emphasis)

Thus, the hardships and dangers that Lindqvist's traveller-researcher recounts in *Exterminate* lend authenticity to the narrative on two levels. The descriptions of the physical hardship of the travels bestow credibility on his intellectual pursuit as well as authenticity on his analysis of the "core of European thought". The "learning" that has taken place is "genuine".

A similar rhetorical strategy is at work in *Terra Nullius*. However, in this travelogue, the rhetoric of peril from *Exterminate* has been superseded by a rhetoric of discomfort. Yet, this rhetoric does not fully convince, which I believe is one of the reasons that the critique in *Terra Nullius* is also put into question by several of its readers. In fact, Peter Conrad even chides Lindqvist for it, arguing in his review that the hardship Lindqvist suffers is inauthentic and paints a stark contrast to the suffering on which he is reporting:

[Lindqvist] relishes the discomforts of the journey: he is a liberal performing a penitential rite, volunteering to suffer in commiseration with his afflicted subjects. But how profound is his empathetic pain? A hotel near Moorundie, he reports, is "shockingly overpriced" with "hollow, sagging beds". Outside Kalgoorlie, he breakfasts in another hotel where "the smell of the food is so greasy you could fry eggs in it". Somehow, I don't think that lumpy beds and fatty fry-ups qualify as a course of self-mortification. (Conrad 2007: par 8)

Here we can see that the rhetoric of discomfort is in place; the reviewer clearly identifies it but in this example it is judged bathetic and unqualified.

Besides lending the narrative a mark of authenticity, as Thompson points out, I would further emphasise that the rhetoric of peril and discomfort has the function of providing the narrator with discursive authority; the knowledge the narrator purports is accepted more readily by the reader because he has risked his life or comforts to gain it. The risks "strengthen the traveller's claim to have acquired a more authentic and insightful knowledge" (Thompson 2011: 124). This function of the rhetoric becomes highly visible in the passage where the traveller-researcher of *Terra Nullius* finds himself at "the end of the road", having endured the discomforts of the "coldest night of the year in Kalgoorlie", and as a result discovers that documentation and real experience correspond: "Just seeing a place like that on a map gives me an adrenaline rush. And to actually be here, to see map and reality coincide for a moment – what does it matter that the room is shabby, the lights dim, the food inedible? It matters not at all. I'm happy" (Lindqvist 2007b: 144-6). Discomfort strengthens the significance of the insight gained through experience.

Yet, the problem with *Terra Nullius*, which Conrad's review brings out, is that Lindqvist's discomforts do not match the gravity of his historiography, nor his "Olympian judgements about Australia" (Conrad 2007: par 10). The claims of the historiography apparently do not match the expectations placed on the genre of travel writing.

## Discursive Authority and Conflictual Entanglements

It seems there is an inherent conflict and imbalance in the travelogue that arises from Lindqvist's combination of narrative forms. Both historiography and travel writing are invested in discursive authority and conveying "facts" about the world. Yet, this authority is also set against the inherent tension in the genre of travel writing and its affinity with story telling and fiction. Arguably, this is also the challenge of writing postcolonial critique in the form of travel writing, and something that contemporary travel writers must address more explicitly: the conflict and imbalances between fact and fiction, and between history and story. Yet, I do not argue that this is an imbalance that needs to be settled. On the contrary, I maintain along with Lisle, that the "genre's precarious positions – between fact and fiction, identity and difference, local and global, and past and present" is what makes travel writing "a crucial site for political debate and resistance", and that the real challenge is to grapple with the imbalances and "draw significance" from this position "*without* re-installing hegemonic discourses of difference" (Lisle 2007: 276).

In both narratives, it is quickly established that Lindqvist as traveller and writer is quite similar to the travel writers of the typical travelogue: "they seek after 'truths' they imagine they already have in their possession" (Holland & Huggan 2000: 11). In the Sahara, Lindqvist already possesses the truth he is to uncover during his travels through the desert; as we have seen, he literally carries it with him. In Australia, he knows more about the history and geography of the place than the expert locals – the museum personnel, the tourist offices and the RAC. Hence, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* can be said to "occupy" the same "space of discursive conflict" that Holland and Huggan argue is characteristic of contemporary travel writing as they too "claim validity – or make as if to claim it – by referring to actual events and places, but then assimilate those places to a highly personal vision" (Holland & Huggan 2000: 10). The reported moments on site are quickly interpreted as "evidence" of what Lindqvist set out to unveil in the first place.

Holland and Huggan further claim that the discursive conflict arises as travel writing "negotiates the slippage between ... two modes" of writing, namely "subjective inquiry and objective documentation", and point out that this negotiation in fact becomes a means to "maximize the writer's discursive authority" (Holland & Huggan 2000:11). Indeed, this maximization of discursive authority becomes particularly prominent in Lindqvist's narratives since the gap between objective documentation and subjective experiences on site is wider than in most travelogues. The historical documentation is meticulously presented in both narratives in a notes section at the end; in *Terra Nullius*, the heavy annotation is further complemented with a chronology of historical events and a bibliography. Compared to other travel writing, the subjective experiences of the actual travelling are signifi-

cantly less reported on. In fact, it is quite surprising that none of the reviewers, writers and scholars that have written about the narratives questions the reason for Lindqvist's travels, nor do they comment on the fact that the historiography on imperialism and genocide in both narratives could just as well have worked on its own without the interspersed anecdotes of travel. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the genre of travel writing itself; the discursive conflict is already taken for granted and accepted, and since both narratives include enough signals to place them safely in the genre despite the unusual amount of historical documentation there is no need to pose the questions. Both narratives display phrases that connote travel on the cover, "one man's odyssey" and "journey through no one's land"; they open with section headings indicating a geographic destination, "To In Salah" and "To Moorundie"; and in *Terra Nullius* there are maps of Lindqvist's itineraries at the beginning of each section.

However, by combining historiography with the subjective experiences of travel the maximization that Holland and Huggan point to also runs the risk of a minimization of discursive authority since it opens the narrative to travel writing's fictional character. Because with this combination, Lindqvist inscribes his historiography in a discursive setting that is characterised by dubious claims of truth and truthfulness. When the researcher's epistemological "odyssey" and "journey" is thus interlinked with actual travel reportage, the historical narrative simultaneously gains and loses discursive authority. Precisely because of the stress on the writer's actual presence on site and having witnessed what he reports on, travel writing is a genre where authorial reliability and unreliability is highlighted. As Carl Thompson points out, the genre's

appeal to the authority of the eye-witness, however, is not without its problems for travellers and travel writers. If on the one hand it lends the traveller's report an authoritative status, on the other it may also render the traveller an object of suspicion. Rooted as it is in personal experience, the traveller's account will often contain details that cannot be confirmed by any other witness, and that cannot receive external verification. The audience to any traveller's tale must therefore frequently defer to the traveller, taking on trust his or her report. This requirement to trust the traveller, however, may engender scepticism rather than belief. (Thompson 2011: 65).

## **Losing Discursive Authority and Problematic Representations**

Writing postcolonial critique through such a fraught genre may thus seem to risk discursive authority to such a degree that the critique loses its efficacy. Indeed, this also happens in some of the reviews of *Terra Nullius*, where Lindqvist is criticised for writing Aboriginal history yet in his narrative never speaks to a single Aborigine. Robert Manne, for example, writes in *The Monthly*: "It is a very telling weakness of *Terra Nullius* that, during his travels, he appears to have taken almost no interest in contemporary Aboriginal societies" (Manne 2007: par 9). Likewise, Sean Gorman of *The Age* is mystified by the absence of Australian indigenous

people in the narrative: “there is not a single sentence of conversation with a blackfella. Where have they gone?” (Gorman 2007: 24). This lack of contact with indigenous Australians has also been noted by Swedish reviewers and there is no denying that it is a curious absence in a text that has such a clear objective to report on and to critique not only past crimes against the indigenous population but also contemporary Australia’s failure to properly address the guilt and legacy of the colonial project.

However, the absence of the Aboriginal peoples in *Terra Nullius* is not absolute. There is one single scene of “encounter” in the travelogue, which occurs when the traveller-researcher visits a bar in a town at the rim of the Great Victoria Desert. The encounter is described in one short paragraph:

Whites are drinking with whites in the bar, blacks with blacks. They pretend not to notice each other. The black people are watching dog and horse racing on television, faithfully staking their money in a betting machine before the start of every new race. By about six, Thursday evening in Laverton has begun. Only the hotel, the liquor store and the police station are still open. (Lindqvist 2007b: 146)

The paragraph is short but charged, and can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it can be read as an illustration of what Lindqvist is trying to “fight” by writing his historiography and travel narrative: the fact that the Aboriginal peoples are present but are still “made null” in white Australian society. They are “unseen” by the whites and respond by not “looking back” as the two groups “pretend not to notice each other”. The passage could thus function as an example of how white and (colloquially referred to) black existence still takes place in coinciding yet separate spheres and that the structures of colonialism are still at work. On the other hand, since this is the only appearance of contemporary indigenous persons in the narrative, the way they are represented in this passage becomes counter-productive to the objective of the narrative, since it threatens to inscribe contemporary Aboriginal people into the same narrative of victimhood and loss as the one that his historiography describes. There is a note of misery here, of drinking, betting and possible clashes with the police, that caters to a one-sided view of contemporary Aboriginal life as marked by alcoholism, addiction to gambling, and recurring problems with the law.

Due to the fact that Lindqvist’s narrative is not counter-balanced by further encounters, includes no other images and representations of the many different lives that the Aboriginal peoples lead today, and it only recounts the story of their past, the narrative becomes entangled in the old colonial imagery in which indigenous peoples are “symbolically displaced onto”, what Anne McClintock has called, “*anachronistic space*” (McClintock 1995:30, original emphasis). In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock discusses how the “myth of the empty land” available for colonisation entailed the notion that “indigenous people .... do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans ... bereft of human agency – the living

embodiment of the archaic ‘primitive’” (McClintock 1995: 30). With his historiography, Lindqvist tries to counteract this colonial trope as he shows us that the Aboriginal peoples do have a long history both before and during colonisation. Nonetheless, his narrative cannot fully escape placing the contemporary Aboriginal peoples in a similar anachronistic space. Lindqvist critiques the fact that white Australia has not acknowledged its past crimes and thus perpetuates the past; yet here, he simultaneously places the Aboriginal people outside contemporary Australia. Even though they figure briefly in this passage, the contemporary “blacks” in Lindqvist’s narrative do not really share the space and time from which the traveller-researcher tells their story; their space and time is rather that of the Aboriginal peoples whose past fate is the topic of the narrative.

It could of course be argued that the passage shows an equally miserable and problematic view of the white Australians in the bar. However, taking into consideration that there are other encounters with white Australians in the narrative, and that together they give a diverse representation of the whites, the argument does not hold. For one thing, Lindqvist’s traveller-researcher speaks with the white Australians that he meets on his journey, and reports on their conversations. But we never get to read a word uttered by a living indigenous Australian along the road. The different encounters and reported conversations with white Australians thus make it possible to recognise them as encounters with individuals, whereas the singular appearance of contemporary indigenous Australians in the bar scene shifts the image of them toward a universalising, essentialist representation of a timeless people.

Hence, another problem with Lindqvist’s historiographical travel narrative is that he has taken upon himself to interpret and speak *for* Australian indigenous people without ever having spoken *with* them. He tells their history, but that history is based on sources from predominantly Western “archives”: the narratives of colonists, anthropologist, scientists, and missionaries. The history that we get to partake of is a colonial history into which the Aboriginal peoples have already been assimilated.

### **The Challenge of the Postcolonial Critic and Lindqvist’s Method of Writing**

With the imbalance in encounters with contemporary whites and blacks, lack of direct contact with contemporary indigenous people, and tendency toward an essentialist representation of them, *Terra Nullius* reprises the same problem of the indigenous and colonized subjects’ historical representability that Spivak brings attention to in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. In this seminal essay on the problems and challenges of Subaltern Studies,<sup>8</sup> Spivak dismantles and warns against the tendency of the “benevolent *Western* intellectual[s]” to speak for the oppressed as an authoritative representative without considering their own entanglement in the

epistemic systems that have constructed the subaltern subject in the first place (Spivak 1994: 87-9, original emphasis). In her analysis, the way many postcolonial scholars have been speaking for indigenous and colonized subjects has instead had the effect of “muting” them. She argues that “the substantive concern for the politics of the oppressed ... can hide a privileging of the intellectual and of the ‘concrete’ subject of oppression” (Spivak 1994: 87). The challenge for the postcolonial critic and consequently for a writer like Lindqvist, “who feel that the [indigenous and colonial] ‘subject’ has a history”, is to “resist and critique ‘recognition’ of the Third World through ‘assimilation’” (Spivak 1994: 88). And by “assimilation”, Spivak means the propensity in Western epistemology for the “ethnocentric Subject” – the Western critic – to “establish... itself by selectively defining an Other” (i. e. constructing the colonial subject as that which the Western Subject is not) and for “the complicity of the investigating subject ... to disguise itself in transparency” when establishing this self; both of which have the effect of either making the subaltern disappear into silence or function symbolically as an “invocation” of “the *authenticity* of the Other”, as well as repeating the epistemic violence of imperialism and making its circuit invisible once again (Spivak 1994: 87-90, original emphasis).

Spivak’s argument in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” is complex. It builds on both Marxist and poststructuralist theories of power and knowledge, and it resists brief summary. However, the crucial point that I wish to highlight here is the problem of transparency. What Spivak points to regarding “transparency” is the long history of Western epistemology that renders the place of the investigating intellectual as being objective and free of complicity and ideological entanglements. The methodological challenge for the postcolonial critic is thus to find a way of acknowledging and understanding the ramifications of this position of alleged transparency. It is a “sanctioned ignorance that every critic of imperialism must chart” (Spivak 1994: 86). At the same time, Spivak implies that this work can never be completed; assuming a resolution would be to reassimilate one’s position into that ideational transparency once more.

Although Spivak’s critique in the essay is specifically directed at the work of the Subaltern Studies group and focuses on Western feminists’ construction of the subaltern woman, her problematization of the position of the postcolonial critic is equally applicable to contemporary travel writing with ambitions to comment on global politics. The position of the travel writer is seldom reflected upon in contemporary travel writing, and this is also what Debbie Lisle argues needs to be addressed if the genre is to fulfil its promise “to encourage a radically diverse global community unconstrained by Enlightenment notions of civilisation and progress” (Lisle 2006: 6). However, according to her study, much contemporary travel writing “continues in the colonial tradition: it reproduces a dominant Western civilisation from which travel writers emerge to document other states, cultures and peoples. In this sense, travel writers continue to secure their privileged

position by categorising, critiquing and passing judgement on less-civilised areas of the world” (Lisle 2006: 3).

What is interesting about Lindqvist’s travelogues is that in *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* the privileged positions of the postcolonial critic and the contemporary travel writer concur. Moreover, Lindqvist’s method of writing, of combining historiography and travelogue, not only highlights the position, it also includes an awareness, albeit limited, of both the constructed notion of and the impossibility of achieving such a transparent position. This, I would argue, is yet another reason why his narratives, and *Terra Nullius* in particular, have received such ambivalent response by the reviewers. Lindqvist’s chosen form of combining two different genres of writing poses new challenges for the reader whose expectations of the narrative as travelogue are suddenly confronted and jeopardized. The comfort of reading within the boundaries of genre is disturbed and we shall see presently how this troubles one reviewer in particular.

Both travelogues have on the whole been quite well received both in Sweden and by the English-speaking readership. A quick sampling of the reviews shows that even though some find the conclusions quite a mouthful and overreaching, the texts are considered timely, thought provoking, and an important contribution to contemporary debate. In fact, two reviewers even recommend *Exterminate* as “school curriculum material” (Baird 1998: 34), and as being “appropriate for upper division and graduate courses as the starting point for a discussion of European imperialism or intellectual history” (Melancon 1998: 686).

At the same time, as noted in earlier examples, several reviewers express different levels of unease about the way Lindqvist voices his critique and draw attention to incongruities in the narratives as, for example, the fact that Lindqvist in *Terra Nullius* complains about the discomforts on the road and poor standard rooms while travelling in the footsteps of genocide (Conrad), and that he purports to tell the history of Aboriginal experience and Australian guilt without talking to any Aboriginal people (Conrad, Ehrnrooth, Gorman, Hallgren, Manne, Sandström). Furthermore, Swedish reviewer Hanna Hallgren has brought attention to questions that Lindqvist does not discuss, such as how his position as a white man affects the narrative perspective (Hallgren 2005: par 6).

However, there is one review that I wish to draw particular attention to since it addresses the topic of this article, namely the effect Lindqvist’s choice to combine historiography with travel writing has on his postcolonial critique. In the *New Humanist*, Daniel Miller ends his review of *Terra Nullius* with a comment on why he thinks the book is highly flawed and “comes to feel hollow and false” (Miller 2007: par. 8). I will quote this at length because the “problem” that Miller identifies runs against the grain of what Debbie Lisle, Patrick Holland, and Graham Huggan consider a possibility of contemporary travel writing today, namely, the transgressive blurring of generic boundaries which may open up a space for political commentary:

The fundamental problem with *Terra Nullius*, the one from which all its other problems derive, is stylistic. It tries to be too many different things at the same time. ... On the one hand, it understands itself as a travelogue, refusing to explain, refusing to offer a rational critique, and thus cheerfully abdicates all claims to real political seriousness. On the other hand, it tries to be a political history, and thus wants [to] be taken extremely seriously, and so swerves into rhetoric, a domineering tone and a sarcastic manner, in a vain effort to achieve this on the cheap. The overall effect is unhappy, and at several points grotesque – most notably ... where Lindqvist takes a series of ill-tempered pot-shots at the Western philosophical canon, and the numerous moments throughout where he swerves into staggeringly glib Neo-Orientalist fantasy. For all of Lindqvist's high moral purpose, this book is frankly disastrous. (Miller 2007: par 9)

Apparently, Miller is disturbed by the fact that the narrative seems to be neither nor genrewise. Structured as a travelogue, it cannot be taken seriously as it does not “offer a rational critique”, at the same time the objective of writing serious “political history” is not achieved due to the level of rhetoric. The comment on “Neo-Orientalist fantasy” also signals that the narrative may still, to borrow a pertinent phrase from Lisle, “operate” in an “uncertain political terrain that is haunted by the logic of Empire” (Lisle 2011: 5). In Miller's reading then, *Terra Nullius* falls short of its aim to offer a tenable critique of the postcolonial condition in Australia because of its stylistic transgressions.

On several points, Miller's criticism is quite accurate. Other reviewers have made similar comments about tone and manner.<sup>9</sup> On other points, his comments are less precise. The case here, however, is not to contest Miller's impressions. Instead, I would like to explore what would happen if we were to read the stylistic choices as deliberate rather than unfortunate, as a considered method of writing critique that Lindqvist has developed over years of writing cultural debate. Lindqvist is quite a self-reflexive writer, and the problem of writing critique is actually addressed in *Exterminate all the Brutes*. Here he is very much aware of the problem of the position of the critic, and the impossibility to remove oneself entirely from the discursive entanglements and practices of the topic at hand. By addressing this problem, Lindqvist shows that he is attentive to the same questions about writing critique and the problem of transparency that were discussed by postcolonial researchers at the time that he was writing *Exterminate*.

In the middle of the narrative, there is a scene in which the traveller-researcher sits in his hotel room. He is writing what will become *Exterminate* when he “suddenly catch[es] sight of a man carrying an empty picture frame” (Lindqvist 2007a: 103). The way the man carries the frame makes it look as if he is within the frame, separated and elevated from the rest of the environment. Then when he shifts from carrying the frame on one shoulder to carrying it on the other, Lindqvist remarks that it is as if he steps out of the frame and ends the description of the sight with: “It looks as if that were the simplest thing in the world” (Lindqvist 2007a: 104).

This scene introduces an interesting discussion about the impossibility for the writer to do the same:

Even in the most authentic documentary there is always a fictional person – the person telling the story. I have never created a more fictional character than the researching “I” in my doctorate, a self that begins in pretended ignorance and then slowly arrives at knowledge, not at all in the fitful, chancy way I myself arrived at it, but step by step, prof by proof, according to the rules. (Lindqvist 2007a: 104)

He then asserts that it is the scientific demand to omit “all that is personal” that creates this fiction and concludes: “The reality ‘I’ experience in the desert is authentic, however condensed. I really am in Arlit. I can see the black man with the gold frame. But I can never, by the very nature of things, step out of the frame” (Lindqvist 2007a: 104).

With this passage Lindqvist addresses the position of both researcher and traveller, illustrating the impossibility of a transparent position even at the moment of “authentic” experience during travel. He further demonstrates that the transparent position of the researcher and scholar is a construction, “a fictional character” that acts its part in the fiction of steady and orderly epistemic progress.

A similar scene is also included in *Terra Nullius*. However, in this narrative the problem of transparency is not as clearly spelt out as in *Exterminate*. In *Terra Nullius*, the principal form of travel is by car, which means that throughout his journey, the traveller-researcher is close to the ground. One part of the journey, however, he travels by plane, and it is in this part that the narrative illustrates a similar problematisation of the transparency of the traveller-researcher’s position and its fictionality. The scene of flying over the same roads and landscape that the writer has already travelled is used to introduce a discussion of “vantage point” and what it might entail: “I’m aboard a taxi plane, taking the short-cut across the Great Victoria Desert from Ceduna to Alice Springs. It saves me three days covering a route I’ve already driven. Above all, it gives me a new vantage point” (Lindqvist 2007b: 161-2). The narrative continues with a detailed description of the ground beneath him, which includes an image of “traces of water events that used to happen once but aren’t happening any more” (Lindqvist 2007b: 162). Yet the traces are there for the researcher to read and interpret, and at the centre of the passage the traveller-researcher compares himself to Sherlock Holmes, the Victorian master of deduction and empirical observation: “You feel you could read the ground as Sherlock Holmes reads the scene of a crime” (Lindqvist 2007b: 162). At this point, Lindqvist’s traveller-researcher seems to have achieved a vantage point that allows him to read the traces of the land as clearly and unencumbered as that master detective whose success as a criminal investigator stems from his ability to look at any event from an unprejudiced and wholly rational vantage point, that is, an ultimate position of transparency. But this position turns out to be temporary, and it is quickly suspended by Lindqvist as the passage ends with images of the difficulty to discern the border between sky and

desert and the comment that “the clarity of focus only lasts a moment” (Lindqvist 2007b: 162).

Even though Lindqvist does not explicitly discuss the fiction of this epistemic vantage point in the passage, as he does in the example from *Exterminate*, the comments on the difficulty to pinpoint the horizon and the fleeting character of the moment of clarity are enough to trouble the position of the master interpreter and of the traveller-researcher by extension. Moreover, the troubling is reinforced in the subsequent chapters, in which Lindqvist expands on the issue of the vantage point. Only this time, he turns to the detrimental vantage point of “white research” (Lindqvist 2007b: 164).

The topic of the chapters is how white research is complicit with the “presumption that Australia at the time of the British invasion had been ‘no one’s land’ and therefore “missed the significance of place” for the indigenous inhabitants. (Lindqvist 2007b: 164-5). Referencing the early anthropological studies of Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955), and Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929) with Francis James Gillen (1855-1912), Lindqvist argues that the fact that they studied the family ties and relationship with animals on Aboriginal subjects already removed from their homelands caused them to overlook “the relationship between the people and their land”, and that this neglect is connected to the colonial trope of *terra nullius*, concluding that “[t]he vantage point they had selected made place invisible” (Lindqvist 2007b: 165). As a consequence, Lindqvist effectively links the problem of the researcher’s position with the position of the colonising subject and shows that they in fact intersect. He demonstrates how in this context “white research” is far from transparent and instead highly complicit with and entangled in the colonial project.

As we can see from these examples, Lindqvist is not as unaware of the problems entailing the traveller-researcher’s vantage point and position as a first reading might lead us to assume. However, it may be that Lindqvist’s method of writing, of combining the genres of historiography and travelogue, obscures rather than clarifies this. For the reader who expects “rational critique”, the metaphorical dimension of such passages requires perhaps too much interpretation where the analysis is already assumed to have taken place and should just be related. For the reader who expects a traveller’s tale, the self-reflexive dimension of such passages does not fit the familiar structures of the genre and may be overlooked or disregarded as fictional embellishment instead of epistemic critique.

## **Conflicting Epistemic Practices: The Problem of the Global and the Universal**

Paradoxically then, Lindqvist’s method of combining the genres of historiography and travelogue has the effect of simultaneously unveiling and maintaining the very aspects of colonial and epistemic practice that it critiques. To recap, the trav-

elogue is still troubled by the genre's entanglement in colonial and Western epistemic structures, which makes it an uncertain form for postcolonial critique. Moreover, its history of association with the tall tale and its inherent tension between fact and fiction easily jeopardize the discursive authority of the critic as regards the experience of travel and the historical analysis. At the same time, the dimension of empirical investigation through travel and the genre's rhetoric of peril and discomfort effectuate a maximization of discursive authority that surpasses the strictures of the genre of historiography as they convey a sense of experienced "authenticity" and "truth". In addition, Lindqvist's combination of genres not only illustrates how the position of the travel writer and the position of the researcher are equally troubled by the question of transparency; it also provides a form through which this position of transparency can be dismantled and examined.

With these coinciding and conflicting aspects of Lindqvist's critique and mode of writing, it is no surprise that his narratives have been both commended and sharply criticised by his reviewers. The diverging responses that *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* elicit seem thus related to Lindqvist's mode of writing, a mode that is riddled by paradox and self-contradiction. Because to a certain extent, Lindqvist's critique is enmeshed in and complicit with the colonial legacy it intends to expose.

But do "paradox" and "self-contradiction" really provide us with sufficient tools for dealing with diverging and even conflicting narratives such as *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*? Or do they in fact belong in the same category of epistemic construction as the transparent "I" of Western science and the "grand narratives" that postmodernist and postcolonial theories alike have put under scrutiny? Are not these concepts already inscribed in an epistemic system that aims to transcend human situatedness and epistemological diversity by appeal to such ideas as unity, transparency and universality?

We are here confronted with two different ways of thinking. On the one hand, we could disregard Lindqvist's narratives as flawed because of their self-contradictory aspects, using the principles of universalist epistemology as our standard. On the other hand, we could interpret the contradictory aspects of the narratives as signs that a universalist epistemological perspective proves insufficient for understanding and capturing the complex realities of global events and conditions like colonialism and its legacy, and that what is required is a "thinking otherwise".

Postmodernist and postcolonial criticism have for quite some time been engaged in such "thinking otherwise", which can be described as a thinking with the objective to dismantle and rewrite the tenets of Western modernity and make room for the "counter-narrative of the colonised" as well as the counter-narratives of other subordinated groups.<sup>10</sup> However, this "thinking" is still under development and at the moment there is an important shift taking place in the field of

postcolonial theory. This shift has to do with the shortcomings of the conceptual frameworks and methodological tools hitherto used predominantly within the field. In conflicts over issues such as land rights, religion, and marriage and sexual custom, where Western and other legal and epistemic systems and practices clash, it has become evident that many established frameworks and tools in the field cannot meet the challenge of explaining and confronting processes on a global scale and on equal terms. Instead, good intentions aside, these frameworks interrogate the colonial project and current global contention and conditions from within a Western universalist system of thought that allows no room for cosmological and epistemological diversity.

The challenge and shift seems thus to originate in the tension between “the global” and “the universal”. How are we to deal with global perspectives and events that include different and sometimes irreconcilable analyses, narratives and experiences without conflating them in a universalising interpretation? How to avoid making the same mistake as many other projects before, as for example Marxism, and refrain from, in the words of Ramón Grosfoguel, “export[ing] to the rest of the world ... universal abstract[s]” such as communism “as ‘the solution’ to global problems” (Grosfoguel 2012: 94)? Herein lies also the challenge for contemporary travel writing if it is to achieve that re-imagination of the world without replicating the structures and violence of colonialism and its legacy.

Yet what if the problem does not really stem from the tension between the global and the universal but in the impasse that is created by an epistemic assumption that we must consider this in terms of an either/or? That the available course in approaching the global must *either* lead to a universalizing grand narrative *or* result in an inadequate assemblage of fragmented and incongruent narratives, and piecemeal, scattered knowledges?

What if instead we were to consider this seemingly inevitable choice to be yet another “mythology”, another grand narrative of Western thought? What if we were to “decolonise” this choice between the “either” and the “or”, similar to Robert J. C. Young who in *White Mythologies* considered ways of decolonising the concept of history? <sup>11</sup>

## Concurrence as a Conceptual Framework

I would argue that one way of decolonising this either/or choice would be to re-conceptualise and remotivate postcolonial critique and the postcolonial project. This is where the concept of concurrence comes in as a methodological tool and theoretical perspective.<sup>12</sup> In the dictionary definition, “concurrence” is synonymous with “simultaneous”, as “occurring together in time”. It may also signify “confluence”, a “combination in effecting any purpose or end”, the “co-operation of agents or causes”, as well as “agreement” and “consent”.<sup>13</sup> With these multiple yet related meanings, “concurrence” captures and encompasses several of the top-

ics and challenges of difference, entanglement and complicity that postcolonial studies has brought to light and grappled with in the last decades, since they deal with different instances of simultaneity. Among these topics and challenges we find colonialism's simultaneous construction of the colonised subject as an incomprehensible "Other" as well as something that can be known through Western means of investigation; the notion that "colonialism" is a confluence of entangled ideologies and practices; and further, that colonialism is not a singular force but includes a co-operation between agents and causes complicit with the colonial project. Within these particular instances of postcolonial theory, we can see that there has indeed taken place a partial decolonisation of the either/or since these are instances of thinking otherwise that acknowledges processes that are both/and: the colonised subject is *both* known *and* unknown.

However, there is another meaning of "concurrency" by which we may also identify what remains to be decolonised as regards the choice between either/or. Concurrency, in its more archaic form, also signifies "rivalry" and "competition".<sup>14</sup> This draws attention to the contestations over epistemic entitlement, competing (and sometimes conflicting) narratives of (post)colonial encounters and experiences, and territorial claims, with which studies with a global perspective invariably must grapple. The remaining challenge for postcolonial theory and critique is thus to find strategies to account for competing and rivalling knowledge systems, narratives and claims without incorporating them in a universalising system of either/or.

Concurrency could thus serve as a methodological tool for identifying areas of competing claims and instances of entanglement as remotivating nodes for study. Concurrency could also serve as a theoretical perspective since it signals an assumption about the global reality that underlies the questions about simultaneity, conflict and complicity that have emerged recently within the humanities and the social sciences.<sup>15</sup> Hence, concurrency may be described as an alternative mode of thinking, with new epistemic potential, that is characterised by a higher level of flexibility as regards universalism.

### **Concurrency of Concrete and Abstract Universalism**

Returning to the matter of writing postcolonial critique in the form of a travel narrative, I will now explore how the concept of concurrency can work as a tool for further unravelling the question of why Lindqvist's travelogue-cum-historiography about the impact of colonialism prompts such ambiguous response. I will therefore briefly revisit a couple of nodes of epistemic conflict within the narratives where universalism is simultaneously at work and under erasure. I will suggest that even though Lindqvist's two travelogues purport to operate within a legacy of Western universalism; they do so in a narrative field where universalism is simultaneously at work and deconstructed.

As noted earlier, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* make strong claims about the need to “draw conclusions” and to confess the crimes. By doing so, Lindqvist arguably exports Western universal abstracts of “reason” and “confession” as the solution to the global problem of white Western atrocities against the “other races”. The underlying assumption of the narratives is that by providing a reasonable and truthful account of the atrocities, and by adopting a convincing scientific stance of analysis, further verified by empirical field work (travel), the problem will be solved as long as we “draw conclusions”, that is, if we employ Western reason. Likewise, in *Terra Nullius*, Lindqvist exports the universal abstract of “confession” as the solution to the problem, since the central claim in the narrative is that reconciliation can only happen when white Australia owns up to its crimes.

I am here borrowing the concept “universal abstract” from Ramón Grosfoguel who in a recent article, “Decolonizing Western Uni-versalism”, discusses forms of decolonising that do not discard universalist thinking per se but aims for a dialogue between the universal and the particular. Western universalism, he explains, is characterised by abstraction and vertical relations, whereas decolonised universalism tends towards the concrete and the horizontal (Grosfoguel 2012). I find Grosfoguel’s approach to be quite similar to a framework of concurrence, because it too opens towards a more flexible and elastic approach to ethico-political diversity that is including and dialogic, rather than perpetuating the excluding and monologic stance of Western universalism. Furthermore, Grosfoguel’s differentiation between abstract and concrete universalism makes a useful distinction for my analysis of Lindqvist’s ethico-political claims and method of critique in *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*. Because this differentiation captures both the challenge of writing postcolonial critique and the reason why Lindqvist’s narratives are so disturbing. Therefore, I will briefly recap Grosfoguel’s main two examples of decolonised universalism at work. The ambivalent nature of Lindqvist’s postcolonial critique arguably stems from a conflict between his abstract universalist stance as a historiographer and his traveller’s aim to narrate the particular. A comparison with Grosfoguel’s examples will make this conflict more tangibly clarified.

In the article, Grosfoguel explores Aimé Césaire’s call for “a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all particulars, the deepening and coexistence of all particulars”, from his mid-1950s letter of resignation to the French Communist Party, as an early example of thinking otherwise regarding universality, arguing that Césaire makes here an important move from Western abstract universalism to a concrete universalism (Grosfoguel 2012: 95-96).<sup>16</sup> He also discusses the Zapatistas’ way of doing politics as a decolonised form of universalism. Comparing the Zapatistas’ method of “walking while asking questions” with the method of “walking while preaching”, which he claims is a universalist practice within the “Judeo-Christian, Western cosmology” that is based on abstraction and that has been “reproduced in equal measure by Marxist, conservatives, and liberals”, Grosfoguel argues that the Zapatistas’ method is in accordance with concrete uni-

versalism rather than abstract since it is “constructed as a *result* ... of a critical transmodern dialogue which includes within itself the epistemic diversity and the particular demands of all the oppressed people of Mexico” (Grosfoguel 2012: 99). Here, we can see that decolonising universalism, according to Grosfoguel, is a matter of concurrence, of conceptualising an alternate universalism directed at a Césairean coexistence of particulars and a Zapatista intersection of diverse epistemes rather than “set[ting] out from an abstract universal (socialism, communism, democracy, the nation, as floating or empty signifiers) in order to preach to and convince all Mexicans [or Others] of the correctness of this view” (Grosfoguel 2012: 99).

In the light of this suggested decolonised universalism, it becomes possible to discern that Lindqvist’s method of writing postcolonial critique is tending towards a concrete universalism while simultaneously being enmeshed in abstract universalism. This is made visible when considering once more his choice to combine travel and historiography. Because on the one hand, Lindqvist’s method of writing his critique while travelling, seems at first rather close to the Zapatistas’ method of “walking while asking questions”. As in all travel narrative, the reason for travel is to either literally or metaphorically “walk” to the place in question and take part of the local sights and customs, of engaging in some form of “asking” about the particular place. And when Lindqvist travels, he travels to “ask” about the “truth” of the colonial project on site. On the other hand, it is an “asking” that does not fully come to fruition since, as we have seen, he does not engage in any form of dialogue with contemporary Australian indigenous peoples. Lindqvist is, as we have seen in the analysis, like many other travel writers, a traveller who already knows the truth his journey is meant to verify. Hence, it could be argued that the impetus for his writing postcolonial critique is not “walking while asking”, but rather a “walking while preaching”. The dominant mode of investigation and “instruction” in the narratives is abstract rather than concrete since its epistemic project, to map the impact of colonialism, is founded on, to borrow from Grosfoguel, the Western “epistemological myth” of “a self-generated subject with access to a universal truth beyond space and time by means of a monologue” (Grosfoguel 2012: 89).

Lindqvist’s traveller-researcher, despite his travelling to ask for the truth on site, never manages to fully discard the myth of this subject with “access to a universal truth beyond space and time”. One telling sign is that the traveller-researcher does not leave the library and the archive behind when he takes off on his journey. In *Exterminate*, Lindqvist not only totes a computer with him, but also, and more interestingly, he is scrupulous about letting his reader know about the extreme volume of knowledge that is at his disposal at every moment on his trip:

The disks are no larger than postcards. I have a hundred of them, in airtight packs, a whole library that together weighs no more than a single book.

At any time I can go anywhere in history, from the dawn of paleontology, when Thomas Jefferson still found it unfathomable that one single species could disappear out of the economy of nature, to today's realization that 99.99 percent of all species have died out, most of them in a few mass exterminations that came close to wiping out all life. (Lindqvist 2007a: 7)

With these sentences, Lindqvist's traveller informs his reader of two things at once. One, that he writes from a privileged position of epistemic abundance and two, that this abundance is at his complete command no matter what his geographical position is. Furthermore, the topic of his narrative, the extermination of the brutes, turns out to be just a small part of the immense overview; here, we are told that he can access the topic of extermination on a global scale, as regards all brutes, not just the human ones.

### **Concurrence and Contemporary Travel Writing**

Whether this image of the traveller's access to an all-encompassing epistemic treasure trove is to be understood as a methodological statement, or is included to function as a means for balancing the discursive authority that travel writing's association with the "tall tale" might undermine is difficult to decide since, as the analysis has shown, there are instances in both narratives where the transparent position of the traveller-researcher is either pursued, taken for granted, or questioned. And claiming either interpretation is neither the objective of my analysis nor of this article. Doing so would be counter-productive as it would strive for textual reconciliation and push the analysis towards yet another universalizing perspective. Instead, I have aimed to show that Lindqvist's narrative technique and postcolonial critique are characterized by simultaneity and conflict on multiple levels, that is, by concurrence. As we have seen, fact and fiction, story and history, discursive authority, and the position of the traveller-researcher, all of these are simultaneously employed and put into doubt through Lindqvist's combination of travel narrative and historiography.

But what is even more interesting is that the two narratives' critique is articulated in a field of conflicting universality, where concrete and abstract universality concur. Lindqvist's method of writing while travelling seems to promise an engagement with the concrete and local effects of what is also a global condition. Yet, this promise is counteracted and contested by the travelogues' entanglement in narrative and epistemic structures that are cathected by colonial sentiments and abstract universalism.

Hence, what my analysis of Lindqvist's postcolonial critique ultimately wants to draw attention to is the fundamental issue that still remains to be problematized further in contemporary travel writing with a global perspective, namely, the concurrence of the global and the universal. Like the critique of many others within the postcolonial field today, Lindqvist's narratives still re-enact the epistemic myth that a global point of view equals a universal one; the accepted "given" in

Western thought that Ania Loomba et. al. also call into question in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*: “the way that the very vantage point necessary to enunciate the global implies an allegory of universal knowledge” (Loomba 2005: 9). Yet, as my discussion of Grosfoguel’s notion of decolonizing universalism shows, this confluence of the global with the universal can be repealed as there are alternative ways of engaging with universalism and global perspectives that include rather than cancel out the local and the particular, and thus takes experiential and epistemic diversity into consideration. Emphasising dialogue and walking, Grosfoguel identifies a combination of methods that could be productive in making room for the diversity and situatedness of human experience within the vast scopes of the global condition. This is also where I find the possibility for intervention and critique in contemporary travel writing on a global scale. In the genre’s combination of travel and narrative, the method of “walking while asking” is already in place. Moreover, due to its long history of an already accepted tension between fact and fiction, empirical documentation and story telling, the genre itself makes an example of a form of writing that not only includes and conveys concurrences, but also, as such, gains its vitality and defining feature from concurrence.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A similar positive view of the possibilities of travel writing and travel has been forwarded by Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan who in *Tourists with Typewriters* claim that “[t]ravel has recently emerged as a crucial epistemological category for the displacement of normative values and homogenizing, essentialist views” while also arguing against the “utopian impulse” that seems to go with contemporary “hypertheorization of travel-as-displacement” (Holland & Huggan 2000: viii-ix). Like Lisle, they approach the genre with the aim to find out whether it “is still primarily a legacy of imperial modes of vision and thought” or if it could “rather be seen as transgressive, an instrument of self-critique” (Holland & Huggan 2000: x). For another recent study that also tries to counteract the “demonized” view of travel writing in postcolonial studies and instead “examine how postcolonial travel texts resist the

- gravitational pull of metropolitan centrality and cosmopolitanism by articulating experiences and ontologies that are often removed from dominant European and North American productions of knowledge”, see Edwards & Graulund 2011: 1-2.
- <sup>2</sup> *Exterminate all the Brutes* was first published in Swedish in 1992 and *Terra Nullius* in 2005. I have consistently used the English translations of Lindqvist’s texts unless otherwise stated. The English translation of *Exterminate all the Brutes* is based on the Swedish pocket version from 1993, which notes a few changes from the first edition. The scope of this study does not permit any further comment on the translation and changes between different editions. However, it should be noted that the changes carry some import, and in my further studies of Lindqvist’s travel narratives, I plan to address the effect of the changes between editions as well as the matter of translation.
- <sup>3</sup> My note about this omission not being surprising refers to the Anglophone bias in most research on travel writing and which translations into English do not seem to amend: “non-Anglophone travel writing has received comparatively little attention in British and American studies of travel writing” which have been inclined to marginalize narratives from non-English speaking cultures (Thompson 2011: 8).
- <sup>4</sup> Lindqvist’s stated aim to provoke his readers to remember and to acknowledge what they already know thus also responds to Holland’s and Huggan’s anticipation that travel writing “may yet show its readers the limits of their ambition and remind them of their responsibilities” (Holland & Huggan 2000: xiii).
- <sup>5</sup> See chapter 111 in which Lindqvist delineates how the “Australian Aborigines’ demands for redress and compensation are part of a global movement” and aligns their demands with similar demands of compensation from American-Japanese prisoners of war, the Sami in Sweden, the Herero people in Namibia as well as African-American and black Brazilian demands of compensation for slavery and discrimination (Lindqvist 2007b: 210-212).
- <sup>6</sup> Lindqvist completed a PhD in comparative literature in 1966.
- <sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the traveller’s angst in the sandstorm has been simultaneously enhanced and subdued in the English translation since it omits both the laconic punning (which is admittedly difficult to translate) and Lindqvist’s travesty of the standard melodramatic plea to God found in the Swedish original: ‘God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’, in which “forsaken” has been changed to “exaggerated”, i.e. “övergivit” to “överdrivit” (Lindqvist 1992: 137). Thus, Lindqvist’s use of standard rhetoric from early travel writing – the mixture of angst and heroic stoicism at the moment of possible death – does not carry through as much in the translation.
- <sup>8</sup> “Subaltern Studies” is an umbrella term for the strand of postcolonial criticism developed in the early 1980s by a collective of intellectuals inspired by Ranajit Guha’s deployment of some of Antonio Gramsci’s ideas to explore the conditions of the colonised subjects in South Asia. The collective is also often referred to as the Subaltern Studies group. For a history of the development of this group and their work, see David Ludden ed. (2002): *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical Histories, Contested Meanings, and the Globalisation of South Asia*. New Delhi: Permanent Black Publishers and London: Anthem Press.
- <sup>9</sup> See for example the reviews by Jay Freeman, Björn Gunnarson, and Robert Manne.
- <sup>10</sup> I have borrowed the phrases “thinking otherwise” and “counter-narrative of the colonised” from Leela Gandhi and her outline of the relation between postcolonial criticism and post-modern thinking. See chapter 2, “Thinking Otherwise: A Brief Intellectual History” in *Post-colonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1998).
- <sup>11</sup> Robert J. C. Young (1990): *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London: Routledge.

- <sup>12</sup> My thinking about concurrences is indebted to the inspiration provided by the leadership of Professor Gunlög Fur in establishing the Concurrences Centre for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies and in spurring discussions around the potential of this concept among our research team, as well as to the work of my colleagues at the Centre and our Advisory Board. For further reading on the methodological possibilities of the concept in relation to historiography, see Gunlög Fur (2014): "Concurrences," (manuscript submitted and accepted by editors) in *Concurrences: Archives and Voices in Postcolonial Places*, ed. by Diana Brydon, Peter Forsgren and Gunlög Fur (planned publication 2015).
- <sup>13</sup> See "concurrency, n." and "concurrency, n." in *OED Online*.
- <sup>14</sup> A meaning that is still visible in the word for competition in German and the Scandinavian languages: Ge. *Konkurrenz*, Sw. *konkurrens*, No. *konkurranse* and Da. *konkurrence*.
- <sup>15</sup> I am making a deliberate move here from the specifically postcolonial since I think that the urgency to account for simultaneous and conflicting narratives, claims etc. is just as present among scholars in other fields of study whether they subscribe to "the contention that colonialism ... is the defining experience of humanity in our epoch" or not (Kaiwar 2007: par 1).
- <sup>16</sup> The cited words are from Aimé Césaire, *Discurso sobre el colonialismo*, Madrid: Akal, 2006 as quoted in Grosfoguel, 95.

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## **Creating the Authentic? Art Teaching in South Africa as Transcultural Phenomenon**

By Melanie Klein

### **Abstract**

The question about what art and craft from Black<sup>1</sup> individuals in South Africa should look like as well as how and for what purposes it could be created was of prominent importance within the contact zone of educational institutions<sup>2</sup> from the 1930s onwards. Art teachers of mostly European origin established provisional art educational venues for African students first, within the curricula of mission schools and then as workshops and art schools in their own right. They transferred modernistic concepts from Europe into the South African context, yet were also confronted with divergent expectations of their students and the overarching policy of Bantu Education that was launched in 1953.

A closer look at selected case studies reveals complex and ambivalent theoretical approaches that were negotiated and discussed in the seemingly autonomous context of art schools and workshops. The teachers' attitudes seemed to oscillate between the search for an 'authentic' African idiom and the claim to partake in global archives or in the making of an art history that was imagined as universally applicable. Art educational institutions perceived as transcultural contact zones exemplify a genesis of modern art from South Africa that was formed by mutually influencing perspectives apart from the restrictions for and the re-tribalisation of Black people imposed by the apartheid regime.

**Keywords:** Art education, art school, workshop, South Africa, authenticity, originality, transculturality

## Travelling Concepts, Migrating Agents. Sketching the Framework

“I *refuse* to digress from the original design!” In this or a similar way must the South African sculptor, Job Patja Kekana, have answered to his teacher Sister Pauline in 1954. Kekana had been commissioned to carve a ceremonial mace for the *Federal Parliament of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland* and had executed the object according to a given design when Sister Pauline criticised the artless completion of the knob. Kekana nevertheless made up his mind and created an additional pattern, a “trelliswork with dots in each space” (Miles 1997: 109). The new creation was approved even by the original draughtsman, Kekana had his artistic “breakthrough” (Morton 2013: 53) and “was invited to the opening of the Federal Parliament as a guest of honour” (Miles 1997: 109). This kind of nudged self-empowerment was and is commonly perceived as Kekana’s becoming an artist instead of a craftsman only, and it was also spread by him in an article that he wrote two years after the actual incidence. Shortly thereafter the mace was in fact replaced by a gift of the *Commons House of Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*.<sup>3</sup> “This honour is bestowed in the full confidence that the great traditions of parliamentary government which we have inherited are in good hands”, says the news presenter about the ceremonial object. It seems as if only the later mace from the colonial motherland could duly ensure the continuance of authorized rule whereas Kekana’s first version of the object served as a provisional place holder. It was the mace from Europe that must have authentically symbolized the ruling power in the House of Commons’ point of view and not the indigenous model carved of wood.

It is not entirely clear what political incidence exactly provoked this change of mind apart from the fact that a gift cannot easily be refused. It can be assumed though that a very specific political conviction made the replacement of Kekana’s work possible and self-evident. The track of his mace has been lost. Yet, this episode exemplifies the relevance of societal frameworks and their hierarchical structures when following an object’s trajectory in both a transcultural constellation in general as well as a colonial constellation in particular. It also illustrates the impact of a diversity of protagonists, their respective way of thinking and their underlying intentions and expectations. In Kekana’s case the contexts and turbulent situations in which his artworks were produced and circulated constituted the fragile practicability of the aesthetic concepts that surrounded him. These concepts linked objects and agents or social dynamics respectively. In the mission of *Grace Dieu* he was trained to be an artisan.<sup>4</sup> After adding his own decor to a remittance work for the first time and hence proving his ability for artistic innovation he was discerned as an artist.<sup>5</sup> And yet on another sociocultural level the art object he produced was obviously not considered appropriate to represent British supremacy any longer and just disappeared. It can only be assumed that Kekana’s mace might have been yet another plaything of the sometimes paradoxical classi-

fications of artistic output from Africa: too eclectic for an ‘authentic’ object, too African to epitomize colonial governance.

“Concepts are flexible”, states Mieke Bal (2002: 22-23) in her theorisation of travelling concepts, “each is a part of a framework, a systematic set of distinctions, *not* oppositions, that can sometimes be bracketed or even ignored, but that can never be transgressed [...]” As such, concepts are negotiable, polyphonic and transformable as they help structuring aesthetic phenomena within the concrete contact zone<sup>6</sup> of art education and production in South Africa. As Bal notes, they were not dismissed here but actively addressed in sometimes ambivalent and fractious ways.

Apart from the methodological approach to apply to the investigation of travelling concepts a ‘thick’ description<sup>7</sup> of cultural, political or economic circumstances it has to be acknowledged that the followed trajectories are often disrupted, not traceable anymore or that they suddenly reappear somewhere else within the extended borders of contact zones that constantly assemble new relationships and connections, while losing others. It is, after all, specific agents – taking up and mediating concepts – who migrate. In the case of establishing art historical narratives in South Africa, in particular, pursuing an antireductionist research position implies the excavation and connection of punctual evidences to fashion patterns of temporary conceptual stabilisations. In this essay, I am especially interested in following the formation of such stabilisations that constituted art production in South Africa to a significant extent.

Job Kekana was very well aware of the political situation at the time and its implications on creative production. In a letter, for example, he mentioned that “woodcarving was thought to be a white-man’s job” (Miles 1997: 107). And art historian Elizabeth Morton equally confirms Kekana’s assessment in a recently published article and observes that educational authorities refused to licence a handwork programme for Blacks at the same mission school Kekana was working at because “skilled white labor” (Morton 2013) had to be protected from competition. Kekana witnessed the changing policy of education for Africans in South Africa firsthand. Several mission schools that had started their work from the early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards were increasingly met with suspicion among Afrikaners,<sup>8</sup> notably members of the *National Party* that was founded in 1915. They “had looked with dislike at African education as it had developed under the missionaries and the provinces. It gave the pupils wrong ideas, they said of their place in South Africa. [...] The ‘sound policy’ was ‘that the Natives should be educated in their own manner, and should learn to be good Natives as tribal Natives, and should not be imitators of the white man’” (McConkey 1972: 1).<sup>9</sup> With the election victory of the *National Party* in 1948 and the establishment of a commission that was sent out to survey the education system, economic, intellectual and subsequent political tensions between different ethnic groups slowly turned, inter alia, into an ideology of preserving ‘authentic’ ethnic ‘traditions’ that found its way

into the art educational realm.<sup>10</sup> Here, the ethnoculturally motivated aspects of a new educational strategy met concepts that were discussed and conveyed by educators of European origin who – from the 1940s onwards – administered a network to exchange staff and ideas. Being equipped with theories that were rooted in Germany and Austria in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century’s art education movement as part of the so-called *Reformpädagogik*, European teachers operated along similar methodological matrices apart from having different agendas.<sup>11</sup> In focusing the research on art education specifically, the aims of educators and aspirations of a Black middle class appear even more complex than following a general history of Bantu Education only. Art education, it seems, ranged from civilizing duties via restrictive and segregating purposes to an experimental pedagogy as playground for concepts of a European zeitgeist yet also as a space for artistic self-affirmation. The investigation of art education in South Africa as transcultural phenomenon first of all seeks to increase the complexity and the impact of differing voices, differing strategies of teaching, mentoring, learning and aspiring as well as the extremely diverse deployment of emerging concepts that accompanied the constitution of new art forms, namely ideas of the ‘authentic’, the ‘African’ or regional genres such as Township Art. Here, misunderstandings, failures and the precariousness of both material and intellectual avenues abound similarly. Artists like Kekana refused to produce certain objects, applied aberrations to original blueprints provided by teachers, repeated appealing and marketable designs or evolved artistically beyond institutional ambits. Educators developed a conglomerate of different pedagogical agendas and had to deal with official policies of the Bantu Education Department along the way. A transcultural approach describes, in this context, the method to engage with ambiguous cultural relationships within a particular contact zone that do not explain cultures from within exclusively (Juneja 2012). Questioning respective concepts that structure such relationships can then expose the dynamics of interplay between participating protagonists, produced objects and the frames of reference that encompass them, between artworks and mediating agents. It thus reveals an alternative art historical narrative in South Africa in which aesthetic concepts are never fixed but mark the struggle for artistic and intellectual self-definition.

### **Turbulent Itineraries. The Concepts of Originality and Authenticity**

Notions of authenticity and originality played an important role in framing art educational institutions as well as their practical and artistic premises in conjunction with religious, economic and, at a later date, political claims. In this regard, concepts of authenticity and originality entailed indeed both discursive as well as factual mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion but at the same time generated assertive or defying manoeuvres of agency. They oscillated between the societal

meta-structure of apartheid's segregational system and variable degrees of freedom of individual designations. Next to the varying dimensions that influenced art educational frameworks and thus have to be included into a thorough analysis of the concepts at hand, I am especially interested in the ambivalent and reciprocal fluctuations in the making of art and art historical narratives. With the attempt to reconstruct aesthetic concepts within the historic structures of art educational venues the highly complex processes of their formation as well as underlying asymmetries of power and concomitant ideologies can be uncovered.

When looking at the formation of concepts of authenticity and originality within discourses on aesthetics in Europe it is striking that it displays a process of constant negotiation and readjustment. Although the concepts' evolution seems to follow a straight line to the point of releasing the aesthetic object as well as the creating and receptive subject from normative controllability while still relating to a social context, they also reveal a turbulent itinerary of upturns, crises and revivals – especially as catchwords of late modernity and modernism.

A genealogy of authenticity's and originality's aesthetic dimensions in Europe was prefigured in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Originality was interrelated to ideas of othering and innovation as well as to their potential to generate effects of genuineness within different art systems at an early stage (Young 1759, Duff 1767). In European literature, for example, the idea of an original artwork was already associated with something foreign and even exotic.<sup>12</sup> William Duff then directly linked originality and the inventive act to the figure of the artist in his *Essay on original genius* from 1767. Here, he described creative subjectivity as the initial point of originality. In the artistic context originality thus exhibited a transcendental quality, something inborn that could not be acquired, rather than a learnable one as it was used in philosophical discourses. The emphasis on inner realities eventually led to a disassociation of the term from principles of imitating nature. It was finally presented by Johann Gottlieb Fichte as "ideal individuality" (Ritter and Gründer 1984: 1375) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The concept of authenticity was introduced into the discourse on aesthetics by authors like Jean Baptiste Du Bos in 1760 who challenged the tradition of classicistic and objectivistic representations in dramatic arts and addressed the interplay between actors and audience. It played a major role in debates on the credibility of art and the subjectification of taste (Ostermann 2002). Here, authenticity was defined by means of its effects on the human psyche and human emotions. Similar to Young's and Duff's valorisation of the artist as creator, 'authentic' art could be created by the artist's decision about the orchestration of objects and material. In contrast to originality though, the concept of authenticity attained a much wider dimension and was eventually connected with ethical questions, emotion and empathy by Jean Jacques Rousseau (Ferrara 1985). For Rousseau, authentic behaviour could collide with societal expectations and thus marked the complex relationship between the self and normative parameters of societal structures. Authen-

ticity was conceived to incorporate tensions and the human being's inherent aberration from the ideal.<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century notations of the pristine and 'primitive' found their way into art discourses in Europe and were not only searched for in objects that were produced outside the continent but also, for example, in the art of children or blind persons (Bisanz 1985, Löwenfeld 1939, et al.). Eventually, concomitant approaches in art education were adapted and implemented into the contact zones of workshops and art schools in South Africa and elsewhere (e.g. Grossert 1953 and 1968, Meyerowitz 1936).

The perception of the authentic individual as responding to its own inner disposition laid the foundation for following elaborated and adjusted definitions of the artist as genius, as lateral thinker, intellectual rebel or – in the African context – as being equipped with the naïveté and unchangeability of indigenous creativity.<sup>14</sup> However, structural analogies of these concepts cannot obscure the fact that they were used in completely different spatio-temporal and hierarchically organised surroundings. In the colonial and postcolonial era the concept of authenticity within art production from Africa in particular became highly charged because of the ascriptions and desires that were projected onto respective objects on the part of a European art system and anthropological classification. Some objects were credited with certain 'tribes' while others were marketed as singular works by an individual, yet still 'authentic' African artist depending on demand and marketing strategy (e.g. Bewaji 2003). Art dealers and artists from Africa often participated in this kind of cultural economy and maintained fictions of authenticity with the help of conformed artistic and narrative strategies (e.g. Steiner 1994).<sup>15</sup> 'Authentic' stories were invented to trade art and craft (Kasfir 1999: 105). And several scholars have just recently criticised persistent ascriptions of an African authentic to contemporary artists from the continent since they would merely appoint them to a rather passive, reacting position (e.g. Oguibe 2004, Okeke 2001: 30).

In the South African context it is crucial to acknowledge the economic dimension of an art world that was dominated by protagonists of European origin and the fact that the choice to become an artist most often led to existential problems especially for Black people. The actual selling of one's artworks was essential to make a living. And prior to some scattered first attempts to establish a curriculum that was entirely dedicated to the education of Black artists from the early 1950s onwards<sup>16</sup> the only art education available was that for teachers or artisans. Artistic freedom as well as being original or authentic in a European sense was thus not only limited by material restrictions and the lack of access to cultural and art historical knowledge but also by the appreciation and goodwill of mostly European buyers and collectors.

Job Kekana's workplace at *Grace Dieu* where he obtained a regular employment as craftsman can be considered a safe albeit not completely autonomous surrounding since the marketing strategies of the woodcarving department were clearly aligned with a concrete demand for religious craftwork with an African appear-

ance. The mission of *Grace Dieu* in today's Polokwane only gradually developed first into a teacher training college, then offered an industrial course for Africans and eventually progressed into an art workshop in the late 1920s. The experimental character of this workshop and others was emphasized by several scholars and exemplarily mirrors the various ideas and ideals which informed the pedagogical programmes of such venues. Morton, for example, stresses the educational and professional artistic background of Reverend Edward Paterson who was teaching, advising and designing at *Grace Dieu* and who launched the policy of the *Arts and Crafts Movement* in England. However, he was only partly able to translate the movement's paradigms into the South African context. Design and execution, Morton writes, were separated along ethnic parameters and not combined within an integral production process. It is not without irony that Paterson's anti-industrialist ethos mutated into a modified repetition of exactly those industrialist circumstances he wanted to avoid when taking into account that several mission-trained artists later mass-produced objects for the curio trade in what Marshall Ward Mount called the "souvenir style" (Mount 1973: 44). Also, the supposed incapability of Black South Africans to design and invent appropriate religious images later became the argumentative basis for an emphasis on the 'authentic' inner voice of African artists in educational contexts with a more secular conception. Design did not have to be provided anymore, but an innate talent had to be awakened. Yet, beyond the mission environment there were a number of artists who likewise launched their own businesses<sup>17</sup> and art careers and started to create works of art apart from the primary scope of production. Some directly satisfied the demand of an emerging art market (Rankin 1992: 41), others tried to establish themselves as internationally acknowledged artists with according residencies abroad.<sup>18</sup> In each case and with every artist and every tutor involved a locally specific framework for the production of a variety of objects was configured that conjured up new art forms and constituted part of South Africa's recent art history.

## Research on Art Education

To date art education in South Africa has been described mainly with reference to its material outcome, such as by Elizabeth Rankin in her essays on the Africanisation of Christian imagery (Rankin 2003, 2009, et alii). Only in 1992, though, did she write about the necessity to research venues of art education for Black people other than the *Polly Street Art Centre* or the *Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre* and their impact on the formation of a Black middle class. It is also worth mentioning that art schools did not displace education in the missions but rather flanked them, as for example the *Mariannhill Mission* in Natal which was founded in 1882, offered art classes from 1942 onwards and established the *Mariannhill Art Centre* in 1978.

Another line of scrutiny addresses the ambivalence of educated Africans between modernity and tradition. Lize van Robbroeck, for example, writes that the “distance between the educated [Black] Christian [...] and the ‘ordinary African’ he gazes upon, is indicated by his search for an ‘authentic Bantu’ free of Western influence” (Robbroeck 2008: 224). And Sidney Kasfir and Till Förster acknowledge that “[...] there is a wide variety of possible workshop constellations that crosscuts the divide between tradition and modernity” (Kasfir and Förster 2013: 4) in their recently published book on *African art and agency in the workshop*. “We argue”, they continue, “for a differentiated analysis of the workshop as a particular institution that shapes the reproduction of art in many African societies” (Kasfir and Förster 2013: 4). I would like to add that the very definition of art and artists was vividly negotiated, contested and transformed in specific art institutions. Their connection to and delimitation from politics with its ideological implications moulded them into discursive spaces for art-related concepts such as cultural authenticity or ethnic marketing.

When looking at the educational situation for Black artists in South Africa and elsewhere pedagogical approaches have been highly individual and dependent on respective tutors from the outset. Yet, these attitudes were never set in stone. Teachers influenced each other and were influenced by their students. Concepts of European origin adjusted over time, also in response to restricted material availability. Art education in particular was an experiment. It was an experiment shaped by numerous different factors. One of these elements was the mostly conflicting mindset of both European teachers and African students in the face of questions on coeval art production or how to deal with heritage, of economic necessities or the demand of the art market and of political constraints. However, in contrast to political guidelines that culminated in the 1953 *Bantu Education Act* the art educational environment appears as a rather intricate and relational discursive scope. Art schools and workshops influenced their students and teachers by interaction, experience, ideas, feedbacks and expectations. Kasfir and Förster (2013: 12) define the workshop as “a social space in which individuals cooperate. [...] it is a sphere in which interpretive processes unfold.” I would like to specify this interpretive aspect within art production as having been accompanied by translational efforts that unfolded as various experimental agendas, too.

Another conceptual ambivalence that characterised co-operations in art educational venues evolved from the fact that several art teachers of European background campaigned for the equality of Black students while at the same time categorising them by means of concepts that they brought along and thus claiming specific modes of production as well as omitting others.

In this connection, I would like to take a closer look at one of the most influential educators in the history of art schools in South Africa, John Watt Grossert, who in 1948 founded the *Ndalen Art Centre*. With this brief case study I would like to indicate that European teachers stretched a complex and ambivalent discursive

sive net that combined definitions of art as a modernising and therapeutic factor with inclusionary attempts in regard to art as a fundamental human activity.

### **Dedication and Limitation. The *Ndalen* Training College**

An independent Wesleyan mission had already been established in 1847 at Ndaleni near Richmond in KwaZulu-Natal that was later developed into a teacher training college under the administration of the Department of Bantu Education. The *Ndaleni Art Centre* not only provided the possibility for teachers to complete advanced training but also became breeding grounds for later artists or those teachers who wanted to pursue an art career in addition to their regular breadwinning. A specialisation in art and craft also entailed an increase in salary and a higher professional status. “[...] aimed at training prospective art teachers [...] it came to be perceived as a significant art school in its own right”, notes art historian Juliette Leeb-Du Toit (1999: 4) in a retrospective catalogue. And Elizabeth Rankin mentions that:

The Ndalen course was primarily aimed at the training of art teachers, not artists, but in the context of the 1950s it offered probably the most programmed art training available to Black students, who were drawn from all over South Africa. The course was wide-ranging in its scope, including classes in art history, design, picture making, clay modelling, crafts and wood carving. (Rankin 1992: 44)

It also generated other kinds of art entrepreneurs and thus helped disseminating art appreciation among Black South Africans. “The first suggestion that village industries should be officially encouraged were made as early as 1852 by a commission on Native affairs in Natal, which put forward a recommendation for the establishment of training centres for crafts as an integral part of Bantu education”, writes Grossert (1968: 85) himself and emphasises the economic policy behind the idea of providing creative education to Africans. At the time he helped founding the Ndalen Art Centre and started to offer a special two-year course for art teachers in 1952 Grossert had to be concerned with an increasing competitive dynamic with regard to art market mechanisms yet also concerning aesthetic concepts that were underlying the creative production of different art educational institutions.<sup>19</sup> Christian training colleges such as Grace Dieu that were equipped with their own craft departments and were oriented towards economic success as well as the mediation of religious images advertised an approach that Grossert tried to avoid. While he was seeking to implement ideas of artistic achievement mission schools split the creative production process according to an academic and ultimately ethnic background. In contrast, the Ndalen Training College as one of the major educational institutions in the 1950s was a venue where Black students were confronted with European ideas on the function and production of art that did not refer to religious connotations only. The paradox still remained that in the context of mission schools and most notably in later art educational

venues Black artists were “detrribalized” (Koloane 1998: 70) and accepted as part of a South African bourgeoisie while educators were simultaneously searching for the ‘authentic’ idiom of an innate creativity.

## **Deviating Conceptualisations. John Grossert’s Art Historical Texts**

“Ndaleni was the ‘dream child’ of Jack Grossert, who had just been appointed *Organizer of Arts and Crafts and Industrial Work* for the Native Schools in Natal”, notes Leeb-du Toit (1999: 6). Grossert was aware of the damaging impact of colonialism and the erosion of cultural practices. “He was convinced”, she further writes, “that the embellishment of surroundings, homes or schools with art, would improve a community’s aesthetic sensibilities and quality of life.” (Leeb-du Toit 1999: 7).

At this point it is revealing how Grossert as a dominating figure in the development of an art educational scheme at Ndaleni specified the function and meaning of art in peoples’ daily lives and how he defined art as such. For him, art had the purpose to shape the intellect and to guarantee partaking in what he called the ‘civilized’ life. In his view, art was a kind of medicine for social and cultural tensions. Through art, he seemed to believe, it was possible to establish an inclusive society in which each and everyone had reached the same civilizing level. Grossert’s attempt to construct an inclusive approach of art theoretical thinking reflected the trend of his time to reevaluate crafts and to recognize foreign cultural goods.

In his monograph *Art and crafts for Africans. A manual for art and craft teachers* from 1953 Grossert outlined a seemingly unprejudiced framework of the connection between art education, art and society. “During the centuries”, he writes, “through which our culture has been progressing certain standards of judgement of art have become generally accepted by cultured people” (Grossert 1953: 19). Instead of distinguishing between South Africans from European origin and Black South Africans Grossert elaborated the discrimination between educated and uneducated people, and between people with culture and those without. On the other hand, he did *not* understand culture as a property that belonged to certain groups of human beings exclusively but rather as an archive that everybody should learn about and that was allowed to be foraged creatively. He notes:

All cultured people should be familiar with the best works from this treasure house, since it not only enriches their own experience but also forms a basis of good taste.  
(Grossert 1953: 20)

Grossert then lists rock paintings of the Bushmen, Egyptian sculptures, art works from China, Persia and Europe as corresponding examples. He seemed to unfold art and culture as a commonly available archive with non-linear, eclectic dimen-

sions. Cultural heritage had to be seen in a global perspective. It had to be used productively to teach the ignoramus.

In his later dissertation from 1968 on *Art education and Zulu crafts* Grossert further devised the question of how to define aesthetic production. In his fairly incoherent text he sketched the turbulent history of art education in Kwa-Zulu Natal and tried to come to grips with an inclusive concept of art. “We may say”, Grossert (1968: 23) explicates, “that before any expression may be called a work of art there must be evidence of creativity and originality in the significant form it assumes. Art is nature seen through the artist’s temperament.” The question of judgment and ascription, of how to analyse creative evidence and of who was actually proficient to analyse, though, is excluded at first. After all, Grossert used the emphasis on the concept of originality as inclusionary instrument. As long as artists produced original artworks they could be included into the art world no matter what aesthetic quality their objects might have had. Originality is in fact valued more by Grossert than aesthetic properties or technique.<sup>20</sup> With this approach he embraced into the canon of art all man-made objects but at the same time resorted to the exclusive structures of originality.

Man reveals his higher intellectual ability by constructing, making and planning. [...] In doing this he places himself in the position of an innovator and creator, an original thinker and inventor. [...] It would be unreasonable, therefore, to exclude any work of man from our category of art unless it is merely a copy or repetition of a skill. (Grossert 1968: 27)

At this text passage at the latest it becomes clear that the dedicated art mentor conceded a potential for original art making and thus the activation of a civilising and modernising process to every individual. Yet, his approach derived from an entirely European vantage point. Here, repetition and copy were no cultural values but a nuisance, the trait of illiterate man. Consequently, the foremost aim concerning his educational approach was a syllabus that would “not only preserve existing Native crafts, but later on make definite additions to Native Craftwork without slavish imitation of European models” (Grossert 1968: 210). At the same time, the modern concept of originality was transferred to individuals who were perceived to be potentially equal, yet were also expected to keep ready genuine ‘African’ characteristics. Grossert thus developed an understanding of originality that would translate as spontaneity and as a vague connection to some kind of immutable ‘tradition’, very different, indeed, from the alternating forces radiating from Europe. As much as his version of originality resembled the idea of the “self as origin” (Krauss 1981: 53) – that Rosalind Krauss much later diagnosed for the European avant-garde following the historiographical development of this concept as ultimate permutation of artistic individuality – Grossert, however, thought of a thoroughly other ‘self’. Here, at Ndaleni, it was not the actual *modus operandi* of the production of so-called art that was questioned by Grossert and his colleagues.

What was at stake was rather the preservation and emergence of an ‘African’ identity as such.

The cachet of emotionality of ‘authentic’ artistic production by Black artists was a leitmotif not only within Grossert’s considerations but also in view of several critical voices of Africans in art. It was selectively employed for feelings of insecurity when coping with the advent of modernity<sup>21</sup> or those that were believed to be connected to inborn dispositions. The anti-modernist stance on an art curriculum that was developed by Edward Paterson at *Grace Dieu* was also implemented by Grossert:

The art of the rising artists among the Bantu of South Africa differs from both the old traditional styles and also from the contemporary art of whites in this country, Europe and America, since in its upsurge it shows a profound interest in humanity and the portrayal of the full range of man’s emotions. This humanistic trend at a time when the art of the white races has shown a tendency towards becoming more abstract and dehumanised, evinces a commendable independence in the Bantu and also their ability to strike new roots to provide supports in the place of the traditional ones which have been cut away. (Grossert 1968: 42-43)

It is not without irony that it was actually Grossert’s and other educators’ ways of searching for alternatives aside ‘dehumanising’ European trends in art which can be designated as emotional. Art had to provide the possibility to reconcile one’s own emotions with an unsettled society. Parameters of art as civilizing factor, of art as an instrument of empowerment and art as therapeutic tool were intermingled with the belief in fundamental cultural differences.

### **Inclusionary Conceptualisations. Grossert’s Account of African Voices**

An important element in Grossert’s considerations was his effort to implement into them voices and thoughts of African origin. He enclosed into his elaborations on the original production and ‘authentic’ configuration of new art by Black artists concepts that he borrowed, for example, from aesthetic appreciation of the Zulu.<sup>22</sup> “[...] the Zulus”, he wrote, “also distinguished from the general group of craftsmen the man whom they called *uchwephesha*, a man who mystifies by the inborn talent which he possesses and which he cannot transmit to others. [...] From this title is derived the word for a work of art. It is called an *ubuchwephesha*,<sup>23</sup> but this is limited to the visual arts such as woodcarving and metalwork.” (Grossert 1968: 41) Grossert – far from being a trained anthropologist and executing respective methods – might have very well translated the term according to his own particular theorisation as it highlights striking parallels to the European conceptualisation of the artist as genius. Again, pivotal differences between Black and European artists were obviously not perceived to become manifest in conceptual structures. Also, Grossert referred to old, ‘traditional’ works of art made by the Zulu but did not investigate how the concept of *ubuchwephesha* was

used amongst then contemporary artists and craftsmen. Yet, whereas he commented on the loss of traditional structures and African patrons in a relatively neutral and unemotional way, the bequeathed Zulu notion seemed to offer him an adequate support to create a theoretical matrix for both the significance and orientation of art education in South Africa that should be informed neither by traditional forms of artistic production nor by European models but rather evoke a new intuitive version of native ‘African’ creativity that was seen as beneficial in changing social tides.

In addition, Grossert was obviously engaged and familiar – to some extent at least – with debates on art and art history among Black intellectuals. In his dissertation, for example, he quotes the artist Selby Mvusi<sup>24</sup> and thus acknowledges the condescending attitude towards art from Africa on the part of Western protagonists. Selby ironically commented on the paternalistic view on art from Africans: “African art [...] enjoys special dispensation from the mental rigour we are accustomed to encountering in Western art appreciation and criticism. [...] The basis of analysis becomes not Art, but the African.” (Grossert 1968: 43-44) What – within Grossert’s text – was a clear critique on the modalities of art production in Africa nonetheless met his own inclusionary approach in theory and practice. He was in search for a new artistic language. The role of the schools was seen in supporting the “phase of transition” (Grossert 1968: 44) in which African people should become part of a modern society. “[...] we want to help negotiate the meeting point of African and outside cultures”, he explicates, “and we want to contain the shock which the confrontation with these other cultures entail.” (Grossert 1968: 44) Art and its educational institutions became spaces of negotiation to address cultural and societal tensions. Grossert formulated the idea of a collaborative effort to meet the changes that colonisation and most notably the era of apartheid brought about. In this collaborative space art should serve as a mediator between individual and society. From such a perspective, Grossert promoted the development of authentic behaviour in Rousseau’s sense. While he set the concept of originality in the process of art making in analogy with the individual’s inner ‘African’ condition, Grossert subsequently aimed at helping to establish an ‘authentic’ and autonomous African bourgeoisie. His motivation was informed by new theories in art education, the obviously honest belief in the power of art and culture as well as by positions that at the same time demarcate an ‘African’ cultural idiom.

Black South Africans displayed a much more prosaic attitude to the issue of art education within the regular curriculum at times. The *Transkeian General Council*, a group of “chiefs, government nominees and [...] elected representatives” (Mbeki 1957: 16) that was also included in Grossert’s text, formulated their viewpoint as such:

[...] if the handicrafts ever existed on any large scale among the Natives [...] we are convinced that their day has long gone by [...] And so far as the training of hand and eye is concerned, the slight benefit the Native pupil might derive is in no way com-

mensurate with the waste of valuable time which could more usefully be given to other subjects. (Grossert 1968: 77)

Grossert's account of Bantu Education exhibits a variety of voices concerning the development of an appropriate and effective syllabus in art. He altogether objected to political trends at a time when education for Black South Africans was drastically curtailed, turned explicitly against political policies (1968: 56 and 60) that were aiming at separate laws and customs from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards and instead advocated the educating efforts of the missions. The Black intellectual had to achieve equal status and to take responsibility. This status, though, could only develop *next* to European culture, not within it. "Culture in a new form will emerge" (Grossert 1968: 234), he eventually concluded. And he was explicitly thinking of Black culture.

Grossert's hypothetical thoughts between crossing frontiers of and demarcating (Mersmann 2004) cultures and art mirror the complexities and changing meanings of cultural concepts especially when being transferred to and permeated by new cultural contexts. The voices of Black cultural workers and politicians accompanied, questioned and transformed such concepts.<sup>25</sup> Both positions countered political restrictions in South Africa in an ambivalent endeavour to search for new identities and art forms.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The demarcation of Black and White protagonists in South Africa is due to the segregation policy of the apartheid era that determines discourses on presentations of artworks produced by the respective other down to the present day. The capitalisation of the adjectives designates their sociocultural dimension and thus implicates common experiences of discrimination or privilege.
- <sup>2</sup> Exchange and clashes between educators and students from diverse cultural and social backgrounds took place on various different levels, namely within a single venue, in encountering other art educational venues with differing agendas or in coming to terms with educational policies of the apartheid administration.

- <sup>3</sup> To be retrieved at <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/rhodesia-parliament-receives-a-new-mace>.
- <sup>4</sup> Kekana first completed his primary school education at the Diocesan Training College before he was trained to become a wood carver for three years. The Christian artefacts and furniture of the college's workshop were produced according to given designs mostly developed by Father Edward Paterson who led the Native Mission at Potchefstroom in the historical province of Transvaal and was himself a trained artist. Similar to Renaissance workshops in Europe students at *Grace Dieu* executed objects after Paterson's samples. They became requested as religious craftwork especially in Great Britain and the United States.
- <sup>5</sup> Six years after his invitation to the Federal Parliament Kekana moved to London with his wife to study art at the *Sir John Cass School of Art* and the *Camberwell College of Art* for three years. Here, his artistic approach towards an otherwise repetitive handling of the stylistic features of Christian iconography became more sophisticated. In the sculpture of a Madonna and child, for example, he entwined Christian European imagery with codes of African identity.
- <sup>6</sup> Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) contouring of the contact zone seems to describe exactly the situation in South African art schools. Here, protagonists engage with concepts of otherness and identity, "they involve in a selective collaboration with an appropriation of idioms of the metropolis" (Pratt 1991: 35). And taking into account asymmetries of power within these social spaces the question still arises, how emanating aesthetic concepts are adapted or denied as well as how they are customized through these very manoeuvres.
- <sup>7</sup> I borrow the term from Kwame Anthony Appiah's essay "Thick translation" (1993) in which he differs between producing meaning through the translation of a text and the more beneficial approach of facilitating its understanding that would include the necessity to amply contextualise the initial text.
- <sup>8</sup> Afrikaners are a South African ethnic group that originates from Dutch settlers as well as from other groups of mostly European origin.
- <sup>9</sup> The complexity of sociocultural structures in South Africa becomes apparent when looking at the politics of settlers from European origin - the Afrikaners - and the politics of British occupation. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Southern Africa was separated into four territories: two of them were under British rule, the other two under the rule of Afrikaners. The following decades marked a period of ongoing struggles for territory as well as for ideological assertion. The Emancipation Act of 1834, for example, abolished slavery in South Africa. The legal equalization of Black and White residents was perceived as betrayal by Afrikaners. Yet, "for the English", Melissa Steyn (2001: 26) writes, "backed as they were by empire, their sense of superiority to the native inhabitants was utterly above question. They did not regard the more rural and often illiterate Afrikaner folk as the same order of civilization." On the other hand, the Afrikaners' predominant differentiation from indigenous peoples at this point in time rested on a feeling of religious rather than racial superiority (Schmidt 1996). An educated African bourgeoisie that emanated from the missions schools - mostly under British custody - was perceived as an economic as well as ideological threat by an Afrikaner working class from often humble backgrounds. Henry Kenney (1991: 36), for example, writes: "The new government consisted exclusively of Afrikaners [...] Afrikaner workers would shrug off the chains of poverty and receive protection from the unfair competition of Blacks [...] Afrikaner business would acquire its rightful place in an economy too long dominated by Jews and English-speakers."
- <sup>10</sup> The commission under the chairmanship of Werner W. M. Eiselen that was responsible for the constitutive *Eiselen Report* especially addressed the problem of the so-called "intellectual

proletariat” (Kros 2002: 61), Black educated people that would never be able to fully participate in the South African society adequate to their schooling. Nevertheless, Eiselen himself disallowed theories based on racial classification and discrimination and instead aimed at reconciling mission-bred intellectuals with their communities. In this sense, “‘Bantu’ was held to allude to a cultural (or social) environment that predisposed its subjects to learn in particular ways and from which they should not be alienated. The ‘unhappy’ condition of many African intellectuals was explained by the fact that mission education had alienated them from their cultural roots” (Kros 2002: 66-67).

- <sup>11</sup> The aim in Europe was to comprehensively educate society through art, music and literature. The art education movement targeted the establishment of an integral human being as opposed to the individual’s alienation through the disrupting tendencies of industrialisation. Eiselen’s benevolent approach of propitiating African intellectuals with their ‘roots’ seems to align with exactly these concepts that sought for cultural veracity and anti-modernist stances.
- <sup>12</sup> The English poet Edward Young, who mentioned the original in the context of art for the first time, writes: “Our spirits rouse at an Original; that is a perfect stranger, and all throng to learn what news from a foreign land: And tho’ it comes, like an Indian prince, adorned with feathers only, having little of weight; yet of our attention it will rob the more Solid, if not equally New.”
- <sup>13</sup> Ferrara (1985: 281-282) notes that “authenticity is the quality of the moral actor who courageously takes this step and faces the risk of acting immorally. An ethic of authenticity is then a post-conventional ethic which emphasizes this quality and encourages its cultivation [...]”.
- <sup>14</sup> See, for example, Valentin Yves Mudimbe whose investigation on Pierre Romain-Desfossés, founder of the *Academie d’Art Populaire* in Lubumbashi in 1946, and other early European art teachers in Africa reveals the resemblance of paradigms they used for establishing their educational institutions. He writes: “His task as he conceived it was to awaken in his students this ancient, unchanging aesthetic memory.” (Mudimbe 1999: 156)
- <sup>15</sup> Christopher Steiner, for example, investigates the circulation of objects and their transcultural entanglements in the history of West African art trade and states that: “Because the merchandise that the traders buy and sell is defined, classified, and evaluated largely in terms of Western concepts such as ‘art’ and ‘authenticity’, the traders are not only moving a set of objects through the world economic system, they are also exchanging information - mediating, modifying, and commenting on a broad spectrum of cultural knowledge.” (Steiner 1994: 2)
- <sup>16</sup> The foundation of the *Polly Street Art Centre* in 1952 with Cecil Skotnes, Cultural Recreation Officer at that time, offering informal art classes was such an attempt.
- <sup>17</sup> Kekana himself, for example, was self-employed for about five years after he moved to Johannesburg and sold his sculptures to private households. Only in 1944 he continued to collaborate with his former teacher, Sister Pauline, in the St. Faith’s Mission in Zimbabwe although she had already started to work there from 1938 onwards.
- <sup>18</sup> One of Sister Pauline’s most famous students, Ernest Mancoba, for example, left South Africa for Paris with a scholarship in 1938 where he received further education at the *École des Arts Décoratifs* after already having gained a degree from *Fort Hare University*.
- <sup>19</sup> “As a practicing Catholic Grossert was [...] well aware of the acceleration in art training ventures undertaken by the Church of Africa in fostering an indigenous sacred art, as well as the international interest and exposure that such work elicited in exhibitions worldwide.” (Leedu Toit 1999: 7)
- <sup>20</sup> “In art and crafts originality is generally considered of equal importance to technique, but when teaching painting, modelling and carving we endeavour first to develop originality and allow technique to follow.” (Grossert 1953: 17)

- <sup>21</sup> Grossert (1968: 233) states: “It is strongly believed that it is the responsibility of education to equip the Bantu with the intellectual and psychological resources necessary to make the social and cultural adjustments which the changing situations demand. [...] Even when that unity [of a culture] is seriously disrupted by the impact of powerful outside influences, these basic forces strive to achieve a new pattern with its own unity.”
- <sup>22</sup> The Zulu are an ethnic group of Bantu-speaking peoples mainly living in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal where the *Ndalen Art Centre* was located. Today, they are the largest ethnic group in South Africa with more than eleven million people.
- <sup>23</sup> In the glossary of the African Studies Center in Boston *ubuchwephesha* is translated with “skill”. To be retrieved at <http://www.bu.edu/africa/files/2012/04/Xhosa-3-Glossary.pdf>.
- <sup>24</sup> Mvusi enrolled for the course in art education at the *Ndalen Teacher's Training College* in the early 1950s and was there trained by the painter Alfred Ewan and his colleague Peter Atkins, a sculptor.
- <sup>25</sup> While Grossert believed in art as civilising factor and was thus offering an unofficial alternative to apartheid policy and Bantu Education, Isaac Bangani Tabata, South African politician and president of the *Non European Unity Movement*, sketched a more drastic picture of the educational situation for Black people in general. “Today”, he (Tabata 1974: 64) writes, “unlike our forefathers, we know that it is their [the Afrikaners'] deliberate policy not to let the African become civilised and to deny him education; [...] In short it is their deliberate policy to debar him from civilisation and then shout: 'He is not yet ripe for civilisation!' All this while they were destroying his customs, traditions and way of life, ruthlessly destroying his economy, his family and his moral codes, shattering them by the impact of a capitalist economy and capitalist greed for profit and power.” In an earlier book from 1959 that Tabata wrote in direct reaction to the new, restricting laws of the *Bantu Education Act* he actually questions the Afrikaners' status of civilisation. Since the time they had left Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century they would not have progressed, he states. Instead, the merits of enlightenment would have passed the Afrikaners: “This was a Europe, then, unknown to the forebears of the present day Afrikaner. They did not inherit this new outlook on man and society. Humanism, that stream of the Renaissance which has been described as the parent of all modern development, whether intellectual, scientific or social, that great movement of thought which began to spread throughout Western Europe in the fifteenth century, and which was essentially an intellectual revolt against ecclesiastical tyranny, had still to come to fruition when these people left Europe.” (Tabata 1959: 27) In the following, Tabata continues with imagining the Afrikaners as uneducated peasants. The stereotype of the uncivilised African is thwarted by the stereotype of the uncivilised Afrikaner. Here, civilisation becomes the contested concept with different strategic alignments and ascriptions.

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## **The Fictitious World Traveller: *The Swede on Timor* and the Noble Savage Imagery**

By Hans Hägerdal

### **Abstract**

Travel writing soared in the Western world in the early-modern era with the widening geographical knowledge. This was accompanied by a genre of travel fiction. The present study analyses a short Swedish novella from 1815, *Swensken på Timor* (The Swede on Timor), “translated” by Christina Cronhjelm from a purported English account. It is a romantic tale of a Swedish sailor who is shipwrecked and is adopted by an indigenous group on the Southeast Asian island Timor, marrying a local woman and converting to Islam. The novella is remarkable for the positive portrayal of indigenous society and to some extent Islam. The article discusses the literary tropes influencing the account, and the partly accurate ethnographic and historical details.

**Keywords:** Travel fiction, Timor, noble savage, Islam, Christina Cronhjelm

## Travel between Truth and Fiction

Travel writings experienced a great upsurge in early-modern Europe, for obvious reasons. With the maritime expansion to the Americas, Africa and Asia, and the rapid dissemination of printing technique, an increasing supply of travel accounts found its way to an increasingly literate public. If you survived your tenure as sailor, soldier or scribe at a colonial outpost and made it back to Europe, a well-told account of your adventures could earn you fame and money. A look at the multi-volume work of Donald Lach, *Asia in the making of Europe* (1965-93) gives an idea about the rich and varied outpour in the centuries after 1500. Sea captains, Jesuit priests, employees of trading companies, soldiers of fortune – all had their story to tell of distant, exotic places which they had often just barely left alive.

On the following pages I will scrutinize the alleged life-story of a castaway Swedish sailor in Asia, published in 1815. The example is interesting since Sweden was not known as a travelling nation, and it therefore becomes essential to investigate how it relates to the European discourse of the tropical or Asian Other in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The complexity of the text in terms of metaphors and balance between authenticity and fiction will be highlighted.

In this context one should note the problems of using travel writings as testimonies of foreign cultures. In recent decades this has been increasingly pointed out by historians and literary scholars: the European traveller (and, for that matter, any traveller) tends to reproduce ideas of cultural otherness of the places that he or she visits. Usually unable to fully grasp the local culture, the external observer will construct an image of the Other that becomes an implicit mirror of the culture of the metropolitan homeland. This, of course, can be done in positive as well as negative ways although the latter have tended to dominate through five centuries of European travel writing. In the postcolonial tradition of Said et al. this refers to a discourse where Western representatives strive to master and in effect dominate non-Western areas (Said 1978; Nyman 2013). But it can also be seen as a ubiquitous human impulse to relate impressions of foreign milieus to one's own place in this world.

To the problem of bias must be added general issues of reliability. Wherever we can compare the travel accounts with external data (local chronicles, archival data, concurring travel reports, etc.) they display an enormous range of truthfulness and care. And it is not certain that the more modern accounts are the more reliable. The enormously popular work *Revolt in paradise* by Muriel Pearson alias K'tut Tantri (1960) depicts the American author's life in colonial and revolutionary Indonesia in the 1930s and 1940s in terms that are largely gainsaid by other information (Lindsey 1997). Some older works such as Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Peregrinação* (1614), which describes the vicissitudes of a Portuguese adventurer in maritime Asia, defy any distinction between fact and fiction (Catz 1989). The

temptation to add hearsay accounts and mere invention to a putative autobiographic travel story can presumably be strong when the details cannot be controlled by the audience.

But there is also a genre of travel fiction, that can be either realistic (*Robinson Crusoe*) or fantastic (*Gulliver's travels*). This genre was popular in West Europe from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, frequently depicting adventurous journeys to real but little-known lands at the edges of geographical knowledge. The heyday of travel fiction coincided with the rapid expansion of European knowledge of foreign continents in the second half of the eighteenth century (Arthur 2011: xx). This might have bearing on the example that will be studied in the present essay.

### The Swede on Timor

Swedish expansion in the early-modern period was seldom directed to other continents, in spite of short-lived enterprises in Delaware and West Africa. Consequently, Swedish travel accounts of non-Western areas are rare up to the eighteenth century. With the activities of the Swedish East India Company (1731-1813) and the peregrinations of the disciples of Linnaeus (1707-1778) a spate of published travel accounts surfaced, notably Carl Thunberg's account of his visit to Japan (1775-1776).<sup>1</sup> At least some of these writings display a positive curiosity about the lands and peoples they visited. It should be recalled that this was at the height of the Enlightenment, with universalistic ideas about the fate of mankind and sentimental interest for the noble savage (often, though less correctly, associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings).

In 1815, two years after the dissolving of the East India Company and a year after Norway's forced union with Sweden, a short text of 15 pages appeared at Marquardska Tryckeriet, a well-known publishing house in Stockholm. The title was laconic but suggestive: *Swensken på Timor* (The Swede on Timor).<sup>2</sup> Timor was known to the avid reader of travel literature at the time as the destination of Captain William Bligh after his remarkable sea travel in 1789, following the much-publicized mutiny of the *Bounty* (Bligh 1969). Otherwise, apart from passages in a few published travelogues, the sizeable island was something of a *terra incognita*. Although the Portuguese and Dutch were positioned there since the seventeenth century, Timor was an inaccessible and supposedly primitive place that lay at the margins of the European spheres of interest.<sup>3</sup>

No author is given on the title page, which only states that the story is an "account [translated] from English". From other sources, however, we do know the name of the person who committed the tropical adventures of the Swede to paper. Her name was Christina Cronhjelm (1784-1852), the daughter of an officer and soon to become the wife of Major Johan Gustav Berger. The short story under scrutiny lies at the very beginning of a long writing career. She wrote a series of

short romantic novels, translated literary texts from French and English, and contributed to various journals and newspapers. Her literary exploits were not praised by posterity, which found her style stymied by romanticist overtones and conventions. Nevertheless, some of her work enjoyed much popularity and she wrote lyrics to which her husband composed music (Ekelund 1886: 65-71).

The preface of *The Swede on Timor* adds to the expectations of an exotic adventure. Cronhjelm relates that she made the acquaintance of an English sea captain in Gothenburg whose father, a Captain Richardson, bequeathed a diary relating a sea travel to the Indian Ocean in 1783. The diary was remarkable for one particular incident which caught the interest of Cronhjelm, who gained permission to borrow the manuscript and copy excerpts from it. "Certainly", she writes, "it is sometimes somewhat similar to romance. However, one may not assume that a man who has neither written to win honours or money, but only annotated what he has heard since it has interested him, has wished to deceive. If one gains the endorsement of the reader, then one is rewarded for the small effort that has been spent" (Cronhjelm 1815b: 2).

### **From Norrland to the East Indies**

The short text is framed by the passage to the East Indies by Captain Richardson with the ship *Triton* in 1783. Visiting Timor for trade, the sea captain is amazed by encountering a European who speaks good English and provides substantial assistance to the Britons through his knowledge of the local language and customs. He stays with his "Malay" wife and four handsome children in a house situated a mile from the coast which is surrounded by pretty gardens and built according to mathematical principles. Being no common beachcomber, he evokes the curiosity of the crew. After the conclusion of the more important commitments, the stranger invites the Britons to his home for a meal and there relates the story of his life.

As it turns out his name is Carl Enander, a vicar's son from the vicinity of Gävle in northern Sweden (Norrland).<sup>4</sup> When he grows up he is captivated by the exotic travel accounts found in his parental home. When 14 years of age he is sent to Gävle for education, but the pedantic style of tuition does not appeal to Enander who dreams of a life at sea. In spite of the refusal of his father to allow this, he takes hire on a Danish ship bound for Dublin at the age of 15. As the ship lifts anchor and departs, Enander is overcome by regret and vainly asks the captain to put him ashore again. He nevertheless has to endure a troubled sea trip to Ireland where the captain dismisses him. The young Swede has a rudimentary knowledge of English and takes up work at a factory for iron manufacture. He is doing well and might have settled down on Ireland for good if not for an incident that changes his plans at the age of 19. A love affair with the daughter of a rich tenant farmer ends abruptly when her furious father surprises them with threatening ges-

tures. Enander hastily abandons work and sweetheart and goes to Dublin where he is hired by a ship leaving for Java – from the internal chronology of the story this would have been about 1770 (Cronhjelm 1815b: 3-6).

Carl Enander's passage to Asian waters marks a change of the narrative to that of wild adventure. The merchantman makes it to Batavia, the hub of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) where the unspecified cargo is sold. Instead the captain purchases merchandise which can be sold to the inhabitants east of Java. The general idea is to return to Java after two months and then bring a suitable cargo back to Europe. However, the ship does not make it that far; due to a violent gale the crew loses control over the ship which is driven against the Island of Banka by the winds.

Our old captain regarded our salvation as impossible and admonished us to meet death with constancy. I asked him not to abandon all hope – I believed I could save him if the ship would be calamitously destroyed. I asked him to put the most necessary objects in the bladder of an ox: some money, a chart, a compass and some gunpowder; and to largely undress since it was not cold. However, we were sometimes rocked towards the abyss, sometimes lifted towards the sky. We tried to cast anchor a few hundred fathoms from shore, but the anchor ropes were torn apart by the raging storm. A moment later the ship collided with a rock. Water poured in from all sides, the ship creaked horribly. I ran to the captain. He stood in just his shirt with the required objects in hand. I had a cutlass and a pistol bound at my hip. I bound the ox bladder around my neck. Crying 'God be with us' I threw myself into the sea. The captain followed me. He could swim but his powers were soon exhausted. He was about to sink. I asked him to grab my long hair. I used all my powers, which were not small, to reach the shore. I finally reached it but was so exhausted that I fell down unconscious (Cronhjelm 1815b: 7-8).<sup>5</sup>

Enander, the captain and four others survive the shipwreck. Having doubts about the inhabitants of the island the Britons steal a canoe and resolve to reach Batavia. However, the winds inevitably push them in south-easterly direction, and they then decide to search for the Dutch colony on Timor instead. On their way the six vagrants land at a minor island where they rob a local family of some Indian cotton cloths and jars, admittedly after handing them 4 guineas. After three weeks of sailing and rowing they eventually reach Timor. It turns out that the Dutch stay at another section of the coast, but the inhabitants turn out to be good-hearted and helpful. "They were Malays<sup>6</sup> who had occupied the coasts of this island and pushed the old natives to the interior... The religion of these Malays is the Mohammedan one, but it is mostly limited to the simple teachings of natural religions. They live in prosperity, partly as a consequence of the splendid land, and partly due to the trade that they carry on with Asians as well as Europeans. They also have European weapons such as shotguns and cutlasses, but they handle the first-mentioned rather ineptly; and they have no sense of fighting in order, without which wild courage cannot commit anything" (Cronhjelm 1815b: 9).

## A Castaway on the Islands

The captain dies a couple of days after reaching Timor. The others, being housed in the household of an amicable and well-regarded man, are soon invited to participate in a war against the tribes of the interior which have raided their Malay neighbours. Much is expected from their European fighting tactics. The five Europeans gladly accept to fight under the banner of the Prophet and depart along with the able-bodied levies. On the fourth day they make contact with the enemy which roam around the hills and plains in scattered detachments, and a memorable encounter ensues:

This tribe had a muscular constitution, brown of colour, being completely naked apart from a piece of cloth around the waist. They had long spears, bows and arrows and a kind of small, round shield. As soon as they detected us they split up in four orderly troops in order to attack in that peculiar manner; but we formed a large square and calmly awaited their attack. They stopped at 30 paces distance in order to shot their arrows, but we anticipated them and triggered a general well-aimed salvo that killed several. Their commander, distinguished by a high feather headdress, rushed against the side where I stood. I let him come at 10 paces distance to be the more confident. Then I triggered my pistol. He fell and a terrible slaughter ensued around his corpse which his men wanted to defend. From this moment the victory was not in doubt since all sense of order was gone among the enemy. Escape and defeat was now general. Many prisoners fell in our hands; they were humanly treated although they became slaves. Three of our Englishmen were so badly injured that they died before we came home (Cronhjelm 1815b: 9-10).

Carl Enander is likewise wounded by a spear but is nursed to life by the 16 years old daughter of his Malay host, Alzima. Her beauty is comparable with the prettiest girls of Dublin, and her tenderness does not fail to make an impression on the Swede, who is now the only survivor left from the shipwreck together with an old sailor. After the victory celebrations he stays with his host and cultivates his fertile land, meanwhile making gardens and flower plantations after the European manner. A hot romance develops between Enander and Alzima:

[W]hen I had picked some fresh flowers and put them in the billowing bosom of the enchanting girl, and she rewarded me with a grateful smile, then I would have forsaken a throne. My masculine power had disappeared entirely; I was as weak as a woman. My happiness increased daily, especially when I had acquired proficiency in the language, and she could show me her bright intellect and splendid heart, which had not been formed by moral teachings but by the influence of a beneficial nature (Cronhjelm 1815b: 11).

His host is a venerable old man who likes to tell of warlike exploits against the natives whose islands his tribesmen have assaulted. After some time his powers abate and it is obvious that his end is near. On his death-bed he speaks to Enander and Alzima: during a long life he has experienced happiness as well as calamities, but declares to be content to pass away to unite with his late wife. He has no worries for his daughter since the Swede will be her friend and protector. "You have the same worship of God; yes, we all have. Do we not all believe in a being who rewards the virtuous, punishes the scoundrel, and links our destiny in such way

that we must finally admit that all that has happened to us in this world has been for our best, and that we will understand the reason for everything when we unite with our friends in blissful Paradise?" (Cronhjelm 1815b: 12-3).

After the death of the father, trouble ensues. A young man of fierce character, Elifu, has long desired Alzima but been repeatedly turned away by her father. With the old man gone he decides to act. When Carl Enander goes to the forest one morning, Elifu and his accomplices enter their home and capture Alzima. She is brought to a boat waiting on the shore and taken in the direction of a nearby island. When Enander comes back he is informed by an old man what has passed. A gale is raging and it is impossible to follow the captors, but the Swede can discern a boat far away that capsizes in the waves. He fears that Alzima might be on board. His neighbours offer assistance, and when the gale has passed they set out for the nearby island. There they find Alzima bound and guarded by two men. Enander rushes forward and cuts one dead while the other begs for his life and tells that Elifu has returned to the larger island to deal terminally with the Swede. It is now clear that it was Elifu who was drowned when the boat capsized. United again once and for all, Enander and Alzima marry after the Swede has been formally converted to Islam:

Before that I had to undergo a ceremony that the law of Muhammad has prescribed for every Muslim, and I then became the happiest of husbands and have been a happy father for ten years. Meanwhile several Dutchmen have visited me. I have not found them worthy of my confidence, but I have told you noble Britons everything that has happened to me. This story may be useful for your young fellow countrymen. It should teach them not to follow the darting passion but rather the voice of cool reason. Many people thoughtlessly abandon their homeland to make a quick fortune in foreign land, but mostly find nothing more than poverty and misery. For a seaman to succeed he should be taught such matters that belong to his profession, and not throw himself out on the tempestuous world ocean, where his lot is mostly to see his expectations crushed and find death, missed by nobody, cursed by the parents since he has spent his powers, which could have tended them in their darker days, in hazardous adventures.

Richardson and his men heard this account with astonishment. He offered the narrator to bring him and his family back to Europe. However, Carl, whose youthful impetuosity had now cooled down, did not wish to abandon a beloved tranquillity and engage in new dangers. 'I hope that my father, before his demise, has forgiven me my thoughtlessness; here in the bosom of nature and friendship, I wish to abide the moment when our shadows shall meet on an unknown shore' (Cronhjelm 1815b: 14-5).

## Historical and Ethnographic Considerations

If genuine, this short account would be of considerable value. Timor and the adjacent islands (Rote, Savu, the Solor and Alor Islands) were roughly divided in a Dutch and a Portuguese sphere of interest in the period when Carl Enander supposedly flourished. We have tens of thousands of archival folio pages dealing with the Timor area in the early-modern period, but it is usually written from a

strictly official point of view. As I have shown elsewhere the Dutch archival material from Timor is detailed enough to enable us to pinpoint social structures and European-indigenous hybridity in the seventeenth century and onwards (Hägerdal 2012). However, reflective “inside stories” of cultural encounters are not to be expected in this period. The closest we come is probably Ernst Christoph Barchewitz’s lengthy account of his stay on Leti, an island off Timor, in the early eighteenth century (Barchewitz 1730).

The strongly romantic overtones of the account may cast some suspicion. It should be recalled that this is the age of romanticism with an avid literary interest in the distant and exotic (Schwab 1984). However, it may be worth the effort to check the story of Carl Enander against other available sources. A number of difficulties immediately surface. The name of the father of the narrator is given as Gabriel Enander; however, the Swedish church records do not disclose a person with that name, either close to Gävle or elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> Even more curiously, the British merchantman where Enander serves makes a stopover in Batavia and then heads in the direction towards Timor. Richardson’s vessel *Triton* is said to have visited Timor peacefully in 1783, at a time when the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War was still raging. Even in peacetime a British vessel would likely not have been allowed to pass Batavia for trade with the VOC-affiliated islands, though it could have visited the Portuguese harbours (Batugade, Dili).<sup>8</sup> It is known, on the other side that British merchantmen turned up in increasing numbers on the islands to the east of Java in the 1760s and later, in obvious defiance of the monopolistic ambitions of the declining VOC (Bijvanck 1894: 153-5).<sup>9</sup> There are also inconsistencies in the story. Banka is an island outside Sumatra which seems illogical if Enander’s ship went towards eastern Indonesia. Admittedly it could allude to Banggai outside Sulawesi; that would fit with the south-eastern course taken by the survivors of the shipwreck.

Let us now turn to Timor itself. The VOC records from Kupang, the Dutch port in the area, provide us with events and ship movements year after year. Unfortunately the material becomes less detailed towards the late eighteenth century. Even so we should expect the presence of shipwrecked Britons to have been anxiously observed by the servants of the monopolistic Company – for example, there is a long report about Captain Bligh’s arrival to Kupang in June 1789 after his remarkable sea trip following the *Bounty* mutiny.<sup>10</sup> A search in the records of the 1760s, 1770s and 1780s yields elusive results at best. In 1769 a report came to the ears of the Dutch that an English ship had arrived to Sikka on Flores, north-west of Timor, and that the crew began to construct a stronghold there. Flores was more or less outside the control of the VOC at that time but had certain products of economic interest, in particular cinnamon (Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007: 307-12). Sikka was nominally a principality under Portugal; part of the population was Catholic in name but a section of the north coast was (at least by the first half of the nineteenth century) dominated by Muslims from Sulawesi.<sup>11</sup> An officially

sanctioned British foray might have been hard to stop since the Kupang post had nothing to say in Sikka, but would have been utterly unlikely given the still peaceful relations between Great Britain, Portugal and the Netherlands. Could these people have been the survivors of the shipwreck? A following VOC report from the same year opined that the rumour about the Englishmen after all seemed unfounded.<sup>12</sup> With a no-smoke-without-fire logic we may acknowledge the possibility that a few British castaways had actually surfaced on the islands, giving rise to the rumour. At any rate it remains to be confirmed.

The ethnographic details are intriguing. The Timor Islands (Timor-eilanden) consist of the mainland (often called Groot-Timor, Grand Timor, in the documents) and a number of adjacent islands.<sup>13</sup> As well known the name merely means “the East” (Malay, *timur*). The Timorese mainland was not characterized by a Muslim coastal population; actually the Timorese feared the sea and were no sailors. However, the situation was different on the islands to the north of Timor: the Alor and Solor Islands, and some sections of Flores. Some of the populations were oriented towards the sea and were nominally Muslim since about the sixteenth century. Nevertheless their religion was heavily blended with beliefs in spirits (*nitu*).<sup>14</sup> Among the means of livelihood among the coastal groups were whaling, fishing and trade while agriculture played a subordinated role. In particular the Solorese and Endenese (on Flores) were known as good sailors. The population had contacts with a number of external groups such as the Makassarese and Butonese from Sulawesi, the sea migrants known as Bajaus, Ternateans from the Moluccas, and last not least the Europeans (Barnes 1987). The Dutch were stationed in Kupang while Portuguese (or mestizo) settlements were found in Dili, Batugade, Oecussi, and Larantuka on Flores (Hägerdal 2012). By the eighteenth century the contacts had led to a dissemination of firearms on Timor and adjacent islands, at least among the coastal communities. Even before that a number of American-derived crops such as maize changed the economic preconditions and allowed for denser populations.

A leading theme in the Solor and Alor Islands, and on part of Flores, was the troubled relationship between the coastal dwellers, who were often Muslim or Catholic, and the tribes of the mountainous interior who mostly held on to their ancestral beliefs. Such ethno-religious highland-lowland dichotomies are known from many places in Indonesia and could be economically complementary, but on the islands north of Timor they were frequently hostile.<sup>15</sup> Raids were followed by counter-raids and the adversaries would sometimes call in assistance from external powers. The lack of executive power on the part of the Dutch and Portuguese colonizers meant that the local polities were free to act on their own accord as long as they did not counter the interests of the European power to whom they were nominally affiliated. Some groups did not have the least political contact with Europeans. The taking of slaves was an inevitable part of this. Captured highlanders were frequently sold off as slaves to Europeans or to other Indonesian

groups.<sup>16</sup> As can be seen from this, there are some elements in *The Swede on Timor* which indeed fit well with what is known of the islands to the north of the Timorese mainland. The hip-cloths, the high feather adornments of the principal warriors, and the small round shields are found at various places in the region, while long lances, bows and arrows were used by the highlanders in places like Solor and Alor.<sup>17</sup> Of the two indigenous personal names given in the story, Elifu could represent the Solorese name Liwu while the vaguely Arab-sounding Alzima is less conclusive.

### A Literary Perspective

All this has to be juxtaposed with the background of the so-called translator of the text, Christina Cronhjelm, and the literary tropes of exoticism common in a second-rank European nation in the wake of the Napoleonic era. Does *The Swede on Timor* stand alone in the literary output of the time, or are there similar published stories? And what other kinds of literary works emanated from Cronhjelm's pen?

The trope of a morally upright castaway surviving in an exotic milieu is clearly reminiscent of Daniel Defoe's immensely successful *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). The book gave rise to a genre of novels with castaway themes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Like *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Swede on Timor* conveys a rather optimistic view of human capabilities to make the best out of a foreign environment. To this is added the romanticist impulse that surfaced towards the late eighteenth century and held sway until at least the mid nineteenth. Being a reaction against rationalism and old societal hierarchy, romanticist writers frequently emphasized the benefits of closeness to nature. One may compare the novel *Panjumouf* (1817) by the well-known Swedish writer Carl Jonas Love Almquist which contains similar element as *The Swede on Timor* – a journey to New Holland (Australia) where the protagonists meet a local girl of extraordinary beauty belonging to an unknown tribe.

The positive image of the native population in *The Swede on Timor* is apparent. In spite of scenes of blood and gore, the coastal dwellers among whom Carl Enander settles repeatedly convey philosophical wisdoms through their words and customs. The old Muslim man expresses inclusive interdenominational ideas on his death bed; in general Islam is portrayed in neutral or even positive terms, as Carl Enander has no qualms of embracing the creed and to undergo circumcision prior to his marriage. This is combined with the image of the locals as children of nature, not restricted and stymied by the regulations of the Western world. The concept of the noble savage was current in European intellectual culture since the days of John Dryden (1672). Although Jean-Jacques Rousseau did not use the concept, he put forward similar ideas: "Nothing is milder than him [man] in his primitive state, placed by nature between the stupidity of the brutes and the deceitful enlightenment of civil man" (Rousseau 1835: 354). Meanwhile the "discover-

ies” of James Cook and other explorers in the Pacific region opened up a public interest for indigenous peoples living in an unspoilt state, far from social rigidity and hypocrisy. The gaps of concrete knowledge of these “new” areas made them tempting for travel fiction or semi-fiction: “The antipodes offered one of the last places on earth where one could dream of a different, better world that has not yet been entirely ruled out as a possibility” (Arthur 2011: xx). As pointed out by Frederick Quinn, the Western image of Islam in the early-modern period was complex and not always negative. Travellers to Islamic countries could even be complimentary towards the lands they visited. A much-read historian such as Edward Gibbon (1737-94) stated Islam to be compatible with reason to an extent, while purportedly Turkish and Persian milieus were used by a philosopher such as Montesquieu and a composer such as Mozart. As more detailed information of the Muslim world reached the Western audience, sympathetic and curious attitudes flourished alongside negative stereotypes (Quinn 2008: 59-60, 71-2, 91-2).<sup>18</sup> However, the production of romantic Orientalist writings mainly belongs to a period subsequent to Cronhjelm’s story (Said 1978; Schwab 1984).

Christina Cronhjelm, later Christina Berger, is not a well-known name in the annals of Swedish literature. Moreover her early works were published anonymously, not uncommonly at the time. *The Swede on Timor* was among her first publications, but during a long life she authored numerous novels and poems which were highly appreciated by her contemporaries but have never been reprinted and are entirely forgotten today. The novels tended towards the fantastic (J.G.C. 1858-59: 1-2). For example, *Trollgrottan i San Miniato dal* (The magic cave in the valley of San Miniato, 1816) was a colourful adventure in a diffuse Italian medieval or Renaissance milieu where mystery, love, warlike exploits, and strong emotions played a role. Another novella, *De franska krigsfångarna i Sverige* (The French prisoners of war in Sweden, 1815) was supposedly based on a true story and told of an old French father who, braving any dangers and obstacles, found his son who was a prisoner of war in a Swedish town. It was an idyllic interpretation of history that also included lively but not always accurate images of the French nature and society.<sup>19</sup> Here, Cronhielm does not disclose any intimate knowledge of the ethnography or geography of foreign lands.

### **Truth or Fiction – or Both?**

As our investigation has shown, the many obvious anachronisms in the story make it impossible to accept it at face value. The castaway trope emanating from Defoe, travel accounts from the South Sea by James Cook and William Bligh, appreciation of nature and primitive cultures by Enlightenment authors, and the discourses of romanticism of the time, did not fail to reach the cultural circles in Sweden, a land without a pronounced tradition of overseas travel. The travels of the disciples of Linnaeus and the activities of the East India Company could have

further spiced a public interest in Asian lands. Much of the content of *The Swede on Timor* could therefore be the product of Cronhjelm's lively imagination.<sup>20</sup> Captain Richardson's diary is quite possibly a literary device to enable a story related in first person singular, Robinson Crusoe-style. Seen in that way the travelogue of Carl Enander has a metaphoric side to it; it is a tale of abandonment of the near and dear in a futile quest for adventure and fortune, and in the end the recovery of familial happiness through the twists of fate. This is paired with a display of exoticism for a Swedish audience that had seldom seen a non-European, let alone travelled to foreign continents. The non-white protagonists are not merely exotic objects though, but on the contrary stand out as subjects whose words and attitudes convey (European Enlightenment-type) ideas of natural life and love.

But the matter is not that simple. There was very little published literature about Timor at the time, and Cronhjelm could not have drawn the local setting merely from the short notes in William Bligh's published account, which are only concerned with the Dutch hub in Kupang.<sup>21</sup> A number of ethnographic features in the story fit very well with what we know about parts of the Timor Islands from archival data and studies which were only published long after Cronhjelm's novella. It is therefore not improbable that she had seen an unpublished account containing data about local society, and used it as basis for an otherwise fictitious short story. The nature of such an account, and whether it actually mentioned a ship-wrecked Swede, cannot be known unless some letter or other private document surfaces. What is important is that a confluence of several literary and cultural tropes about the Other produced a vision of a society at the margins of Asia which did not conform to the discourse of race and evolution that was taking shape in the West around this time. Conversion to Islam formed a *rite de passage* which sealed the Swedish world traveller's inclusion in a state of natural way of living. Closeness to nature and adherence to a foreign creed were seen as commendable and capable of absorbing an open-minded Westerner.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A list of Swedish travel literature before 1800 is found in Hedenquist & Stenbacka 2000: 75-6, 82-3, 90-2, 95, 98, 101-3, 105, 109, 112-4, 116.
- <sup>2</sup> The modern spelling would be *Svensken på Timor*, there being no difference in pronunciation between the letters v and w.

- 3 General surveys of the colonial history of Timor before 1800 may be found in Matos 1974; Hägerdal 2012.
- 4 Though strictly speaking being situated in central Sweden, Gävle is traditionally counted to Norrland (“Land/region of the North”).
- 5 All translations from the Swedish text are by the present author.
- 6 The ethnic denomination Malay at this time did not just allude to Malay speakers, but denoted all kinds of Austronesian peoples on the islands.
- 7 This conclusion is based on a study of the various *herdaminnen* (registers of clerics in various Swedish provinces) which have been published.
- 8 European power on the Timor Islands was vaguely defined at this time. It rested on a few coastal strongholds and alliances with various local “kingdoms“. See for all this Hägerdal 2012; Matos 1974.
- 9 The British had a trading post at Bencoolen on Sumatra’s west coast, and British ships anchored at Lombok which was not under VOC suzerainty. The Dutch had no means of stopping British ships from visiting the islands east of Java during the Anglo-Dutch War (Cool 1896: 235).
- 10 VOC 3859 (1789), f. 4-5.
- 11 It is known, for example, that a certain Makassarese Muslim seafarer called Daeng Muna forcibly established a position on the north coast in 1847 (Kartodirdjo 1973: 424). An Islamic coastal area called Geliting existed in the Sikka area in the nineteenth century (Steenbrink 2013: 105). For Sikka in general, see Lewis 2010.
- 12 VOC 3277 (1769), f. 190. There was a strain of Anglophobia in the VOC possessions in the second half of the eighteenth century which may easily have led to inflated rumours.
- 13 VOC 3810 (1788), f. 50.
- 14 Cf. the account of Jean-Baptiste Pelon from 1778: “The islanders who inhabit the shores are almost all Mohammedans, although they are not very knowledgeable about that religion. Those who live in the mountains do not have any [world religion]. It is the same on the neighbouring islands” (Pelon 2002: 64).
- 15 Steenbrink 2013: 104-5. On the complementary relations between coastal (*hilir*) and highland (*hulu*) groups on Sumatra, see Andaya 1992: 13-20.
- 16 Van Lijnden 1851; Hägerdal 2010: 240.
- 17 For an early picture of Solorese people in waist-cloth, and a depiction of the elaborate head adornment of a Solorese warrior, see De Roever 2002. 88-9. Bound-up hair with feather adornments can be seen on early nineteenth-century depictions of Alorese people; see Hägerdal 2010: 219,241. Small round shields from eighteenth-century Timor are seen in Sá 1949, appendix; and from Solor in the sixteenth century in Subrahmanyam 2009: 41. On the Solor and Alor Islands the shields were otherwise often rectangular or oblong (see image from 1818 in Hägerdal 2010: 219).
- 18 A rare case of upper-class conversion, which might have been known to Cronhjelm, was that of the French General Jacques-François Menou, who commanded the French forces in Egypt in 1800-1801. He married an Egyptian woman and converted to Islam under the name Ali Abdallah Menou; see Soboul 1989: 734-5.
- 19 Reviewed in *Allmänna journalen*, 4 October 1816: 1-2.
- 20 Cf. Teodor Ekelund’s characterization: “This learned woman was by nature endowed with a lively opinion and an always playful imagination“ (Ekelund 1886: 65).
- 21 The cartography and published travel accounts about the Timor area have been discussed and quoted in some detail by Frédéric Durand 2006 (for the European accounts prior to 1815, see pp. 43-196).

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