

**AFRICAN - NOT AFRICAN: NEGOTIATING TEXTUAL IDENTITIES IN  
COLONIAL- ERA TRAVEL WRITING ABOUT CONGO (1870-1950)**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates colonial era travel writing about Congo by, what I call, 'hyphenated Africans': authors who claim an African identity alongside another identity. Seven authors from different social, and political, backgrounds have been selected for this study, with dispersion by colonial power as a common thread linking them to each other. As well as close reading, this study draws on archival research regarding the lives and other writings of these travel writers who travelled to central Africa, specifically Congo.

My study focuses on the ambivalent identities of the writers constructed by the layers of their connection with Africa and the places of their emigration and immigration. I argue that to negotiate identity, the writers navigate through their multiple selves that arise due to their hyphenated identities and their complex relationships with Africa. From these multiple selves, the writer chooses an appropriate self with which to respond and react in a particular situation in the actual event as well as the textual representation of that event. Due to this, and the representation of sameness and difference, multiple others are also constructed as a response to the performativity of multiple selves in the text. I, therefore, argue that the 'other' is also not fixed and stable; it is a textual construction to complement or support the positive textual identity negotiated by the travel writer. This performativity is further enabled through what I call the process of selectivity of silence and voice. I show how writers may choose to be silent during an event itself but then voice an opinion in the text, may sometimes choose to remain silent altogether regarding a particular event, and may sometimes voice the silence by explicitly informing the reader about the choice of 'not speaking'. This selectivity of silence and voice, I

argue, allows the travel writer writing in asymmetrical power relations to use the text as a contact zone to communicate with the readers (who are generally presumed to belong to the powerful society, specifically to the colonial structures in the colonial era), and claim voice, authority and power, which is otherwise denied or restricted.

By focusing on the agency of the traveller of the colonial period, this thesis reads African travel writing both within and beyond the colonial context. Recent scholarship on African travel writing has started acknowledging and analysing the rich body of African travel writing. However, it is still largely seen as either 'writing back' to the Empire or reproducing the stereotypes constructed by colonial explorers and missionaries about Africa. Although I focus on colonialism as the defining historical force informing the setting and themes of the chosen texts, I also consider synchronous events in other places both within Africa and outside Africa. I argue that travel writing by the travel writers with an agenda is always involved in power dynamics, irrespective of race. Ignoring this leads to maintaining the binaries: travel writing by whites will continue being read for colonial meaning-making and nostalgia, and that by the members of former colonies will continue to be read as either mimicry or counter-narratives to colonial structures; thereby blocking the ways to acknowledge the individuality of the authors. The thesis by reading it against this trend joins the debate to free African travel writing from its Western moorings. Also, by focussing on the agency of travel writers, and the ways they produce travel writing through the politics of representation, the thesis challenges the peripheral status of the African travel writing, and tries to position it in the universality of the travel writing genre.

**DEDICATION**

TO

Subedar Sardar. Gurbachan Singh

(My grandfather, who was my first link to Congo)

and

Mumma-Papa

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## CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1 – Travel Writing by African Writers: Histories, Critical responses and Methodology .....</b>	<b>1</b>
African Travel Writing: complexities of definition and its textual history .....	17
Travel Writing: Genre and definitions.....	24
Postcolonial Travel Writing: Colonising non-Western knowledge .....	35
Methodology .....	45

### LIBERATED SLAVES AND A SLAVE TRADER

<b>Chapter 2- Bombay Africans: A Journey of the ‘Faithfuls’ with the Corpse of their Master.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Origins and trajectories of the texts.....	56
Retracing the lost voices... ..	60
Reading the texts as travel writing .....	62
Bombay Africans: conceptualising their position .....	66
Being Black Europeans: Between Affinity and Alterity .....	72
Recounting Journey, performing heroism .....	81
Selectivity of Silence and voice: Politics of the Contact Zone .....	88
Conclusion.....	93

<b>Chapter 3- African-Arab: <i>Maisha Ya Hamed Bin Muhammed Al Murjebi Yaani Tippu Tip</i></b> .....	96
Categorising the text...	99
Text as the Contact Zone: the politics of representation .....	102
Arabs in Africa: Politics and the position of Tip’s family in Africa.....	109
Being Arab-African: Manoeuvring through multiple selves... ..	113
Reproducing hierarchies: constructing self, representing the other .....	122
Constructing heroic self: Exceptionalism in the text.....	127
Selecting, Interpreting and Manipulating Voice and Silence .....	132
Conclusion .....	138

## **AFRICAN-AMERICANS’ JOURNEYS**

<b>Chapter 4 - Colour Roles: William Sheppard’s Politics of Representation as Mundelen’dom</b> .....	141
William Sheppard: Entering Congo more than escaping American racism ....	146
Politics of the Contact Zone and Selecting Silence .....	153
Performing Ambivalence: Alterity and Affinity .....	163
Sheppard: A Black-White Victorian Hero .....	173
Challenging stereotypes as Black heroic saviour.....	178
Conclusion .....	186
<b>Chapter 5 - Eslanda Robeson’s <i>African Journey: Meeting ‘My People’ on ‘their home ground’</i></b> .....	189

Robeson's life as a 'Race-Conscious Woman': A context for <i>African Journey</i> .....	193
Contact Zone: A politically charged space .....	198
Performing gender, Challenging stereotypes .....	201
Performing ambivalence: Representing through affinity and alterity .....	206
Complex positionality: Multiple Selves, Multiple Others .....	211
Selectivity of Voice and Silence .....	221
Conclusion .....	231

## **WHITE-SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNEYS TO CENTRAL AFRICA**

<b>Chapter 6 - Words and Colours: Expressions of Excursions in Irma Stern's Congo</b> .....	234
War, Displacement, and Ambivalence .....	240
Escaping Desolation: wounded by 'civilisation', searching for healing elsewhere .....	245
Contact Zone: Representing the other, speaking for self .....	253
Ambiguous positionality: Reproducing stereotypes... ..	262
Exceptionalism: A heroic woman in the 'heart of Africa' ... ..	267
Silence and Voice: Claiming authority for self, giving meaning to others .....	273
Conclusion .....	281
<b>Chapter 7 - Not exactly 'the fairyland': The Long Way Round by Anthony Delius</b> .....	284

Positioning Delius: a liberal South African man in Congo .....	285
The Politics of the Contact Zone .....	296
Congo: 'White man's wonders' and a wonder for white men.....	306
Silence all about us, silence in ourselves... ..	317
Conclusion.....	323
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>333</b>

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<b>Fig.1</b> Manuscript signed by Carus Farrar.....	59
<b>Fig.2</b> Photograph of Tippu Tip.....	122
<b>Fig.3</b> Photograph of ruler of Muscat and Zanzibar.....	122
<b>Fig.4</b> Photographs of Mulumba N Kusu- the ‘Cannibal Chief’; Sheppard and Chebambi published in <i>Pioneers of Congo</i> .....	161
<b>Fig.5</b> William Sheppard and his Church at Ibanje. ....	162
<b>Fig.6</b> William Sheppard’s Congo home .....	162
<b>Fig.7</b> William Sheppard with Kuban dignitaries.....	167
<b>Fig.8</b> William Sheppard as a hunter.....	176
<b>Fig.9</b> William Sheppard with his hunts.....	176
<b>Fig.10</b> H. M. Stanley and his servant.....	180
<b>Fig.11</b> William Sheppard and the Kuban chief .....	180
<b>Fig.12</b> An African woman in a postcard collected by Robeson in 1936.....	204
<b>Fig.13</b> Eslanda Robeson and her son, Pauli, with Chief Justice of Buganda .....	220
<b>Fig.14</b> Pauli with Pygmies... ..	220
<b>Fig. 15</b> Eternal Child (1916). .....	246
<b>Fig. 16</b> Irma Stern fleeing from Europe to Africa (published in <i>Paradise</i> ).....	246
<b>Fig. 17</b> Irma Stern’s autobiographical illustration-1 in <i>Paradise</i> .....	251
<b>Fig. 18</b> Irma Stern’s autobiographical illustration-2 in <i>Paradise</i> .....	251
<b>Fig. 19</b> Book Cover ( <i>Congo</i> ). .....	256

**Fig. 20** Irma Stern’s Sketch by F. L. Alexander... 259

**Fig. 21** Sketch of the Ball reflecting emotion of exclusion (published in *Paradise*).259

**Fig. 22** Painting and Sketch of a Congo woman by Irma Stern... 279

**Fig. 23** Paintings: Congolese woman (1946) and African woman (1940)... 280

**Fig. 24** The Ceolocanth (Anthony Delius’s vehicle)... 297

**Fig. 25** Gerald (Anthony Delius’s friend) with Pygmies... 299

**Fig. 26** Father Dunlop with Congolese ladies in Ituri Forest... 305

**Fig. 27** An African Clinic... 306

**Diagram 1**

Chiastic performance of Identity... 173

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

APCM – American Presbyterian Congo Mission

CAA – Council of African Affairs

CMS – Church Missionary Society

DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo

LSE- London School of Economics

PCUSA – Presbyterian Church USA

WASU- West African's Student Union

## CHAPTER 1

### TRAVEL WRITING BY AFRICAN WRITERS: HISTORIES, CRITICAL RESPONSES AND METHODOLOGY

In her blog, *The Myth of the African Travel Writer*, Christabelle Peters flags a crucial disparity that helps us to understand the marginalisation of African travel writing and scholarship from the mainstream literary scholarship. The blog documents the author's critical engagement with the African Travel Writing Encounters (ATWE) workshop held at the University of Birmingham in 2016. Peters writes that the speakers seemed to be „hand-picked“: „all the male presenters were black African and the white ones were female [to] explicitly shake-up [the] complacent views [regarding] the customary profile of professional travel writer-meaning that he is white and male“.<sup>1</sup> The blog admires the workshop for „breaking new ground in several ways“.

However, the blog also criticises the balance of scholars to travel writers who attended the workshop, thus exposing the fault lines in the Western understanding of the genre.<sup>2</sup> Peters notes that among the presentations given during the „marathon session“ – which began at „nine in the morning and finished late into happy hour“ –

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<sup>1</sup> Christabelle Peters "The Myth of the African Travel Writer," 2016, accessed December 20, 2019, <https://africasacountry.com/2016/04/the-myth-of-the-african-travel-writer>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; I use the term „west“ and „western“, in this thesis, based on the parameters discussed by William H. McNeill who claims the west is a „civilization independent of locale“ and a term changes its meaning according to the user and the reason for the usage. The term has gone from being used for Europeans, to including North America due to the shared qualities indicating „broader notion of the west“. Later, the term included Australia, New Zealand and other European overseas settlements. Today the definition of the term has extended its range to include even the non-western nations „that have assimilated western institutions, techniques and to some extent values“. I prefer this contemporary definition of the term as Africa has been stereotyped by Europeans and non-Europeans. Therefore, in this thesis, West is used for all those, whether geographical West or non-West, who tend to rely on the construction of non-western as the Other. See William H. McNeill, "What we mean by the west," *Orbis* 41, no. 4 (1997), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0030438797900028>.



„only three“ were presented by Africans, namely Lola Akinmade Åkerström, Pelu Awofeso and Humphrey Nkonde, „who are practising travel writing“.<sup>3</sup> The remaining speakers were scholars from various research institutes. Amongst them, the UK-based scholars were „almost all white“, whilst the „blacks had been bussed in“ from African and other institutes.<sup>4</sup> Further to highlighting issues of race in academia, Peters’ insights provide us with an opportunity to investigate the fallacy and its consequences of ramming the history of African mobility in the same frame as European or Western travel writing. Nkonde joined the workshop via telephone as his visa request to the UK had been declined. This, when considered together with „the blacks“ being „bussed in“ to „buy in diversity“, depicts a continuation of Western control over the mobility of Africans.<sup>5</sup> It also exemplifies the disparity in conditions of mobility for African and Western travellers. In contemporary times, when there exists an advanced tourism industry, African travel writers are still, when travelling outside of Africa, often expected to convince authorities of their purpose of travel.<sup>6</sup> In Peters’ words, they are still expected to „answer the question: why are you here?“<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the „privilege of mobility“ that, according to Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, allows people to „travel, and to write“ is not, and was never, equally accessible to everyone.<sup>8</sup> To ensure her ease of mobility, for example, the London-

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<sup>3</sup> Peters, "The Myth of the African Travel Writer."

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ciku Kimeria, "Traveling While African and Trying to Appease the Visa Gods," Quartz, 2016, accessed 11 November, 2019, <https://qz.com/africa/790671/african-visa-problems-while-traveling-around-europe-south-america-and-the-us/>.

<sup>7</sup> Peters, "The Myth of the African Travel Writer."

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 4.

based Cameroonian writer, Eliza Anyangwe, resorted to swapping her „forest green passport for a crimson red British one”.<sup>9</sup>

This disparity of mobility has led some African travellers, throughout history, to engage in new and different forms, ways, and modes of travel that do not always fit the Western understanding of the term. As Aedín NíLoingsigh suggests, the mobility of „the colonized African”, who had insufficient „material means to devote time to the privileged recreational movement of the early twentieth-century European traveller”, „is rarely acknowledged”.<sup>10</sup> Colonised African travellers were rarely acknowledged as travellers, or for their knowledge and experience of the landscape, as well as of navigational skills that facilitated European caravans; rather they were seen and understood as „either transported commodities or static features of the landscape”.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the tendency to fit African and Western mobility in the same frame has enabled „privileged European figures and practices of travel” to continue to occupy or dominate „travel-writing” as a distinct genre.<sup>12</sup>

The marginalisation of African travel forms and modes- not only in travel writing but also in scholarly literature and popular culture- further led to the marginalisation of the oral or written narratives documenting them. Traditional forms of travel writing, such as *Rihla* (a form employed by Arabic literate travellers), *Safarnama* (mostly taken by Persian, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi literate migrants in Africa), and epics with motifs of a journey (such as the epic of Sundiata) or the

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<sup>9</sup> Eliza Anyangwe, "Why is travelling with an African passport so difficult?" The Guardian, 2015, accessed 20 March, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/11/african-passport-europe-struggle-borders#comments>.

<sup>10</sup> Aedin NiLoingsigh, "African Travel Writing," in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 187.

<sup>11</sup> Aedin NiLoingsigh, *Postcolonial Eyes: Intercontinental Travel in Francophone African literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>12</sup> NiLoingsigh, "African Travel Writing," 187.

modified forms, such as autotravography (part autobiography and part travelogue often by Africans travelling in Europe), have rarely been acknowledged in the travel writing scholarship. Even when African travel writing has been acknowledged, these texts have largely been read through the lens of Western travel writing definitions and traditions, thereby gluing them to the colonial history.<sup>13</sup> For instance, South African travel writer Sihle Khumalo's use, in *Dark Continent, My Black Arse* (2007), of a self-deprecatory tone has been read as replicating the stereotypes constructed by the Western explorers he seeks to criticise.<sup>14</sup>

The postcolonial scholarship on African travel writing has drawn attention to the tendency of African travel writers to use literary devices, such as satire, parody, and symbolism to „write back“ whilst simultaneously aligning themselves with the imperial tradition. For instance, Maureen Amimo notes that Binyavanga Wainaina's *Discovering Home* (2001) uses the „tropes that align with the imperial tradition of describing places“ as fantasies or exotic to subvert the „representational poetics“ and critique the marginalisation of Africa.<sup>15</sup> However, as Ali Behdad suggests, opposition, in counter-discursive practices, works „within the system as effects of its power relations“; thus it is rather a „formative element“ reconciling „the production and

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<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Jones, "African Travel Writing," in *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, ed. Tim Youngs and Nandini Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 283; Tabish Khair, "A Multiplicity of Mirrors: Europe and Modernity in Travel Writing from Asia and Africa," *Indian Literature* 52, no. 6 (2008), <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/23348444>. The term autotravography was used by T.E. Afejuka while referring to J.P. Clark's combination of autobiography and his travels. See Kwame Osei-Poku, "Adapting to life in "Strange England": Interrogating identity and ideology from S.A.T. Taylor's 1937 Travelogue; "An African in An English School", " *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 31, no. 1 (2020): 65, <https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ljh.v31i1.3>.

<sup>14</sup> Isaac Ndlovo, "Rewriting the Colonial Gaze? Black Middle-Class Constructions of Africa in Sihle Khumalo's Travel Writing," *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 35, no. 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2020.1762997>.

<sup>15</sup> Maureen Amimo, "Poetics and Politics in Contemporary African Travel Writing" (Ph.D. Stellenbosch University, 2020), 47.

maintenance of orientalist power and knowledge".<sup>16</sup> This phenomenon of subverting the colonial discourse, named as „countertravel writing" by Holland and Huggan, therefore, remains attached to the dynamics of colonialism.<sup>17</sup> The „countertravel writing", as rightly noted by Rebecca Jones, „subverts Western forms of travel writing but takes Western travel writing as the originator of the genre".<sup>18</sup> In this way, African travel writing, by either assenting to or opposing the discursive construction of Africa by Western writers, appears to be merely a product irrevocably entangled in European colonialism. In other words, the sub-genre is either seen as reproducing Western discourse about Africa by mimicking stereotypical colonial voices, or as opposing the colonial hegemonic discourse. Due to this, it is seen as lagging behind Western travel writing or at least achieving its relevance only through its response to colonial discourses. The major marginalisation of the subgenre originates from this understanding of its derivativeness and belatedness, which obstructs its exploration and appreciation to its full potential.

Early critics tended to consider African mobility as a „consequence of colonialization" and the travel writing produced by that as „propaganda for colonialist

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<sup>16</sup> Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994), 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Counter-travel writing was a term first used by Charles Sugnet (1991) to refer to a new trend in travel writing that narrates the displacement of migrants in western society (see Charles Sugnet, "Vile Bodies, Vile Places: Traveling with Granta," *Transition* 51 (1991), <https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/2935079>). Arjun Appadurai observed that migrant narratives are always counter-travelling because they tend to subvert the image of European traveller and non-European other (see Arjun Appadurai, "Place and Voice in Anthropological Theory," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (1988), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656305>). This term was later used by Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan in reference to literature that „pits itself against dominant Eurocentric models (see Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*, 21.).

<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Jones, *At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English* (Woodbridge [UK]; Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2019), 31.

ideas".<sup>19</sup> However Africans were travelling and writing in subtle and self-generated ways in this period. As Frantz Fanon suggests, while criticising O.Mannoni's concept of dependency complex amongst Malagasies, it is the colonial situation that dehumanises the black man, in response to which the black man tries to become white so as to „compel the white man to acknowledge that I am human".<sup>20</sup> Osei-Poku noted a similar tendency amongst Africans sojourning or travelling in European metropolises during the colonial or pre-independence period. They were adapting to „the eccentricities of human relations and cultural expression which exists within such hegemonic socio-cultural terrains" with an „expectation of obtaining an improvement in their lives", which sometimes may even mean putting up with „bigotry" to „build better relationships" with their „European counterparts".<sup>21</sup> African travellers also used travel writing– in the form understood as such by the colonial masters– as a form of agency to „compel" the dominant culture to „acknowledge" their eligibility to claim power and authority, of which they were otherwise thought of incapable. The use of Europeans' own tools by colonial subjects to generate new meaning for their marginalised selves has already been acknowledged by Mary Louise Pratt.<sup>22</sup> According to this perspective, African travel writers were not operating in a „dependency complex", as Mannoni would have suggested, but were navigating asymmetrical power structures imposed on Africans, engaging in constructing the self and claiming authority. Thus, I argue, African travel writing from the colonial

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 9-10.

<sup>20</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 98.; O. Mannoni, based on his observations in Madagascar, suggests that the coloniser faced „inferiority complex" and the Madagasy encountered „dependency complex" while operating in the colonial situation. (see O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1956), 39-48.

<sup>21</sup> Osei-Poku, "Adapting to life in "Strange England": Interrogating identity and ideology from S.A.T. Taylor's 1937 Travelogue; "An African in An English School", 64.

<sup>22</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and Transculturation*, 7.

period (1870-1960) is more than mere conforming to or contradicting colonial discourse; the writers were using familiar tropes to negotiate identity, status and recognition within racialised structures.

The role of readerships and market expectations are influential when the writer belongs to a subjugated culture, and when the readership is expected to belong to the dominant society: the place where the publication and distribution market predominantly exists. The novelist and journalist Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani discusses the reliability of the „western seal of approval“ for considering African literary pieces as authentic or readable because this seal comes at the expense of reproducing the „same stereotypes Africans claim to abhor“.<sup>23</sup> The situation is more complex and intense during the colonial period which, by default, centred power on the colonisers. Belonging to a subjugated culture means being forbidden from certain positions of authority, and voice, and to adhere, even if unwillingly, to hegemonic structures of knowledge and power decided by the dominant culture. Therefore, the subjugated people often cannot be as direct and explicit in voicing their opinions as their dominant counterparts. As I demonstrate in chapters 2-5, they may need to use the same hegemonic structures, but turn them into their favour, or at least find a way to negotiate acknowledgment by the dominant group and a position in their power structures. Scholars such as Paul Gilroy, Debbie Lisle, Mary Pratt, Graham Huggan, and Charles Forsdick recognise how non-Western subjects have participated in and reconfigured „eurocentric modes of travelling, seeing and narrating“. However, the agency of African travellers and „their contribution to the literature of travel and cultural contact“ is still not fully appreciated in mainstream scholarship on travel

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<sup>23</sup> Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, "African Books for Western Eyes," *Opinion*, Sunday Review (2014). <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/30/opinion/sunday/african-books-for-western-eyes.html>.

writing.<sup>24</sup> Scholars rarely read African travel texts of the colonial period for their textual value, looking as I do for the traveller's agency in enacting their journey, and strategically negotiating authority, voice, and power through the text.<sup>25</sup> By seeking to adopt an approach more sensitive to African travels and their textualisation, I argue throughout this thesis that the asymmetrical historical and political relations imposed on Africans during the imperial era not only influenced their mobility and modes of textualisation, but also shaped the content of the texts, specifically those written in English or other colonial languages, based on the expectations of their target readership.

However, by engaging with African travel writing from the colonial period, I propose that even if the imposed colonial structures and the production of the texts, which relied mostly on those at higher positions in the colonial hierarchy, were highly influential in informing the content of the texts, African travel writers still retained an element of control of their texts and used the content for claiming authority and voice. That is to say, even if the African travellers were using European modes and techniques of representation, and playing into the colonial hierarchies to negotiate forms of authority and voice that were otherwise denied to them, their texts should not be reduced to being merely colonial products. Although all writing from this period is inflected by colonial power, its meanings are not always fully determined by it. The travellers and their texts discussed in this thesis were not only in contact with the space of the travellee – that is, the African spaces in which they travelled - but

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<sup>24</sup> NiLoingsigh, *Postcolonial Eyes: Intercontinental Travel in Francophone African literature*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> See Claire Lindsay, "Travel Writing and Postcolonial Studies," in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing* ed. Carl Thompson (London and New York: Routledge 2016), 25-26.; Laura E. Franey, "Sub-Saharan Africa" in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 415.

also with a predominantly Western readership through the printed texts. As such, I consider how African travellers used their texts as a „contact zone“ for meeting and interacting with the dominant culture and representing themselves accordingly. Mary Louise Pratt defines the „contact zone“ as „the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other“; these spaces become social spaces where „cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today“.<sup>26</sup> Writers travelled and represented their experiences within highly asymmetrical power structures, but still participated in transculturation, that is, they selected and absorbed particular elements from the materials of the dominant culture to navigate colonial hegemonic structures of knowledge and power.<sup>27</sup> What they selected, „how they use it, and what they make it mean“ through processes of literary representation, is therefore a crucial part of my analysis.<sup>28</sup> Throughout this thesis, I examine in particular how writers use selective silence and voice to choose events, experiences, and characters to create a self, authorised and eligible to claim a position of authority within highly racialised and gendered hierarchies. I, therefore, examine the politics of travel writing: the ways in which travel writing was used by writers to negotiate identity and claim power, authority, and voice.

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<sup>26</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 7. ; Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991), <https://doi.org/http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469>.

<sup>27</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



This thesis examines seven travel narratives that represent travels to Congo by travellers from different social, political, and cultural backgrounds.<sup>29</sup> Congo has been selected as the focus of this thesis because of its resonance for being highly stereotyped in Western travel writing, and since the African travellers considered in this thesis are outsiders to Congo, their works offer further instances of outsiders' views of Congo. However, while Congo is a thread that links all the texts discussed in this thesis, the travellers also travelled to other parts of Africa and discussed these travels in the same texts. Thus, to avoid artificially separating Congo from rest of Africa and to avoid being unable to talk about all of the texts in their entirety, I also discuss their writing within the same texts about their travels elsewhere in Africa where appropriate.

The travellers I consider in this study are Jacob Wainwright, Carus Farrar, Tippu Tip, William Sheppard, Eslanda Robeson, Anthony Delius, and Irma Stern.<sup>30</sup> Jacob Wainwright and Carus Farrar - known as „Bombay Africans“, a term used to describe liberated African slaves who were taken to Bombay for education and training in the latter half of the nineteenth century - saw the white colonial masters as saviours and the black Africans as their enslavers. Farrar and Wainwright are often described as David Livingstone's „faithful companions“. They remained with the missionary until his death and then carried his remains to Zanzibar from Zambia. Tippu Tip, an Arab-African and the most infamous slave trader of the east-central

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<sup>29</sup> Congo in this thesis means both Republic of Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo. These names for two parts of Congo divided by the Congo River were only given in the 1960s. In 1885, the Belgian government took hold of the region previously known as Zaire, and named it Belgian Congo. After its independence in 1960, the name was changed to „Democratic Republic of the Congo“. The French in 1880s claimed the Congo region on the Western side of the river; after its independence in 1960, it was named „Republic of Congo“.

<sup>30</sup> Later in the introduction I discuss my basis for referring to these writers as African Travel Writers- I use the term expansively to include African-Americans as well as other diasporic writers.

region of Africa, spent most of his life travelling between Zanzibar and Congo. He saw non-Muslim, black Africans as enslavable subjects deserving of his protection, and Europeans as a threat to his power. William Sheppard and Eslanda Robeson were African-Americans who travelled from North America to central Africa. For Sheppard, a black missionary, his return to Congo was his chance to „help [his] brothers and sisters“ and serve his white „superiors“. In contrast, Robeson, a civil rights activist, saw Africans as oppressed by the European colonisers. Anthony Delius and Irma Stern, both white South Africans, also travelled from South Africa to Congo. Delius was a white South African with liberal political views who nonetheless looked at Africans through racial structures, while Stern, a Jewish South African painter rejected by the patriarchal art establishment, saw Africans as „primitive“ and admirably free from the distress she considered to have been caused by „modernity“ and „civilisation“. The writers' diverse backgrounds, therefore, clearly informed their complex and ambiguous positionality, as well as their ideological positions, and the way they wrote about the region. This diversity also informed their dissimilar ways of relating to colonial structures and its racial hierarchies: the Bombay Africans were former slaves liberated by their colonial masters, Tip lost his authority to colonial powers, Sheppard was trained as a missionary by white people, Robeson was a transatlantic anti-colonial activist, Delius was a white liberal exiled for his anti-apartheid stance, and Stern was an apologist for colonialism who saw Africa as a place of consolation for her wounded soul.

The colonial context – which roughly frames the period 1870-1960 – is a strong theme in the chosen texts, all of which were produced by writers in close, though varied, connection with colonial structures. Each of these writers negotiated

hegemonic colonial structures in the „contact zone“ of central Africa and attempted to claim authority, power, and voice otherwise denied to them. I am interested in how the authors constructed ideas of selfhood while operating in dominant structures of knowledge and power. For instance, even Robeson’s travel narrative, the most explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonial text discussed in this thesis, can also be read beyond its direct anti-colonial properties for the ways that she constructed a sense of self and claimed power and authority by subverting white hegemonic racial meanings through selective silence and voice; this was her motivation for travelling and writing.

I have adopted a broad definition of „African travel writers“ that includes diasporic writers; however, the selected travel writers are connected by common threads: they all either lived in Africa or claimed ancestry on the continent; all of them were mobile in the context of particular colonial histories, such as slavery, anti-slavery, expansionist, or settlements; and all of them were motivated by a desire to treat Congo as a place for becoming what they were otherwise not allowed to be within their respective social and political settings. All of the writers occupied ambiguous positions in society and had some awareness of the structural dimensions of power. Insofar as can be demonstrated through the reading of their texts, all of them also sought to construct a particular kind of self and to imbue that self with some kind of voice and capacity for action and influence in the world. Another significant common thread is that their identities were constructed by the same colonial histories that resulted in their mobility. They remained Africans whilst also becoming someone else, as was the case for the African-Americans and Bombay Africans, or became Africans whilst remaining someone else, as was the case for the white South Africans. I call this dynamic as a process of becoming

„hyphenated Africans“. This is not to say that I expect a stable unified core that can be termed as African. Rather, I agree with scholars such as Stuart Hall, who conceive of identities as being fluid and constructed across different discourses, positions and practices.<sup>31</sup> As Sidonie Smith suggests in relation to autobiography, the „I“ is not present prior to the process of narration; rather it is constructed by the process itself with the help of multiple selves that come into play at different stages of the autobiographer’s storytelling.<sup>32</sup> The term „hyphenated Africans“, I propose, captures the multiple selves of these authors operational in their travel writing. I am interested in the ways these travel writers engage with multiple selves, and choose from those multiple selves an appropriate self for responding or reacting in a particular situation so as to construct a textual identity of self and the other. I will elaborate on my concept of „hyphenated Africans“ in the following section of this Introduction.

Within each section of the thesis, I have paired together authors who were at different hierarchical positions -one at a more authoritative position than the other - to study their varying modes of representation of self and other. For instance, Tip, who controlled the mobility of many in central Africa, is paired with the Bombay Africans who, being liberated slaves, always remained conscious of their perceived subservient position. Sheppard enjoyed a powerful position in Africa as a black missionary, but was seen as subservient in white American society and by his fellow white missionaries. He is paired with Robeson, who, being an anti-racist activist and

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<sup>31</sup> Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Sidonie Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance " in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 108.; Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 45.

a celebrity, thanks to her status as the wife of Paul Robeson, enjoyed a comparatively stronger position both in Africa and the United States. Delius, a liberal journalist and writer, who held a position of influence due to his links with the white South African authorities, is paired with Stern, a painter who held a weaker position than Delius, despite being white, because of her gender. This structure allows me to compare and contrast how those occupying more or less powerful positions worked towards their political goals while representing self and the other.

Furthermore, I have chosen works according to the historical periods in which they were written, as well as considering biographical periods in each author's life. Each of the texts were written in what may be considered a period of struggle for the author, enabling us to understand the ways in which these authors sought to negotiate a heroic or positive identity- emphasising characteristics they wanted to portray in themselves, for example representing themselves as loyal, honourable, or liberal depending on the context- and claim authority and power against the odds. The Bombay Africans [chapter 2] travelled and wrote in the 1870s; as liberated slaves they were highly dependent on missionaries and their colonial masters. Tip [chapter 3] travelled for his entire life including expeditions with European explorers, but wrote in 1905, after losing his power and wealth to European colonisers, and when he was highly dependent on them to safeguard his remaining wealth. Sheppard [chapter 4] travelled from 1890 to 1915 and published his work at the command of the Church. Robeson [chapter 5], who published her work in 1946, enjoyed certain financial and political privileges, but was always under the observation of the American government as a socialist and civil rights activist. Stern [chapter 6], published in 1948, was in a relatively powerful position in Africa

as a white woman trained in Europe. However, her gender made it difficult for her to gain significant status, power, or even acknowledgement within the patriarchal European art world of the mid-twentieth century. Delius [chapter 7], published in 1956, was in a privileged position as a white male journalist in South Africa but faced his own struggles because of his anti-apartheid stance.

The period from 1870 to the 1960s is also significant in another way. 1870 marked the death of Livingstone; this year thus witnessed the liberated African slaves, the Bombay Africans, travelling through and writing about central Africa alone (taking with them the corpse of their master, Livingstone). I argue in Chapter 2-3 that the writings of Bombay Africans and Tippu Tip can be read as a form of „autoethnography“, Pratt’s term to refer to those „instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s terms“, to claim power and relevance in the dominant society.<sup>33</sup> By the late 1950s, in which the most recent texts discussed in this thesis were published, much had changed. The texts I discuss encompass the effects of anti-apartheid activism, which rejected the division of society based on colour; the New Negro movement, which challenged racism and stereotypes through literature, art, and music; and the Pan-African Movement, which tried to bring all Africans together. In Chapters 4-7, I read texts by authors directly related to these movements (both African-Americans and South Africans) to understand the role of different forms of ambivalence in the making of their texts. Borrowing from Stephen Greenblatt’s idea of the „single“ self as a „rhetorical construct designed to enhance the speaker’s power, allay his fear, disguise his need, and create a superior self in the face of the

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<sup>33</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 9.

inferior „other““, I read these texts as reflecting their idea of „self“ as superior and separate to what they perceived as the other.<sup>34</sup> My close reading of the texts follows James Duncan and Derek Gregory’s way of paying attention to the physicality of representation by reading different media (letters, journal, paintings, postcards) to „attend to their different valences and silences“ along with other biographical details.<sup>35</sup> I also borrow the idea of performativity from autobiographical studies specifically that of Sidonie Smith, to illustrate how through choice of themes and language the travel writers construct self and other while negotiating power and relevance in African spaces. I also draw on their social and political backgrounds – in terms of the context of the times and places in which they were writing – to inform their perceptions, observations, and representations. I examine their ideas of „Africanness“, and the ways in which they forged distinct identities in relation to their conceptions of African identity. I extend Tim Youngs’ observation regarding African American travel writing, as a textual tool to „create a space in which identity can be affirmed, discovered or renegotiated“ to all the hyphenated Africans who faced dominance in some way.<sup>36</sup>

In the following sections, I discuss the complexities of defining African travel writing arising from the complexity of the term „African“, in light of the continent’s history of centuries of migration and settlement. The chapter proceeds to discuss the complexity of defining the genre of „travel writing“ itself. It then discusses the role of postcolonial scholarship in entangling colonial and postcolonial travel texts with

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<sup>34</sup> Hannah Jane Sikstrom, "Performing the Self: Identity-Formation in the Travel Accounts of Nineteenth-Century British Women in Italy" (Ph.D. University of Oxford, 2015), 44-45.

<sup>35</sup> James Duncan, "Introduction," in *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, ed. James Duncan and Derek Gregory (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Tim Youngs, "Pushing against the Black/White Limits of Maps: African American Writings of Travel," *English Studies in Africa* 53, no. 2 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00138398.2010.533841>.

the theme of colonialism. Finally, I discuss the methodology I have adopted in this thesis.

### **African Travel Writing: complexities of definition and its textual history**

In his satirical piece „How to write about Africa“, Binyavanga Wainaina writes about the recurring stereotypical images of Africa in Western travel narratives, one of them being that non-Europeans never travel.<sup>37</sup> This stereotype constructs the continent as passive, and Europeans as active. Here Africans are recipients of European „modernity“, rather than as dynamic travellers producing knowledge and meaning in their own right. In 1899, in an account of his journey to the interior of Africa, Henry M. Stanley coined the phrase „dark continent“, a phrase that has continued to emblematised the continent in western eyes until recent times. His account, and those of other explorers and travellers, made „darkness“ a recurring trope and theme in travel writing about Africa. Even in postcolonial times, the tropes of „power, paternalism and darkness“ endure.<sup>38</sup> This identification of Africa and Africanness with darkness, central to European travel and exploration writing, was constructed, authenticated, and reproduced through the „rhetoric of presence“.<sup>39</sup> The title of Stanley’s travel account, *Through the Dark Continent*, demonstrates his own presence in the contact zone: he moves „through“ the „dark continent“. The European traveller in Africa used the „monarch-of-all-I-survey“ technique to uphold European hegemony and validate colonial subjugation of the other by asserting the European traveller’s physical presence and presumed mastery of the landscape he surveyed.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Binyavanga Wainaina, „How to Write About Africa,“ *Granta* 2005, 92.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, *At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 205.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



The technique involves „explicit interaction between esthetics [sic] and ideology“, where „the esthetic qualities of the landscape constitute the social and material value of the discovery to the explorers“ home culture, at the same time as its esthetic deficiencies“ suggest a need for intervention by the home culture.<sup>41</sup> This further helped Europeans establish the „myth of discovery“, which was used to justify the imperial conquest of the non-European world.<sup>42</sup> Amitav Ghosh, writing about the European „discovery“ of the Buddhist temple Angkor Wat in Cambodia, highlights how the „myth of discovery“ was used to silence indigenous voices and undermine their achievements and ventures, by neither considering the help that was given by local people in carrying out such „explorations“ and „discoveries“, nor acknowledging the mobility of local people.<sup>43</sup>

A similar myth of discovery was instrumental in the erasure of African travel accounts, which until recently in the late twentieth century rarely received critical attention. Tabish Khair et al. note, the myth of discovery helped erase „travel writing by Africans and other non-Europeans“.<sup>44</sup> As discussed by Johannes Fabian, African travellers in European expeditions, including the servants known as „auxiliaries“, tended to remain at the peripheries of European travel writing, despite the importance of their knowledge of local landscapes, routes, and culture for the success of expeditions.<sup>45</sup> The experiences and narratives of other African travellers, such as traders, slaves, and missionaries, similarly remained at the peripheries of the publishing industry as well as the growing critical scholarship on travel writing.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>42</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 202.

<sup>43</sup> Amitav Ghosh, "Foreword," in *Other Routes: 1500 years of African and Asian Travel Writing*, ed. Tabish Khair et.al (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), ix.

<sup>44</sup> Jones, *At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 29-31.

This was true until the 1980s, when scholars such as Paul Gilroy and James Clifford recentred indigenous voices by calling for the historical study of alternative modes of travel: slavery, African auxiliaries travelling with their masters, and Black Atlantic journeys.<sup>46</sup> NiLoingsigh argues that African travel writing is, nonetheless, considered „meagre“ in contrast to European travel writing because its different modes and forms of travel and writing do not fit into western definitions.<sup>47</sup> This marginalisation of the genre, which continues today, has provoked contemporary travel writers such as Lydia Ngoma and Pettina Gappah to advocate for the need for more travel stories about Africa by Africans, the very issue with which I began this Introduction.<sup>48</sup>

African travel writing is not only considered belated, but marginalised because of a skewed understanding of the term „African“. In order to recognise marginalised African voices in the travel writing genre, as well as encourage new travel writing by African writers, the stories already told by Africans about Africa need to be acknowledged and heard. However, a crucial question arises here: who is African? Achille Mbembe rightly states that the „cultural history of the continent can hardly be understood outside the paradigm of itinerancy, mobility, and displacement“.<sup>49</sup> Seen from „the viewpoint of Africa“, the phenomenon of „worlds-in-movement“ „has two sides“: dispersion and immersion.<sup>50</sup> In periods of dispersion, it was not only foreign cultures that came to Africa, Africans too moved across and beyond the continent.

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<sup>46</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 33-34.; see also Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).; Alasdair Pettinger, *always elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic* (London: Cassell, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> NiLoingsigh, "African Travel Writing," 185.

<sup>48</sup> "Let's Get More Travel Stories on Africa by Africans," *The Guardian*, 22 July 2016 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/jul/22/africa-travel-writing-beyond-liches.>; "Not yet Uhuru," 2008, <http://www.african-writing.com/holiday/webpages/petinagappah.htm/>.

<sup>49</sup> Achille Mbembe, "Afropolitanism," *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art* 46 (2020): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10757163-8308174>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

During periods of immersion, people from afar settled and started their families on the continent, their relationship with the „countries of their origin“ became complex and they turned into „cultural hybrids“. <sup>51</sup> In a continent that has witnessed such a long history of mobility and cultural intermixing, it is complex to determine who can be considered as African. <sup>52</sup> Again to quote Mbembe, „For many, to be “African” is to be “black” and therefore “not white”“. <sup>53</sup> Scholars such as Kwasi KwaaPrah agree with Mbembe’s sense of the cultural, linguistic, and historical diversity of the continent and suggest that African identity needs to be thought beyond the „colour line“. Being „African“ cannot be defined simply according to skin colour but based on belonging to the cultural and historical „roots“ of the continent. <sup>54</sup> This perspective is more inclusive of the status of settlers in Africa, such as Indians, Malays, and European-Jews who settled in Africa making it their home and takes us beyond a homogenised sense of who is „African“. „African“ is a complex term and the idea of „African travel writing“ is likewise complex, just as Chinua Achebe suggests that we cannot cram African literature into „a small, neat definition“, similarly African identity as well as African travel writing cannot be crammed into a small, neat definition. <sup>55</sup>

I borrow the term „hyphenated“ from Carl Thompson who suggests that in the contemporary age of globalisation, when „many cultures and societies are less homogenous than they once were“, people - specifically those who are dispersed or

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>52</sup> Rather this is the case with all other continents; world has witnessed mobility, migration and displacement even from prehistoric times. However, the historical episodes, such as colonialism, catalysed this displacement. At this moment, for the sake of uniformity and coherence, I am only referring to Africa. Otherwise, the same concept applies to other continents and its people as well.

<sup>53</sup> Mbembe, "Afropolitanism," 57.

<sup>54</sup> Kwasi KwaaPrah, *Beyond the Color Line: Pan-Africanist Disputations* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>55</sup> Chinua Achebe, "English and the African Writer," *Transition* 18 (1965): 28.

immersed - possess „hyphenated“ identities.<sup>56</sup> Africa, a continent of „mobility, crisscrossed by traders, warriors, scholars, religious leaders, and migrants“, has been in this process of globalisation since even before the colonial period.<sup>57</sup> The destabilisation of homogeneity was a feature of African society prior to colonialism. The practice of slavery in Africa before colonialism, for instance, speaks of a ruptured sense of belonging and identification.<sup>58</sup> However, colonialism escalated the mixture of cultures and identities by paradoxically allowing people to believe that they were „only one thing“: „exclusively white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental“ and promoting ideas of exclusivity in race, gender, language and class.<sup>59</sup>

Colonial powers operated through false intentions, such as the „civilising mission“, through which they desired to create, in Homi Bhabha’s terms, a „reformed, recognizable Other“.<sup>60</sup> This paradoxical phrase functions through the ideas of affinity and alterity: colonial techniques of assimilation and acculturation enabled the „Other“ to become „recognizable“ by performing sameness or affinity with the coloniser, whereas colonial hegemony continued to inform the colonised about their alterity,

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<sup>56</sup> Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 5.

<sup>57</sup> Traders, travellers and geographers all travelled to and from Africa even before colonialism. For more of this pre-colonial history see Shanti Sadiq Ali, *The African Dispersal in the Deccan: From Medieval to Modern Times* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995). For examples of Africans travelling to other parts of the world, specifically Europe, see Kiranpreet Kaur, "Re-thinking the Travel History in and Around Africa: A Case of Ancient Egyptian Explorations," *The Saharan* 1, no. 1 (2020), thesaharan.com.

<sup>58</sup> African-Arab traders such as Tippu Tip saw non-Muslims as enslavable people because of their cultural and social ideas. Those who were Muslims, or who converted to Islam, were treated differently, sympathetically, by the African-Arab trader. (Patrick Manning, "Contours of Slavery and Social Change in Africa," *American Historical Review* 88, no. 4 (1983), <https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/1874022>.; Linda M Heywood, "Slavery and its transformations in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491–1800," *The Journal of African History* 50 (2009), <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S0021853709004228>.)

<sup>59</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage 1994), 336.

<sup>60</sup> Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis* 28 (Spring 1984), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/778467>.

their status as „Other'.<sup>61</sup> A colonised subject, or the member of a once colonised society, is reminded of their African heritage by the gaze of western society, thereby imposing on them a consciousness of difference or alterity. This leads to what W.E.B. DuBois calls „double consciousnesses“ in African-Americans: „twoness- an American and a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings...“.<sup>62</sup> This imposed consciousness further produces an ambivalent relationship between the colonised and the space of the colony: to claim affinity with the white coloniser and its space becomes an existential question for the colonised, a dilemma Fanon calls as „turn white or disappear“. <sup>63</sup> This in itself means surrendering, or at least pretending to surrender, connections with the non-white world, in order to perform a white identity. DuBois exemplifies this situation through the African-American’s wish to be „both a Negro and an American.“ <sup>64</sup> This works through ambivalence in simultaneously claiming affinity and belonging, and distance and alienation, with Africa and somewhere else, in this case America. I refer to the African travel writers in this thesis as „hyphenated Africans“ since they place a sense of belonging in both Africa and elsewhere as a way to resolve this situation.<sup>65</sup> I call them hyphenated because of the emphasis they put on their own multiple identities: Bombay Africans, African-Americans or white South Africans. It was not only geographical locations that supported their multi-dimensional sense of self; rather, their skin colour, gender, and ideologies all formed a part of their self-understanding. They considered themselves Africans as well as something else at the same time.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1994), 5.

<sup>63</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 100.

<sup>64</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Jones, *At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English*, 2.

This is not to say that there exists, or should exist, „a better and truer self“ that DuBois portrays as what an African-American wishes his double self to become.<sup>66</sup> This wish is based on exploring „the interstitial passage“, as Bhabha puts it, between fixed „identifications“, such as black and white, African and American, white and South African, Arab and African, Christian and African, thereby leading the way for a state of cultural hybridity closely linked to Mikhail Bakhtin“s idea of „intentional hybridity“.<sup>67</sup> This, according to postcolonial critics of the concept of hybridity, leads to an idea of a pure form of culture or an identity existing before the process of hybridity.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, any idea of a unified identity, even a hybrid identity, reflects some sort of unification, which is in itself false. So, by using the term „hyphenated identities“ I do not intend to propose it as any form of „pure“ identity; rather, the term gestures towards a phenomenon where authors construct a textual identity by engaging with a complex concentric structure of self-definition with multiple layers - or „multiple selves“ in Sidonie Smith“s terms - of racial, gender, ethnic, national, historical, social, cultural, and political understandings of selfhood.<sup>69</sup> I argue that the notion of a „pure“ self narrows down the history of African travel writing. An urge to homogenise African identity has stereotyped the idea of African travel writing: who may be considered African, and who is entitled to write about Africa as an African. In this thesis, then, I approach African literature as „writing in which an African setting is authentically handled or to which experiences originating in Africa are integral“.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: New York: Routledge, 2004, 1994), 5.; Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desires: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 22.

<sup>68</sup> Pnina Werbner, "The Limits of Cultural Hybridity: On Ritual Monsters, Poetic Licence and Contested Postcolonial Purifications," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7, no. 1 (March 2001), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2660840>.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance " 110.

<sup>70</sup> Achebe, "English and the African Writer."

Though this approach has been criticised by Achebe, I find it valuable to build on to define African travel writing as writing which deals with an African setting or experiences in Africa by a traveller who places their belonging in Africa in some way. This allows me to treat African-American and South African white travel writing about Africa as a part of African travel writing.

### **Travel Writing: Genre and definitions**

The history of travel narratives, oral or written, can be dated back to the period of antiquity.<sup>71</sup> Despite this, as Tim Youngs notes, „their longevity has made it no easier for critics to agree on how to define or classify them“.<sup>72</sup> As Youngs notes, no discussion of the genre is complete without critics commenting on this difficulty of determining their object of study.<sup>73</sup> The complication concerning the definition of the genre partly arises from the its „complex and confusing relationship with any number of closely related (indeed, often overlapping) genres“ such as autobiography, ethnography and anthropology, which further raises the question, who can be considered a travel writer?<sup>74</sup> The genre borrows from as well as lends its style and form to other genres, thereby becoming a „hybrid genre that straddles categories and disciplines“.<sup>75</sup> Emma Darwin categorises it broadly as „creative non-fiction“ because of its tendency to freely borrow from „memoir, journalism, letters, guidebooks,

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<sup>71</sup> Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.; Nandini Das and Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 2.

<sup>72</sup> Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, *Travel writing*, 11.

<sup>75</sup> Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*, 9.

confessional narrative, and, most important fiction".<sup>76</sup> Though many writers tend to write across genres, travel writers are particularly prone to defining themselves in other ways. Arguably, there have been relatively few writers who have defined themselves as „travel writers“, even when their texts have been considered as such. Instead, they have defined themselves as anthropologists, explorers, journalists, soldiers, and businessmen embarking on a journey. Jan Morris, for example, found the term travel writing „a bit demeaning“ and „never thought [of herself] as a travel writer“. <sup>77</sup> Leisure travel writers, such as Bill Bryson and Paul Theroux, emerged in large numbers only in the mid- to late-twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. Since the definition of a travel writer remains vaguer than other categories of writers, such as novelists, poets, or historians, this makes it difficult to depend on the writer as a guide to classify and define travel writing.

The wide typology of travel writers and reasons for their journeys further adds to the complex nature of the genre. Authors of travel writing –pilgrims, traders, slaves, soldiers, explorers, journalists, ambassadors, or backpackers - undertake their journeys „for almost every conceivable purpose“ to „every destination in the world“. <sup>78</sup> The diverse reasons for undertaking a journey also inform the diverse forms of travel writing, ranging from „picaresque adventure to a philosophical treatise, political commentary, ecological parable, and spiritual quest“. <sup>79</sup> For instance, a pilgrim’s work may be expected to be more self-reflective representation; a journalist’s could be picaresque as well as offer political commentary with historical

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<sup>76</sup> "Life Writing? Travel Writing? Creative Non-Fiction? What are you writing?" This Itch of Writing, 2016, <https://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting/2016/10/what-is-creative-non-fiction.html>.;Thompson, *Travel writing*, 12.

<sup>77</sup> Jan Morris quoted in Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, 7.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*, 7.



and ethnographic details, whereas a novelist may reproduce a journey as a storyteller would – constructing dialogues and events which may or may not be recorded at the time of the journey to make the narrative more dramatic. These ways of seeing, observing, and documenting affect the representations of a journey and a place. This leads to a trend of cross writing: whereas some fictional texts such as *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) borrow the technique of representing self and other in travel writing, some historians borrow its narrative technique to document historical facts in a literary style. For instance, William Dalrymple uses the first-person narrative to narrate the story of his travels through the streets of Delhi in *The Age of Kali* (1998). Barbara Korte observes, this heterogeneous character feeds the complexity of the genre. The „travel account has not emerged as a genre hermetically sealed off from other kinds of writing“ and thus is not „easily demarcated“. <sup>80</sup>

This blurring of boundaries between different genres and movement of writers between various genres informs the definitional complexity of classifying travel writing and is fundamental to it. The texts that I analyse in this thesis allow me to examine diverse purposes underpinning travel writing: essential travel (Tippu Tip), leisure travel (Anthony Delius), missionary travel (William Sheppard), travelling for artistic purposes (Irma Stern), travelling to assist white masters (Bombay Africans), and travelling to counter white hegemony (Eslanda Robeson). They reflect a diversity of narrative styles: for instance, the Bombay Africans (chapter 2) narrate their experience briefly while keeping Livingstone's diary; Robeson (chapter 5), a fiction writer, meticulously reconstructs events in a dramatic style with dialogue and

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<sup>80</sup> Barbara Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, trans. Catherine Matthias (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 8,1.

sub-plots. Delius (chapter 7), being a journalist, constructs his text as self-reflective reportage that comments on the condition of settlers and the black population.

Travel writing, as Thompson suggests, is understood as serving „variously to entertain, to pass on information, and to maintain the collective memory of tribal groups“. <sup>81</sup> Throughout this thesis, I explore how travel writing has been used to maintain the collective memory not of „tribal groups“, in Thompson’s terms, but of what I term „dispersed peoples“. „Tribal cultures“, anthropologist James Clifford argues, „are not diasporas; their sense of rootedness in the land is precisely what diasporic peoples have lost“. <sup>82</sup> The „hyphenated African“ travel writers in this study demonstrate a sense of belonging to both: their new and old cultures and places. Thus, I choose to refer to them as dispersed people. These dispersed people in diasporas, according to Clifford, „once separated from homelands by vast oceans and political barriers, increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country“. They share common historical experiences and memory with the people of the old country; however there exist certain differences or parts of the memory they are separated from that result in their ambivalent relationship with the old as well as new country. <sup>83</sup>

The dispersed people who wrote the texts invoked their different relationships with the people and places of „ancestral home“ and maintained the collective memory of their race, culture, and historical experiences. This collective memory, according to Edward Said, is „not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>82</sup> James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 310, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/656365>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with the political meaning".<sup>84</sup> Thus, when a travel writer selects events from collective historical experiences and their aftermath to represent, they are involved in the political construction of the text. Travel writing, therefore, may also serve as a political tool at the hands of the writer to negotiate identity and to claim authority by performing or enacting identity.

The kind of role the travel text will play thus largely depends on who is writing the travel text and for what purpose. To deal with this, defining the nature of the „travel“ and the identity, position and purpose of the „traveller“ becomes important. Although travel, in the most simplistic terms, is a movement through time and space, varying largely in scale it *typically* involves an encounter with some kind of „difference and otherness“.<sup>85</sup> Even the most self-oriented text or one that appears to cite mainly sameness can in fact be read as referring to difference and otherness. As Hall has noted, identity is not outside the difference, rather it is a game „played against difference“- identity is created through „the gaze of Otherness“, through the dialogic relationship to the other.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, engaging with difference, even a change in self-perception is central to the traveller. I demonstrate in chapter 5 on Robeson that even the most conscious effort of invoking sameness slips into the risk of documenting what the writer perceives as difference and otherness. Similarly, even the most seemingly self-centred work, that of Tippu Tip, in which the author seems interested only in describing events without much emotion, also reflects the

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<sup>84</sup> Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 185, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344120>.

<sup>85</sup> Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 9.

<sup>86</sup> Stuart Hall, "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference," *Radical America* 23, no. 4 (October-December 1989): 16.

dialogic engagement with difference and otherness. However, the nature and intensity of this encounter between perceived self and other and its documentation in the text largely depend on the circumstances and reasons guiding the journey.

„Traveller“ can be an umbrella term for all people who undertake some kind of movement. However, in their discussion of the kind of movement that informs travel writing, critics such as Paul Fussell and Casey Blanton narrow down the definition of „traveller“ to those who produce and present an authorial self and other by consciously using aesthetic skills.<sup>87</sup> This definition asserts that only those who embark voluntarily on journeys, or whose intention for the journey was aesthetic can be considered travellers; this definition excludes refugees, slaves, settlers, and other displaced people from the status of „traveller“ and ignores the historical, economic, material and other complexities that produce mobility. It propagates the idea of the traveller as someone of elite status. Moreover, given that, the purpose of the journey can determine the attention the writer pays to self and other, it is problematic to exclude those who do not document self and other extensively or directly in their texts from the term „traveller“, simply because they may not have undertaken elite travel, or travel for travel's sake. Therefore, in this thesis, I treat those who travelled for purposes other than leisure or discovery, such as the Bombay Africans (chapter 2) and Tip (chapter 3), equally as travellers, just as much as other travel writers who travelled more conventionally for the sake of travel itself as Stern (chapter 6) and Delius (chapter 7).

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<sup>87</sup> Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 37-39.; Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: the Self and the World* (New York: Twayne Publishers; London: Prentice Hall International, 2002), 4-5.

Two broad perspectives emerge from this discussion of the definitional issues surrounding travel writing, one inclusive - treating both literary and non-literary forms as travel writing – the other exclusive, whereby only first-person literary narrations of an actual journey undertaken by the author count. Thompson argues that the inclusive one seems like an „eminently sensible suggestion“ as it considers a wider range of forms, thereby reflecting sensitivity towards different forms of writing.<sup>88</sup> The form of travel narratives has evolved over time: from tomb inscriptions, to ship logs, guidebooks, and autobiographical texts.<sup>89</sup> Based on a desire to take these historical complexities into account, and encompass texts beyond solely first-person literary narratives, Jan Borm defines travel writing broadly as „a collective term for a variety of texts both fictional and non-fictional whose main theme is travel“.<sup>90</sup> However, he does not define „travel writing“ and „travel book“ as the same or interchangeable terms. A travel book, according to him, is a first-person, non-fictional account of the travel, which may or may not involve an element of artistry – contrary to „travel writing“, which he defines more broadly. The problem with this inclusive definition is that the journey pattern, as Casey Blanton notes, „is one of the most persistent forms of all narrative“ – stretching into other literary genres far beyond travel narratives.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, there does not remain any form of writing that cannot be considered as travel writing according to this theme-based definition of Borm. According to this, every form of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction – such as autobiography, memoir, reports, diaries, even maps, as well as genres more conventionally considered

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<sup>88</sup> Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 23.

<sup>89</sup> Percy G. Adams, *Travel literature through the ages: an anthology* (New York; London: Garland, 1988).

<sup>90</sup> Jan Borm, "Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology " in *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, ed. Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 13.

<sup>91</sup> Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*, 2.

„travel writing“, such as the travelogue or travel book - qualifies as travel writing if it has travel as its main theme. However, though this inclusivity allows a wide range of fictional and non-fictional texts to be counted, it also risks the distinctiveness of the genre. Thus, Borm suggests that defined in this way, travel writing „is not a genre, but a collection of texts“. <sup>92</sup> Therefore, I contend, there remains a need for distinguishing it from other genres.

Paul Fussell, the most prominent advocate of defining the term exclusively, defines the genre by categorically distinguishing between travel books and other forms of travel documents, such as guidebooks. According to Fussell, the travel book is a „retrospective, first-person account of the author’s own experience of a journey, or an unfamiliar place or people“. <sup>93</sup> Fussell’s definition of a travel writing is the texts that are „invariably extended prose narratives“ generally resembling „novels, visually and formally“ occasionally „interspersed with maps, tables, lists, symbols, and other non-narrative modes“. <sup>94</sup> Fussell eliminates guidebooks, catalogues, and maps from the definition of travel writing and differentiates travel books from the „novel or romance“ by requiring a „literal validity by constant reference to actuality“. <sup>95</sup> Fussell’s definition forms the line around which many critics formulate their definition of the genre. Tim Youngs, for instance, defines the genre as „predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travels that have been undertaken by the author-narrator“. <sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Borm, "Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology " 15.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Thompson, *Travel writing*, 14.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*, 203.

<sup>96</sup> Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, 3.

Whilst Fussell's definition is clearer than Borm's, it is lacking on two fronts. Firstly, Fussell largely ignores historical complexities and their impact on genre and form. Although travel and exploration date back to the period of antiquity, the wide-ranging ways of documenting journeys have often differed from what Thompson calls the „modern or literary travel book”.<sup>97</sup> Yet, Fussell's definition ignores almost all other forms of documentation, such as inscriptions. Secondly, the definition of travel writing as non-fiction fails to address travel writing „hoaxes”: those first-person narratives that claim to be non-fiction but emerge from the imagination,<sup>98</sup> such as Louise Linton's *In Congo's Shadow: One Girl's Perilous Journey to the Heart of Africa* (2016). Furthermore, even where texts do not deliberately deceive the reader, some texts such as Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*, which was nominated for the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award, but was withdrawn by Chatwin due to its fictitious character, straddle the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction.<sup>99</sup> I argue that the truth claims propagated through non-fiction are rhetorical strategies; therefore, I choose to use quasi-nonfictional instead of non-fictional in the definition of travel writing. Fussell's definition, which explicitly makes non-fiction the key feature of a travel text, thus does not take into account the classification of such texts that blur the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. Nonetheless, I am interested in the impact of labelling works as „non-fiction”. Korte, defining travel accounts, suggests that these are accounts of a journey whose authors „claim- and their readers believe-

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>98</sup> Daniel Carey, "Truth, Lies and Travel Writing," in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (New York, Oxon: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>99</sup> Chatwin acknowledged that a „lot of this is a fiction, a lot of this is made up...But it is made up in an order to make it a real story” (see Nicholas Shakespeare, *Bruce Chatwin* (London: Vintage, 2000), 487). Another well-known example of this is Michael Ondaatje's semi-autobiographical work *Running in the Family* (1983), which uses magical realism to blur the boundaries between fiction and history in this book.

that the journey recorded actually took place".<sup>100</sup> When travel writers do this, they ultimately avoid having to acknowledge their own positionality and ideologies, presenting their texts as representing an „objective“ rendering of „reality“. The category „non-fiction“ may, therefore, encourage less critical or sceptical readers to believe what the writer describes and to ignore authorial and editorial interferences in the production of the text. In this thesis, by examining the role of writer's positionality and motivation behind the journey and its textual documentation, I demonstrate the authorial subjectivity in the making of the text.

Travel texts invite a certain degree of fictionalisation because travel books „introduce us to the other“ and thus typically „dramatize an engagement between self and world“. <sup>101</sup> This dramatization may not involve inventing stories, but editing and passing over of certain details to present a text that often tells a heroic tale, comic story, or tragic narration. Such inventions of detail craft the „travel experience“ into a „travel text“ by adding a „fictive dimension“. <sup>102</sup> Whilst some travel writers „insist on absolute verisimilitude, others readily admit to the manipulation and invention of detail“. <sup>103</sup> Moreover, even in the most honest accounts, the writing process itself is always a re-creation of experience: a writer „picks out significant recent events, and organises those events and his or her reflection on them, into some sort of narrative“. <sup>104</sup> As Hannah Sikstrom argues, travel writing is not an „unmediated expression of self“. <sup>105</sup> In this sense, then, it involves constructing textual identities. My own study of hyphenated Africans is in line with New Historicists such as

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<sup>100</sup> Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, 1,10.

<sup>101</sup> Blanton, *Travel Writing*, pp xi

<sup>102</sup> Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 26-27.

<sup>103</sup> Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 27.

<sup>105</sup> Sikstrom, "Performing the Self: Identity-Formation in the Travel Accounts of Nineteenth-Century British Women in Italy," 17.



Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose, who reject the idea of objectivity and unproblematic representations of the past and propose an understanding of history as being „constructed“. Rather than take the texts at face value, as representing „true“ or „actual“ experiences, I pay attention to their forms of constructedness. The constructed identities, I argue, help us to understand the writers“ needs: the voices and silences often correspond to the writer“s agenda and the purpose of their journey. As Pierre Macherey suggests that the „speech of the book comes from a certain silence“, that is that both said and unsaid contribute towards the construction of the textual identity of the writer as well as the others represented in the text.<sup>106</sup> To shape the speech of the book, voice and silence is strategically selected by the writer according to his/her agenda, motivation or the purpose of the journey and its textualisation. Similarly, „the “other” produced by travel writing is [...] seen as a textual construction and not a reflection of reality“.<sup>107</sup>

In sum, my own understanding of the term „travel writing“ is more in line with Fussell“s than Borm“s: many texts can have travel as a central theme, but the writer“s purpose and reader expectations are important in deciding if a text is travel writing. I reject Borm“s idea that any text related to travel is travel writing, but I am also reluctant to consider „non-fiction“ as being synonymous with „reality“, or „actuality“. For these reasons, I use „travel literature“ as a broader term that encompasses every kind of storytelling: oral and written narratives, non-narratives, fiction and non-fiction. „Travel literature“ includes texts as varied as Harkhuf“s tomb inscriptions, slave narratives, refugee narratives, soldier“s letters, Chatwin“s *The Songlines* (a narrative

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<sup>106</sup> Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 85.

<sup>107</sup> Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2.

of an actual journey with fictitious details), Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (actual journey narrated through fictive character), Naipaul's *Area of Darkness* (actual journey with real characters and reference to actuality), William Dalrymple's *City of Djinns* (an account of the author's stay in New Delhi) along with other non-narrative forms such as maps, logistics, paintings, and sketches resulting from an actual journey undertaken by the author-narrator. Whilst I am aware that this framework offers a very broad definition of the genre, it is useful in not only centring fictional forms of writing, such as novels and short stories. Travel *writing*, meanwhile, deals with written texts, and more specifically, with first-person, written accounts of an actual journey undertaken by a writer who has an outsider status in the place of travel. I consider this as a sub-genre of travel *literature*.

### **Postcolonial Travel Writing: Colonising Non-Western Knowledge**

Before the advent of postcolonial readings of texts, travel writing was largely understood as neutral and objective.<sup>108</sup> Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), one of the foundational texts of postcolonial theory, contested this approach to understanding travel texts. Focussing on representations of the Middle East, Said examined texts by nineteenth-century European travel writers, such as Gertrude Bell. He considered the role they played in establishing the logic of empire by constructing the Orient as the „inferior“ other to the European self. Using Foucault's scholarship, Said analysed the texts for their contribution to the project of Orientalism, which he presents as a complex discourse of western knowledge „for domination, restricting, and having authority over other“.<sup>109</sup> Travel writing, Said argues, formed an important tool in this

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<sup>108</sup> Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

project as it constructed racial binaries and hierarchies by depicting the East as inferior to the West for the „audiences back home who wanted to read about European colonial powers“. <sup>110</sup>

This ground-breaking study, which initiated the debate around travel narratives and the colonial legacy, influenced scholars who sought to consider how colonial and imperial history shaped aesthetic and other expectations of the readership of these texts, expectations that further informed their construction. Such scholars started recognising that travel enables the traveller to experience the space of the other; travel writing codifies this experience in a written representation that draws on certain established conventions, recurring tropes, and uses of language, and takes a specific form and/or genre. <sup>111</sup> As Blanton suggests, travel writing becomes a privileged tool „to introduce us to the other“ and [...]dramatiz[ing] „an engagement between self and world“. <sup>112</sup> Postcolonial scholarship on travel writing is divided into two broad categories: the first includes critics and theorists such as David Spurr, Bill Ashcroft, and Mary Louise Pratt, who consider travel writing as a genre highly entangled with colonial history and its legacy; while others, such as Tabish Khair, Inderpal Grewal, and Sam Knowles, consider travel writing as a genre that has potential to be analysed out of the colonial context. The present thesis is in line with the second category.

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<sup>110</sup>Justin D. Edwards, "Postcolonial Travel Writing and Postcolonial Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing* ed. Robert Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 22.

<sup>111</sup>Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World.*; David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and Transculturation.*; Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).; Sara Mills, *Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>112</sup>Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*, xi.

Though *Orientalism* revolutionised ways of reading the representation of other cultures through travel writing and the role of the genre in the imperialist and colonial project, the generalising character of this scholarly text has also attracted criticism. Claire Lindsay notes that the manner in which Said sets up an Oriental/Occidental or East/West division limits the concept of „the East“ to being a place that was „acted upon“ by imperial and colonial powers without any resistance.<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, it is true that Empire, being directly associated with power, gave greater opportunities to those at the centre of that power. Travel is surely one of the many opportunities provided to those with power, whereas for those with less power, opportunities to travel were either limited or existed in different ways, such as forced travel or travel in an auxiliary or subservient role. These writing positions, either at the centre or the periphery of power, further inform the kinds of experiences that we find in travel writing, and their mode of representation.

Robert Clarke highlights the popularity of travel books produced by metropolitan Europeans and North Americans narrating the journeys undertaken in colonies or former colonies in the colonial and post-colonial period.<sup>114</sup> Clarke also notes that those belonging to former colonies have also produced travel narratives: „of their “home” nations; of Europe; of other former colonies; sometimes relying on indigenous models of journey writing, at other times imitating, appropriating, and subverting European conventions of travel discourse and hence their world views“.<sup>115</sup> Both of these categories of texts, either by those at the centre or periphery of power,

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<sup>113</sup> Lindsay, "Travel Writing and Postcolonial Studies," 27.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Clarke, "Toward a Genealogy of Postcolonial Travel Writing," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing*, ed. Robert Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

may express a sense of „belatedness, nostalgia, and even melancholia“ embedded in their historical relation to the former colony. <sup>116</sup> This traps works from both the colonial and postcolonial periods in the history of colonialism: Said demonstrated that travel writing not only facilitates the project of Orientalism, but might also rupture such a project by producing a critique of colonialism. This dependency on an imperial „system of power“ allowed Behdad to claim, „there is no language “outside” to the language of empire”.<sup>117</sup>

Mary Louise Pratt further developed the idea of Orientalism to suggest that European travel writing, primarily for a European readership, constructed non-European places and people in a way that supported the expansionist ideology of the empire. Pratt, here, tries to re-imagine the relationship between coloniser and colonised by theorising spaces of contact, the contact zones. Pratt’s work has also been criticised for reflecting highly on „imperial eyes“, rather than looking „beyond imperial eyes“ as contested by Ania Loomba, Survir Kaul and Inderpal Grewal, thereby offering a reading of travel writing that conforms to Debbie Lisle’s observation that „the genre [of travel writing] encourages a particularly conservative political outlook that extends to its vision of global politics”. <sup>118</sup> Lisle, focusing on contemporary travel writers, further adopted a Eurocentric view of travel writing by claiming that „travel writers seek to jettison their colonial heritage by focusing on the harmonising effects of globalisation“, an idea she terms the „cosmopolitan vision“ of

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, 5-6.

<sup>118</sup> Claire Lindsay, "Beyond Imperial Eyes," in *Postcolonial Travel Writing*, ed. Justin Edwards and Rune Graulund (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 17-18.; Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, xi.; Benita Parry, "The Postcolonial: Conceptual Category or Chimera?," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 27 (1997), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3509129>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3509129>.; Ania Loomba and Survir Kaul, "Introduction: Location, Culture, Post-Coloniality," *Oxford Literary Review* 16 (1994).; Lindsay, "Beyond Imperial Eyes."

the writer.<sup>119</sup> This cosmopolitan vision is certainly true for many contemporary writers, but this point of view largely ignores non-European travel writing. Therefore, these ideas of reading postcolonial travel texts, according to Edwards, „relegates the entire genre of travel writing to a Eurocentric and colonizing form.“<sup>120</sup>

Further developments in the field of postcolonial studies helped to avoid this pitfall of generalisation of travel writing as a genre that is deeply engaged in the Orientalist project. Postcolonial ideas, such as hybridity, transculturalism, ambivalence, transnationalism, alterity, subalternity, and counter-hegemonic discourse, strengthened the intersection between postcolonial theory and the field of travel writing, and proposed alternative ways of dealing with travel texts. Travel writing scholars such as David Spurr, Gareth Griffiths, Bill Ashcroft, and Ali Behdad developed these ideas to address the issue of generalisation. This led to Clarke’s observation that although the genre demonstrates a long trend of „naturalizing and celebrating the ethos of European hegemony over the last 500 years“, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries writers have more recently used their accounts to critique the colonial and imperial history and legacy.<sup>121</sup> According to Clarke, there have always been „critical and oppositional perspectives circulating within this field of writing“. <sup>122</sup> However, Justin D. Edwards suggests that even those travel writing scholars avoiding the generalised view of Said still agree that the genre can never free itself from its association with colonial legacy and context, thereby adhering to the notion that colonial history is the locus of the genre.<sup>123</sup> This establishes that

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<sup>119</sup> Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Edwards, "Postcolonial Travel Writing and Postcolonial Theory," 25.

<sup>121</sup> Clarke, "Toward a Genealogy of Postcolonial Travel Writing," 1.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Edwards, "Postcolonial Travel Writing and Postcolonial Theory," 22-24.

travel writing criticism is necessarily contained within the boundaries of „the discourse of Orientalism“ – even if only on negative terms.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, even though these critics tend to discuss the genre as not simply facilitating the project of imperialism and colonialism, still they seem to agree with Gareth Griffiths' observation that „travel writing itself may now have become so deeply imbricated with the idea of the colonial that even the most oppositional texts remain deeply problematic“. <sup>125</sup>

Holland identifies four key journey types relevant to post-coloniality: „*imperial* travel“ (narratives constructed by British authors who travelled the Empire, mainly during the nineteenth century); „*inter-commonwealth* travel“ (narratives that comment on the experiences of traveling from one country or region to another); „*return* travel“ (accounts of migrants travelling back to their „*home*“); and „*within-the-country* travel“ (accounts by travellers exploring their own countries).<sup>126</sup> Whilst acknowledging the work of writers from various backgrounds who adopted different styles to tell their stories, Holland also recognises that the experiences and sensibilities that inform these texts are „broadly understood as postcolonial, through the most mercurial of literary forms, travel writing.“<sup>127</sup> Similarly, Clarke defines postcolonial travel writing as „an eclectic and expansive corpus of journey literature, and a transnational collection of authors and readers attuned to the legacy and persistence of past forms of colonialism and imperialism, as well as the emergence of new modes of cultural, economic, and political dominance in the era of globalization“. <sup>128</sup> This idea of

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<sup>124</sup> Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, 6.

<sup>125</sup> Clarke, "Toward a Genealogy of Postcolonial Travel Writing," 9.

<sup>126</sup> cited by *Ibid.*, 4. [emphasis added]

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

postcolonial travel writing widens the horizon of what Peter Hulme terms, an „exclusivist“ definition of the genre that tends to conform to only the Eurocentric and colonialist ways of understanding the genre, that is, in categories of precolonial, colonial or post-colonial, making „colonial“ the locus of knowledge produced in former colonies.<sup>129</sup> To conclude, this development in postcolonial studies invites us to think about the travel writing genre *beyond* its involvement in the Orientalist project, even as it emphasises the significance of colonial history as a context for its reading today.

This theoretical paradigm of considering travel narratives as generally conforming to a Western colonial tradition, even if in opposition to it, clearly indicates a reason for the undervaluing of non-European travels and travel writing. Forms of mobility enabled by colonisation resulted in cultural encounters between European travellers and indigenous peoples; these encounters were further consolidated in „an emerging structure of conscious power and dominance“.<sup>130</sup> These encounters, as represented through texts, sought to impose structures of power and dominance through the representation of indigenous cultures and their people as inferior to Europeans. These accounts, many of which took the form of travel narratives, informed the imagination of Europeans back home and also constructed the identity of colonised peoples for the world. The „undoubted effect“ of these narratives on the „world whose ignorance of what lay beyond its boundaries“ was not only matched by its eagerness to know and exploit the unknown but also resulted in the neglect of the

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<sup>129</sup> Cited in Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, 4.

<sup>130</sup> Gareth Griffiths, "Postcolonialism and travel writing," in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, ed. Ato Quayson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 58.



histories, accounts, and texts of indigenous people.<sup>131</sup> The forms of knowledge that existed beyond the Eurocentric epistemology and imagination were simply ignored or rejected. European voices such as Marco Polo were heard and celebrated much more than non-European writers such as Abu ibn Battuta, a Moroccan traveller. Such neglect, ignorance, and erasure nurtured the perceptions that travel writing, as a genre, is highly Europeanised.

From the eighteenth century onwards, once enslaved Africans, such as Olaudah Equiano, started publishing their accounts of their „enforced travels and their treatment by their captors and owners through the patronage of the slavery abolition movements“.<sup>132</sup> Still, their voices were limited; not only for enslaved (or formerly enslaved) people, but also for those such as William Sheppard (see Chapter 3) who, although a free black man on the continent, was still subject to double consciousness. As Griffiths notes, the degree to which these „texts were able to present their perspective was limited by the expectation of their patrons and the audiences at whom their narratives were aimed.“<sup>133</sup> Indeed, the writers' voices were substantially restricted, being unable to openly represent the true nature of their relationships with European or American society. Despite representing their stories, and in some cases eventually having their texts recognised by the powerful classes, the success of the texts necessarily depended on Western approval. Therefore, we cannot read these travel texts from the colonial period through the same lens as those from later period, whereby the writers enjoyed more freedoms to express

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 68.

themselves as they wished, even if still subject to editorial interventions and reader expectations.

The writers with restricted voices need alternative methods to voice their experiences; therefore, their narratives may not be as straightforward as others. Sara Mills has analysed travel narratives by British women such as Mary Kingsley from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, to analyse the impact of gender in the construction of imperial and colonial discourses. She argues that the British women „were unable to adopt the imperial voice with the ease with which male writers did“, as they were „uneasy about the tensions between empire and gender“.<sup>134</sup> The texts that women produced included counter-hegemonic discourses, such as in Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*. Kingsley criticised Europeans' treatment of Africans, such as missionary attempts to convert Africans and to replace their culture with European belief systems. Reflecting on African people's agency, Carol Bacchi adds that „the extent to which subjects can use discourses or are constituted by them“ demonstrates that the gender politics involved in the construction of these texts allows the writer to intentionally deploy concepts to achieve certain political goals.<sup>135</sup> I argue that this strategic deployment of certain hegemonic concepts and discourses does not only apply to women's travel writing; rather it is instrumental in writing by dispersed people in general, and marginalised people specifically. The marginalised writers discussed in this thesis carefully selected certain Western or colonial ideas to criticise or conform to, in order to achieve their political goals, negotiate alternative identities or claim some power and authority.

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<sup>134</sup> Mills, *Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, 3.

<sup>135</sup> Carol Bacchi, "Discourse, Discourse Everywhere: Subject "Agency" in Feminist Discourse Methodology," *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 13, no. 3 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740600600407>.

These debates advocate for the expanding of the „exclusivist“ definition of travel writing. Literary critic NiLoingsigh has examined the legacy of African journey writing traditions that appear in a range of forms, arguing that travel writing needs to be untied „from its Western moorings and to open up a space for the examination of non-Western forms of journey literature“. <sup>136</sup> Postcolonial theory has undoubtedly assisted in expanding definitions of the genre. However, until scholars move away from exclusively approaching travel writing in terms of colonial legacies, the texts cannot be fully understood. By reading the texts produced, during, or after, the colonial period by the people impacted by colonial history, essentially for their relation with colonial and imperial history, we risk erasing their individuality as travellers and writers. When addressing this issue, I consider the work of postcolonial critic Arun P Mukherjee, who highlights the assumption that all writing from colonised locations is writing against colonial discourses:

[This] leaves us only one modality, one discursive position. We are forever forced to interrogate European discourses in one way. I would like to respond that our cultural productions are created in response to our own needs.<sup>137</sup>

In this thesis, while focussing on travel writers who were significantly impacted by colonial regime, I demonstrate that the travellers and travel writers had their own agendas as well, informing their motivation for the journey and the textualisation of the same, with which they enter and manipulate the contact zone. The study

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 11.; NiLoingsigh, *Postcolonial Eyes: Intercontinental Travel in Francophone African literature*, 2.

<sup>137</sup> Arun P. Mukherjee, "Whose post-colonialism and whose postmodernism?" *World Literature Written in English* 30, no. 2 (1990), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449859008589127>.

demonstrates that the travellers/travel writers were travelling and writing for specific purposes, and then producing their texts to claim power and authority otherwise denied to them due to colonial displacements. Since colonialism is a historical context of the period of these texts, therefore it cannot be ignored; nonetheless the texts are doing more than just adhering to or rejecting the colonial structures.

## Methodology

This thesis primarily deals with politics of representation, construction of self and the other, and claiming power, authority and voice in travel writing by people with hyphenated identities. Edward Said in *Orientalism* has noted that the „construction of identity“ „whether of Orient or Occident“ „involves establishing opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation of their difference from “us”“. <sup>138</sup> Identity is, according to Gilliam Whitlock, „a process of inventing the self in relation to other“ or rather in contest with other. <sup>139</sup> I apply this idea of identity as an unstable, changing phenomenon to examine the simultaneous construction of self and the other, in the text, by the travel writers with hyphenated identities.

Stuart Hall suggests that identities are „constituted within, not outside representation“. <sup>140</sup> This has been extensively explored by autobiographical studies scholars, as Sidonie Smith, who noted that the identities are performed in the text; the narration constructs the narrator and not otherwise. <sup>141</sup> The performativity of

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<sup>138</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 325.

<sup>139</sup> Gilliam Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (New York: Cassell, 2000), 7.

<sup>140</sup> Stuart Hall, Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 5.

<sup>141</sup> Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance " 108-10.

identity, in Malini Johar's words, „celebrates agency, as an act of choosing and becoming in the here and now“.<sup>142</sup> This choice to be[come] , according to Judith Butler, „takes place through discursive routes: to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker, in sum to signify a multiplicity of guarantees in response to a variety of different demands all at once“.<sup>143</sup> These demands are further formed by the „heterogeneous and heteronomous representations of gender, race, and class“.<sup>144</sup> Thus the self, or in this case the autobiographical self, is not fixed and stable, rather it performs heterogeneously at multiple stages. This has allowed feminist scholars, as Chandra Mohanty Talpade and Teresa de Lauretis, to reflect upon the „feminist subject“, which was initially perceived only as „unified or simply divided between positions of masculinity and femininity“ as rather „multiply organized across positionalities along several axes and across mutually contradictory discourses and practices“.<sup>145</sup>

Borrowing this idea of multiple selves and the performativity of identity from autobiographical studies, I analyse how the travel writers construct their identities through representations of their journeys, experiences and places of travel. The self, in the texts by hyphenated Africans discussed, engages in multiple layers of references of identification: gender, social (American-Arab-European), historical (African), hierarchical (master, slave, missionary) to construct a textual identity. I

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<sup>142</sup> Malini JoharSchueller, "Performing Whiteness, Performing Blackness: Dorr's Cultural Capital and the Critique of Slavery," *Criticism* 41, no. 2 (1999), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23124294>.

<sup>143</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), 145.

<sup>144</sup> Teresa de Lauretis quoted in Julie Rak, *Negotiated memory: Doukhobor Autobiographical Discourse* (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 2004), 6.

<sup>145</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, "Displacing Hegemonic Discourses: Reflections on Feminist Theory in the 1980's," *Inscriptions* 3, no. 4 (1988).; also see Chandra Mohanty Talpade, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30, no. 1 (1988), <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1988.42>.

examine the texts to study the ways the writer decides to activate a specific self out of these multiple selves to respond or react in a particular situation- and how in response to that „self“ an „other“ is constructed; as self is not a fixed entity, similarly the other is also not fixed. I ask when a black missionary represents himself as becoming an ostensibly „white“ self and constructs black others? When the same man represents himself becoming black to construct white others, and why? „The self“ and „the other“ in the case of the dispersed people discussed in this thesis are often not the same as those represented in European travel narratives to foreign lands.

The travel writers discussed in this thesis, who were dispersed from their lands of origin due to historical forces such as colonialism, acquired ambivalent identities that affected their belonging and alterity, which is often reflected in their use of language. Therefore, by close reading of their texts, I focus on language, style, figures of speech, setting, and perspective, to analyse the ways the authors navigated through their ambiguous positions as insiders-outsiders and express ambivalent identities that negotiate power and authority. By focusing on the repetitions in the texts, I identify themes and motifs that allow me to read the texts for the desired versions of self and other the writer constructs and how they achieve this through language.

I focus particularly on narrative voice and narrative techniques to construct self and represent others. Travel narratives are usually written in first-person narrative, so it is the voice of the writer that represents the story of the journey; however, sometimes the author allows a character“s voice to overcome the narrator“s

voice momentarily, though of course still in the control of the writer. The writer may use either direct speech - that is, quoting other characters directly - or indirect speech, that is, narrating in the third person to indicate the voice of the character. This allows the story to be enacted through the process of focalization. Focalization allows the writer to sometimes construct the events and identities through focalizers, who are mostly the narrator, but sometimes the writer makes their characters speak and create an effect that relates to the desire, expectation, and perception of the author. In travel writing, travel is a framing narrative into which other smaller narratives are embedded, in the form of experiences and encounters of the traveller with the space of the travellee. My readings of these travel texts are interested in seeing how the smaller episodic segments contribute to and build on the overarching narrative pursued by the travel writer. By focusing largely on the focalizers - that is, the voices that create the narrative - I analyse the roles the writer plays in the text as the traveller and a narrator of the story, as well as outside the text, as an author in charge of making other characters speak for the traveller. I consider how the voice is reversed, which means the way the author achieves the desired construction of self and other through the dialogues they assign to the characters.

Whitlock suggests that „autobiographic writing is engaged in an ongoing process of authorization in order to capture not its subject so much as its object: the reader“. <sup>146</sup> Autobiographies supposedly „follow the mould of the life, the personality and the individual“; however „autobiographers manoeuvre for their public; for the privilege of addressing the reader about her life“. <sup>147</sup> For this reason, travel writing has also been seen as a tool of self-fashioning- a term used by Stephen Greenblatt

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<sup>146</sup> Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*, 3.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.



describe how writers construct the self according to the norms of society.<sup>148</sup> I examine how these hyphenated identities allowed the travellers, while textually reproducing their journey, to choose their subjects of representation, or with whom to align themselves and when to claim distance, according to both their perceptions of the expected readership and the agenda of the text. Nonetheless, travel writing also demonstrates agency, which allows the writer to resist the „structures and decide for themselves the parameters in which they self-fashion“.<sup>149</sup> The travel writer, while textualising their experiences, is involved in a process of „scripting“: a series of „steps and signals“ that produce a „narrativized sequence of interactions through which roles are made“ „by soliciting responses and responding to cues“- producing a „serialized space of constructed visibility that allows and sometimes even requires specific objects to be seen in specific ways by specific audience“.<sup>150</sup> I examine the texts for the ways the writers use „scripting“ to claim authority in the process of self-fashioning even- how they invert storytelling to counter-storytelling (the process of rejecting or reverting stereotypes or making the marginalised voices heard).<sup>151</sup>

The multiple selves that make up hyphenated identities were constructed by subjects in response to certain experiences, personal and historical. The layering of these multiple selves invokes intricacies of what I call the process of selectivity of voice and silence, through which an identity is performed or enacted within a text. Such representations, informed by a „particular perspective“ of the traveller, are

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<sup>148</sup> Judith Hamera and Alfred Bendixen, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, ed. Judith Hamera and Alfred Bendixen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Duncan, "Introduction."

<sup>151</sup> Gary Totten, "Mobility, Skepticism, and Counter-storytelling in African-American Travel Writing: Carl Rowan's *South of Freedom*," *Journal of American Studies* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875820000730>.

performative in nature.<sup>152</sup> Smith notes the autobiographical subject who performs by constructing a narrative scene, presenting the self as a character in coherence with other characters; similarly I examine the performance of the travel writer in the text.<sup>153</sup> Travel writing allows a travel writer to construct the self through dramatising interactions between the self and other.<sup>154</sup> The writers, I argue, employ voice and silence selectively; they carefully select the events to be represented, and interpret the characters using voice and silence to achieve certain political goals.

In modern philosophy and literature, silence „has been broached and breeched simultaneously through the work of negation“.<sup>155</sup> However, silence is not merely a product of negation in travel texts, but a compound tool to negotiate identity. John Cage, the composer, suggests that silence is not an absence, but the indefinite, self-affirming, indeterminate presence of a plenitude of sounds.<sup>156</sup> J.M Coetzee referring to one of the architects of apartheid Geoffrey Cronjé, writes that „we must make an effort of projection, listening closely to what he says and even more closely to what he does not say, is afraid of saying“.<sup>157</sup> Though Coetzee here is speaking about the political subtext and deeper motivating worldview, nonetheless the quote usefully emphasises silences as much as words. Macherey also, while emphasising the importance of „unsaid“ in the production of a literary text, suggests that it is the silence which „informs us of the precise conditions for the appearance of

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<sup>152</sup> Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 71.

<sup>153</sup> Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance " 20.

<sup>154</sup> Sikstrom, "Performing the Self: Identity-Formation in the Travel Accounts of Nineteenth-Century British Women in Italy," 20.

<sup>155</sup> Thomas Gould, *Silence in Modern Literature and Philosophy : Beckett, Barthes, Nancy, Stevens* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 4.

<sup>156</sup> John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 8.

<sup>157</sup> J M Coetzee, "The mind of apartheid: Geoffrey Cronjé (1907-)," *Social Dynamics* 17, no. 1 (1991), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533959108458500>.

an utterance", therefore „Silences shape all speech".<sup>158</sup> The instances of silence emerge in a text through a careful process of reading and paying attention to the author's positionality and their selection of events worthy of representation and the commentary by a travel writer. Throughout this thesis I therefore focus particularly on the process of meaning-making in the travel texts by concentrating on the use of selective voice and instances of strategic silence, as moments in which the author constructs the self and the other. I examine selective silence as complementing the voice in the text. I argue that the writers I discuss in this study often choose between voice and silence, and interpret the silence of their characters, to construct themselves in a favourable light.

Since travel writers select and shape events to create a specific effect, in this thesis the authorial persona, intention, and sensibilities are understood to have resulted in selection and shaping of the events, the order in which they are narrated, the entities involved, the language, the sequence of events. As such, the circumstances out of which the narrative is produced – as well as those under which the journey was taken - play a vital role in the construction of the narrative. This point towards the impact of biographical details as well as political and cultural ideologies on the text. Thus, the thesis also pays attention to the biographies of the authors other sources of information regarding the author and their historical identity and political ideology, including archival material. It also attends to the paratextual material of the work, which may comprise of the title that includes "memoir" or "novel" in the subtitle, blurbs on the dust jacket, an introduction to the text, reviews, word-of-mouth comments, best-seller lists, or the pictures in the text. These

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<sup>158</sup> Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 85, 86.

paratextual materials may also inform a reading of the text and its context helping us analyse the ways travel writers and their publishers pick and choose material for representation in their texts.<sup>159</sup>

Section 1 of the thesis deals with Bombay Africans (chapter 2) and Tippu Tip, (chapter 3), focusing on the way their position affects their choice of other while constructing the self. It deals with the ways they use their texts to perform self-fashioning to reclaim the authority of self-determination, in whatever degree possible. They strategically navigate hierarchies to claim status and to „regain control over their often chaotic and difficult circumstances“. <sup>160</sup> Section 2 deals with two African-American travellers positioned in two very different socio-political locations: William Sheppard (chapter 4) and Eslanda Robeson (chapter 5). Whereas Sheppard uses self-fashioning to negotiate his place in the power structure and then uses his voice for counter-storytelling, Robeson is more direct and critical about colonialism and white supremacy. These two African-American writers oscillate between being of African descent in America and American in Africa, demonstrating the chiasmic performance of identity.<sup>161</sup> I argue that they use Africa and its representation to make themselves visible in a way that is denied to them in the U.S.<sup>162</sup> Section 3 deals with white South Africans: Irma Stern (chapter 6) and Anthony Delius (chapter 7). By only

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<sup>159</sup> Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, Literature, Culture, Theory, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/paratexts/8E570577FE5C3C417DEB6B70EA8A714D>.

<sup>160</sup> Wendy Martin, "North American Travel Writing," in *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, ed. Nandini Das and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 256.

<sup>161</sup> As Alasdair Pettinger suggests, there are „more relaxed forms of chiasmus in which the switched terms need not be identical and the syntax may vary“ and that „the reversal may play out over larger units of text, at the level of theme or narrative structure“. (see Alasdair Pettinger, "African-Americans on Africa: Colleen J. McElroy and the rhetoric of kinship," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 7, no. 3 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14794010903069151>.)

<sup>162</sup> John C. Grusser, "Afro-American Travel Literature and Africanist Discourse," *Black American Literature Forum* 24, no. 1 (1990), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2904063>.

including white South African travel writers, I do not intend to say that there are no other South African travel writers, but rather my focus on white writers here allows me to demonstrate that the 'other' in travel writing is not fixed: the 'other' of these white South Africans is interchangeable; sometimes it is a black person, other times it is a white person.

This thesis, while studying the selected texts produced during the colonial period, argues that even though colonialism formed a historical context for these texts and their writers were in dialogue with this context, still the meaning of the text is not totally constrained by colonialism. That is, the writers were involved in more than just reproducing or countering colonial stereotypes about Africa; as will be seen in each of the chapters that follow, the travellers/travel writers had their own agendas as well. In each case, I show how their motivations for the journey to Congo and the textualisations of that journey were informed by their agendas of claiming power and authority otherwise denied to them due to colonial displacements. The thesis demonstrates how Congo provided these travel writers with a physical contact zone to be all that they could not be in their respective societies, and the textual representation of their journey to Congo enabled them to use the text as a contact zone to communicate with the cultural space of the reader, who is mostly placed in the dominant colonial culture. It is in this contact zone the travel writers negotiate and construct a textual identity through the complex performance of multiple selves enabled by the ambiguous positionality resulting from them being what I call 'hyphenated Africans'. As hyphenated Africans they simultaneously relate to Africa and elsewhere in some way, which allows them the flexibility of claiming both affinity and alterity with African spaces at the same time, further enabling them to become

African in some situations and someone else in others. Navigating through this ambiguity and ambivalence, in their texts, the writers perform their most favourable selves in an attempt to achieve social mobility and claim voice, power and authority that would otherwise be denied to them due to asymmetrical power relations, a characteristic of colonial Africa. Hyphenated identities, therefore, allow the travel writers to move between different situations and respond to them through multiple selves: they choose a self from these multiple selves to respond in a positive or favourable way to their agenda.

The thesis also evaluates the role of selectivity of voice and silence in facilitating the travel writers to navigate through these multiple selves while constructing a favourable textual identity for self and a different, often negative, identity for an 'other'. The thesis proposes that the 'other' in these travel texts is not a fixed entity; rather it evolves as a performed difference to the performed favourable self. In each of the chapters that follow, I discuss how the writers tried to establish superior-inferior binaries in their desire to validate their own self as relevant, moral and positive, thereby claiming an identity closer to equivalent in status to the powerful. Simultaneously, I argue, they negotiate identity, and claim some power, voice and recognition from those at the centre of power structures through self-fashioning and meaning-making. By reading these texts by hyphenated Africans produced, during, and immediately after the colonial period not just as historical sources but as travel texts in their own right, examining their agency, politics of representation, construction of self and the other, and the ways in which the authors claim power, authority and voice in travel writing, the thesis strives to put African travel writing genre at the heart of the broader travel writing genre.

# **SECTION 1**

## **Liberated Slaves and a Slave trader**

‘Wisdom is better than force’

-African Proverb

(Matthew Wellington)

## CHAPTER 2

### BOMBAY AFRICANS: A JOURNEY OF THE 'FAITHFULS' WITH THE CORPSE OF THEIR MASTER

After the death of David Livingstone, the renowned Scottish missionary, in May 1873, his fifty-six escorts and porters decided to carry his mortal remains from Illala, present day Zambia, to Zanzibar.<sup>1</sup> Livingstone's life and death have received considerable attention from explorers, travellers and British journalists of the nineteenth century; they have considered his diaries, letters and journals as first hand information about the missionary and his travel experiences.<sup>2</sup> However, Livingstone's last journey, which took place after his serious illness on his previous expedition and finally led to his death, was recorded at different times using different mediums by his six African companions, famously known as his „faithful servants“.<sup>3</sup> This chapter focuses on two accounts that were written by Livingstone's „faithful servants“. The chapter begins by outlining the origins and trajectories of these texts about Livingstone's last journey, and then goes on to explore the complex identities of his „faithful servants“ as „hyphenated Africans“, showing this was mediated through combinations of language and selective silence. These servants belonged

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<sup>1</sup> The date of David Livingstone's death is not certain. Some scholars agree at 1 May 1873, whereas Jacob Wainwright states it in his journal as 4 May 1873. For this reason I prefer writing May 1873. (Roy Bridges, "A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874," in *Four Travel Journals: The Americas, Antarctica and Africa, 1775-1874*, ed. R. J. Campbell Herbert K. Beals, Ann Savours, Anita Savours, Anita McConnell and Roy Bridges (The Hakluyt Society: Ashgate, 2007), 335.)

<sup>2</sup> Justin D. Livingstone, "A "Body" of Evidence: The Posthumous Presentation of David Livingstone," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40, no. 1 (2012), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41413819>.

<sup>3</sup> Horace Waller, ed., *The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death: Continued by a Narrative of His Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from His Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi; in Two Volumes.*, 2 vols. (London: J.Murray, 1874).



to a distinctive group called „Bombay Africans“- which I see in this chapter as Hyphenated Africans.

### **Origins and trajectories of the texts**

According to Roy Bridges, five versions of this last journey of David Livingstone are known.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, through the testimony of „faithful servants“, Abdullah Susi and James Chuma, Horace Waller documented this journey in his book *The Last Journals of David Livingstone* (1874).<sup>5</sup> Secondly, Majwara, a servant who was with Livingstone in the hut when he died, also narrated a version of the story that was recorded by Frederic Holmwood.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, Matthew Wellington narrated his experience of carrying Livingstone's remains back to Zanzibar, which William Joseph Wright Rampley, a Christian missionary in Kenya, documented in a book named *Matthew Wellington: The sole surviving link with Dr. Livingstone*.<sup>7</sup> Fourth, Jacob Wainwright, the literate African follower of Livingstone, was responsible for keeping the diary of Livingstone since he fell sick, thus his diary also documents the

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<sup>4</sup> Bridges, "'A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874."

<sup>5</sup> Abdullah Susi, also known as David Abdullah Susi remained constantly with David Livingstone after first entering his services in 1861. (see Waller, *The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death: Continued by a Narrative of His Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from His Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi; in Two Volumes.*) James Chuma was a freed slave, attached to the University Mission to Central Africa, came into David Livingstone's service in 1864 and remained with him till the end. (Donald Simpson, *Dark Companions: The African Contribution to the European Exploration of East Africa* (London: Paul Elek, 1975), 56,64.)

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Holmwood, "Majwara's Account of the Last Journey and Death of Dr. Livingstone," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 18, no. 3 (1873), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1799786>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1799786>.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Wellington was a Yao freed slave, who was liberated by British Navy and taken to Nasik, Bombay, where he was educated and trained in English. (Simpson, *Dark Companions: The African Contribution to the European Exploration of East Africa*, 198.)

details of the journey. <sup>8</sup> Fifth, Carus Farrar narrated his experience briefly to a Christian missionary in Bombay, who penned it down.<sup>9</sup>

Susi, Chuma and Wellington were unable to write their story themselves. They narrated their stories to Horace Waller and Rampley respectively, who further documented these stories. As suggested by Sandra Greene, in the cases where the narratives have been recorded and edited by someone else the complexity of understanding the historical, literary and cultural contexts arise. Since the power and authority of selecting „the extracts and shaping the resulting fragments into the narrative“ lie with the amanuensis, therefore distinguishing the voice of the narrator and the amanuensis becomes a complex rather impossible task.<sup>10</sup>

Jacob Wainwright kept the record of the journey in Livingstone's diary; he is known to have taken the diary along to England while accompanying Livingstone's corpse. This diary was lost: how and why is still a mystery. According to Roy Bridges, three historians have tried to know the fate of the original diary but could not come up with any reliable answer. However, Bridges states that before the vanishing of the diary in England, two copies were made: one by Dr. James Christie, the British Consul, and the other by Richard Brenner, the Austrian Counsel who himself was a former explorer. Bridges suggests that Brenner may have

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<sup>8</sup> Jacob Wainwright was also a Yao freed slave who was liberated by the British Navy and taken to Nasik, where he was baptised and educated. He was well versed with English Language, rather Chuma considered him to be the best person to keep an account of their journey in David Livingstone's diary – the diary which he also carried to England while accompanying Livingstone's coffin to England. (Bridges, "A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874," 338.)

<sup>9</sup> Carus Farrar was also a liberated slave, taken to Nasik, Bombay where he was also educated and trained in English language. He, after carrying the remains of Livingstone to Zanzibar, returned to Nasik. His document is produced in Nasik itself.

<sup>10</sup> Sandra. E. Greene, *West African Narratives of Slavery* (Indiana, USA: Indian University Press, 2011), 2.

persuaded Wainwright to let him borrow it and then he may have sent a copy to the leading geographer, August Petermann, who translated this to German.<sup>11</sup>

Till date, this German translation is the only copy of the complete diary of Wainwright. Bridges has reproduced the events in an account titled „A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey“ in *Four Travel Journals* published by Hakluyt society in 2007. Bridges considers Jacob Wainwright“s diary as the most authentic source. However, since Wainwright“s original diary was not found, there was no way to authenticate the content of the original diary. Thus, the authenticity of its German translation which feeds Bridges“s English version was also debatable. The recent development a set of 11 pages of the diary have been found and published by *Livingstone online*, a digital resource dedicated to David Livingstone.<sup>12</sup> This makes the diary pages an only hand-written account of Livingstone“s death and his servants“ subsequent travel with his body, thereby giving space to compare the original document with the translation and confirming the authenticity of the document.

A signed document of Carus Farrar“s journey, titled „The History of Carus Farrar of finding Dr Livingstone in Central Africa“ is available in the CMS archives at the University of Birmingham. This manuscript of nine pages, dated at Bombay, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1874, is the first-person narrative by one who was with Livingstone“s caravan at the time of his death.<sup>13</sup> The signature „Carus Farrar“ (figure 1)<sup>14</sup> indicates

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<sup>11</sup> Bridges, "A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874."

<sup>12</sup> David Batty, "Diary of explorer David Livingstone's African attendant published," *The Guardian* (London), 24 April 2019 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2019/apr/24/diary-of-explorer-david-livingstone-african-attendant-jacob-wainwright-published>.

<sup>13</sup> Carus Farrar, *The History of Carus Farrar of finding Dr Livingstone in Central Africa* by Carrus Farrar, 1874, CMS/Z 19, Cadbury Research Library, Church Mission Society, Nasik.

knowledge of the English language but the mismatch of handwriting in the text with the signature suggests that Farrar himself did not write it. It is likely that he narrated it. H.B. Thomas, an officer at Ugandan Civil Services, suggests the scribe was probably a CMS missionary in India. Thomas also reproduced this document in the *Uganda Journal* and compared it to Livingstone's journals for accuracy, confirming that most of the names of places and chiefs, trials and tribulations can be identified. He confirms that „though often shaky in detail it affords remarkable confirmation of the story”.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the accounts produced by Jacob Wainwright and Carus Farrar can be considered as the first-hand travel experience of these „faithful servants” of Livingstone from central Africa to Zanzibar. These two texts are the main focus of this chapter.

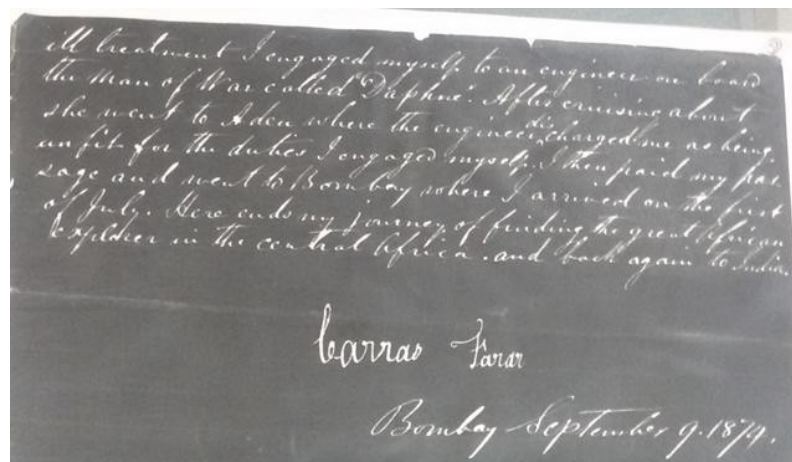


Figure 1  
Manuscript signed by Carus Farrar  
Courtesy- Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham

<sup>14</sup> Spellings of „Carus Farrar” in the signatures are different to that used by H.B. Thomas; I have relied on Thomas's spellings for this chapter.

<sup>15</sup> H.B. Thomas, "The Death of Dr. Livingstone: Carus Farrar's Narrative," *The Uganda Journal* 14, no. 2 (September 1950): 115.

## Retracing the lost voices

Wainwright and Farrar were among the six men employed from Church Mission at Nasik, Bombay, for „Finding Livingstone Expedition“ in 1873. This group called „Bombay Africans“, similar to other „Black Victorians“ or „Black Englishmen“, educated and trained at Christian missions also started reviewing African cultures and languages through „stringent European standards“. <sup>16</sup> This makes their texts appear to be a perfect case of aligning with or reproducing colonial discourse. However, through close reading of these two texts, I intend to analyse and locate the texts in the universality of the travel writing genre; that is, these writers also engage in the instance of self-fashioning and self-construction while representing the difference and otherness that is so often central to travel writing. Arguably, these texts belong to the category of „autoethnographic texts“, defined by Mary Pratt, as „instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizers“ own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means by which European s represent to themselves their others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations“. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Christian missionaries introduced formal literary education in West Africa. The English abolitionists, who encouraged the „establishment of Freetown for freed African slaves“ also ensured that education and evangelization were at the locus of new settlement policy makers' agenda. Education, Christianity and „the introduction of modern institutions“ provided the British Empire with a „cadre of literate men and women“. Some of these literate men and women „rose to prominent posts in the colonial administration“. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the members of the literate middle class in West Africa formed „a sub cultural group“, famously known as „Black Victorians“ and „Black Englishmen“ by West Africans of later generations. These Black Victorians were „influenced by the climate of the time“, and some of them „felt their traditional culture was of a lower order than the European culture and so strove to uphold the European and to show hostility towards the traditional culture“. (Emmanuel Obiechine, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel* (London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 9-10.)

<sup>17</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Travel writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

Nonetheless, in this chapter I demonstrate that these texts also go beyond autoethnography; that is, the texts allow the writers to negotiate power, authority and voice, and become a part of politics of representation. As Olakunle George suggests that the „identity categories like African and black can be meaningful and agential when -and only when- they are immanently complicated, ruptured by and interlayered with, other identity categories“. <sup>18</sup> The identity categories, in the case of Bombay Africans, are informed largely by the hyphenated identities followed by their complex positionality as black slaves captured by Africans or African-Arabs; liberated, educated and trained- and thus westernised- by white Christian missionaries; and as employees or servants of white masters in Africa. This complex positionality allows them to align with white „saviours“ in Africa, and distance themselves from black non-westernised Africans; nonetheless their skin colour and their ancestry aligns them with black Africa as well. In this chapter, I study the interplay of these complex positions in the representation of Africa.

Johannes Fabian suggests, European travellers and explorers were never travelling alone, as it might appear from their accounts. Rather, they were highly dependent on the caravans, comprising of approximately 100 people of which their African auxiliary formed a major part. <sup>19</sup> However, despite the services they rendered to the European explorations, these „auxiliaries“ could never rise to any higher order other than being African helpers or servants. <sup>20</sup> Livingstone“s African auxiliaries and companions were the ones responsible for carrying sick Livingstone through the

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<sup>18</sup> Olakunle George, *African Literature and Social Change: Tribe, Nation and Race* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 29.

<sup>20</sup> R. C. Bridges, "Europeans and East Africans in the Age of Exploration," *The Geographical Journal* 139, no. 2 (1973), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1796090>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1796090>.

dense forest and then dead Livingstone to the coast, but they have always been seen speaking, or not speaking, through David Livingstone's accounts. Petina Gappah, who has highlighted the role of these Africans in her recent novel, said that this has been told „always as the story of the Doctor”.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless these voices still remain less addressed in travel writing scholarship. This chapter is the first work that analyses the writings of Bombay Africans as travel texts, and the engagement of the Bombay Africans with their multiple selves, as black-Christian-Africans, evolving in response to claiming power and authority.

### **Reading the texts as travel writing**

Carus Farrar's short text is focussed on narrating the travel experience undertaken by the „Nassick men”.<sup>22</sup> With a very brief mention of places passed before meeting Livingstone, his travels with Livingstone and taking back Livingstone's dead body, the text documents travel experience of a traveller in first-person. Also, it reflects on the alterity of the Bombay African self (that is, the traveller) to a black African other (that is the travellee), thereby fitting the text in Carl Thompson's definition of travel writing as a genre documenting „encounter between self and other that is brought about by movement through space”.<sup>23</sup>

The text can be divided into three sections. The first section comprises Farrar's experience before meeting Livingstone. The section begins with the narration of the enthusiasm to find and help Livingstone, leading to the meeting of these Bombay Africans with Stanley who came with news that Livingstone has

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<sup>21</sup> Petina Gappah, *Out of Darkness, Shining Light*, Main ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 2020), 7.

<sup>22</sup> David Livingstone in his *Journals* mentions the Africans recruits from Bombay in his party as Nassick men.

<sup>23</sup> Carl Thompson, *Travel writing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 10.

already been found. However, the Bombay Africans, when asked by Stanley, decided to still go further, with the caravan carrying supplies, to meet Livingstone. They started their journey from Buagamoyo to Unyembe, in central Africa, where they met Livingstone. Here begins the second part of the narrative, which is a brief documentation of their first meeting with Livingstone and the decision to go on the journey to the interior of Africa with him. After this, the narrative very briefly mentions the places through which they passed such as Cawende, Namaroongoo, and Wapipa. The section ends abruptly with the mention of Livingstone's sickness and finally death.

From here, the third section of the narrative starts, continuing a brief documentation of places crossed while carrying the dead body of Livingstone, it includes their apprehensions about taking the dead body across the chiefdoms where it would be considered an act of abomination. Later, Farrar describes his meeting with three Europeans, namely Mr Cameron, Mr Dillon, and Mr Moffat, who were on their way to rescue some papers left at Ujiji by Livingstone. Two of them decided to accompany Farrar's group to the coast along with the remains of the missionary. Finally, the body was handed over to the French Roman Catholic mission at Buagamoyo and Mr Moffat from here onward took the body to the Zanzibar coast leaving the troop of African helpers behind. Farrar's narrative concludes with a brief description of all those, specifically Africans, who were involved in the expedition, their whereabouts and their fate afterward. This can be considered as a most useful contribution of the narrative, as according to Thomas, „it enables us to sort out the various elements of Livingstone's party by giving



names and information regarding them which seem not elsewhere to be on the record".<sup>24</sup>

Jacob Wainwright's narrative, as translated by Roy Bridges, is a more detailed narrative compared to that of Carus Farrar. Unlike that of Farrar, and even Wellington's text, it does not start with the description of the recruitment of six Africans from Bombay. This is because Wainwright started keeping the journal when Livingstone left it due to his illness. It is said that Susi and Chuma asked him to keep the journal to record all their efforts and actions after this.<sup>25</sup>

He died in the night, and was described kneeling by his cot- Jacob was awakened from sleep to make an entry of the date of his death and seeing that the last writing in the Doctor's diary was dated april 27,1878...<sup>26</sup>

The narrative starts from a point when Livingstone's health was worsening. The first line of the text is, „After Chambezi River, Dr Livingstone's illness gets worse".<sup>27</sup>

Wainwright's account is the only account of the last journey of Livingstone that gives comprehensive details, including the names of places, lakes, rivers, flora, fauna and people, and the names of chiefs of the villages they passed through while carrying the mortal remains of Livingstone. However, the account becomes very descriptive in some places and is very brief in others. Perhaps he wrote extensively when the journey was convenient or when they halted at some safe place. At other places when they were to rush through the jungle or night-stay at a less comfortable

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas, "The Death of Dr. Livingstone: Carus Farrar's Narrative."

<sup>25</sup> Waller, *The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death: Continued by a Narrative of His Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from His Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi; in Two Volumes.*

<sup>26</sup> A. H. Lash, In Walsall. In *Mid Victorian Days: Dips into the Diary of a Deputation*, 15 September 1874 1874-1875, CMS/ACC348 F1/5A, Manuscript, Church Mission Society.

<sup>27</sup> Bridges, "'A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874," 361.

place, he just mentioned the date, location and brief registration of their presence. Wherever the journal is more detailed, Wainwright unfailingly noted down his observations about local leaders and their society. The anthropological attribute of the genre is maintained in the journal. Wainwright not only mentions the lifestyle and beliefs of the locals but also documents the day-to-day activities of the caravan that included the procuring of the supplies, arranging for safe stay and sleep at night, negotiation with local leaders and dealing with fighting indigenous people. While documenting this, Wainwright used „we“ to address all those who were making decisions. This narrative is not written in conventional „I“ by the narrator. It can be argued that Wainwright used „we“ instead of „I“, because he never wanted to declare a single leader of the caravan. He was undoubtedly the captain of the Bombay Africans, but he may have never wanted to belittle the presence and involvement of other Africans present, and serving Livingstone even before them.<sup>28</sup> Livingstone had divided his caravan into three parts and made three of his loyal and trustworthy companions as their leaders. Wainwright engraved their names: Yazusa, Mnyasera, and Ghopere, along with inscription about Livingstone’s demise on the tree called Mbura, under which they buried Livingstone’s heart.<sup>29</sup> This account acknowledges the presence of other African companions and leaders also.

The extensive ethnographic details of the narrative align it with the exploratory travel texts that allowed European travellers to claim understanding of „not only the terrain they entered but the inhabitants as well“; thus, allowing them to

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<sup>28</sup> Wainwright being the leader of Bombay Africans was made clear by W.S.Price in a Memorandum given for transfer of powers of Nasik Asylum by W.S.Price to Rev I.A. Lamb and Captain Russel, (W.S. Price, Memoranda about the East Africa Mission, 1876-1877, CMS/Z 59, Cadbury Research Library, Church Mission Society.).

<sup>29</sup> ""The Aftermath of Livingstone's Death." In Livingstone's Final Manuscripts (1865-1873)," Livingstone Online, University of Maryland Libraries, 2018, <http://livingstoneonline.org/uuid/node/535bf1aa-5479-42de-984f-7048ec054e4c>.

claim „intellectual superiority“ to the others.<sup>30</sup> The author appears to be very scientific, vigilant and informative observing the microscopic details of the space of the travellee. His account is also full of exotic wildlife, the adventure of the unknown, and thrill of living on the edge, confronting every threat and moving ahead like a hero towards the target. The text thus constructs the group as a hero, similar to that Victorian hero, and plays into the rhetoric of anti-conquest, as defined by Pratt.<sup>31</sup> The caravan is described moving amidst the dense forests, being attacked by a tiger, encountering unwelcoming and hostile locals, and being attacked by boars. A member of the caravan was killed by a snake, whereas others are described as bumping into an African cobra and killing it in self-defence. All of this makes the account a perfect travel narrative with a plot, a hero and a foil. This narrative is also reflective of the alterity between the Bombay Africans and „others“, as will be discussed further.

### **Bombay Africans: conceptualising their position**

„Bombay Africans“ or „Bombayans“, a phrase coined in the Indian sub-continent by the mid nineteenth-century, is the name given to a group of African men who were pioneers of African freed slave settlements in Kenya, Rabbai and Mombasa. Their role in European explorations of Africa is acknowledged, at least to

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<sup>30</sup> Roy Bridges, "Exploration and travel outside Europe (1720–1914)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 53.

<sup>31</sup> Anti-conquest is defined as „the strategies of representation whereby European Bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony“. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes Travel Writing and Transculturation* , 7.

some extent, in European travel texts.<sup>32</sup> Captured and enslaved in Africa<sup>33</sup> and then, liberated by the Royal Navy whilst being transferred through Zanzibar, these young African men and women were then taken by British cruisers to Karachi and Bombay in British India, as part of the enforcement of the Slave Trade Act of 1807.<sup>34</sup> As early as the 1830"s these liberated men and women started reaching the Indian ports. Initially they were placed with families or were locally employed.<sup>35</sup> In 1853, George Candy, the corresponding secretary of the CMS in Bombay, along with Mr. and Mrs. Theodre Zorn, a German couple, developed the first „orphanage" for these people in Nasik, in the Bombay Presidency of India.<sup>36</sup> Some archival papers use the word „orphanage" and others use the word „asylum" for these institutions. For the sake of consistency, hereafter the word „institution" will be used for these places.

This institution was to offer basic necessities of life, education and Christian values to these liberated Africans.<sup>37</sup> This allowed them to learn to read, write and speak English language as well as some technical skills. Due to these acquired skills and the knowledge of Christianity, either independently or with the help of missionaries, they started returning to Africa to preach Christianity. Rev W.S. Price and his wife took a special interest in the education and the shaping of the future of

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<sup>32</sup> Eunice de Souza, "Bombay Africans," *Mumbai Mirror*, 23 October 2008 2008, Opinion, <https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/opinion/columnists/eunice-de-souza/danish-connections/articleshow/15861472.cms>.

<sup>33</sup> They were not very much aware of the place of their birth, so it is difficult to say which part of the continent they came from.

<sup>34</sup> Along with the attempts of signing treaties with local African rulers for the enforcement of the law, the Royal Navy also established the West African Squadron in 1808 to patrol the coast of West Africa. They used to seize the slave ships and liberate the slaves. Since the establishment of the squadron till 1860 approximately 1,600 slave ships were seized and 150,000 African slaves were liberated. (See Martin Meredith, *The Fortunes of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 191-94.).

<sup>35</sup> Lowri M. Jones, "Bombay Africans 1850–1910, Royal Geographical Society, 25 September - 29 November 2007," *History Workshop Journal* 65, no. 1 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbn015>.

<sup>36</sup> Fred Morton, *Children of Ham: Freed slaves and Fugitive Slaves on the Kenya Coast, 1873 to 1907* (NY: Taylor and Francis, 1990), 72.

<sup>37</sup> Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, ed., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 241.

these ex-slaves.<sup>38</sup> Working in close relationship with Price, Sir Bartle Frere (who was Governor of the Bombay Presidency and President of the Royal Geographical Society [1873-74]) recommended their recruitment as staff for British explorers on expeditions to Africa. Thereafter they were officially recruited for the expeditions and for the works of Church missionaries.

Clifford Preira has broadly divided the Bombay Africans into four groups depending on the way they reached Bombay and the treatment they received after reaching there:<sup>39</sup>

1. The Sidi Group: Sidi or „seedhi“ as spelled by Rossie Jones, a British scholar and an expert on Lucknow and its culture, is a name used for slaves.<sup>40</sup> The Sidis are related to Banto speaking peoples of East Africa.<sup>41</sup> The report about the Royal Geographical Society’s exhibition suggests that the Sidi group is named after Sidi Mubarik Bombay, a liberated slave who then assisted many explorers, including John Speke and Richard Burton, on their explorations. Though these people are known to have travelled to India during Arab invasions, but, according to Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, this migration was boosted by the European slave trade.<sup>42</sup> These

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<sup>38</sup> Colin Reed, *Pastors, Partners and Paternalists: African Church Leaders and Western Missionaries in the Anglican Church in Kenya, 1850-1900* (NY: E.J. Brill, 1997), 25.

<sup>39</sup> Jones, "Bombay Africans 1850–1910, Royal Geographical Society, 25 September - 29 November 2007." "The lost history of Bombay Africans was brought forward by Clifford Preira, a historian, who under the patronage of Royal Geographical Society worked with local communities, including the Tanzanian Women’s Association, the Friends of Masai People, the Congolese Community in the UK, the Lancaster Youth Group (Bethnal Green), Ghanaian Elders Group and the O-Bay Community Trust, to create an exhibition representing these Bombay Africans, their lives and their services to the empire. This exhibition was showcased at Royal Geographical Society, London from September 25, 2007 to November 29, 2007 under the project titled „1807 Commemorated“.

<sup>40</sup> Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, "The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India - Two Contrasting Cases," *African and Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1163/156921011X558628>.

<sup>41</sup> Anish M Shah, "Indian Siddis: African descendants with Indian admixture," *American journal of human genetics* 89, no. 1 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajhg.2011.05.030>.

<sup>42</sup> Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, "Crossing Boundaries: Africans in South Asia," *Africa Spectrum* 43, no. 3 (2008), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40175259>.

people were transferred from Africa to Bombay, Gujarat or Karachi through different routes. They were then either locally employed or sent to live with locals as their servants.<sup>43</sup> Some of them could make their way to Christian missionaries and got the education as well as training to assist African explorers.

2. The Nasik men or the Thetis group: This group is named after HMS *Thetis* that was used by Royal Navy to liberate and transfer 200 enslaved Africans to the Nasik Institute, Bombay in 1860. Two members of this group, Matthew Wellington and Jacob Wainwright, later joined David Livingstone in his last journey. Livingstone named them as „the Nassick men“ (this is how Livingstone spelled it). In 1875, these men provided the nucleus for freed-slave settlement as they were 80 in number. Therefore, W.S.Price looked for a suitable site for the settlement, which he found at Mombasa after a week’s stay at Rabbai. Later this was shifted to Freretown, named after Sir Bartle Frere. The „Thetis Group“ migrated to East Africa where they settled at missions in Frere Town and Rabai.<sup>44</sup> Sir Frere received his first batch of 240 freed slaves by the same ship, HMS *Thetis*, which liberated and migrated the first batch of Nassick men to Bombay. <sup>45</sup>

3. The Livingstone group: David Livingstone, while travelling to East Africa in 1861, liberated slaves from an Arab slave caravan. These nine liberated Africans travelled with Livingstone until the end of the expedition in 1864. After that Livingstone travelled with these Africans to India and found them a home at the

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<sup>43</sup> Shanti Sadiq Ali, *The African Dispersal in the Deccan : From Medieval to Modern Times* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995), 246.

<sup>44</sup> "The Life and Afterlife of David Livingstone: The 'Bombay Africans'," *Special Collections, SOAS Library*, 06 June, 2014, <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/archives/2014/05/12/the-life-and-afterlife-of-david-livingstone-the-„bombay-africans“-2/>.

<sup>45</sup> D. E. Nwulia Moses, "The Role of Missionaries in the Emancipation of Slaves in Zanzibar," *The Journal of Negro History* 60, no. 2 (1975), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2717375>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2717375>.

Free Church of Scotland Mission at Bombay. On Livingstone's return to Bombay in 1865 he recruited Amoda, Chuma, Susi and Wikitani from that group of nine men for his next expedition to East Africa.

4. The Freretown and Rabai group: They were all involved in expeditions after 1881. The CMS later used Frere Town and Rabai as settlements for Africans returning from India. By 1880 there were over 3,000 Bombay Africans in East Africa, with the largest groups at Freretown and Rabai.<sup>46</sup> Little is known about the Bombay Africans involved in expeditions after 1881.

The life histories of Bombay Africans are examples of liberated slave biographies who were able to rise through social hierarchies both in Britain itself and in colonial India and East Africa. Some individuals became visible through public speaking in Britain, whilst others assisted Christian Missionary societies in developing the first East African settlement for returning slaves. They formed educated elite in East Africa.<sup>47</sup>

This group of people, either being recruited for the explorations or coming on their own for the cause of Christianity, played a very vital role in European explorations and establishment of missionary centres from 1850-1890.<sup>48</sup> They shifted their role from „being assisted“ to „being assistants“; as we shall see in the chapter the extent to which they were recruited and which they were self-motivated to join, as well as complicated extent of their own agency and the way it is manifested in the text. Almost all the explorers and missionaries required and

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<sup>46</sup> "Bombay: Refuge for Slave Africans," *The East African*, 11 October 2009, 2009, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/magazine/434746-670908-edxx59/index.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces : Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013), 170-71.

<sup>48</sup> "Bombay: Refuge for Slave Africans."

sought out their services for the success of their expeditions. Their demographic and ethnographical knowledge, and their understanding of both the local languages and English, made them a perfect fit for the needs of explorers and missionaries. David Livingstone, James Grant, Henry Morton Stanley, John Speke and V.L.Cameron all acknowledged their presence and importance in their journals. Though they were never able to come out of the footnotes, still their significance to commerce, religion and government in the British Empire is undeniable.

When David Livingstone's Zambesi expedition went missing, a group of six Bombay Africans was commissioned from Bombay to be a part of the Livingstone search expedition. These six men, according to one member of the group, Matthew Wellington, were Jacob Wainwright, William, Benjamin Rutton, Kalos, Legett and Matthew Wellington.<sup>49</sup> Wellington does not name Carus Farrar; however other evidence of the Livingstone expedition puts Farrar in this group. His name is also confirmed by W.S. Price in his journal written from Mombasa on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1875.<sup>50</sup> It is possible that W.J. Rampley, Wellington's interviewer, misheard Carus for Kalos, or the detail was otherwise lost. This pattern of mistaken names due to accent or blurred memory has been identified and documented by Roy Bridges.<sup>51</sup>

Wellington's narrative provides insights into missionaries' work at the Saharanpur institute, in Nasik. He narrates his first meeting with Livingstone in 1865. Livingstone visited Saharanpur to recruit „some fine boys" for his expedition; rather the missionary, according to the narrative, was a regular visitor at the

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<sup>49</sup> W.J.W. Rampley, *Matthew Wellington: Sole Surviving Link with Dr. Livingstone* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 24.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, "The Death of Dr. Livingstone: Carus Farrar's Narrative," 127.

<sup>51</sup> Bridges, "'A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874."



institute.<sup>52</sup> The Bombay Africans, who were prepared for this kind of work, were regularly recruited by the missionary. They were trained to show absolute commitment to the missionaries they served and also to be passionate about imperial endeavours. Wellington recalls Mr Daimler, an English official at Bombay, supervising and training the boys about the sacrifices made by the missionaries. Wellington narrates that „Mr. Daimler would tell the boys the price that was paid by Dr. Livingstone in order to free Africa from slavery”.<sup>53</sup> Wellington states that they were chosen for „Finding Livingstone Expedition” by W.S. Price, and were instructed by Daimler: „Be ye faithful unto death...”.<sup>54</sup> As we shall see in the chapter, their texts explicitly documented the group as obeying this instruction of being faithful.

### **Being Black Europeans: Between Affinity and Alterity**

As discussed above, Bombay Africans were known by various names. The name „AdzunguAiru”, meaning „the Black European”, was given to them by the Rabai. The name itself is reflective of the complex and ambiguous status, identity and positionality of Bombay Africans.<sup>55</sup> Frantz Fanon suggests that the colonized, after living in the white man’s world- a place where the colonised can be Westernised- „becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness”. Being „civilized”, then, is measured against a person’s closeness „to the white man”.<sup>56</sup> The Bombay Africans also tried to leave behind their „blackness” to become „whiter”. By adopting European civilisation- through the „wearing of European clothes”, „using European furniture” or other „European forms of social intercourse” - the colonized, according

<sup>52</sup> Rampley, *Matthew Wellington: Sole Surviving Link with Dr. Livingstone*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>55</sup> Roberts, *The End of Slavery in Africa*, 260.

<sup>56</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 18,26.

to Fanon, were able to develop „a feeling of equality with European and his achievements“.<sup>57</sup>

Bombay Africans indeed used to dress up in European clothes, but in the text they developed and performed the feeling of familiarity, if not equality, through Christianity. When first meeting Livingstone, Farrar represents Livingstone as, „very pleased to see us a little band of Christians“ (117), thus evoking familiarity with the missionary through Christianity that further leads to a point of happiness and comfort in an unfamiliar African setting. Wainwright, when returning to the coast with Livingstone’s corpse, also reflects on a memory of having „spent Christmas Day of 1872 with Dr Livingstone“ in that village (370). Christianity allowed these Bombay Africans to claim affinity and closeness with the dominant culture represented by Livingstone. Bombay Africans’ position as Christians, other than allowing them to claim some affinity with white missionaries, also allowed them to claim distance from „natives“ or „Mohammedans“ in the text. After handing over Livingstone’s body to the authorities at Buagamoyo, Farrar describes the members of the caravan to his readers, especially those recruited by Livingstone himself:

Of the nine boys who followed the Dr. on the first outset two only followed his remains to Zanzibar [...] These men throughout the journey never associated with us six Christian boys their brothers as they have turned out Mohammedans. (120)

Here, Farrar claims affinity with the other group of Bombay Africans, who joined Livingstone earlier, as „their brothers“, whilst simultaneously creating distance when stating that they did not associate „with us“, but shifting the responsibility of distance

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 25.

onto „two men“ as a result of their presumed guilt for leaving their „master“s religion. In the following sentence, Farrar blames two different African servants for not being faithful and grateful to Livingstone: „Chuma and Suse [sic] in spite of all that the Dr. did for them in getting them English education at Dr. Wilson“s school at Bombay have at last turned out Mohammedans also“ (120). This signals Farrar“s views of those who had left Christianity: he appears to consider remaining faithful to the religion as remaining faithful to the missionary. Therefore, despite his affinity with „brothers“, being Christians makes his group more „faithful“ than those who „turned out Mohammedans“. To self-fashion them as „faithfuls“, he narrates the decision of Bombay Africans to continue on the journey to meet Livingstone even after the „Finding Livingstone expedition“ was terminated soon after the commencement by Stanley, who came with the news that Livingstone was already traced.<sup>58</sup> Significantly, these Bombay Africans are represented as being different to those who had deserted the missionary.

In yet another incident, Livingstone gives Farrar“s group the option to leave before commencing the journey with him:

Many and if not all of the nine boys who joined him at first in his long and adventurous travels had entirely deserted him. It was therefore natural for him to ask us whether we preferred going back to the coast or following him in his adventurous work. He was afraid we would prove ourselves the same as our brothers. He therefore gave us a day for consideration as to whether we would go and be faithful to him in all the trials and enormous difficulties and countless privations while journeying [...] Some of us were willing to return to the coast a thing which would *go very much against us had we left*

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<sup>58</sup> Farrar, The History of Carus Farrar of finding Dr Livingstone in Central Africa' by Carrus Farrar.

*him*. After a little consultation we all made up our minds to follow him. (117)  
[emphasis added]

Importantly, this demonstrates an incident of self-fashioning by Farrar and other Bombay Africans. Farrar's group saw Livingstone allowing them „a day for consideration“ as a chance to prove their faithfulness and thus claim distance from the other groups of Bombay Africans. However, it is not only the matter of faithfulness but also, as he mentions, if they would have gone back it would have not been in their favour. So, their decision to accompany Livingstone was a well-thought out decision that assisted them to self-fashion as better than other Bombay Africans, thereby allowing them to demonstrate their eligibility to be closer to Livingstone, and hence to the colonial power.

Christianity, for these Bombay Africans, not only symbolised affinity with their „master“ and his culture, and distance from non-Christians, but was also a perimeter for measuring the responsibilities and threats towards those in service of Livingstone. The clichéd image of a Christian, often a white man, heroically moving amidst the intimidating, „barbaric“ „savage“ in unknown Africa, was prevalent in travel texts about Africa.<sup>59</sup> Farrar also uses this image to claim affinity with Christians through fear and death:

We six Nassick [men] felt more fear as we were the only Christians while the majority were Mohammedans. We thought if our master die [sic] in this part of the world surely none of us that are Christians would survive to go and tell the story of our master's death.<sup>60</sup> (118-119)

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<sup>59</sup> Emma Wild-Wood, "The Making of an African Missionary Hero in the English Biographies of Apolo Kivebulaya (1923-1936)," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40, no. 3 (2010), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25801379>.

<sup>60</sup> The original text only says „Nassick“.

Here, Farrar pronounces two groups in the caravan, i.e., Christians and Mohammedans. Continuing, he produced a clear distinction between them. Not only were the Christians „surely“ in danger; they were also with the responsibility of telling the „story of our master“s death“, which they would not be able to fulfil if they died. Farrar performs alterity with other members of the caravan who are „Mohammedans“ by excusing them of any vulnerability if „our master die“, probably because the interior of Africa was known for Arab slave traders and their activities that included slavery. This allowed Farrar to claim distance from the other members of the caravan, whilst allowing him to perform his position as an outsider through his vulnerability.

Wainwright also evokes Christianity as a point of alterity between Bombay Africans and the others, and through the language of the text he also positions himself as an outsider. Wainwright invokes differences between Bombay Africans, other African members of the caravan and the inhabitants of the area they travelled through. He represents the travellers as either „natives“ or „occupants“. For instance, while staying for a night at the banks of Luapula River, he documents „the natives and all people said that people or men who know about black magic change into lions and roam around to kill people“ (364). Here, „all people“ refers to the members of the caravan who are different to „natives“ as well as this group of Bombay Africans. Also, by referring to „black magic“, he is not only reinforcing the mysterious stereotype about Congo but also making a case for degrading local beliefs. This has been a recurring trope in the accounts of Christian missionaries who saw „traditional beliefs and religion as inferior“, helping them turn Christianity „into an ideology which

was used to lay the ground for white domination".<sup>61</sup> Black Englishmen also due to Christianity, as well as English education, developed a sense that African cultures, religions and beliefs are inferior to those held by Westernised Africans.<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere in the text, while passing through the area of Kumba-Kumba, he notes: „The people themselves report, according to their superstitious ideas" (371). This clearly signifies Wainwright's disbelief in the local knowledge, and thus allows him to perform distance from these local traditions. Wainwright also fashions himself as a Black Englishman who sees local knowledge as either inferior or mythical.

Wainwright's English education and acquaintance with white British culture allowed him to think of himself as superior to other Africans. A fine example of this occurred, as documented by Roy Bridges, when Mrs A.Z. Fraser - the daughter of W.F. Webb, a former associate of Livingstone in South Africa - noticed that, „Wainwright was not content to eat with the servants".<sup>63</sup> It can also be surmised from Bridges narration of Mrs. Fraser's attitude towards Wainwright that she didn't like him much. She often referred to him as „ugly" and his English as „elementary".<sup>64</sup> Perhaps this reveals Mrs Fraser's own prejudice – i.e., she would have expected Wainwright to „eat with the servants" when he and W.S. Price were with her guests. Nonetheless, his aligning with Livingstone's culture and claiming some sort of equality with white men , thus claiming distance from the other Africans, cannot be ruled out.

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<sup>61</sup> Fidelis Nkomazanal; Senzokuhle Doreen Setume, "Missionary colonial mentality and the expansion of Christianity in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1800 to 1900," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 29, no. 2 (2016).

<sup>62</sup> Steven Kaplan, "The Africanization of Missionary Christianity: History and Typology," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 16, no. 3 (1986), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1581285>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1581285>.

<sup>63</sup> Bridges, "A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874," 343.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Wainwright's sense of belonging to Kilwa, his birthplace, and its traditions also signals towards his sense of belonging to the place, which he chooses to suppress due to the trauma of slavery. When describing Wakhonongo, another name for Wanyamwezi, he states:

The Wanyamwezi are called Wakhonongo by some, and are of superior race in this part of Africa. They very much love fighting a war, are a courageous, industrious and strong race of men, and their music is the sweetest among all of Africa's nations that I have ever heard or seen(376).

Bridges deduces that Wainwright was reminded of Yao music from his childhood when he heard the music of Wakhonongo people. If true, this implies that Farrar's sense of belonging to the place prevailed. Yet, the trauma of being sold into slavery by his own people had left him disillusioned. To minimise the trauma inflicted on him by the powerful (slave traders), he chose to align himself with the more powerful (white missionaries). Alignment with the locals, he might have been trapped in the binaries of slavery: either a slave or enslaver- this may have reinforced to Wainwright his position as victim of slave raiding carried out by Africans, but by aligning himself with the third front of saviours and lawmakers, he was able to negotiate a different identity and more favourable position for himself within the hierarchical power structure. Put differently, Farrar performs a kind of self-fashioning by remaining silent on missionaries' and travellers' relationship with slave traders (discussed below in the section on silence), but criticising local thieves and slave traders, and locals engaged in wars and occult beliefs and practices.

These Bombay Africans also tried to fashion themselves as capable of integrating in the English society. Whilst in England, Wainwright was afforded the

opportunity to speak publicly at various events, such as in Walsall and Lenton. When speaking at Walsall, his admiration of England and Christianity are explicit:

The countries of the world are the coaches in a Railway Train – of this train England is the engine – and the station to which England is (unclear word) them is Heaven and the Bible is the time table.<sup>65</sup>

He concluded „Mighty England do good“.<sup>66</sup>

A sense of patriotism can be traced in how Farrar speaks about England. His love and loyalty appear to be more for his English saviours than England. The intensity of his relationship with his English saviours, specifically Price, is apparent through his letter to him on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1876 where he addresses Price as „My Dear Papa“.<sup>67</sup> Farrar was seven years old when he was sold into slavery by his own people. He was saved by white men; thus, he identified the British missionaries at Nasik as his guardians. Here, the missionary is not patronising Farrar by referring to him as a „child“ or „boy“; rather, it is the black African himself who is presenting himself as a „child“ to the white „saviour“: submitting self to white paternalism.

Furthermore, to be accepted in the contact zone with European structures, Farrar simultaneously claimed to be superior to other Africans whilst subservient to Europeans. Even if he wanted to, he could not claim to belong to English society, since he was never fully accepted by them. Despite his English education, Christian values and displays of loyalty, Wainwright was considered a stranger. Evidence of

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<sup>65</sup> Lash, In Walsall. In *Mid Victorian Days: Dips into the Diary of a Deputation*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Jacob Wainwright, Letter from Jacob Wainwright to W.S.Price 1875, CMS/B/OMS/C A5 O1, Church Mission Society.



this can be seen in a journal kept by a missionary A.H. Lash where he documents Wainwright's presence and speech at Walsall:

The attraction was Jacob Wainwright, Dr. Livingstone's faithful negro servant – He is sturdy young man of 22 with a very negro face...<sup>68</sup>

He remained „negro" for Englishmen despite his efforts of performing affinity with them through language and clothes. Livingstone, in a letter to Price has already registered his dislike for the „8 volunteers" who „expected to have the same food as the bishops's associates who were clergymen gentlemen".<sup>69</sup> He also was conscious of the Bombay Africans" position as his servants. In a letter to his friend Horace Waller, he states:

I have travelled with all sorts of Africans and I can without hesitation assert that the native Christians are out of sight better than either Moslems or heathen- only let them understand thoroughly that they are servants and must work as hard as slaves – They are not gentlemen and you will have trustworthy and generally truthful attendants-...<sup>70</sup>

Both Wainwright and Farrar were engaged in self-fashioning in their texts, presenting themselves as being conscious of their alterity from the so-called „white superiority". Farrar's text produces a master-servant paradigm through his use of language. He repeatedly discussed Livingstone as his „master" and his group of Bombay Africans as the „faithfuls". In doing so he acknowledged the existing hierarchies that distanced Bombay Africans from Livingstone. Whereas Farrar can

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<sup>68</sup> 15 September 1874 Lash, In Walsall. In *Mid Victorian Days: Dips into the Diary of a Deputation*.

<sup>69</sup> "Letter to William S. Price, 27 September 1865," Livingstone Online, University of Maryland Libraries, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> "Livingstone's Letter from Bambarre," Livingstone Online, University of Maryland Libraries, 2017, accessed 12 June, 2018, <http://livingstoneonline.org/uuid/node/55a1e9ea-f6d4-4713-a8d1-a810ecbe1c20>.

only be heard through his text, Wainwright spoke publicly on many occasions, again expressing this alterity. When being invited to speak at Walsall, for example, he was introduced as a friend of Livingstone. Wainwright immediately corrected this statement: „I was not his friend, I was his servant”.<sup>71</sup> Thus it can be concluded that when in Africa, Wainwright was a stranger in a strange land. He distanced himself from the Africans by labelling them „Black men”, „tribes” and „natives”.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, when in England, he still remains a stranger distanced by missionaries, journalists and the public who labelled him a „faithful servant”, „negro” and „African companion”. His experiences are representative of many Bombay Africans who occupied an interstitial position as Black Europeans. Wainwright and Farrar claimed affinity with white European culture and religion whilst remaining conscious of their position as black liberated slaves, thus acknowledging their distance with their white masters in their texts and public appearances. When producing their texts – a narration for Farrar, diary extracts for Wainwright - they navigated their complex positionality as westernised liberated slaves.

### **Recounting Journey, performing heroism**

In line with colonial texts of the time, both writers constructed non-Westernised, „savage” Africans in stark contrast with European „heroes”, specifically Livingstone. When first encountering Livingstone, Farrar writes: „we found the *great African missionary and enterprising traveller*, living with *savage Africans and half-barbarous Arabs*” [emphasis added] (117). The black Africans are „savage”, whereas the Arabs are „half-barbarous” in Farrar’s text because of the closeness of the Arab

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<sup>71</sup> Lash, In Walsall. In *Mid Victorian Days: Dips into the Diary of a Deputation*. Chapter 2.

<sup>72</sup> Bridges, "A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey': Jacob Wainwright's Diary of the Transportation of Dr. Livingstone's Body to the Coast, 4 May 1873- 18 February 1874," 377.

traders to Livingstone. Tippu Tip's cousin Kumba-Kumba, a famous slave trader, remains „an enterprising Arab chief“ because he was „one of the Dr's friend“ (118). As Fanon suggests, being „civilized“ was measured in terms of closeness to the whites. Here, the Arabs' friendship with Livingstone raises their status from „savage“ to „half-barbarous“.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Farrar observes, understands and represents people through their relationship with Livingstone. He goes on representing „kind“ (116) „gentlemen“ (120) Europeans against the „fierce and warlike race“ of people in Pipa (117) and Ugogo country (120) in the text.

Similar to other Bombay Africans, Farrar was captured and sold into slavery by Arabs, thus he must have understood why the local people were frightened by the Arabs and other „warlike race“. Nonetheless, he demonstrates little sympathy towards African populations and their misery. Instead, for the challenges faced by his caravan, he blames the local people who „deserted their country owing to some petty wars, due to which our expedition was thrown to the severest test“ of being without food. This tends to demean and represent the locals as hostile and problematic, while claiming innocence for Livingstone's caravan. Farrar also represents local chiefs as being corrupt and greedy, elucidating Livingstone's heroic status. When passing through Wapipa:

But before leaving the frontiers of the fierce race of the Namaroongoo for Pipa, the Dr. was asked to give something to the chiefs of the country as he was quitting their land. The Dr. instead of heeding to their everlasting demands ordered the men to take up their loads and move onwards without giving them anything (117).

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<sup>73</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 26.

(When the caravan reached Bemba Lake) We were detained for a long time by the King in this island as he was not willing to give us canoes. At last the Dr. ordered all his men to arm themselves and to follow him to the King's hut to demand boats. After telling the King the folly of his keeping us longer against our will we demanded to leave the place soon anyhow contrary to his will. The King seeing that the Dr. was determined to leave immediately procured him many boats...(118)

In both examples, we see Livingstone tackling dangerous and fearful situations efficiently and effectively. The chiefs, who are „terror of that part of the country“ (118), are represented as surrendering to Livingstone's authority. These events are also mentioned in Livingstone's *Journals* but in a placid manner. Livingstone's narration describes the closeness of Livingstone and Kumba-Kumba, which allowed Livingstone to force Kumba-Kumba to surrender to his will. Farrar's narration of such events, however, assists in enacting „an exciting narrative drama of loss and recovery“. <sup>74</sup> Victorian explorers often represented „hostile natives and forbidding native landscape“ as a sublime encounter during which „British explorers lose, then quickly recover their vigour“, highlighting their „ingenuity, courage and individual heroism as well as demonstrating their capacity to contain various types of resistance to their power“. <sup>75</sup> Similarly Farrar represented Livingstone's superiority through his bravery and determination when dealing with Kings and chiefs. Livingstone remains the central hero of the narrative.

Interestingly, immediately after Livingstone's death, the Bombay Africans adopted the heroic persona. We see them struggling to keep „our master's death“ „a secret from the natives“. Then, on reaching Ugogo:

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<sup>74</sup> Andrew Libby, "Taming the Sublime in Darkest Africa: Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone* and Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa*," *Nineteenth Century Prose* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 111.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-11.

Hitherto the Dr.'s remains were carried on the shoulders of two persons throughout, but coming to the Ugogo country for fear of the natives knowing that we were carrying dead body it became necessary to make it single man's load. It is an abomination [sic] thing among some of the African tribes to carry a dead body through their country (120).

Here, Farrar represents the Bombay Africans victoriously overcoming challenges after facing „hostile natives and harsh landscapes“. Therefore, Farrar, like the Victorian explorers, was able to construct himself as „stronger“ and „more heroic than they were before their adventures began.“<sup>76</sup> Farrar's first-person narrative uses the pronoun „we“, thus claiming a heroic persona for more than one member of the caravan. Whilst it is the caravan as a whole that appears heroic, Farrar implicitly claims a leadership position while making important decisions, such as, what would happen to Livingstone's body, planning the route, and negotiations with village chiefs. The other African companions are invisible in the narrative. When they appear, they appear as Mohammedans or „native“ Africans. In short, when narrating the story of Livingstone as a hero and then documenting the fear and perils involved in undertaking the last journey with his mortal remains to Zanzibar, Farrar represents himself and his group as „faithfuls“, whilst claiming authority, status and voice for himself. He uses autoethnography to enter the contact zone with English readers and Christian missionaries, and enacts the group as worthy of trust, deference and favours in the colonial power structure.

Similarly, Wainwright claims superiority over the local people who are represented as „bad and uncivil there“ (365), thus antithesis of „gentlemen“ Europeans or Europeanised blacks, such as Bombay Africans. He uses

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Livingstone's diary to perform as a heroic faithful in front of white masters. Since he was writing in Livingstone's diary, he would have been aware that the diary was going to be handed over to the British officers along with his body, therefore it can be suggested that he was aware of his readership. He was a black man, as suggested by Fanon, trying to „prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect“.<sup>77</sup> The diary, thus, appears as a space for Wainwright to meet and negotiate identity within the contact zone with English readers. Nonetheless, unlike Farrar, Wainwright's narrative is not only about Livingstone; rather, he celebrates the caravan's heroism also:

This country is full of wild animals like lions, tigers and elephants, and that saying is quite true because of the same night, at about 10 o'clock, when we were all asleep, two or a pair of lions came and killed our fine donkey [...] we did not sleep at all because of the roaring of the lions, but kept a watch and fired at them, whenever they tried to get near (364).

One or two of our men who were at the front went and tried to get into the boma, but the people of the place shot their arrows and spears at them, and one spear went and hurt the arm of one of our people; when we saw this we all dashed in, and within a minute they all turned their backs. During the night, however, they all came with their weapons to destroy us. But thanks to our watchfulness, they could not get near us (365).

Here, Wainwright performs as an authoritative, powerful and enterprising traveller equipped with guns, the symbol of Western power, taming the naturalness of Africa. By portraying dangerous landscapes, wild animals and brutal people, he evokes the image of a Victorian hero for whom Africa is either „amusing or dangerous“.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians And Africans: The Genealogy Of The Myth Of The Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985), <https://doi.org/10.1086/448326>.

Wainwright's „watchfulness“ allows him to construct himself as a hero, continuing his journey amidst mortal dangers.

Regarding the nineteenth-century missionaries and travellers in Africa, Johannes Fabian suggests that „death figured as a noble sacrifice, as a price well worth paying for the victory“ in terms of accomplishment of the journey or its cause.<sup>79</sup> Wainwright also recounts death, both as a form of fear and noble sacrifice, as a price paid for the accomplishment of the journey. After writing of various encounters with death, Wainwright's text includes the death of a caravan member. On reaching „Ugunda, a big place about two day's journey from Kasekera“, „in the wilderness, a young girl was bitten on the way by a big snake“. The girl died after „many attempts were made to save her life“ (375). This death, though not glorified in the text as any missionary's death, allowed Wainwright to confront his readers with a physical death, not just the fear of death in a „dangerous“ and hostile landscape. He also recounts facing difficulties when travelling with the corpse of Livingstone, when „wicked natives put up a strong opposition after having seen the corpse that we were carrying“ (368). Still, the caravan led by the Bombay Africans demonstrates their determination to successfully take the corpse to the coast. Once again, Wainwright constructs a heroic self in response to local people who „use bows and arrows; some use spears without shields“ but „lack courage, cleanliness and honesty“ (372). By succeeding in their goal, Wainwright constructs Bombay Africans as able to „tame unexplored landscapes and wild natives“, a trope that has allowed

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<sup>79</sup> Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*, 59.

the Victorian explorers and missionaries, such as Livingstone, to claim heroism and become „the “god” term, or figure of transcendence”.<sup>80</sup>

Wainwright’s text is presented through his own observations. Yet, like Farrar, he tends to voice his agreement with other members of the caravan through „we”. Wainwright does not position himself as the leader of his caravan. Nonetheless, he presents the caravan as organised, united, determined, and dependable. We see its members taking decisions, planning routes and negotiating with chiefs without a visible leader. Whilst the name of a leader is not present in the narrative, the presence of a clear and far-sighted leadership cannot be ruled out:

When we saw that our master was dead, we had no need to go on but returned to Zanzibar, taking the dead body with us (363).

Later, when the caravan reached Unyamwezi and they heard of the arrival of Livingstone’s son, Oswell, Wainwright wrote a letter to him requesting provisions. Wainwright makes this appear as though everybody was involved in writing the letter, without a single person being highlighted as leader:

...we wrote a letter to him at Unyanyembe (373).

...10 of our soldiers are lost and some have died. Our hunger presses us to ask you some clothes to buy provision for our soldiers...The writer Jacob Wainwright Dr Livingstone Exped.<sup>81</sup>

This is in line with Farrar’s text, which also allows Bombay Africans to perform the role of the caravan leader without explicitly claiming it, and also perform heroism

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<sup>80</sup> Libby, "Taming the Sublime in Darkest Africa: Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone* and Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa*," 111.

<sup>81</sup> Letter reproduced by Lieut Cameron in Verney Lovett Cameron, *Across Africa*, 2 vols., vol. I (London, 1877), 165.



while passing through difficulties of the journey to finally bring the corpse of Livingstone, „this courageous man who gave his life to help the people of Africa“ back to the coast.<sup>82</sup>

### **Selectivity of Silence and voice: Politics of the Contact Zone**

Silence appears through voice in these texts; thus, it is important to analyse what the writers decided to represent, or not. Indeed, these writers are important in helping us to understand why people from a dominated group employ selective silence, and the role of their hyphenated identities in doing so. According to David Maxwell, the slave is at the bottom of the hierarchy and, therefore, has no voice or power.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, some are able to strategically employ language to represent selected events and negotiate some authority, voice and social mobility within power structures.

Both Farrar and Wainwright reinforce Livingstone's heroism by selecting to narrate events where he clearly overpowers the people of interior Africa, however they remain silent on the events where his image as a „saviour“ can be ruptured. Both writers document the hostility of Africa's landscapes and the cruelty of its peoples towards „foreigners“ (Wainwright, 378). Yet, they choose to remain silent on Livingstone's closeness to the slave-trader Kumba-Kumba. Wainwright repeatedly recounts the horrors of slavery – for instance, while speaking in England, he narrated

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<sup>82</sup> "An African companion of Dr Livingstone," *Habari: A newspaper for the natives of Kenya Colony* 7, no. 1 (January 1928), <https://digital.soas.ac.uk/AA00000935/00019/1x>.

<sup>83</sup> David Maxwell, "Freed Slaves, Missionaries, and Respectability: The Expansion of the Christian Frontier from Angola to Belgian Congo," *The Journal of African History* 54, no. 1 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853713000030>.; David Maxwell, "Photography and the Religious Encounter: Ambiguity and Aesthetics in Missionary Representations of the Luba of South East Belgian Congo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 1 (2011), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41241733>.

a childhood memory of first being sold as a slave at the age of seven: „as soon as I went in the house, I saw the man receiving dollar (about 4) and I began to cry“.<sup>84</sup> So common was slavery that Wainwright, just at the sight of money being exchanged, knew that he had been sold. In almost all his speeches he narrated the bitter story of him being sold and re-sold into slavery, and finally being liberated and educated by British institutions.<sup>85</sup> Also according to a report by W.S.Price, Wainwright „was occupying a useful position at Sharanpur“ assisting the missionary in educating new arrivals of liberated slaves at Bombay.<sup>86</sup> Later in his career, it can be deduced that he may have been working as a teacher for newly liberated slaves.<sup>87</sup> This implies that he was acutely aware of the abolitionist movement and missionary activity in central Africa; thus he has experienced slavery, liberation and the abolitionist approach of missionaries. The fact that Wainwright fails to ask questions in his text about the slave traders“ relationship with missionaries points toward the selective voicing of the opinion.

Bombay Africans also exemplify the ways in which dominant powers try to contain the voice of the subaltern. The sympathetic ideas of the dominant culture, such as those of missionaries, holds only until the time that members of the dominated culture believe in and propagate their ideology- the supremacy of whiteness. So long as the time, Wainwright was conforming to the saviour-saved hypothesis of African and British identity, he was being acknowledged by white

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<sup>84</sup> Jacob Wainwright, Speech of Jacob Wainwright at Church Missionary Meeting, 17 June 1874 1874, D3287/37/12/1/1-4, Derby Record Office.

<sup>85</sup> Lash, In Walsall. In *Mid Victorian Days: Dips into the Diary of a Deputation*.Chapter 2.

<sup>86</sup> W.S. Price, Report of Saharanpur, Nasik, 30 June 1872 1872, CMS/B/OMS/C A5 O1, Cadbury Research Library, Church Mission Society.

<sup>87</sup> Price, Memoranda about the East Africa Mission.

masters as humble, simple and faithful. Moreover, his discipline, dedication and loyalty, along with the other five Bombay Africans, was reported by many:

The lads have been under my care, and I can fully confirm your good opinion of them. They seem in all respects well behaved, and most desirous to become acquainted with the work in which they are to be engaged.<sup>88</sup> (Letter from Kirk to Price).

Many thanks for the trouble you have taken about the Nasik boys. They seem worthy fellows and I have no doubt will be of good service.<sup>89</sup> (Letter from Lieut Dawson (the leader of the expedition) to Price).

Later on, their efforts to carry Livingstone's body to the coast were applauded and even rewarded. When Wainwright was in England, he spoke at various events. However, a dislike for this man can be sensed at various occasions. Though Wainwright would have been helpful as he was keeping the journal and was well-versed in English, Horace Waller instead relied on Susi and Chuma keeping Wainwright aside while documenting the last journey of Livingstone.<sup>90</sup> The CMS's proposal for publishing Wainwright's journal was declined by John Murray, an important British publisher. Tom Livingstone also declined to use Wainwright's information for compiling his father's last journal. Not only was the demand for publication of this valuable source declined, but the journal was also mysteriously lost. Despite all the distinctions and adulations heaped upon him in England, according to W.S. Price, Wainwright remained unaffected.<sup>91</sup> He was admired for his

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<sup>88</sup> Price, Report of Saharanpur, Nasik.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Waller when started interviewing he knew that their use of English was just enough for a comprehensive talk, *Last Journal*

<sup>91</sup> Price, Memoranda about the East Africa Mission.

attributes by all, specifically by Price. However, for Price, Wainwright turned arrogant and undemonstrative once he started speaking his mind.

In a letter to Price, Wainwright informs him of his decision to leave the work of the school. He clearly mentions that his decision is due to „inadequate freedom of teaching“.<sup>92</sup> The letter gives the impression that he was not comfortable working under someone. In June 1876, a month later, Price writes a report in which he clearly mentions this: „Possibly the position he had necessarily occupied unfitted him for working under another.“<sup>93</sup> After this, Wainwright's status was never the same. He was ignored and rejected to an extent that he took the job of a door-porter for making his living.

Consequently, the subaltern is forced to produce new ways of speaking, and the first way of finding that voice is actually the silence. Farrar and Wainwright represent all the African companions of Livingstone following his directions silently throughout the journey. They never speak: how did they feel when the party was detained by the chief of Pipa? How did they feel when John Wainwright, one of the members, went missing in the area of Kumba-Kumba? Did they fear him to have been sold into slavery once again? Did they have questions when they witnessed friendships between the „saviour“ of Africa (Livingstone) and destroyers of Africa (slave traders)? Instead of addressing these questions – conversations that may have formed a part of their group conversation - Farrar hero-worships Livingstone and focuses on documenting the oppressive demands of African chiefs. These details are missing in Livingstone's *Journals*, and also in other documentations of

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<sup>92</sup> Jacob Wainwright, Letter to W.S. Price, 2 May 1876 1876, CMS/B/OMS/C A5 O1, Cadbury Research Library, Church Mission Society.

<sup>93</sup> Price, Memoranda about the East Africa Mission.

Livingstone's last journey, raising questions about authenticity or exaggeration.<sup>94</sup> Farrar represents Livingstone as a hero capable of „taming“ the local people. Yet, on other issues he remains silent, such as an event when Livingstone was ineffective as the caravan got engaged in a fight with the local chief of Mtapi, who then also looted the village (where Livingstone was staying) on the return journey. This event is well documented in Livingstone's *Journals* but finds no place in Farrar's narrative, presumably as it would have ruptured the heroic image of the missionary.

Since the Bombay Africans were positioned in-between – i.e., they were powerful amongst non-Europeanised Africans, but subservient amongst Europeans - they could not claim a position better or equal to their masters. This explains why neither of the two texts pronounces a single leader of the caravan. Nonetheless, they construct self as heroic and faithful through the corpse of Livingstone. Again, they occupied a liminal space between being Englishmen and African. As Africans, they could not leave the Livingstone's dead body as it would have not gone in their favour as „faithfuls“, and as Englishmen, they could not decide on their own to bury the body at the place of his death- something which European explorers used to do with the dead bodies of their fellow explorers or missionaries who died in the interior of Africa.

We all consulted together and we decided that we should bring body to the coast, if not, people would have said we deserted him or left him alone- so we put him into coffin.<sup>95</sup>

In this way, they carried the corpse as a silent voice of their faithfulness. Yet this also helped them to become admired and acknowledged by the powerful. Despite

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<sup>94</sup> Thomas, "The Death of Dr. Livingstone: Carus Farrar's Narrative," 122-23.

<sup>95</sup> Wainwright, Speech of Jacob Wainwright at Church Missionary Meeting.

this, they never voiced their bravery directly. In his journal, A.H.Lash states that Wainwright said (whilst speaking at Walsall) :

We deserve no praise for having brought home Livingstone's body, for those who sent us said "If you do not bring home Livingstone, dead or alive, you will get no pay".<sup>96</sup>

The corpse itself became a voice of their enterprise. However, by not directly taking any credit for this enterprise, Wainwright avoided challenging white supremacy – which operates by either employing or saving black Africans- and thus save his voice through silence. Being in a liminal space, the Bombay Africans carefully selected to portray events that praised Livingstone, constructing central Africa as an antithesis of their Europeanised self, and finally claim some power, authority and voice by performing as a group of heroes. The silence here allows them, both Farrar and Wainwright, to avoid the contradiction of a friendly relation existing between these two extremes: slave traders and abolitionist.

## **Conclusion**

The narratives, though written in seemingly an objective manner, focusing carefully on selected events, gave the authors" plenty of opportunities to employ strategies of self-representation. This group of Bombay Africans endeavoured to distance themselves from the other seventy Africans who carried and followed the body of Livingstone to the coast. Internalised racist ideology made them believe that their affiliation to English and Christian education made them superior to non-westernised Africans. They shared the same religion and language, to some extent, with the dominant class. Their positionality – as neither Europeans nor „savage“

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<sup>96</sup> Chapter 2 in Lash, In Walsall. In *Mid Victorian Days: Dips into the Diary of a Deputation*.

Africans –constructed them as existing in the ‘interstices’ where they developed a new community that was more likely to be aligned with the dominant culture. Their strategic aligning with the dominant culture seems in some ways to reinforce Western hegemony. However, their consciousness of not being equal to the masters allowed them to be present in the subservient space. Silence in these texts appears in the form of gaps and missed representations of events. Through the narratives, the Bombay Africans were able to fashion out for themselves a particular form of agency, by claiming for themselves a unique insight into, and responsibility for, the completion of the something that Livingstone had started.

Since the Bombay Africans, like Black Victorians, viewed black Africans and African culture as inferior to that of the colonial masters, their texts are more likely to be read as approving or mimicking colonial narratives about Africa and Africans. However, by studying the ways these Bombay Africans negotiate an identity relevant to contemporary power structures and thus claim power, authority and voice, while nonetheless reproducing European stereotypes about Africa and performing as subservient to colonial masters, this chapter demonstrates the agency of the Bombay Africans as traveller/travel writer. Along with bringing the voices of the Bombay Africans to the centre, rather than reading them in the peripheries of the narratives about Livingstone’s last journey, the chapter highlights how they use autoethnography to enter the contact zone with English readers and Christian missionaries, and perform as worthy of trust and status in the colonial power structure. The way they use strategic silence to communicate and negotiate with the powerful enables the chapter to discuss the alternative ways of operating, and claiming voice, in the asymmetrical colonial power hierarchy by hyphenated Africans.

The chapter by outlining the instances of self-fashioning and self-construction while representing difference and otherness - a significant parameter of the broader travel writing genre- locates the texts, and these hyphenated African travellers, in this broader travel writing genre. This puts forward the possibility of reading African travel writing from the colonial period for the individuality of the writers in terms of their agency and agendas, and not merely following the European modes and forms of travel and writing. This playing with strategic silence, self-fashioning and representation of difference by the writers is common in all the hyphenated African writers; despite being placed in different historical, political, social and cultural contexts, as will be seen in subsequent chapters.



## CHAPTER 3

### **AFRICAN-ARAB: MAISHA YA HAMED BIN MUHAMMED AL MURJEBI YAANI TIPPU TIP**

Hamed bin Mohammed al-Murjebi, born in Zanzibar in the mid-nineteenth century, was known as Tippu Tip and became famous for his involvement in the ivory and slave trade.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the other travellers discussed in this thesis, Tip was not motivated by a mission, adventure, escape, or personal choice for a journey. Rather than embarking on a one-off trip, travelling formed a major part of his life. Sometimes he travelled for „fourteen years“, with substantial stays at various places (111).<sup>2</sup> He travelled for his family's copal-trading business, sometimes leading caravans into the interior of Africa from Zanzibar and Tabora, present-day Tanzania.<sup>3</sup> In 1902, Tip began writing his autobiography at the behest of Heinrich Brode, an employee of the German Consulate in Zanzibar.<sup>4</sup> Tip narrated his travels in Swahili, under the title *Maisha ya Hamed bin Muhammed al-Murjebi yaani Tippu Tip*.<sup>5</sup> In 1903, the original text was transcribed, translated and published by Brode in the Orientalist journal *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* under the title *Autobiographie des Arabers Schech Hamed bin Muhammed elMurjebi*,

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<sup>1</sup> There is an inconsistency in Tippu Tip's year of birth. Almost all the scholars acknowledge this doubt by nowhere mentioning the year with certainty; the date is not at all available. Most of the scholars, such as Michelle Decker, places his birth more broadly to be „around 1840“ (Michelle Decker, "The „Autobiography“ Of Tippu Tip: Geography, Genre And The African Indian Ocean," *Interventions* 17, no. 5 (2014): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801x.2014.987800>.), Stuart Laing, however, provides us with a year with a hint of doubt by saying „probably in 1837“. (Stuart Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa* (Surbiton, Surrey: Medina Publishing, 2017), 1.)

<sup>2</sup> Tippu Tip and Wilfred Howell Whiteley, *Maisha Ya Hamed Bin Muhammed El Murjebi Yaani Tippu Tip* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1958).

<sup>3</sup> Gum-copal, a resin from a forest tree, was used in the making of varnish for carriages and printing ink and till 19<sup>th</sup> century it was used as a staple in east African trade was found buried, as a fossil, in coastal areas (Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 13,34.)

<sup>4</sup> Decker, "The „Autobiography“ Of Tippu Tip: Geography, Genre And The African Indian Ocean."

<sup>5</sup> Whiteley, *Maisha Ya Hamed Bin Muhammed El Murjebi Yaani Tippu Tip*.

genannt *Tippu Tip*.<sup>6</sup> The text includes fifty years of travels through Central Africa, until Tip returned to Zanzibar in the wake of formal European colonisation of Africa.

This chapter begins by discussing different categorisations of the text, as travel book / memoir / travelogue. The chapter then proceeds to offer an alternative reading to that proposed by Michelle Decker and Thomas Geider, who argued that the text lacked „interiority“ or „autobiographical“ qualities due to what they call Tip“s „mundane recollections“ about his journeys and encounters with locals.<sup>7</sup> Applying Eric Hayot“s idea of narrative techniques engaging expression, Decker suggests that the narrative technique of the text allows Tip to narrate events (e.g. hunting an elephant, fighting with local chiefs for ivory, finding his porters, various encounters with European explorers, and the death of his father) in a way where the „gap between“ his „foreground and background material“ is „non-existent“, that is without instilling his own perceptions, reflections, and opinions.<sup>8</sup> I argue that although this narrative technique does not explicitly address, either the significance of events or the author“s feelings, still Tip“s heroic self actually emerges from this „non-existent gap“.

The chapter explores Tip“s ambiguous insider-outsider position, as an African-Arab-slave trader. It explains that, as an African-Arab, Tippu Tip was able to mobilise multiple relationships to make claims on material, symbolic and social resources.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 5.; Christian missionaries were struggling to learn Swahili for the sake of spreading the religion in the area. They even got sections of Bible translated to Swahili and Swahili folktales to English. Germans further widened the use of the language and „raised its status by making it the official language. Between 1900-1950 „there were approximately 359 works of prose published in Swahili; 346 of these were written by Europeans and published mainly in English and German“. (Alamin Mazrui, "The Swahili literary tradition: an intercultural heritage," in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, ed. F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 206-08.

<sup>7</sup> Decker, "The „Autobiography“ of Tippu Tip: Geography, Genre and The African Indian Ocean," 754.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; Eric Hayot, "On Literary Worlds " *Modern Language Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (June 2011), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-1161286>.

However, at the time that his text was written, his power and wealth were under threat from the expanding European presence in East Africa. I discuss how Tip uses the text as a contact zone to communicate to Europeans and construct himself as a hero and even a saviour through representations of bravery, adventure, and saving, allowing him to (re)claim power and authority at a time when the obvious forms of power were being lost to the Europeans. Decker suggests that Tip's story can be seen as „a collection of silences“ ; a character „who is portrayed not as an individual, but only in relation to other characters“.<sup>9</sup> I propose that Tip constructs heroic as well as honourable self textually through these silences, and also by incorporating the voices of other characters.

This chapter uses W.H. Whiteley's translation of the original text. After the publication of Brode's Swahili to German translation in 1903, Tip's text was frequently translated and published in English. Brode's biography of Tip, based on the travel text and additional interviews with Tip, was published in 1907 in English and adds many details not included by Tip in *Maisha*. For instance, Brode's text discusses Tip's „role in slave trading“, which Tip did not mention in his original text.<sup>10</sup> In the light of several scholarly critiques of the various translations, and in to avoid Brode's voice overshadowing Tip's, I use Whiteley's bilingual text, published in 1958 as *Maisha Hamed bin Mohammed al-Murjabi yaani Tippu Tip*, which presents the Swahili text transliterated in English next to its translation in English. Whilst I concentrate on Whiteley's translation, I am nonetheless aware that tensions between the original text and its translated versions persist, even in the most accurate translations.

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<sup>9</sup> Decker, "The „Autobiography“ Of Tippu Tip: Geography, Genre And The African Indian Ocean."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 746.

## Categorising the text

Michelle Decker argues that the text is neither an „autobiography nor travelogue, nor chronicle exactly“; it borrows characteristics from all these genres.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the text chronicles historical information regarding the slave trade and European explorations of Africa’s interiors, whilst also working as a travelogue: narrating Tip’s personal motivations, business endeavours and kinship experiences; along with chronicling wars and power struggles amongst African chiefs. Since the text is a „retrospective, first-person account of the author’s own experience of the journey, or an unfamiliar place or people“, and largely focuses on the „author’s response to that place“ and his „impressions, thoughts and feelings“, it fits with Carl Thompson’s definition of the travel book.<sup>12</sup> The text also partially adheres to Paul Fussell’s definition of a travel book: by describing his travels through unknown villages and meeting unknown people in the interior of Africa, Tip’s „autobiographical narrative arises“ from his „encounter with distant and unfamiliar data“. Moreover, Tip claims „literal validity by constant reference to actuality“, a significant part of Fussell’s definition, by explicitly stating that „I have written everything; I have neither added anything nor have I omitted much“ (129).<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, Fussell claims that travel books not only represent „an exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, but [also] to an interior, a sentimental or temperamental voyage“. <sup>14</sup> Yet Tip’s text, as noted by Decker, „withholds his interiority“ through „mundane recollections“.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Thompson, *Travel writing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 14.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Fussell, *Abroad : British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 203.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, it lacks in introspection as well as any kind of sentimentality to fit Fussell's definition of a travel book completely.<sup>15</sup>

As a travel book is often structured through the trajectory of the journey in a chronological order, from beginning to end; whereas a memoir is more flexible in this chronological order and also does not require that the writer narrates the entire story of his/her life or journey. Since Tip did not maintain a strict chronological order when producing the text; he describes himself revisiting his memory to produce the text:

I have written an abridgement; some earlier material I have written later, because you will appreciate a long time has passed! But everything is here; nothing is lacking. Everything is straightforward, there are no doubts. (129)

Thus, I consider this text more generically aligned to the travel memoir, rather than the travel book. Nonetheless, as it lacks any kind of explicit „self-scrutiny“ or introspection central to the definition of autobiography as well as memoir. Thus, the „autobiographical“ value, character and quality of the text is bit questionable here.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, in line with Thomas Geider's definition, Tip's work is more aligned with travelogues.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this, there are some notable ways in which *Maisha* differs from other „travelogues“ also. Firstly, the text is not precise about time; Tip never gives us a precise date, year, or time of his travels. When documenting his stories, Tip leaves readers to calculate time through the period of his stays at particular places, or the

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<sup>15</sup> Decker, "The „Autobiography“ of Tippu Tip: Geography, Genre and The African Indian Ocean."

<sup>16</sup> Linda R. Anderson, *Autobiography: New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 7.; Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "The Ruffled Bed of Autobiography: Extravagant Lives, Extravagant Questions," *Biography* 24, 1 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2001.0025>.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Geider, "Early Swahili Travelogues," in *Sokomoko Popular Culture in East Africa*, ed. Werner Graebner (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992).

days or months it takes him to complete a specific journey. The text also lacks textual markers to indicate distance or document the landscapes and its people. This, as Geider suggests, is a common trope in Swahili travel texts and is different to Western perceptions of travelogues.<sup>18</sup> I therefore examine the text as an example of travel writing in the broadest sense, even if it does not completely cohere with the most conventional definitions of the „travel book“, „travelogue“ or „travel memoir“. I am particularly interested in how, despite the text's departure from the conventional definition of Western travel writing, the text also coheres with the nature of travel writing as divulging the preoccupations and preconceptions of the traveller and their own society, as much as the place to which they travel.<sup>19</sup>

*Maisha's* lack of precise markers of distance and time could be due to Tip's motives and fascinations, different from the Western travellers and explorers of the period. Contrary to Decker's suggestion, Tip was not entirely a foreigner; his family and kinsmen were already settled in the interior of Africa.<sup>20</sup> They were used to regularly travelling great distances to collect and transport ivory to the coast.<sup>21</sup> Whereas a foreign traveller may have been keen to emphasise the great distances travelled, for Tip, the demonstration of distance covered may have seemed less important. Furthermore, as Decker argues, Tip was writing this text to revisit and reclaim his power that was lost to the European colonialists. Thus, writing about his enterprise and bravery in local wars, taming hostile local chiefs, and using his authority to settle local disputes was more important than documenting distances

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>19</sup> Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).; Robert M. Burroughs, *Travel writing and Atrocities : Eyewitness Accounts of Colonialism in the Congo, Angola, and the Putumayo* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Decker, "The „Autobiography“ Of Tippu Tip: Geography, Genre And The African Indian Ocean," 753.

<sup>21</sup> Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 1-5.

and times.<sup>22</sup> Tip implicitly selected events, characters, voices, and silences to present before the readers an „honourable“ self when European imaginaries of the East and Central African slave trade tended to vilify Arab traders.<sup>23</sup> I argue that Tip not only produced a narrative of his „negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in space“, but also selectively draw on the character of the travellee, as well as space and time, to perform as a heroic self.<sup>24</sup>

### **Text as the Contact Zone: the politics of representation**

When Tip was writing *Maisha*, he had lost the majority of his power and prosperity to European domination. He used this text as an opportunity to write back to the European idea of the Arab slave trade that vilified Arabs, and also as a way of reclaiming some power, voice and authority. Since Tip was writing *Maisha* with the encouragement of Brode, the German Consul’s Legal Councillor, thus Tip was presumably writing for European readers. At this time, Tip was also facing a court case with Rumaliza, who was aligned with German powers, and Tip, according to the text, was well aware of the European power and its influence in the interior and coastal areas.<sup>25</sup> Whilst convincing Manyema people to agree to the European rules of trade, he recounts himself saying: „Here in Manyema have we strength enough to

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<sup>22</sup> Decker, "The „Autobiography“ Of Tippu Tip: Geography, Genre And The African Indian Ocean," 755.

<sup>23</sup> Geider, "Early Swahili Travelogues," 62.

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, *Travel writing*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad bin Khalfan, another ivory trader in Central Africa, was famously known as Rumaliza. He, after meeting Tip at Tabora, formed an alliance with him for trading and also became the Sultan of Ujiji in 1883 with the help of Tippu Tip. After escaping the Arab-Belgian war, Rumaliza came to Zanzibar and sued Tippu Tip claiming Tip’s quarter of all assets. Since Rumaliza was born in Lindi, which was now subject to German control, therefore Rumaliza became German subject and the case was heard in Dar as-Salaam. In Tippu Tip’s account Rumaliza incited Arabs and the local people to attack Europeans, as a result of which Arthur Hodister, a Belgian ivory trader, was killed. (Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 274.; Alfred J. Swann, *Fighting the Slave Hunters In Central Africa* (London: F.Cass, 2012), 31.; Whiteley, *Maisha Ya Hamed Bin Muhammed El Murjebi Yaani Tippu Tip*.; B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century Africa*, African Studies Series, (Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 168-70.)

stop the Europeans? What kind of equipment have you with you? [...] it is the Europeans who have limitless resources and power. Leave off your bumbling.” (131). Therefore, to align with the powerful while withholding his status and authority, Tip uses the text to perform as a dependable friend of Europeans who are represented as „disposed towards me” (33), and „anxious to become friends” (119). Tip represents Europeans, mostly English and German, asking him for favours, and presents himself as helping them without any expectations in return. For instance, Tip took David Livingstone, who „had neither goods nor rations” (25), to the camp and helped him to reach his destination in central Africa by giving „him guides to take him there and picked out one of our kinsmen, Said bin Khalfan, to go as far as Cazembe’s in Runda” (25). Tip further ensures Livingstone’s safety and comfort, by sending „a word” to one of his „relative[s]” who has settled there „that one Livingstone would be arriving and that he was to respect him and not give him any trouble” (25). In another incident, „two Europeans” approached him and the „one said to me “This is my brother who wishes to go to Zanzibar [...] but has neither porter nor anything else”. Tip turned to their help by saying: „No matter, I will give him dug-outs [...] he’ll be given such provisions as he requires, and porters until he reaches the coast. The expense will be mine, right up until he reaches Zanzibar” (117). By performing as a dependable friend of Europeans, in the text, Tip presents before the readers a man significantly needed for the European expansionist project in the interior of Africa.

Tip also uses European explorers as the characters of his story to claim power and authority. When Wissmann comes to Tip somewhere between Tabora and Manyema, „without provisions or anything else” (107-109), he confirms that his association with Tip has „accorded me great respect”, as „Everywhere I passed, I



mentioned your name, and what I wanted became available" (107). This reinforces Tip's authority and power in central Africa, whilst demonstrating his kindness and European dependence on his assistance.

He represents himself as an authority, in whose absence Europeans may not be able to get the support of the local porters and chief, and thus would never be able to accomplish their exploration. After reaching Kusuku when accompanying Stanley to the Congo River, Stanley informs his porters that, „Now Hamed bin Muhammed will return, and you, get busy, for we shall set off on the day after tomorrow." (85) The men revolted, „If Hamed bin Muhammed returns we return too; we are not going to a foreign place." (85) They tell Tip, „You, we fear and respect for your words, but we have no contract with this European." (87) They only agree after Tip and Stanley, through a theatrical staged drama,<sup>26</sup> convince the porters. Tip manipulates the porters by saying „if you follow me [...] my property will become the property of government. On this occasion [...] all my trouble of the past few years [in the form of wealth and property] is lost." (85) His words are trusted by the porters and they follow Stanley towards the „foreign place" to which they were previously reluctant to go. Once again Tip's assistance is portrayed as being crucial for a European. Therefore, by reproducing events where Europeans have asked for

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<sup>26</sup> After reaching Kusuku, when Stanley informs his porters that, „Now Hamed bin Muhammed will return, and you, get busy, for we shall set off on the day after tomorrow" (85). The men revolted, „If Hamed bin Muhammed returns we return too; we are not going to a foreign place" (85). They also tell Tip, „You, we fear and respect for your words, but we have no contract with this European" (87). When Stanley informs Tip about their revolt, Tip asks him to „follow my advice and summon all your men" and „speak to me fiercely" that „if you return, all my men will insist on returning...if my men return, then when I return, I shall tell Seyyid Bargash that it was Hamed bin Muhammad who ruined my trip, then your property will be seized- when you have said that, well, leave things to me" (85). Stanley as directed by Tip speaks to him in „harsh tone" and then Tip manipulatively deceives them saying, „if you follow me...my property will become the property of government. On this occasion...all my trouble of the past few years is lost" (85).

assistance and Tip has gone out of the way to assist them, he is using the text to communicate his friendship and his significance in the exploratory and expansionist efforts of Europeans.

The period of his writing and his travels also coincided with European missionaries and explorers carrying out the projects of Christianity, ethnography and, as Mary Pratt named it, „planetary consciousnesses“.<sup>27</sup> Men such as Livingstone set the tone of „European reporting on the Arab slave trade“, which presented Arab traders, such as Tip, rather than Europeans as „responsible for the violence and destruction“.<sup>28</sup> Tip challenged this idea during an interview with Jerome Becker, a Belgian explorer of Central Africa, when discussing human dignity, immorality, and cruelty regarding slavery:

White people have quite false ideas about our customs and habits. Everything which doesn't exist with them– even if it has ended recently- they insist on abolishing immediately everywhere else! [...] When it comes to it, what is the difference between a slave and a domestic servant?<sup>29</sup>

In the same interview, Tip claimed that nothing was bad in falling under „the protection of an Arab, whose religion enjoins kindness and justice“. Aligning himself with other Arabs, he depicts slavery as the „protection“ „in our hands“ of those who would be massacred and mistreated by „their tribal enemies“, thereby constructing

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<sup>27</sup> Mary Louise Pratt describes „planetary consciousness“ as a process through which „European elites“ tried to make sense of „themselves and their relations to the rest of the globe“. It was a new „version“ of making sense of self „marked by an orientation toward interior exploration and the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history“. (Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Travel writing and Transculturation* (London and NewYork: Routledge, 1992), 15.)

<sup>28</sup> Melvin E. Page, "The Manyema Hordes of Tippu Tip: A Case Study in Social Stratification and the Slave Trade in Eastern Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1974): 70, <https://doi.org/10.2307/216554>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/216554>.

<sup>29</sup> Becker quoted in Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 281.

the Arab slave trade as the act of saviours. Tip discusses having „brotherly relations with the blacks, since we bring up our children with theirs, and we are much more fatherly with them than you are with your servants“. He rejects claims of cruelty and violence, and validates slavery: „if we buy men, it's because they are offered to us for sale, and we couldn't get them otherwise.“<sup>30</sup> This interview with Becker clearly demonstrates that Tip was aware of contemporary European attitudes that considered slavery and slave traders as cruel and inhuman, despite Europeans' own involvement in the slave trade.

Also during his retirement years from 1895, Tip owned seven plantations and ten thousand slaves.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Tip seized the opportunity to tell his story „in a favourable light“, and to challenge the idea of abolishing slavery, although without challenging European authority itself.<sup>32</sup> He used the text to perform and verify his „brotherly relation“ with the slaves. Tip presents himself in *Maisha* as a „fatherly“ man taking care of the slaves' food and supplies, nursing them, and caring for their opinions. When crossing Itawa, 700 of his men „overcome [with] vomiting and with diarrhoea“. Tip can be seen nursing them: „Fortunately there were plenty of goats around, and we collected all those“, „made a gravy and added peppers and ginger“, and „gave it to those who were in greatest need“ (47). „Everyday I gave them this diet“ (47), he continued, thus representing himself as being „more fatherly with them“. Tip claims a paternalistic persona throughout his text by referring to a slave boy as *Tukamwona kitwana Chetu*, which translates to „our little son“, and *mtwanawangu*, which translates to „my son“ (41). As the Arab slaveholders of the nineteenth century

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<sup>30</sup> Tippu Tip in conversation with Jerome Becker (September 1881) is quoted in *ibid.*, 282.

<sup>31</sup> Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory In Zanzibar: Integration Of An East African Commercial Empire Into The World Economy, 1770-1873* (London: Currey, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 9.

used „the hegemonic ideology of Islam to assert their paternalistic power over their slaves“, Tip“s text can be read as a practical response to the European notion of Arab cruelty in central Africa, by exemplifying „kindness and justice“ commanded by „religion“, and through this he claims the moral high ground which further assists him in claiming innocence.<sup>33</sup>

This pattern of claiming innocence through performing his morality forms an important part of the text. Tip uses the text to respond to allegations of cruelty and barbarity made against him. For instance, during a conversation with missionaries (probably French), he denies claims of being involved in providing a slave to James Jameson, a Scottish anthropologist, in order for him to see the slave being eaten by the „cannibals“. He after rejecting the allegations also asserted himself as a moral being:

“...They had heard from Stanley that in Manyema, Jameson had bought a slave for cloth, and given him to the locals who killed him and ate his flesh while he was watching and in your presence“. I told them, “This is a lie. I was neither there nor did I hear such thing before today. That he should say Jameson would do such a thing! Or that I would allow it! Yet I“ve never seen a European nor, for that matter, any human being who is such a liar“. (135)

In fact, Jameson documented this incident in his journal and Assad Farran, a Syrian interpreter for Tip on the Emin Pasha expedition, confirmed Jameson“s and Tip“s role in „murder, dismemberment and consumption of a girl by some African soldiers“, in

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<sup>33</sup> Elisabeth McMahon, "Introduction," in *Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa: From Honor to Respectability*, ed. Elisabeth McMahon, African Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13.

an affidavit in 1890.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, Tip rejects the incident by announcing it „a lie“. He rejects the allegation on moral grounds. In testifying that neither „Jameson would do such a thing“, nor would he „allow it“ to happen, Tip claims innocence through an appeal to his own outstanding morality, as he represents it.

Nonetheless, Tip knew that Europeans, such as Stanley and Wissman, had travelled with him, and presumably had seen the slaves in chains. Thus, he goes further in justifying that treatment as well. Whilst narrating his travel experiences from Zanzibar to the interiors, he recreates the scene of „kindness“ by explaining his concern about the porters who were „carrying on their loads on empty stomach, so when we arrived at Mkamba we bought plenty of rice“ given to them because for places in between „there was no likelihood of getting food and the porters were many“ (15). This „kindness“ is then shown as being met with disloyalty when he decides to move forward from Mbezi, a region in Tanzania, but finds that the porters „had deserted“ him. After this, Tip „lost my temper“ and asked his brother to „bring me my guns, travelling clothes and a bedroll and servants“. He then goes from village to village sleeping „on the road“ to find them. After „arriving at the porters“ villages, when he still fails to find them, he „seized their elders and kinsmen“ (15), after which the porters „came back“. Then Tip, along with the porters, took „strips of metal“ from a Banyan at Mkamba where the „craftsmen who were with me made chains“ (15) and „put the whole lot of porters in these chains“ (17) to stop them escaping. Here he perpetually evades responsibility for behaviour that seems cruel by shifting the responsibility for being chained onto the porters themselves. The text, thus, becomes

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<sup>34</sup> James L. Newman, *Imperial Footprints: Henry Morton Stanley's African Journey* (Dulles: Potomac Books Inc, 2004).; Laura Franey, "Ethnographic Collecting and Travel: Blurring Boundaries, Forming a Discipline," *Victorian Literature And Culture* 29, no. 1 (2001): 227, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s106015030129113x>.

his tool to enter the contact zone with European readers and perform before them as a moral, kind and brave man, so as to implicitly challenge the European idea of cruelty associated with slavery. Tip, thus, uses the text to communicate with European powers and construct moral self, as well as to claim relevance in the power structure by being a friend of European expansionism.

### **Arabs in Africa: Politics and the position of Tip's family in Africa**

Before discussing Tip's travel experiences, it is important to contextualise the presence and impact of Arabs in Africa to better understand Tip's positionality as an African-Arab trader.<sup>35</sup> Since the seventh century, Arabs had been present in East Africa through the Indian Ocean trade.<sup>36</sup> They continued to be linked to and influenced by the politics of Oman and Muscat even in the eighteenth century; political changes, such as the changing of Imams and the collapse and emergence of dynasties, affected Arab society and trade in East Africa.<sup>37</sup>

The time in which Tip was travelling and writing was a period of upheaval and change in the region. The collapse of the Ya'rubu dynasty and the election of Ahmad ibn Said, the Wali of Sohar, as the Imam of Oman and Muscat in 1749, directly impacted the future of Arab trade in the Indian Ocean and also the formulation of an

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<sup>35</sup> Arabs trading between Zanzibar and west of Lake Tanganyika were mostly the Omani trading families and settlers. As noted by Stuart Laing, only a few came from other parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

<sup>36</sup> The Portuguese invasions in the sixteenth century affected the Arab population here negatively, but as the position of the Portuguese weakened due to their conflict with English and Dutch, the Omanis succeeded in retaking their centres of Zanzibar and the neighbouring island of Pemba and Mombasa in 1698. By 1700, the Omanis were secure in coastal towns of the north of Mombasa. (see Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 13-18.)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

image of Arab trade as a horrifying tale of enslavement, slave trading and slavery.<sup>38</sup> In 1839, Said-bin sultan, the grandson of Ahmad ibn Said, moved his court and residence from Muscat to Zanzibar; this not only expanded the scope for trade but also allowed Omani traders to expand their presence further towards the interior of Africa in search of ivory and slaves. As the human and elephant populations near the coast depleted, the penetration of trade routes further inland gained momentum, the rising demand for ivory in India and European countries prompted Arab traders to buy slaves for transportation of ivory to the coast. After reaching the coast, they sold the slaves to coastal and island plantations.<sup>39</sup> Slaves from East and Central Africa were also sold to islands further away in the Indian Ocean, and some were also transported south and then west across the southern Atlantic. Whilst moving inland, the traders' methods became increasingly violent, sometimes burning villages and taking hostages.<sup>40</sup>

When Tip was born, the Omanis had already established themselves in the coastal areas and to some extent the interiors of Africa as far as the central African kingdoms of Kazembe, in present-day Zaire and south-eastern Congo.<sup>41</sup> A small number of families from Muscat, the coastal areas of the sultanate of Oman, and from towns and regions of the interior of Oman, such as Nizawa, started

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<sup>38</sup> Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History Of Slavery, Race And Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Ronald Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves: The History Of Africa's Other Black Diaspora* (London: Atlantic Books, 2001). Ahmad ibn Said founded the Al-bu-Saidi dynasty, which had a significant effect on Mombasa and Zanzibar. After the death of Ahmad-ibn- Said, his son, Sultan-bin-Ahmad, gained control of Muscat, in 1792, which by now had become an important commercial and maritime centre. Sultan-bin-Ahmad and his son Said-bin sultan, ruling from 1804 to 1856, administered the strongest growth in Omani maritime power in the Indian Ocean in general and in East Africa in particular. (Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 18.)

<sup>39</sup> It is noteworthy that slaves were needed for the plantation of cloves, a crop which was also introduced by the Sultan in Zanzibar.

<sup>40</sup> Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas F. McDow, *Buying Time: Debt And Mobility In The Western Indian Ocean* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018), 117-18.

strengthening their domination in East Africa.<sup>42</sup> Upper Nizawa was at one time held by the Nabhani family, which used to be known as the Nabhani dynasty before the Yaʿrubi dynasty overtook Oman in 1624, and were the longest-standing Arab clans on the African coast.<sup>43</sup> Tip was related to this Nabhani family. His relations can be traced back to his great grandfather Rajab bin Mohammad al-Murjebi who, born in Oman, arrived in East Africa in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Muhammad al-Murjebi started travelling with one of the sons of Juma bin Muhammad al-Nabhani, who had already travelled and temporarily settled at Mbwamji, an important trading centre in East Africa. Rajab bin Mohammad later married one of the daughters of Juma al-Nabhani, who is mentioned in the text as *bint* (daughter) Juma bin Mohammad. She gave birth to Tip's grandfather Juma bin Rajab al-Murjabi. Juma al-Murjabi married the sister of Mohamad-bin-Rajab al-Nabhani, and became an „active trader engaged in “daring raids” to Tabora and Lake Tanganyika”.<sup>44</sup> He „created new kin networks and linkages that paid dividends over time” by providing his successors with a strong position and safe passage through villages, which would otherwise have been difficult due to hostile chiefs.<sup>45</sup>

By the late 1840s, Juma's son Mohamad-bin-Juma al-Murjabi, Tippu Tip's father, also used these links and networks to establish trading settlements in the Unyanyembe district of the WaNyamwezi, a group of Bantu people in Southeast Africa. This is mentioned by Tip, who writes:

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<sup>42</sup> From 1624 to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, most of Oman had been under the leadership of Imams from the Yaʿrubi dynasty. However, the Yaʿrubi Imams were not able to consolidate their influence in the „colonies” established at the coastal towns north of Mombasa and Cape Delgado, due to which the small number of Omani families strengthened their domination in East Africa. (Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 17.)

<sup>43</sup> McDow, *Buying Time: Debt And Mobility In The Western Indian Ocean*, 1-5.

<sup>44</sup> Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 12.

<sup>45</sup> McDow, *Buying Time: Debt And Mobility In The Western Indian Ocean*, 130.



In Tabora, he was comparable to a chief. He had married from childhood the daughter of Chief Fundi Kira- one Karunde, and Karunde's mother was Fundi Kira's first and chief wife. And the chief wife at that time in Unyamwezi held power comparable with the Chief, so that my father was greatly respected. Whatever he wanted in and around Tabora he got, and when he went down to the coast he took his wife Karunde. He was given much ivory from the wealth of Chief Fundi Kira. He was also given other goods, [...], and at this time he was as though Chief in Nyamwezi manner, having much property and many followers, perhaps even as much as the Chiefs of Uganda and Karagwe. (9)

According to Tip, his father's status as „comparable to a chief“ allowed him an easy access to both human and other resources in the interiors and in Tabora. This placed Tip's father in a powerful and authoritative position: after „the death of chief Fundi Kira“, „my father had installed Chief Mnywa Sera, son of the brother of Fundi Kira“ (11) as the new chief of Tabora. His decision, though, was met by opposition by other aspirants of chieftaincy. Mkasiwa, in this case, opposed Mnywa Sera's installation and „declared war; he built a stockade and collected a force around him of his followers“ (11). However, the kin network developed by Arab forefathers „joined in the fighting against Mkasiwa for a whole month“ leading to his followers being „killed, others were captured; Mkasiwa himself fled to Uriakuru“ (11). Such incidents verify the Arab kinship and network, and their authority in the interiors. By including these incidents in the text, Tip displays and establishes the legacy of Arab power and authority in the interiors of Africa.

Likewise, Tip reproduced the powerful kinship networks of Arabs in Tabora and the interior. When Mnywa Sera's „tyranny increased; he put to death Karunde's mother“, infuriating Tip's father who was provoked „to fight him“ (11). For this, he sent

the „communique to all their kinsmen, all the folk who were in Tabora, and at that time they numbered between 300-400; they together with the folk from the Mrima coast, all gathered at Sultan bin Ali’s house” and then after three months of the war they „removed the chief and made Mkasiwa chief in his place” (13). In this incident, Tip’s father appears as a powerful man who was an authority not only in local politics but amongst the Arabs as well. This is demonstrated by the Arabs who „were extremely angry” with Mnywa Sera for forcing each Arab caravan to pay heavy tax, but „dared not attack him for fear of my father, Muhammad bin Juma, who at that time was rather powerful”. Once Tip’s father decided to attack Mnywa Sera, the Arabs voiced their opinion, „Long ago when we saw how arrogant he had become we wanted to let you know, but were fearful of your reactions” (11). After voicing their anger against Sera, the Arabs advised Tip’s father to „wait for your kinsmen and your son, When [sic] they arrive we will attack” (11). This incident, as described in the text, not only portrays the superiority of Tip’s father but also constructs Tip’s presence as his son, and therefore heir of the legacy of Arab authority. The Arab traders’ acceptance of Tip as the heir of his father’s legacy allowed him to build upon an already existing network of links and kins, thus putting him in an advantageous position in Tabora society and trade.

### **Being Arab-African: Manoeuvring through multiple selves**

Tip’s position as an Arab-African trader plays an important role in his mobility in central Africa and the textualisation of that mobility: his black skin, inherited from his mother, allowed him to claim affinity with African people of the interior and claim acceptance as well as chieftaincy among the people of the interior of Africa; his Arab

status made him an outsider allowing him to claim authority and power through his affinity with the Arab kinship network that further facilitated his travels in Africa.

Tip, according to Leda Farrant, „considered himself a pure Arab“.<sup>46</sup> He repeatedly claims affinity with Arabs in the text. After settling a conflict between Arabs and the local village chiefs, the commander of the Arab group proposes to Tip that „we two should go to Nyangwe and Kasongo where there were Arabs like ourselves“ (75). The phrase „Arabs like ourselves“, while implicitly distinguishing from Africans, confirms Tip’s claims to affinity with Arabs, and allows a space to demonstrate his position as an Arab trader. Tip can be seen evoking his ancestral ties with Arabs at other points too: he referred to Muhammad bin Saleh al-Nabhani, an Arab trader and explorer, as *baba yetu*, translating to „our father“. Whilst assisting Livingstone to reach and stay at Runda safely and comfortably, Tip uses his familial connection with Nabhani Arabs by sending a word to „one of my father’s relatives“ whose name was „Mohamed bin Sali elNabhani“ and „had settled in Runda having made a trip to it a long time previously“ (25).

This kinship allowed Tip to claim power and authority, as well as providing him access and safe mobility in the African landscapes amongst hostile chiefs of the villages. For instance, after a violent conflict at Ituru with one Ngoni Mafiti, „I, together with Said bin Habib el Afifi, went on as far as Mfuto, to Salum bin Saleh elNebhani’s place; a relative of mine. This was the far border of Unyanyembe and we slept here before pursuing the Ngoni as far as river Ngombe.“ (37) Tip can often be seen travelling and consulting with his Arab relatives. At the village of Samu, when Tip was to decide about the course of action in tackling a „treacherous“ chief, he

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<sup>46</sup> Leda Farrant, *Tippu Tip and the East African Slave Trade* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), xi.

represents himself calling „my uncle, Bushir bin Habib elWardi“ (21) to consult him. Tip presents these claims of affinity / belonging / kinship with Arabs as reciprocating. As much as he felt to be one of them, in the text, he represents the Arabs also accepting him as their own. When the Arabs saw Tip at Uteera, they „rejoiced“ and dropped the idea of war, thereby settling the conflict peacefully. This demonstrates, what Tip represents as, his authority and acceptability amongst Arabs. His position as an Arab trader also allowed him a special place in the European imperial structures which, despite the rhetoric of anti-slavery, relied on the pools of vulnerable and exploitable labour generated by slave trading, in order to carry out their exploration missions.<sup>47</sup> Thus Tip’s position as an Arab allowed him mobility, power and authority which become instrumental in his construction of self as powerful, resourceful and significant in the interior of Africa.

Tip’s claim to authority, evolving from his affinity with Arabs through his lineage, is a recurring theme in the text. However, he can sometimes also be seen aligning with *waungwana* presumably due to his African features.<sup>48</sup> European explorers, such as H.M. Stanley, observed Tip as a „well-bred Arab“ with „negroid complexion“.<sup>49</sup> Hermann Wissmann, the German explorer, also saw Tip as „the powerful Arab“ „completely black in his skin colouring“.<sup>50</sup> His features thus allowed him to be placed at interstices of Arab-African that was *waungwana*. When Tip was

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<sup>47</sup> Richard D. Wolff, "British Imperialism and the East African Slave Trade," *Science & Society* 36, no. 4 (1972): 444, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40401672>.

<sup>48</sup> *Waungwana* was a term used for Swahili people who adopted „Islam from their Arab and Persian trading partners“. By the late nineteenth century the term was used for „free Muslim indigenous inhabitants of the coast“.(Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 27.)

<sup>49</sup> Henry M Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent or, The Source of the Nile around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and Down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean*, 2 vols., vol. II (New York: Dover Publication Inc, 1988), 74.

<sup>50</sup> H. Wissmann quoted in Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 58.

trying to find Manyema, where he had heard that his guns could be repaired, a man informs him, „The Manyema are on the far bank of the Ugarawe: there are people there like yourselves, many of them” (73). Here „there are people ”like yourselves” is important, as it helps Tip to claim affinity with the people, who are further explained by the man as follows: „After Ibari one passes some very small villages and then reaches Ugarawe, on the far bank one can see the villages of *Waungwana* [sic] like ourselves, having guns.” (73) Therefore, Tip can be seen, through the text, claiming affinity with the *waungwana*, which further becomes the reason for being appalled by seeing „the heads of more than sixty waungwana” (23). Some women answer Tip’s question about „how these *waungwana* came to be killed”:

The day they arrived on the border from URungu- the border that is between Itawa and URungu- news came as they crossed the river of our battle with Chief Samu and of our having evicted him from the village. The *waungwana* had had no news of this and were killed without warning, though some escaped, losing all their goods (23).

Samu’s men killed those *waungwana* presumably as revenge. These *waungwana* „had no news” of the battle; this indicates that they were not involved in the battle, but were killed „without warning” because of their affinity with Tip, or Tip’s affinity with *waungwana*. Later when he arrived in URungu, Samu’s rival, who became Tip’s friend says, „You and I are friends and I will show you the place where those *waungwana* were killed.” Tip then sends his men to see and meet „the kinsmen of those who were killed” (23). This can be read as Tip’s attempt to demonstrate his solidarity with the *waungwana*. The kinsmen, on meeting Tip’s men, informed them: „We had heard that the man who was fighting Samu was called Tip-Tip; we hadn’t

realised that it was Hamed bin Muhammed". (25) This reflects that the *waungwana* were already acquainted with Tip, but was not aware of the new name given to him by the people of the last village he travelled. They further informed Tip's men of the conversation of Samu's men about Tip, which Tip documents in third person, producing an effect of documenting their words as it is- a kind of reportage: „they said they had seen many waungwana and had seized their goods but this man's guns went „tiptip"...“ (25). This allows Tip to use the voice of people to demonstrate his power in that area. It also allows Tip to represent himself as a *waungwana*, but an exceptional one; different to those whose goods had been seized by Samu's men.

Though in the text, Tip mostly aligns himself with either Arabs or *waungwana* and does not claim distance or alterity with any of them. Tip saw the mobility and its outcomes in the form of mixing as a source of strength- he was able to assert affinities with a wide range of people, and thereby draw upon multiple social networks. He could selectively emphasise or de-emphasise particular affinities in given circumstances. For instance,

My brother and I, together with Bushir and Abdulla, the sons of Habib bin Bushir elWardijan, my uncle, others of my brothers and young men who accompanied us, rather more than 30 young *waungwana* and 90 of our folk with guns (totalling 120 guns altogether), we all decided to go on to Ruemba" (17).

Here, Tip can be seen distinguishing himself and his kin from *waungwana*. This demonstrates the ambivalence of his identity as an Arab-African. He shifts between identifying himself with certain Africans and with Arabs, but it is also evident that he aligns himself with the more powerful, and uses his position to negotiate power and

authority. He chooses to align himself with the dominant group: sometimes it is by claiming affinity with Arabs, referred to as *waarabu*, through his kinship with them, and other times it is with *waungwana*. His position as an Arab trader allows him to claim power and authority, and his position as *waungwana* allowed him to „lay claim to slaves, property, and a large network of indigenous kin“. <sup>51</sup>

According to Farant, Tip"s awareness that „his complexion and features betrayed some African blood, annoyed him intensely“, yet he used these features to claim acceptance in the interior of Africa and to claim a position of insider that allowed him to access power, prosperity, and authority, which otherwise was not possible as a *waungwana*.<sup>52</sup> Tip"s mother was the daughter of Habib bin Bashir al-Wardi, a trader who travelled from the coast to Urua (present-day eastern Congo).<sup>53</sup> In *Maisha*, Tip uses this maternal link to the interior to enter this region that was then subject to internal rivalries of the chiefs. Tip, while at Urua, is informed by his „KiRua speaking friend" that „if you want ivory, cross the Rumani river and go to Koto, where there is much ivory; or, go to Utetera to Chief Kasongo Rushie and Chief Mwana Mapungi, it is not far from here and there is plenty of ivory" (61). Tip further shows his interest in this kingdom as he had „heard from our elders, that the Paramount Chief of URua, by name Kumambe- and afterwards Rungu Kabare- ruled over the whole of URua as far as Mtoa, including the Manyema country and the banks of the Rumami river" (61). Thus, the might of this kingdom was a further attraction for Tip along with it being „not far from here" and having „plenty of ivory".

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<sup>51</sup> McDow, *Buying Time: Debt And Mobility In The Western Indian Ocean*, 131.

<sup>52</sup> Farrant, *Tippu Tip and the East African Slave Trade*, xi.

<sup>53</sup> Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 28, 33.

However, he also knew that „the WaTetera are very numerous but somewhat stupid and are prone to be attacked because of their timidity; every time they are set on a fight they are defeated, and their fear aggravated“ (61-63). So, there were „numerous“ people who could, in Tip“s logic, be enslaved or be made into followers, and since, according to Tip, they were „stupid“ and „timid“, this would likely mean less retaliation from them. Furthermore, when Tip realises that the „trade was slackening, and the ivory no longer coming“, he „decided to go to UTetera“ (63). Therefore, Tip“s coming to Utetera appears to be well-calculated move, yet when „people of Mkahuja (the rivals of Utetera) said, “You are not allowed to go to UTetera except you go to Kirembwe”“ (63), Tip used his information to avoid armed conflict by saying:

Since UTetera is also my country, Kasongo is related to me in my grandfather“s side [...] A very long time ago the chief of URua, Rungu Kabare Kumambe, waged war in all parts of the country, and reached UTetera. He took captive two women, Kina Darumamba and Kitoto, and took them to URua. It happened that my grandfather Habib bin Bushir elWardi, my mother“s father (genitor), came to URua, and saw the two women, and bought one; taking her as concubine. Then my mother was born. Later on, when I was born, she said to me that in her country the chief was very powerful and that there was much ivory there. Our (my) brother, the elder brother at Kasongo Rushie, was Mwana Mapunga. So I determined to come, and anyone who stands in my way I“ll fight with him; it is my intention to come. (65)

In the context of this event, Tip was trying to strategically avoid conflict with the rivals of Utetera by evoking his maternal heritage, and claiming a connection with the locals, who are neither Arabs nor *waungwana*, through „my country“. Further, when he says that he was „determined to come“ because of his ancestral ties, he is manipulating his reason for visiting Utetera as well as claiming to be one of them.



Furthermore, Tip narrates this story about his grandmother to Ribwa, who according to Tip was „a man from the royal clan“ from Utetera, and has come to know Tip’s intentions, on the command of chief Kasango, of coming to the place:

This grandmother of mine, Darimumba, used to tell me that in her home country she was a member of the royal house; that there was much ivory and many people and that I should make an effort to go there, although it was distant. She said her brother was a powerful chief, by name Kasongo Rushie Mwana Mapunga, and that all the WaTetera and WaKusu were their people (69).

Tip, in the text, states that „this story [that] was told [to Tip] by the chap we came across“ (69). The story might not be true, and the woman he is claiming as his grandmother may not actually be his grandmother. However, since his maternal ancestry is linked with the interiors of Africa and his features along with his skin colour supported this link, he was able to claim and manipulate this link. Here, he manipulates his motivations by suggesting that all his pains for reaching the „distant“ place were because his grandmother, the chief’s sister, wanted him to „go there“. Though in the text, he had already narrated information about the abundance of ivory as his reason for the visit; meeting with his maternal kin was mentioned belatedly, making it appear that Tip was manipulating this link to claim an insider position that would facilitate his commercial goals and legitimise his acquisition of the chieftaincy. This allowed him to claim affinity with African peoples, and to claim a position where „all authority was mine“ (71). The insider position attracted his acceptance by the Chief Kosongo, who declared him the new chief by saying, „I have no longer any stake in the chieftainship; bring to him all the tusks. Anyone wanting anything should

not come to me; authority lies with him" and „the chief wanted me to rule, he gave me goods; I was really the paramount chief" (71).

Though Tip was a powerful man, unlike his father at Tabora, he had no authority to declare or make changes to the politics of the place without having to fight and burn the villages. Yet he was able to mobilise a relationship to an African grandmother in order to claim that authority and establish a kingdom as large as the „Paramount chief of Urua" (71). Tip celebrates his power and authority: „my domain is larger than UNyamwezi, all Tabora, and the whole of Sukuma; larger than all the chiefdoms of UNyamwezi" (111). Tip puts down the offer of Seyyid Bargash, the sultan of Zanzibar, to become the Wali (Governor) of Tabora, by saying, „I am the great chief of Manyema, why should I want to be a Wali?" (110). Thus, Tip's manipulation of his maternal ancestry, in his telling, allowed him access to the power and authority in the form of a kingdom that raised his position above many other Arabs and *waungwana*. In short, Tip's position as an insider, claimed through his performance of affinity with the local people, allowed him a place which otherwise was not available to *waungwana* or Arabs. Simultaneously, his position as an outsider - as an Arab trader well equipped with guns and powerful kinship networks - allowed him an authority over the peoples of Africa's interior; his maternal heritage allowed him to play into the insider position, which not only allowed him easy access to the interiors of Africa, and perhaps greater acceptability among black Africans. By moving between Arab-*waungwana*-African positions he was able to construct his position of authority and power, which is also visible in the ways he used to dress (figure 2) which mirrored the clothing and style of a sultan (figure 3).



**Figure 2**  
**TIPPU TIP**  
(Wikipedia)



**Figure 3**  
**RULER OF MUSCAT AND ZANZIBAR**  
(Stuart Laing, *Tippu Tip*)

### **Reproducing hierarchies: constructing self, representing the other**

Tip uses autoethnography, not in oppositional terms as suggested by Mary Pratt, but as an instrument of self-fashioning. Catherine Russell has suggested that autoethnography can „reaffirm duality of center and margin“: when the writer „portrays the other selves as culturally constituted, it also fashions an identity authorized to represent, to interpret“ the others.<sup>54</sup> Whilst narrating his travel experiences, Tip performs the ambivalence of being insider-outsider by reproducing and navigating mostly successfully through the hierarchies of Arab and African society in East Africa:

<sup>54</sup> Catherine Russell, *Experimental ethnography / Catherine Russell* (Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 1999., 1999), 277.

We called a halt after two hours, but our slaves and the Nyamwezi did not return for four hours. About seventy of the enemy had been killed... (42)  
(*Muda wa saa mbili sisi tukasimama, watwana wetu na **Wanyamwezi** hawakurudi ila saa ya nne. Wameuawa **washenzi** wapata watu sabini...*)  
(41)

We were on the look out for our Nyamwezi porters who had dispersed to pound their millet, and some of our slaves also. (43)  
(*tukatezama wapagazi wetu **Wanyamwezi** walitafarraki kutwanga mtama wao, na baadhi ya **watumwa**) (42)*

At this time their leader was Mwinyi Dugumbi, a man from the Mrima coast, from Winde, There were also the men of Said bin Habib el Afifi, the Arab, and of Abed bin Salumek Khaduri, also an Arab, and their local followers.  
(75)  
(*Mkubwa wao wakati huu Mwinyi Dugumbi, mtu **wamarima**, Windi. Na watuwa Said bin Habib el Afifi **Mwaarabu**, nawetuwa Abed bin Salumel Khaduri Mwaarabu, na **washenzi** wao...*) (74)

As in these examples, the overall text is also produced through these racialised identities, which are themselves structured with reference to Islamic hierarchies.<sup>55</sup> The text uses *waarabu*, *waungwana*, *washenzi* and *Wanyamwezi* as the categories while speaking about self and the other.<sup>56</sup> Although the terms *Wanyamwezi*, or

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<sup>55</sup> Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones : Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press 2011), 34-35.

<sup>56</sup> *waarabu* refers to Arabs; those of both African and Arab heritage or from the coast but have converted to Islam are referred to as the *waungwana*. Those who have yet not accepted Islam are either called *Wanyamwezi*, referring to people from Nyamwezi, a group of Bantu people in Tanzania; or *washenzi*, referring to the chiefs and other free people from interiors. The term *washenzi* related more to a division of people from the coast and the interior; those who were born in the interiors were seen by East African Arabic-speakers in this era as „non-Muslim barbarians“ and were referred to as *washenzi*; their identity held the „birthmark of slavery“. Tip, however, does not speak about these divisions in terms of religion, but he does maintain these divisions in the text while narrating his experiences. Finally, *watumwa* referred to slaves, either bought or acquired in the raids, is a category that stands different to all those other categories who refer to free people either on the coast or the interiors. This complex social labelling of free people in the interior of Africa, rising from the

*washenzi*, were translated at the time as „barbarians“ or „savages“, *washenzi* was a term specifically used to refer to people perceived as „uncivilized, barbarians, pagan, people of the up-country origin“- this term is used collectively in *Maisha* for porters, chiefs and locals of the interior.<sup>57</sup> *Wanyamwezi* were ever involved in expanding the trade of central routes.<sup>58</sup> In the hierarchies of the era, they could become *waungwana* by permanently moving and settling to the coast and adopting coastal Islamic culture.

Tip constructs self as either *waarabu* or *Waungwana*, as an antithesis to the others, who are either *Wanyamwezi* or *washenzi*. While at Urua, he mentions these categories clearly by representing *washenzi* as „man-eaters“ who killed a chief „together with ten *Waungwana* and fifty *Nyamwezi*. They were eaten, and those who escaped fled back to us“ (71). Here „us“ represents Tip, his Arab uncles (who Tip repeatedly mentions as kinsmen or *waarabu* in the text), and *waungwana*. Tip represents *Washenzi* as morally and ethically inferior to *Waungwana* and *Arabu*. He uses the language of disgust and detest while representing local chiefs and their people. For instance, in the case of his conflict with Samu, he defines him as a „very cruel man“ (19); *MnywaSera* was a „worthless creature“ (11) because he tried to

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hierarchical structure based on their status as supposed „gentleman“, „civilized“ or „barbarians“, and „uncivilized“ depicts the dominance of those aligning with the religion of the dominant class. (McMahon, "Introduction," 14.)

<sup>57</sup> Jan Lindström, *Muted memories : heritage-making, Bagamoyo, and the East African caravan trade / Jan Lindström* (New York, Oxford : Berghahn, 2019., 2019), 351.

<sup>58</sup> *Nyamwezi* first came to the coast from interiors before 1800. Later the coastal caravans first travelling inland preferred the *Nyamwezi* routes. However, with Arabs rising to the power, by establishing trade centres at Tabora and Zanzibar, the *Nyamwezi*'s position changed and they became waged labour for the Arabs. As Glassman noted, Arab expansion steadily subverted *Nyamwezi* autonomy and they became „approximated waged labour“. (Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot : Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888*, ed. Allen Isaacman and Jean Hay, Social History of Africa, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), 55, 59.) However, they continued to see themselves as the „autonomous agents engaged in prestigious quest of power and honor“. ( Stephen J. Rockel, "A Nation of Porters': The *Nyamwezi* and the Labour Market in Nineteenth-Century Tanzania," *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 2 (2000), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/183432>.)

revolt against the authority of Tip's father; the chief Msiri of Katanga is a „treacherous fellow“ (53); people of Urua were „hostile and stole from us“ (61); Taka, the brother of the chief of UGala, was „arrogant and treacherous“ (39); the locals of UTetera are „wretched fellows“ „hampering your prestige“ (75). These images reinforce the binaries of civilized-uncivilized, refined-barbarian, through which the East African Arab community of the time understood Africans. These categories - based on, as Jonathon Glassman suggests, Arabocentrism, which influenced „ethnicized notions that imputed inborn barbarism to mainland descent“ - allowed Tip to present non-Muslim people from interiors as the others.<sup>59</sup>

The text, produced through these categories, allowed Tip to adhere to certain binaries of civilized/uncivilized, light/darkness, derived from aspects of the Arab culture of his time.<sup>60</sup> As Tip decided to go to Irande, a region between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Lomani (present-day DRC) and the people of that region warned him that there was „no ivory, only *Viramba*‘<sup>61</sup> (57), he recounts , „We didn't believe this as no *Mwungwana* had ever been there- not since the beginning of time“ (57).<sup>62</sup> Tip's disbelief at local information because no *Mwaungwana* had ever been to that place suggests that he considered Arabs, or those who were „gentlemen“ because of their conversion to Islam, as an authority on knowledge about the African landscape, thereby creating Arab Muslim religious hegemony. The word *waungwana*

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<sup>59</sup> Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones : Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*, 35.

<sup>60</sup> Deborah Gabriel, *Layers of Blackness: Colourism in the African Diaspora* (London: Imani Media Ltd, 2007), 9.

<sup>61</sup> Viramba is a piece of Raffia cloth that was used as currency for trade

<sup>62</sup> Waungwana in Swahili refers to gentleman; M-as prefix indicates singular and Wa- as prefix indicates plural. This term is now often understood as used for freeman; however, the exact translation is „gentleman“. In the nineteenth century it was used for those who identified with the urban culture of the coast. Therefore, any person, slave or free, could become waungwana by learning the urban culture of coast, which largely referred to the Islamic religion. For more details see Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones : Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*,

reproduces the binary of „civilized“ against the so-called „uncivilized“ on the basis of their acceptance of Islam.

Tip also constructs self as brave, honest, kind man against the dishonest, cunning, „warmongers!“ (95) of the central region of Africa. When the chief of Mkahuja, rivals of Kasongo, the chief of UTetera, came and blocked their way and declared war by „beating the drums“, he instructed his men „no shooting unless one of our number were attacked...“(65). Here he represents himself as fighting or burning the villages only as a response to an attack initiated by the locals. In yet another example, Tip describes how when the village chief Samu, after being „given a great quantity of goods“ as a price for ivory, summoned Tip’s people „to collect the tusks“. But Samu when turned out to have treacherous intent, Tip was, as he tells it, forced to fight:

He had posted all his warriors ready, a fact of which we were unaware. Twenty of us went, together with ten of our slaves. When we arrived and I was leading, I was suddenly hit by three arrows; two of which hit me squarely and one slightly. A youngster, Saud bin Sef elMaamri was also hit and two slaves, who died immediately. However, our guns were loaded with bullets and buckshot and the enemy were packed like sardines. One round and they died like birds! When the guns went off, two hundred were killed instantly and others were trampled to death! They fled. (19)

Tip claims that he was „unaware“ of the intentions of Samu to attack Tip and his men with an intent to kill; thus, Tip’s reaction is, in his telling, justified, and the high number of casualties was due to the guns that killed two hundred men „instantly“. In these ways the narrative foregrounds „justice“ and honesty; Tip does not show himself raiding villages, rather he enters a village for trade, pays the price and

expects the ivory to be given, however when the chiefs and headsman try to be dishonest and attack his caravan, only then is Tip violent.

Tip works with and reproduces social categorisations, but he does so in order to make specific and distinctive claims for himself – claims to particular kinds of kinship on his mother’s side and his father’s side, claims about his ability to help Europeans, claims about his paternalistic approach to his slaves. By making claims about his relationship with these „others“, and representing various „others“ as culturally constituted, he sets himself up as having exceptional qualities that confer authority upon him – to know and interpret the behaviour of various others, and to exert his will on people and events. In other words, he personally can only be an „exceptional“ individual against a backdrop of „others“ who are not exceptional but are merely typical of the groups to which they are deemed to belong.

### **Constructing Heroic Self: Exceptionalism in the text**

Tip constructs a heroic self while playing into the trope of exceptionalism. At the beginning of the text, he asserts himself as a superior leader. After his first trip, Tip’s father gives his „property“, ivory and other trading items to a „fellow from the Mrima coast at Mbwamaji“, and instructs Tip to „go with him, travel together“ (9). Tip rejects this, saying, „I can’t go on to URua, with your property in the possession of a man from the Mrima coast and I following along with him.“ (9) When rejecting his father’s instructions by specifically mentioning „a man from the Mrima coast“, he makes it clear that he did not want to follow somebody he considered as inferior to *waungwana* or Arabs. Following this, when his father allows him to lead the caravan, Tip presents himself as a successful trader and a capable leader by judiciously



buying „the small“ tusks but in a „large number“, whilst other traders purchased the large ones for which the price was „high“ (11).

Further to constructing himself as an efficient trader throughout the text, Tip also presents himself as an exceptional explorer, willing to go where no *‘Mwungwana* had ever been there- not since the beginning of time“ (57). Before embarking on this journey, he visits a fellow Arab, Juma bin Salum Rakad, who was camping at Urua and asks:

„Do you intend to stay here or to go on?“ He replied, „I don“t intend to venture into unknown country. If we stay here the WaRua will bring in ivory, and we shall be able to buy it, a little at a time, until we have enough. I don“t want to go into new territory!“ I said to him, „Look here, I“ve got my ivory, I“ll leave it with you, and when I return I“ll come and collect it!“ He said to me, „[...]do you intend to go where no one has been before?“ (59)

In addition to wanting to explore the „unknown country“, he shows determination to finish his journey(s) despite receiving warnings about the dangers and challenges he would face. When he decided to go to „Itawa, to Samu“s, beyond Lake Tanganyika“:

The porters tried to dissuade us saying, „Don“t go to Samu, he“s got plenty of ivory but he is treacherous. He has killed several Arabs and WaBisar, as well as several people from the Mrima coast [...] It is better that you stayed here, and got what trade you could, a little at a time. We have known of his character for a long time now.“ In the end, however, we went on and reached URungu. All the porters told us, „You“ll not return. You“re merely taking goods to him!“ We saw one old Arab, by name Amer bin Said eshShaksi. He told us, „Don“t go to Samu“s place. A long time ago we went there with Muhammed bin Saleh enNabhani, Habib bin Hamed, Hamed bin Abdulla,

both elMurjebi [...] We were attacked. They took our goods and some were killed...you would be wise to go back" (17).

By documenting his decision to continue the journey despite these explicit warnings of death and destruction, Tip is able to represent himself as a determined, intrepid traveller, and thereby perform heroism.

According to his text, Tip also faced logistical challenges, such as food shortages. Yet, he represented himself tackling these issues and managing his fears wisely and courageously. When on his way to Ukonongo, his caravan halted near Ugala and his „young slave“ was attacked by locals. Tip tried to stop the conflict from escalating by instructing the slave, „Don“t make a fuss and make things difficult for us!...don“t make a dispute out of it!“ (41) Tip does not want to be in conflict with the locals: „As for us we were fearful: the village was a large one...“. Still, when his enslaved boy, despite Tip“s instructions, attacks the locals and the conflict escalates, Tip appears as a brave commander who, looking at the situation where they „were certain to die“, „caught“ the chief and „told him to call off his men“ (41). In another incident, they „got no supplies“ at Ugogo, „and at every village“ they „were turned away“, putting them „in serious trouble, with men dying everyday“ (33). When they „reached the last village in UGogo“, the „warriors across the path“ said, „you are forbidden to enter the villages; go round through the bush and come out at MgundaMkali“ (33). Tip knew that „through the bush to MgundaMkali, it is a twelve day journey from where we are, and we“ve only a little food“, so he decided to „go through the village by force! If they decide to fight, we“ll fight!“ (33). Tip represents himself implementing his leadership and enterprising skills. Even in the worst conditions, he performs as an unstoppable, undefeatable leader. At Samu“s village,

when Tip was badly wounded and „the enemy, when they compared their numbers with our puny force, were scornful“, Tip did not lose his vision. Rather, he depicts himself courageously leading his men. He „gave orders to our chaps“ to „put ten guns to each entrance (doorway). They won“t see us because of the fire. Fire off your guns and come back immediately afterward“ (21).

Tip, then, represents himself as efficient, brave, and skilful in warfare tactics. In many instances, he documents that he was „afraid; the country was large, the people numerous and hostile“ (21). Nonetheless, by „staying in the village for a month, together with our fear“ (21), Tip highlights his own sense of bravery and courage to tackle challenges and fears, and not to allow warnings, threats, fears, or challenges to obstruct his journey. As a self-represented hero, Tip is determined to face and defeat any obstacle in the way of his destination.

In this sense, Tip also portrays himself as exceptional to others. Through his actions and the words of his characters, he portrays himself as being superior in terms of his bravery, aggressiveness, and ferocity in war fare. Mirambo, a rival of Tip“s father, says „No one but Hamed bin Muhammad would fire guns like that, no one but he“ (97). This „no one“ included Arabs and local chiefs. Moreover, when Tip was at Ituru, „war became inevitable“ (37) between his men and Chief Mkasiwa and the Wali Said bin Salum eLemki over the tusks of an elephant killed by Tip“s men in Mkasiwa and Wali“s area. The men of Mkasiwa and Wali were ready to fight, but the same day their „war broke out with the Ngoni Mafiti“ who „had been brought by Mshama, Mkasiwa“s nephew“ with intent of seizing „the chieftainship of Tabora from his uncle and wanted to kill him“ (37). Since the „local Arabs in Tabora had not experienced any fighting“ and „they needed our help“ and thus they „suspended“ the

conflict with Tip (37). Tip then „sent word to the folk in Tabora to come as soon as they got the message“ for helping Mkasiwa (37). Here, local Arabs are not only shown seeking Tip“s help but also looking to Tip for his expertise in war. He was perceived as able to save them and to even lead them to victory, thus saving their lives and position. Tip uses this story to remind his readers of his bravery, as well as present an image of Nyamwezi contrary to European perception of them as cruel fighters: „All these Arabs and the Nyamwezi were very timid and fearful, as they were not use to fighting“ (39). Tip makes himself perform as superior and exceptional to others multiple times in the text.

Through other Arabs, locals, chiefs and porters, Tip is able to represent himself as being a saviour to all. After helping Mkasiwa and Wali to win the fight, Tip decided „to get out and go to Atawa and Ruemba“, Mkasiwa, Wali and their people, „would not let us go“ because they feared „when all was quiet the Ngoni would return“ (39). They wanted Tip to „wait and listen for signs of war“, but Tip leaves after assuring their safety by „leaving some of our number behind“ (39). Elsewhere in the text, we see further examples of others looking up to Tip. Chungu (chief of Tafuna, URungu), knowing the victory of Tip over Samu, invites Tip to „stay in my village“ (23). Tip assures them, „I am not leaving here until I have completely crushed the people of Samu and they bring peace“ (25). Thus, Tip presents himself as a hero entitled to save his kinsmen and local chiefs from a „very cruel“ (19) man, Samu.

Tip suggests that it is his bravery, courage, and skilfulness that causes everyone to treat him with respect, and to invite him to stay with them and become their chief, for his presence meant security. After returning from a trip with Cameron, at Nyamgwe, „My kinsmen from the coast“ also invite him to „stay here, let us be

together!" After this, wherever he went „Kihandai, Kibogo and Kabanga, and all the locals came to me; and the chiefs of each area wanted me to stay and be their chief" (77). When the locals revolted, the „Arabs who were in Kasongo" told him „We leave both large and small matters to you; all authority is yours and no one will argue with you" (77-79). By this, Tip is represented as a sole authority amongst the locals and Arabs in the interior. Tip appears as a heroic saviour of all, and his exceptionalism further confirms his heroism.

### **Selecting, Interpreting and Manipulating Voice and Silence**

Silence and voice play an important role in Tip's construction of a heroic self. Tip diplomatically selects silence to manipulate opportunities and the voice of others, sometimes he interprets the silence of others to play into a saviour-saved trope, and other times he uses silence to claim solidarity with Europeans. This self-represented adventurous, brave explorer and trader, when knowing that his „great quantity of ivory" will be lost, as his men are „youngsters" who are not „experienced in fighting", can be seen taking „advice" and keeping „patience" even though „four of my Nyamwezi were taken from me and killed, for no justifiable reason" (95). Until this point in the text, Tip has been responding to every attack, despite presenting himself as trying to avoid conflict. Once the conflicts escalated, he appears as a brave leader. However, in this case, when he was on his way to the coast with „a great quantity of ivory", even though the conflict had already started through the killing of his men, he selected to be silent and leave „Uvinza" „safely" (95). He portrays „Said bin Sultan" advising him against his decision to „attack"; by doing this he still maintains his heroic trait but also presents himself as listening to his fellow travellers,

and perhaps especially listening to those who are of high status, like the Sultan. He uses the voice of Said bin Sultan to play into silence, when he knew that his chances of victory were less and his ivory was at stake.

Similarly, at Samu's village, as Tip mentions crossing a „wide“ river after reaching Urungu (a region in present-day Southern Tanzania), after healing his wounds and settling a conflict with the chief, Tip calls „together our company, *waungwana* and slaves, and asked them for their opinions“ to decide on their next steps (21). Though „no one answered“ (21) and finally Tip's „view“ was followed, nonetheless by representing himself as giving slaves a chance to voice their „opinion“, he tries to prove the „brotherly relation“ with slaves – though this also validates his paternalistic claims vis-à-vis his slaves, who despite the opportunity are represented, through their silence, as wanting to take their lead from him.

Tip employs the voice, as well as the silence, of others to prove his innocence in various allegations as well. For instance, Tip is known to have come into conflict with Stanley several times. However, when Stanley brought a case against Tip in Zanzibar courts, seeking „compensation for losses from the death of followers“ of the Emin Pasha Expedition, this put Tip's assets in „the hands of British Indians impounded till the time of settlement“.<sup>63</sup> This indicates a bitter relationship between Tip and Stanley. Thus, Tip uses Emin Pasha's voice to claim innocence in this case. He mentions Pasha's letter which he received at Tabora stating, „Your people [those whom Tip had supplied for the expedition] are not angry with you. Stanley came with them, and I also as far as the coast. Your people accorded me great respect, and they have now gone back to Manyema, Stanley's charges are false.“ (133) Here Tip,

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<sup>63</sup> Swann, *Fighting the Slave Hunters In Central Africa*, xxxiv.

through the voice of Pasha, claims innocence as his men „are not angry” with him, presumably because he has not breached any contract with them. Pasha’s voice declaring „Stanley’s charges are false” confirms and approves Tip’s depiction of Stanley’s „lying manner” (87).

Since Tip was writing *Maisha* at the demand of Brode, he may have considered Brode and other Europeans as his first readers; it is therefore unsurprising that Tip represents himself as a respectable friend amongst Europeans, with the exception of Stanley because, according to Tip, he has „never seen a European nor, for that matter, any human being who is such a liar” (135). Later, he uses an English Governor who treated him „kindly”, and then Mr. Nicol who told him „there is no case between us”, to expose the falsehood of „Stanley’s charges and his lies” (135).

Tip not only uses the voice of others to construct a positive self, but also represents other people as fearful of his position of power, and thus presenting himself as authority in the region. For instance, while at Urua:

There appeared some men from Katanga, from Msiri, bringing twelve pieces of ivory as a gift to me. He (Msiri) had heard that we intended to attack him though we had-as a matter of fact- no intension [sic] of so doing. But he was afraid, after our defeating Samu and Runda Cazembe, and sent us these tusks; He sent messengers saying, „I have heard that Tippu Tip intends to attack me, but I have no quarrel with him.” I replied „That is true, I have heard he (Katanga) is a treacherous fellow, attacking people without provocation; certainly, then, I shall come and attack him unless he brings me twenty pieces of ivory in addition to these!” The messenger said, „Right, we shall bring them!” (53)

In this case, Tip had already acquired authority and power in the area by defeating Samu and Cazembe, „the most powerful chiefs“ in the interiors. Msiri, the chief of Katanga, sending „twelve pieces of ivory as a gift“ indicates his acceptance of Tip’s authority, and his fear of being attacked by Tip, thus presenting Tip as superior in power to him. Tip clearly mentions in the text that „as a matter of fact“ he had no intention of attacking Msiri. However, in the event itself, he shows himself choosing to remain silent on this matter, and manipulating their fear to gain profit out of them: he remained silent on his „no intension“ [sic] but asks for „twenty pieces of ivory in addition to these“ to maintain peace. Tip manipulates, by choosing to remain silent in the event itself, their fear of being attacked by him. This in the event gains him wealth and, in the text, represents him as an authority in the region.

Tip further uses his silence to construct himself as a kind and helpful man, specifically towards Europeans, thereby claiming solidarity with them. When Tip was at Ugarawe, he describes how Mr. Cameron, „the Englishman appeared“, requesting Tip to take him to „your place“, and said „Please find a way for me to get to the west coast“ (75). Cameron „intended to follow the Congo but the people of Nyangwe“ had not granted him „this permission, and the man I came with has told me a kit of lies about this permission. I’m afraid they’ll attack me“ (75). Tip agrees to help him, but asked him to „wait for me; I shall be going to Kasongo to see my kinsmen, when I go I’ll take you with me!“ (75). However, Cameron asks him to, „Leave what you’re doing here, let us go tomorrow!“ Even though he is presently meeting his kinsmen in Nyangwe after a long period of absence, Tip represents himself dropping his own plans and „agreed to start on the morrow“; and the next morning, he ‘went back and said farewell to my kinsfolk of Nyangwe“ (75). By abruptly leaving his meeting with



his kinsmen and agreeing to go with Cameron at short notice, Tip presents his loyalty towards Europeans. However, when his kinsmen, astonished by this, ask, „What, have you dropped everything for this European?“ I said I had to go (in any case) with him (75), this represents Tip obliged to choose Cameron over his kinsmen. Tip does not represent this conflict with his kinsmen to Cameron, but documents it in the text. The silence in the event itself allowed him to maintain his position as an authority, or not show his weakness amongst his kinsmen in the eyes of Cameron. By narrating it in the text, Tip demonstrates the difficulties through which he has to go in order to help Europeans.

Elsewhere in the text, Tip similarly maintains relations with the dominant Europeans whilst representing himself remaining silent on his reasons for doing so, and also demanding others' silence and assent to this in return. When he decides to accompany Stanley to Congo, all „my kinsmen tried to dissuade me, „You have left your work to follow this European without knowing where he is going?“ to which he answered, „I mind my own business, not that of other people!“ Here, Tip demands not his own silence, but that of his kinsmen, from whom he does not want any more questions. This silence in the text allows him to present himself in solidarity with Stanley and assist him without any doubt, condition, or monetary gain as he says, „I shall go from good-will and it won't be 7000 dollars that seduces me from here" (81). This silence allows him to align with Europeans and negotiate his position in the dominant European masters holding power at the coast and the interiors of Africa. When he reaches Nyangwe with Stanley, he is further asked by the locals:

„what, going with a European, have you lost your senses? You're mad, will you become a European? Yet you're not needy, why then? You have your stock of ivory, why then follow an Unbeliever [sic]?" I told them, „Maybe I am mad, and you that are sensible, keep to your own affairs." (83)

Here, he is playing into silence through voice: by saying „maybe I am mad...keep to your own affairs", Tip is using his voice to remain silent on the reason of his accompanying a European, and again demanding silence from others on the matter, asking them to „keep to your own affairs". He is further using the voice of locals to declare the intensity of favour he was doing to Stanley and many other Europeans. As he was „not needy" so his following „an Unbeliever" was superfluous for him; still, he represents himself following him without any condition, makes him claim to solidarity with the Europeans.

Silence in the text also appears as a form of communication, paradoxically a kind of voice, in the interiors of Africa. Through this mode of communication, Tip represents himself as a responsible and trustworthy man, specifically in relation to Europeans. After accompanying Cameron to Utetera, he gave him „the WaRua and about thirty other men" to accompany him to the Portuguese Territory in Loanda. Tip „waited for three months to hear a word from him, but when I saw none was forthcoming, I knew he had nothing further to report", after which Tip „decided to leave Utetera" (77). Furthermore, when Stanley was not sure about finding his destination in the Congo, he explicitly asked Tip to „wait for me a month, until I have passed safely" (87). Tip „agreed, and waited a month, hearing nothing. I then left for Rumani..." (87). In these cases, Cameron's and Stanley's silences communicate that there is nothing to report; either the person has reached his destination or he is not

in the position of returning. Tip's representation of himself waiting for Cameron and Stanley for months, receiving nothing but silence, and leaving aside his own trade and travels to do so, presents Tip as a responsible and trustworthy man. This also gives Tip a chance to refute Stanley's accusation that he had breached the contract, thus accusing him of dishonesty.<sup>64</sup> Tip, therefore, can be seen using voice and silence to select, manipulate, and interpret, to construct a heroic self and tell his story in a „favourable light“.

## Conclusion

Though by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Arab families were well established between Lakes Victoria, Tanganyika, and Nyasa, they still had not travelled further into Central Africa. Tip, by entering those regions with which Arabs were less familiar, used the central part of Africa as a space for negotiating his power and authority, along with gaining wealth and prosperity. He claims in *Maisha* that he was not able to wield such power at home on the coast:

At this time I had neither plantation nor house in Zanzibar nor any property, but I did have a wife, bint Salum bin Abdullah elBarwanije. She had a great deal of property both in Zanzibar and Muscat. (29)

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<sup>64</sup> Stanley had a case lodged, at Zanzibar Consular Court, by Nicol, the Smith Mackenzie agent on behalf of Emin Pasha Relief Committee against Tippu Tip. Stanley believed that the Committee has incurred loss due to Tip's „failure to fulfil his part of the contract signed in 1887“, which included producing porters for the expedition. Stanley accused Tip for not providing the porters, „wilfully delaying the supply of the men, harassing and effectively starving the Rear Column, wasting the Expedition's ammunition, etc“. The case claimed „repayment from Tippu Tip of over £11,000“. Tippu Tip also engaged a lawyer in Zanzibar „to protect his position“. Relief Committee members meanwhile were also considering a better way to deal with this. Even it was considered that Tip must be brought to Europe to meet King Leopold, whose employee, as Stanley Falls Governor, he still remained. However, by early 1891, Leopold's advisor told him that Tip's visit „would not go down well with a public opinion that associated senior Arabs with slave trade“. Thus, the plan of Tip's visit to Belgium was terminated. Nonetheless, Stanley's dispositions were found false, and In 1891, a settlement was reached „under which neither side would any longer pursue the other“. (Laing, *Tippu Tip : Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa*, 256-60.)

His kinship and his paternal ancestral ties allowed him to claim a position as an outsider in Central Africa. He asserted his links with the interiors of Africa through his maternal heritage, thereby allowing him to claim an insider position. This insider-outsider position facilitated Tip to have multiple connections, and thus be in position to make multiple claims that enhanced his own status and authority. In the text, he navigates these multiple connections to construct himself as an intrepid, adventurous, chivalrous, heroic self. His diplomatic use of voice and silence played an important role in constructing this self. He used the text as a contact zone to meet and communicate with European powers to convince them of his innocence, and negotiate with them his position, power and authority.

This text has only been treated by previous scholars as a source of colonial history, to understand the operative methodology of imperial expansionism in the interior of Africa and the role of slave traders in it. This chapter, however, by studying the text as a piece of travel writing, rather than merely a historical source, acknowledges the agency of Tip as a travel writer. The chapter studies Tip's use of the text as a contact zone to communicate with the readers, specifically Europeans to whom he has lost his empire and power, to present himself as a hero, a trustworthy friend of Europeans and a significant person for European expansionism and thus deserving a position in the hierarchical power structure. The chapter treats the text as not a simple example of autoethnography but a way of operating in highly racialised asymmetrical power structure. It also demonstrates Tip's navigation through his hyphenated identity as Arab-African. This identity allows him to choose an appropriate self while responding in a particular situation, and against which he constructs multiple others. Thus, reading this chapter together with the previous

chapter, we see how both the Bombay Africans- liberated slaves (see Chapter 2) - and Tippu Tip- a slave trader- employ strategic silence to navigate through the power structures of their era. Both choose their events and experiences to represent depending on the necessity of the script of their narrative. Though they are operating in colonial structures, and are at vulnerable positions, still they control their texts and their meanings.

# **SECTION 2**

## **African-Americans Journeys**

-where I may be African, American even

-Colleen J. McElroy

## CHAPTER 4

### COLOUR ROLES: WILLIAM SHEPPARD'S POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION AS MUNDELEN'DOM

In February 1890, William Sheppard, an African-American missionary for the Southern Presbyterian Church (U.S) <sup>1</sup>, embarked on his journey to Congo Independent State via London. As a missionary of the Church to Africa, Sheppard lived in central Africa for twenty years, primarily in and around Congo.<sup>2</sup> Sheppard became the first black missionary to have travelled and established a mission in central Africa, and by 1917 became 'perhaps the most distinguished and certainly the *most widely known* minister of our Southern Presbyterian Church' (9).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Presbyterians, among the earliest Reformed immigrants to America founding congregations as early as the 1630s, trace their history to the Protestant Reformation. Originating from Scotland, as a part of the reformed tradition within Protestantism, it was taken to North America by Scots and Scot-Irish immigrants (see James H. Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996). During the eighteenth century, the Church began to develop its own indigenous leadership, educational mission and charitable institutions. While the Church believed in segregation of the Church and state, they nonetheless participated in the writing of state and national constitutions. (see William B. McAlpin, "Presbyterians and the relation of Church and State (September 1954)," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (1943-1961)* 32, no. 3, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23325641>.) In the nineteenth century, the Church volunteered in shaping educational, missionary, evangelical, and reforming work by forming its own boards and agencies to address these needs at home and abroad (see Russell E. Hall, "American Presbyterian Churches—A Genealogy, 1706–1982," *Journal of Presbyterian History (1962-1985)* 60, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 95-128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23328527>.) They started sending missions to Native Americans, African-Americans, and populations all over the world. However, in the nineteenth century the Church was divided over theology, governance, and reform—particularly slavery. When the country could not reconcile the issue of slavery and the federal union, the southern Presbyterians split from the PCUSA (Presbyterian Church U.S.A), forming the PCCSA (Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America) in 1861, which became the Presbyterian Church in the United States. William H. Sheppard worked under this branch of Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church (U.S) began its work in Africa in 1869 with its first American missionaries arriving in West Africa. The Presbyterian Church (U.S) was significantly active in places that were seen as the poorest and most marginalised, such as Congo and Sudan.

<sup>2</sup> Pagan Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo* (New York: Penguin, 2002), 4.

<sup>3</sup> S.H. Chester, "Introduction," in *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo*, ed. William H. Sheppard (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1917), 9. [emphasis added]

Sheppard documented his experiences in Congo through various means: speeches, newspaper articles, photographs, art collections and published texts.<sup>4</sup> *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (1917), published by the Presbyterian Church, is Sheppard's first full length text adapted from the lectures and speeches he gave while touring the United States in the 1890s and 1910.<sup>5</sup> The text recounts intricate details about indigenous life in Congo, specifically Kuba, a kingdom of the Bakubas in the region south-east of present day Democratic Republic of the Congo, along with Sheppard's challenges and achievements as a missionary. *Presbyterian Pioneers* represents Sheppard as a missionary, explorer, anthropologist, linguist, hunter, and hero, whilst informing readers about the role of the Church and his white companions in making him the 'widely known minister'.

Although the text has received some recognition, its potential as a travel document has not been fully recognised. Ira Dworkin, in *Congo Love Song*, examined the text for its revisionist interpretation of Congo. Dworkin establishes that the transatlantic mobility of Sheppard, and his report on the atrocities committed by Belgium in the Congo, developed political understanding of Africa, further influencing future writers and activists.<sup>6</sup> John Turner briefly analysed Sheppard's claims to

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<sup>4</sup> The majority of works by Sheppard have been published and are available in various archives. The following works, along with *Presbyterian Pioneers*, can be treated as his travel texts:

1. *Pioneers in Congo*
2. *Experiences of a Pioneer Missionary in the Congo* (available at Moorland-Spingarn Research Centre Library)
3. *A Young Hunter: a true story of Central Africa* (available at Moorland-Spingarn Research Centre Library)

<sup>5</sup> William H. Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (Richmond, Va.: Published by Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1917).

<sup>6</sup> Ira Dworkin, *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and The Crisis of the Colonial State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 49-77.



Victorian male identity.<sup>7</sup> Pagan Kennedy, Sheppard's biographer, considered the text as his 'autobiography sort'.<sup>8</sup> Many African-American narratives, such as Sheppard's, risk getting classified as autobiography - which, as suggested by Cheryl J. Fish and Farah J. Griffin, may fail to account for the significance of mobility and its relation to subjectivity.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, Tim Youngs- whilst discussing the epistemological status attained by the experience of travelling, through which people made sense of 'this vast and little known country' - touches on Sheppard's account, arguing that such texts allowed both the apologists and the anti-regime travellers to make sense of the atrocities and the Belgian presence in Congo.<sup>10</sup> Still, the text was not recognised for Sheppard's subjectivity and construction of self and the other.

Addressing this gap, I examine the text for Sheppard's textual construction of self and the other through representation of the traveller, the travellee and the unknown land for the audience, most likely in Europe and America. Although Sheppard claims to recount 'African life of twenty years', when he was travelling in

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<sup>7</sup> John G. Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary On The Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard And Middle-Class Black Manhood," *The Journal of Southern Religion* IX (2006), <https://jsr.fsu.edu/Volume9/Turner.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Pagan Kennedy's use of the term 'autobiography sort' clearly speaks of her acknowledgment of the presence of the points of departure of the text from conventional definition of autobiography. Sheppard is known to have been in Africa for twenty-five years, thus the major part of his life has been in Africa, and the text beginning with his life in America, though very briefly, moves to document Sheppard's life in Africa. It thereby covers a major part of his life; however, it does take the shape of memoir as well, based on the focused details of feelings and experiences of the writer. Moreover, the details of the events and experience are not enough to fit into the genre of autobiography, as what we get from the text is hints of the life of the author; major renowned facts are missing, such as Sheppard's involvement in a trial, his conflict with the Belgians, his son born out of his relationship with a local woman, and his relationship with Morrison. While autobiographies are significantly subjective in nature and authors are known to skip or inaccurately document certain details, Sheppard's text altogether skips important series of moments. (Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, xii.)

<sup>9</sup> Cheryl J. Fish and Farah J. Griffin, "Introduction," in *A Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African-American Travel Writing*, ed. Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), xiv.

<sup>10</sup> Tim Youngs, *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 48.; see also Tim Youngs, "Africa/ The Congo: Politics of Darkness," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

the Upper Congo area, Kassai region, the text focuses only on the period between 1890 to 1893.<sup>11</sup> This he acknowledges in the second edition titled as *Pioneers in Congo*, of the text:

This book gives a very brief sketch of my first three years' movements, out of the twenty spent in the Belgian Congo. We hope on to write and give to the public the remaining seventeen years.<sup>12</sup>

Since the text is a 'brief sketch' of Sheppard's 'first three years' of mobility, I consider it as a travel narrative more than an autobiography. I analyse Sheppard's representation of self and others while negotiating power in the text. I examine it in light of other texts authored by Sheppard, including *Pioneers in Congo*, articles published in journals and missionary magazines (i.e., *Kasai Herald*, *The Missionary*, and *Southern Workman*), and his biographical details, particularly those documented by Pagan Kennedy. I furthermore evaluate the circumstances that enabled Sheppard to choose between voice and silence.

This chapter also evaluates Sheppard's claim to a heroic persona and an exceptional identity as a black Westerner, often being titled 'Black Livingstone'. I suggest that Sheppard simultaneously confers alterity onto and establishes his affinity with both African and American identities, further developing his ambivalent identity, oscillating between what Kennedy identifies as justification of 'white colonialism' and 'black pride'.<sup>13</sup> Considering the power structures inherent in the text's production by the Presbyterian Church and the perceived expectations of its anticipated audience, it becomes apparent why the text highlighted mainly the

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<sup>11</sup> Dworkin, *Congo love song: African American Culture and The Crisis of the Colonial State*, 65.

<sup>12</sup> William H. Sheppard, *Pioneers in Congo* (United States: General Books, 2010), 157. [reprinted]

<sup>13</sup> Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, xiii.

achievements of the mission. In doing so, it reinforced stereotypes about Africa, making it resemble the accounts of white Americans visiting former or present colonies- a significant characteristic of African-American missionaries' accounts, as noted by Alasdair Pettinger.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, according to Gary Totten, these African-American travel writers borrowed narrative strategies from various literary forms to resist Jim Crow, the laws officially segregating American society.<sup>15</sup> They also borrowed from Western hegemonic structures for counter-storytelling.

Building on Pettinger and Totten, I demonstrate how Sheppard's text adheres to Western norms of superiority and simultaneously finds a way out of this, partially if not completely, by navigating between voice and selective silence. His multi-layered positionality and the experiences out of that empowered him to speak sometimes and forced him to be silent elsewhere in the text, thereby strategically negotiating power and constructing the self and the other. Sheppard's strategic use of selective silence and voice, I propose, allows him to negotiate identity, claim authority, acceptance and relevance to the power structures. Throughout the chapter, I show how in his travel account, Sheppard treats Congo as a space in which to construct his personal utopia, far from American racial prejudices; thereby using Congo for resisting a racially biased society. Furthermore, I argue that Sheppard's knowledge of African societies—attained through his training in theology, by the Church or society in general, and by his first-hand encounters in the contact zone – is strategically selected to negotiate his position in the hierarchical power structure, and

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<sup>14</sup> Alasdair Pettinger, "'At Least One Negro Everywhere': African American Travel Writing," in *Beyond the Borders: American Literature and Post-Colonial Theory*, ed. Deborah L. Madsen (London: Pluto, 2003), 79.

<sup>15</sup> Gary Totten, *African American Travel Narratives from Abroad: Mobility and Cultural work in the Age of Jim Crow* (Amherst; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 134.

to provide him safe entry to the continent where he was further able to construct self and challenge the racial structures to some extent.

### **William Sheppard: Entering Congo more than escaping American racism**

Sheppard's ambivalent relationship to the racialised power structures of his society in *Presbyterian Pioneers* can be understood as drawing on his own life history and the way he himself negotiated such power structures. This section of the chapter explores how Sheppard created a 'mask' through which to relate to white missionaries and their supporters.

Sheppard, born in Waynesboro, Virginia, in March 1865, was exposed to both a deeply racialised society and the hope of equality in America during his childhood. Sheppard was born exactly a month before the end of the American Civil War that broke out between the Northern United States (loyal to Union) and the Southern United States (Confederate States of America).<sup>16</sup> The time and place of Sheppard's birth saw the beginning of emancipation: black and white Americans were moving together with some equality in political status with Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments to the United States constitution. With the withdrawal of Northern troops from Southern states, the reconstruction era ended in 1875. In 1876, Virginia instituted poll tax, barring black Americans from the right to vote; black schools were also closed, and by 1878, mixed marriages were declared illegal. Finally, the Jim Crow laws in 1877 instigated

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<sup>16</sup> The Southern states, comprising eleven slave states that advocated upholding slavery, were one of the major areas of conflict between Union and secessionists. With the victory of Northern States, the Reconstruction era began, focusing on redressing the injustices of slavery and its socio-political and economic legacy.

the violent process of riots and lynching. Sheppard witnessed and experienced these transitional phases in American society.

The cognizance of these racialised structures and the norms they imposed on African-Americans forced many African-Americans to adopt alternative ways to be, according to Gary Totten, 'noncoercive and self-preserving' at the same time.<sup>17</sup> Many African-Americans, such as Carl Rowan and Mary Seacole, explicitly narrated their strategies of navigating racialised and gendered hierarchies of power structures to claim the right to mobility and status.<sup>18</sup> Though Sheppard does not explicitly document this, he surely adopted such strategies. Sheppard, considered 'mulatto' in the racial discourse of the time, was born to a barber and freedwoman. He was a member of a black middle-class family in the post-civil war era. In his youth, he attended a predominantly white Presbyterian Church as the only black child and was segregated from the white children when receiving instructions.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the Southern Presbyterians sanctified slavery, and thus supported the confederacy during the civil war. This speaks of the racial ideology of the Church that treated

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<sup>17</sup> Totten, "Mobility, Skepticism, and Counter-storytelling in African American Travel Writing: Carl Rowan's South of Freedom."

<sup>18</sup> Carl Rowan explicitly narrates his life as a journalist in America where he consciously chose when and where to show his camera, and described how his choice of wearing a tie and the condition of his clothes depended on the area of his travel. He notes that an African-American can be killed for 'dressing and acting like white folks' in the deep South, whereas in other parts, such as Tennessee, 'looking educated' can be advantageous for mobility(see *ibid.*, 16.) Also, Carl Rowan speaks explicitly about the reaction of African-Americans to racial encounters: he says that if black men are stopped at a traffic stop, it is wise for the black men to 'submit to the harassment and humiliation of the patrol men in order to survive the traffic stop' and to 'smile if a white man insulted me under circumstance where he obviously was in power'(see *ibid.*, 8.) ; Mary Seacole uses parody as a narrative strategy for appearing as non-threatening to her English readers' and convey her 'anti-American bias'. (see Griffin, "Introduction," 4, 15.)

<sup>19</sup> John G. Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary on The Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard and Middle-Class Black Manhood," *The Journal of Southern Religion* IX (2006), <https://jsr.fsu.edu/Volume9/Turner.htm>.

Sheppard as a second-class Christian.<sup>20</sup> Sheppard's seeking assurance from his mother that God's love was not only for whites speaks about his consciousness about this prejudice.<sup>21</sup> Sheppard managed to cope with this racism by keeping the company of 'sympathetic' whites, who had kinder and more considerate attitudes towards him, such as Dr. Henkel, a dentist and Sheppard's first employer. Kennedy implies that working as a stable boy at Henkels, Sheppard not only learned to read and write but also to 'converse and joke in a way that set white people at ease' and 'harden his face into a *mask* when they discussed the race question'.<sup>22</sup> This 'mask', I argue, and the disconnection proposed by this mask - which allowed him to appear to become what white masters and colleagues wanted him to be, in order to survive and negotiate authority in highly racialised American society - became a part of his strategy of surviving and achieving status in the white society.

If Sheppard did not completely escape racism, he at least learned to survive and negotiate his way through a racialised society through the 'mask': a strategy to choose between voice and silence; between conversations and hardening the face. In his adolescence and early adulthood, Sheppard worked under many white men, whom he always praised for their wisdom and character, and kept on writing to them despite knowing 'they'd never accept him as one of their own'.<sup>23</sup> He continued to carry his 'mask', in this case by not acknowledging this unacceptability and still maintaining the link with his masters, which allowed him to enter the domain of power and authority. With this 'mask', I argue, Sheppard learned the trick of turning

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<sup>20</sup> Benedict Carton, "From Hampton —[!]Nto the Heart of Africall: How Faith in God and Folklore Turned Congo Missionary William Sheppard into a Pioneering Ethnologist," *History in Africa* 36 (2009): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2010.0005>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, 9. [emphasis added]

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

adverse conditions into favourable ones, and tip-toed around race questions for the sake of his accomplishments; transiting from a life of struggle to becoming, in Chester's words, 'the most distinguished' and 'the most widely known minister' (9). The 'mask', allowing him to perform according to his white audience, not only became a significant strategy for negotiating his own relevance, power and identity in highly white-led organisations, such as the Presbyterian Church, but also allowed him to control his life and situations thus investing power and authority in him already.

After reconstruction, the Church, according to Ramona Austin, 'remained the major sphere in which talented blacks could develop and exercise social and political leadership'.<sup>24</sup> Also, as Fish and Griffin notes, the Church and the missionary projects allowed forms of 'traveling abroad' that helped the women missionaries to find 'meaningful work and an authoritative voice beyond the confines of -women's spherell', and this, I suggest, was also the case for major African-American missionaries.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Sheppard, by carrying the 'mask', appears to be conforming to the norms and expectations of the Church, thus not risking any opportunity or chance of counter-storytelling that could allow his voice to be heard and reallocate power in some way.<sup>26</sup>

Sheppard's ambition to become a missionary was realised at the Stillman Institute in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, from where he graduated in 1884 in Theology. He

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<sup>24</sup> Ramona Austin, "An Extraordinary Generation: The Legacy of William Henry Sheppard, the —Black Livingstonell of Africa," *Afrique & Histoire* 4, no. 2 (2005), <https://www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-et-histoire-2005-2-page-73.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish, "Missionaries and Activities of the Nineteenth Century," in *A Stranger in the Village*, ed. Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 56.

<sup>26</sup> For counter-storytelling and its effect on power see Totten, "Mobility, Skepticism, and Counter-storytelling in African American Travel Writing: Carl Rowan's South of Freedom," 7.

was appointed in 1888 by the Atlanta Presbytery. From 1888 to 1890, he served as pastor of the Zion Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia, where he faced racial discrimination. He chose to remain silent on this and keep lobbying the Presbyterian Church (U.S) (PCUS) to establish an African mission:

My appeals met with no success then, but I was not discouraged. I made a trip to our Foreign Mission office and laid my plans before our secretary, Dr. M.H. Houston. (18)

Benedict Carton suggests, along with wanting to become a pastor in Africa, Sheppard may have longed to escape the repressive milieu in the United States'.<sup>27</sup> African-Americans, as noted by Wendy Martin, generally treated travel as an opportunity to imagine and advocate a better life' outside the racially charged American system.<sup>28</sup> Agreeing with Carton and building on Martin's observation, I propose that Sheppard's moving to Africa was not merely a way to escape American racism but it also allowed him to construct a space of his own that would permit him to escape the mask', enabling him to construct a heroic identity leading him to negotiate authority and power in the white dominated society.

At this time, the southern Presbyterian hierarchy was vacillating on the issue of commissioning African-Americans as missionaries to Africa. J. Leighton Wilson, the first secretary of the Church's Foreign Missions Committee, proposed in favour of the issue by suggesting that black Americans would survive the tropical diseases and temperature more readily than whites.<sup>29</sup> Other white leaders also hoped that the

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<sup>27</sup> Carton, "From Hampton —[!]Nto the Heart of Africall: How Faith in God and Folklore Turned Congo Missionary William Sheppard intoa Pioneering Ethnologist," 67.

<sup>28</sup> Martin, "North American Travel Writing," 261.

<sup>29</sup> William E. Phipps, *William Sheppard: Congo's African American Livingstone* (Louisville, Ky: Geneva Press, 2002), 8.



black Americans would be able to 'spur black emigration to Africa'.<sup>30</sup> However, some Presbyterian leaders, such as Charles A. Stillman, feared that single black men would 'debauch the native maidens'.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it was concluded that black Americans would be sent to Africa as missionaries but not without white supervision.<sup>32</sup> This can be seen as partially resulting from the mistrust of black enterprise and partially from a desire to uphold white supremacy and control. Sheppard's application was rejected, repeating history: when Olaudah Equiano volunteered for missionary work in West Africa, in 1779, his application was rejected 'for some certain scruples of delicacy'.<sup>33</sup> For more than a century, things remained unaltered for black people in America; Equiano was a freed slave, but Sheppard, despite being born to free parents, was still addressed as 'son of slave' by the *Boston Herald*, while celebrating his success in exposing Belgian atrocities in Congo.<sup>34</sup> Sheppard was to wait for ten years before a white man agreed to lead the mission to Africa. Sheppard, like many other African-Americans, had to rely on white paternalism for deciding the shape of his life. Rev R. Bedinger, Principal of Presbyterian Foreign Mission, wrote in his book that 'the Committee gladly turned to Mr. Sheppard after finding 'a *talented* young white man, the Rev. Samuel N. Lapsley' who agreed to lead the mission for the same purpose as Sheppard. Before this,

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<sup>30</sup> Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary on The Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard and Middle-Class Black Manhood."

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> David Killingray, "The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s-1920s," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 1 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006603765626695>.

<sup>34</sup> Phipps, *William Sheppard: Congo's African American Livingstone*, 171.

Bedinger hesitated to send this *untried, inexperienced* colored man alone to Africa'.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, Lapsley was as inexperienced' as Sheppard.

Sheppard engaged with these racial attitudes through the 'mask', which allowed him to demonstrate his adjustment, a kind of self-fashioning, to the racialised norms. He describes being referred to as a 'good darky' by a resident when he returned from Africa to Virginia, for he remembered his place and came to the backdoor'.<sup>36</sup> In another incident, when after his speech the influential white congregation invited him for dinner, Sheppard was seated on the back porch adjacent to the dining room where others ate. Sheppard interacted with the guests through a window.<sup>37</sup> In these cases, Sheppard silently performed according to the racial norms of the white society to remain relevant and visible in a space and time where other African-Americans were struggling to establish their identity. This silence allowed Sheppard to negotiate his position as an exceptional African-American who, as noted by S.H Chester, was esteemed by the Committee of Foreign Missions not only because he has achieved this prominence and recognition, but that[...] he has come back to us the same simple-hearted, humble, earnest Christian man that he was when we first sent him out'.<sup>38</sup> Sheppard's growing status was never seen as a threat to his white colleagues; he did not try to be equal to them, nor did he challenge any norms. Rather, he constructed himself as a

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<sup>35</sup> Rev. Robert Dabney Bedinger, *Triumphs of the Gospel in the Belgian Congo: Being Some Account of the Mission Work That Has Been Carried on in the Belgian Congo, Africa, since 1890 by the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1920), 19. [emphasis added]. It is noteworthy here that Samuel N Lapsley was even younger to Sheppard and was as inexperienced as Sheppard. APCM (American Presbyterian Congo Mission) was his first venture as a missionary.

<sup>36</sup> quoted in Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary on the Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard and Middle-Class Black Manhood."

<sup>37</sup> Phipps, *William Sheppard: Congo's African American Livingstone*, xii.

<sup>38</sup> Chester, "Introduction," 1.

submissive loyal follower with potential to fight tropical fever and climate, and eligible to tame the 'heathens', as they considered Africans to be. Through the mask, then, Sheppard remained simultaneously connected as well as disconnected to the white American society, enabling him to navigate through the racialised hegemonic structures and enter the Church, a place substantially controlling power, as a minister. Travel, as noted by Youngs, provides a space for a 'degree of self-determination'; it demonstrates 'agency' even to those with 'little choice'.<sup>39</sup> Sheppard strategically adopted the mask to claim this agency and employ it towards some degree of self-determination.

### **Politics of the Contact Zone and Selecting Silence**

Turning now to Sheppard's travel text *Presbyterian Pioneers*, in this text we see that as much as Sheppard uses the 'mask' to perform self-fashioning towards achieving the status of a missionary, he also employs language through narration of his travel experiences to assert some control over his life, in terms of repositioning his status and authority. Sheppard's position in American society and his opportunity to travel to Central Africa came with his status of being a black missionary; therefore, he was to choose carefully between his voice and silence according to the expectations and needs of the Church. The strategic silence can be heard loudly in the text through Sheppard's voice – in what is not said as well as what is said – when seen in the historical and social context of the society Sheppard was a part of:

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<sup>39</sup> Tim Youngs, "African American Travel Writing," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing*, ed. Robert Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 117.

While still a barefoot boy a beautiful Christian lady, Mrs. Ann Bruce, said to me one day, -William, I pray for you, and hope someday you may go to Africa as a missionaryll. (15)

I had never heard of Africa, and those words made a lasting impression. God bless that good lady, so interested in me and Africa. (15-16)

The ‘lady’ here is wishing Sheppard luck for a successful career but in another continent, coinciding with white southerners’ fear of black people sharing the same social space with them. Even though many African-Americans, similar to Sheppard, were born in America and ‘had never heard of Africa’, they were seen by white Americans as belonging to Africa. Senator John Tyler Morgan advocated that blacks should be ‘shipped to their -fatherlandll for their own good’.<sup>40</sup> Though it seems likely that Sheppard was aware of these opinions in America’s white-dominated society, it is difficult to ascertain if he was aware of this when Mrs. Bruce said those words to him. Sheppard’s voice, here, allows him to retrospectively claim innocence as a child, seeing Mrs. Bruce as benevolently interested in him and Africa, and not writing anything about the possibility of her words being motivated by the white Southerners’ fear of sharing the social and political space with African-Americans.

Sheppard wrote this text in 1917, by which time these political ideas about African-Americans and Africa had been circulating in America for over a century. In 1880, Sheppard attended the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Hampton, Virginia, for three years, where he attended Booker. T. Washington’s night school. The Institute invited important dignitaries from all over America to interact with the students, and in 1882, the father of Pan-Africanism, Edward Wilmot Blyden, was an

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<sup>40</sup> quoted in Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, 14.

invited dignitary. Blyden's lecture on the European failed project of evangelization, as suggested by Dworkin, must have been attended by Sheppard, who had appeared – sometimes as a subject, sometimes as an author – in leading magazines such as *The Missionary* alongside W.E.B DuBois.<sup>41</sup> Even if Sheppard did not attend the lecture, he was certainly exposed to circulating ideas and tensions regarding the 'returning' of blacks to Africa. Sheppard's discounting of this potential implication in Mrs. Bruce's speech thus provides us with insights into his strategic use of silence to transport his childhood innocence to the text written by him as an adult, and to comfort his white audience that largely included his patrons and colleagues. By crediting his decision to become a missionary to 'those words', Sheppard avoids challenging authority and placates the fears of white supremacists too.

Sheppard employs this strategy of comforting white patrons and 'superiors' of the Church in his text, which is dedicated to the Southern Presbyterian Church who, as Sheppard writes on the dedication page, 'took me as a half-clad, barefoot boy and trained me for the ministry of Christ, and to which I owe all I am or ever hope to be'.<sup>42</sup> His being 'half-clad' and 'barefoot' points to his representation of himself as previously occupying an underprivileged position in American society, and his claim to 'owe all' to the Church exhibits his sense of gratitude towards an institution for his training but also for offering him an opportunity to transit, as he saw it, from a hard-up African-American life in southern America into a more privileged part of American society. Throughout the text Sheppard is courteous towards the white leaders of the

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<sup>41</sup> quoted in Carton, "From Hampton —[I]Nto the Heart of Africall: How Faith in God and Folklore Turned Congo Missionary William Sheppard into a Pioneering Ethnologist."; Ira Dworkin, "In the Country of My Forefathers," *Atlantic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810701878291>.; Blyden was a proponent of Pan-African ideas and always advocated returning of blacks to Africa for the betterment of Africa. He proposed Zionism as a model for what he called as Ethopianism.

<sup>42</sup> William H Sheppard, "Dedication," in *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (1917).

Church, patrons and colleagues. He never forgets to mention the white 'masters' he worked for during his youth; his speeches always highlight the role of his white companion Samuel Lapsley in the mission. He also put Lapsley's photograph on the frontispiece of this text. Chester, however, as noted by Dworkin, interpreted the text as an 'exemplar of black obsequiousness'.<sup>43</sup> Tim Youngs suggests that for African-Americans, there always have been 'a tension between self-expression and the limited means available for it'; this 'obsequiousness', I argue, is a strategy evolving out of that very tension.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the book was commissioned by the Presbyterian Church, and the Church, despite admitting black members to its leadership, was still operating in racial hierarchies.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless the Church and related organisations, such as Hampton Institute, as Carton suggests, sheltered Sheppard from crude racist experiences.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, Sheppard was provided with something along the lines of a 'safe house', in Mary Louise Pratt's sense, by allowing him space and a voice that enabled him to negotiate some power, and giving him authority to rise in the hierarchy -although differing importantly from Pratt's sense of a 'safe house' in not allowing complete sovereignty and equality.<sup>47</sup> Sheppard was aware that his readership consisted of predominantly white American Church members, thus he tried to portray himself as an African-American who is obedient to existing power

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<sup>43</sup> Dworkin, *Congo love song: African American Culture and The Crisis of the Colonial State*, 66.

<sup>44</sup> Tim Youngs, "Pushing against the Black/White Limits of Maps: African American Writings of Travel," *English Studies in Africa* 53, no. 2 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00138398.2010.533841>.

<sup>45</sup> For more detail on this, see *All-Black Governing Bodies: The History and Contributions of All-Black Governing Bodies in the Predecessor Denominations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Louisville, Kentucky: The Office of the General Assembly, 1996), [https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/allblackgoverningbodies.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/allblackgoverningbodies.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Carton, "From Hampton —[!]Ntothe Heart of Africall: How Faith in God and Folklore Turned Congo Missionary William Sheppard intoa Pioneering Ethnologist," 67.

<sup>47</sup> Pratt defines 'safe houses' as 'social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogenous, sovereign communities with high degree of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression...construct shared understandings, knowledges, claims on the world that they can then bring into the contact zone.' (see Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone.").

structures and therefore deserves to be at the top of the hierarchy at black Churches.

Sheppard's life was shadowed by numerous paternalistic white males, some younger to him, others older, but he appears nowhere to explicitly challenge their authority, not even when following orders that may risk his life. According to an article published in *The Southern Workman*, Sheppard knew that facing down five hundred Zappo-Zaps - a group of Songye people from the Eastern Kasai region, renowned as 'cannibals' - alone would never have been possible. But when William Morrison, a white American missionary and the head of the APCM after the death of Lapsley, ordered him to go, Sheppard agreed by saying 'I had to go; there is nothing else to do'.<sup>48</sup> However, Sheppard's subsequent report on Congo atrocities by Belgian company (1899) and a 1909 trial on an article about Belgian Rubber Company, 'would not fit the story that Chester and Church wanted to see in print at a time when APCM's racial policies were clear: black missionaries need not apply'.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, both the incidents, otherwise crucial and significant to Sheppard's life and his Congo experience, are missing from the text. The silence on these incidents in the text not only speaks of the mask- the hardened face- which Sheppard enacted during his early youth, but also reveals the editorial role of a travel writer, through which he/she undertakes a kind of 'scripting'- setting a narrative scene with characters performing according to the expectations of the audience, the people for whom certain

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<sup>48</sup> William H. Sheppard, "Light in Darkest Africa," *The Southern Workman* XXIV, no. 4 (1905): 221, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/590be125ff7c502a07752a5b/t/5cc5f65fb208fcb57a1f356/1556477536373/Sheppard%2C+William+Henry%2C+Light+in+Darkest+Africa.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Dworkin, *Congo love song: African American Culture and The Crisis of the Colonial State*, 66.

discourses of identity and truth' make sense.<sup>50</sup> It is to the audience, in this case white power holders, that Sheppard performs his identity. As suggested by Sidonie Smith, this performativity involves inclusion of certain identity contents and the exclusion of others; the incorporation of certain narrative itineraries and intentionalities, the silencing of others; the adoption of certain autobiographical voices, the muting of Others'.<sup>51</sup>

Sheppard's text is in dialogue with material outside of the text, such as his reports, speeches, and personal writings. By selecting to be silent in the text on some issues, he negotiates a way out of complex situations while manipulating his audience, still controlling his life even in adverse circumstances. Sheppard achieved a heroic persona and admiration for being a human rights activist, substantially due to his reports of Belgian atrocities in Congo. At the orders of Morrison, Sheppard reported on the aftermath of the raid. On reaching Pianga, Zappo-Zaps mistook Sheppard as a Belgian official. He played into this ruse to accomplish his orders of gathering evidence of the Belgian atrocities for Morrison.<sup>52</sup> Morrison sent the report exposing King Leopold's lies about the Congo Free State under the name of William Sheppard to London. This is when the world first came to know about the atrocities of the Belgian Rubber Company through an eyewitness report, and Sheppard became a hero. Yet, these reports, as noted by Kennedy, had the potential to lead to Sheppard being considered as one of the prominent black critics of European

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<sup>50</sup> Sidonie Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance," *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 10, no. 1 (1995/01/01 1995), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.1995.10815055>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.1995.10815055>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>52</sup> Sheppard, "Light in Darkest Africa," 220.



colonialism', thereby putting him in confrontation with white hegemony.<sup>53</sup> Sheppard, perhaps for this reason, avoided any conversation with European press and instead repeatedly vocalised his innocence to the influential white people. For instance, while Sheppard was in America in 1904, a Belgian ambassador invited him for dinner. Sheppard clarified to him that 'he regretted all those nasty letters and articles Morrison had written about the colony'.<sup>54</sup>

Even though, according to Kennedy, Sheppard was upset with Morrison for sending these reports to newspapers and Mark Twain, he silences his feelings in his written documents.<sup>55</sup> *Presbyterian Pioneers* bypasses even the presence of Morrison at the mission. Sheppard knew that the Presbyterians would never give him the go-ahead to establish a mission in the Kuba capital. He needed a white man through whom he could operate, thus Sheppard was well aware that the funding for the mission largely depended on the report of Morrison.<sup>56</sup> For this, Sheppard maintained that his reason to explore Kuba was to take the light of the gospel to the heart of Africa; Morrison encouraged Sheppard's ambitions of exploring the interiors of Africa, but made it clear that 'black man would take his order'.<sup>57</sup> Jan Vansina suggests that Sheppard, and Morrison, did not deplore the attack primarily because 'the conquest removed an obstacle to their evangelization'.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, for Sheppard, Kuba was more than an evangelising mission; it was a 'Forbidden

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<sup>53</sup> Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, 158.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Twain wrote a political satire *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905) based on these reports.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>58</sup> Jan Vansina, *Being Colonized: The Kuba Experience in Rural Congo, 1880-1960* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 84. [information added]

Country' (87), where the king had refused 'access to any Bula Matadi'.<sup>59</sup> So Kuba was a space where Sheppard could be an authority. At Leubo, any resident, European, American or African-American missionaries, according to Vansina, was considered to always be 'superior to anybody else' and an 'authority to intervene' in local matters.<sup>60</sup> Thus, African-American missionaries also enjoyed a superior status compared to the local people; nonetheless, their position remained somewhat subservient to white colleagues. Kuba was an opportunity to do away with this subservience as well.<sup>61</sup> Therefore instead of saying anything, good or bad, about Morrison, Sheppard presumably chose to be silent.

Sheppard's selective silence in the text not only allowed him to directly avoid criticising a white man, it also permitted him to maintain his newly acquired heroism that made white-dominated media celebrate Sheppard and his bravery. Even though he maintained silence in the text, he still adopted an alternative way to claim heroism, which is through photographs. Sheppard added photographs (figure 4), in the second edition of the text, titled as *Pioneers in Congo*, of Mulumba N'Kusu, the Zappo-Zap chief who led the raid on Pianga, and that of Chebambi, the man who led the Zappo-Zap crew, interposed and saved Sheppard from being shot and led him to the Zappo-Zap camp where the bodies of the murdered locals were dumped. These photographs, added in a single frame in the text, and Sheppard's description of them demonstrate his authority to see and capture them, specifically the Zappo-Zap chief who led the horrifying raid and was thus capable of capturing other black people.

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<sup>59</sup> Bula Matadi literally means 'stone breaker', this was a name given to Henry M Stanley by the Congolese people after he used dynamite to blast a road from the lower river to Kinshasa. Later the local people started using this collectively for white explorers and missionaries (see *ibid.*, 38.).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

Chebambi's photograph and the description explicitly mentioning his role in saving Sheppard at once speak for the physical presence of Sheppard in the war zone. His near encounter with death in the description of the photograph raises him to the level of Victorian heroes whom he recognised in his text as Triumphant Martyrs' who were murdered by the natives' (25).

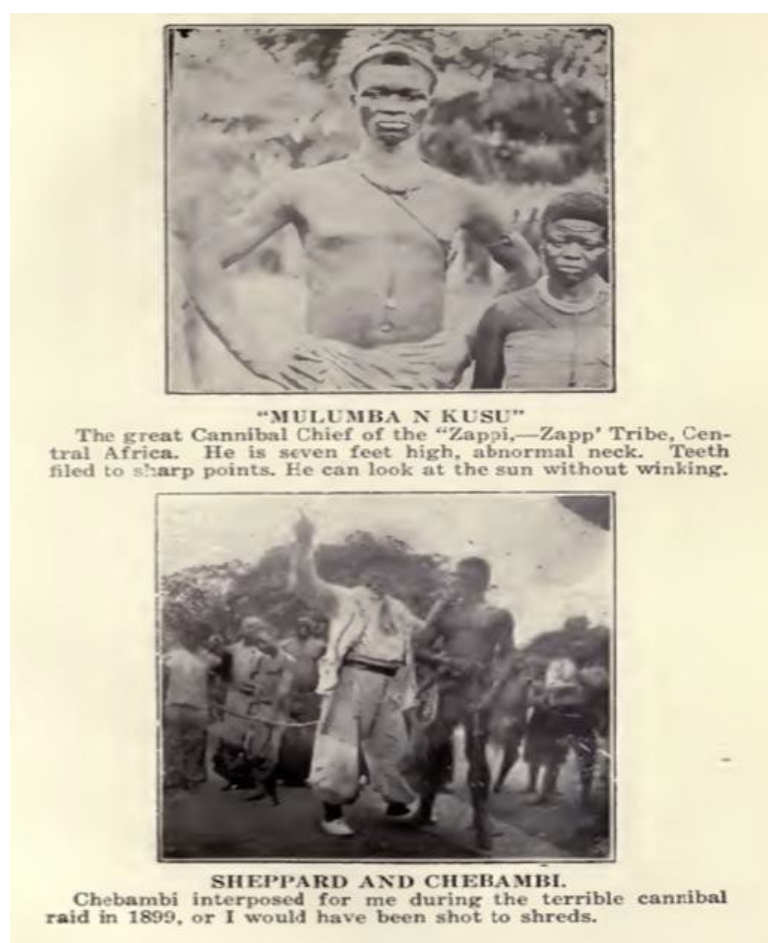


Figure 4

Photograph published in *Pioneers of Congo*, pp 65



Figure 5



Figure 6

Photograph published in *Pioneers of Congo*, pp 112 and 104 respectively

The silence allowed Sheppard to access money and support from the Presbyterians to establish and maintain a station at Ibanche, which was his personal utopia, his model of equality and peace'.<sup>62</sup> At Ibanche, Sheppard was superior to all: he was the master and would never be expected to eat in the porch and converse through the window, nor he was a 'darker' there. In the many photographs that he added in *Pioneers of Congo*, Sheppard can be seen posing with locals, his Church and his home (figure 5, 6). In one photograph, he even added the title saying 'chief of Ibanche'.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, 152.

<sup>63</sup> Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary on The Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard and Middle-Class Black Manhood."

Sheppard in these photographs no longer appears as a submissive subservient black missionary. He politically manipulated contact zones, both in America and Africa, through his African-American status, by sometimes claiming a position of power through voice, comforting white egos by reinforcing stereotypes and approving their knowledge of Africa; and other times through silence, allowing him to keep hold of his job, a passport to Belgian Congo, and money raised by whites for his mission. In these contact zones, Sheppard adopted and performed racialised labels such as, 'good darky' and 'White-black'. While in Congo he carried the burden of proving his Western 'superiority', thus performed as a 'white American' travelling to Congo by delinking himself from 'uncivilized' black identity and being a 'good darky'.<sup>64</sup> He negotiated the contact zone in all his speeches and reports to accomplish his ambitions of establishing his personal utopia at Ibanche, Congo, where he constructed himself as a heroic, exceptional saviour, superior to those who he intended to convert.

### **Performing Ambivalence: Alterity and Affinity**

Sheppard opens *Presbyterian Pioneers* by writing that, 'Many requests have been made of me to write something of my life. May I say that, even from the beginning, it has been a very checkered one'(15). This sense of a 'checkered' life is, I suggest, reflected in the different perspectives he operates with throughout the text. While narrating the moment the *Adriatic* leaves behind the New York port for

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<sup>64</sup> This trend, specifically in African-American travel writing, of resembling travel writing by 'white Americans visiting those parts of the world over which the United States exerts formidable economic, political and cultural influence' has been discussed by Alasdair Pettinger and other scholars. See Pettinger, "'At Least One Negro Everywhere": African American Travel Writing," 79.

England, from where they were to sail for Africa, 'the richest, the darkest and the most neglected' (19), Sheppard narrates a poem:

*Native land*, we love thee;  
All thy scenes, we love them well;  
*Home*, and friends which smile around us.  
Can we leave thee? Can we say farewell?  
Far in *heathen* lands to dwell?  
"Yes, we hasten from thee gladly  
To the *strangers*, let us tell  
How He died, the Blessed Saviour,  
To redeem a world from hell  
Native land, Farewell, farewell!"

(19) [emphasis added]

Sheppard's relationship with America as his 'native land' and 'Home' allows him to see Africa as a 'heathen land' and its people as 'strangers'. He places his travel as a part of 'nationalistic and imperialistic' ideology, in the terms of Fish and Griffin, that was based on the idea of Western supremacy that demanded spreading 'enlightened Christianity to other cultures'.<sup>65</sup> This is where the text provides a point of departure from the limited understanding of the African-American missionary accounts as predominantly the narratives of 'returnees'.<sup>66</sup> Sheppard is not returning to his 'native land'; rather, he leaves his 'native land' to live amongst the 'strangers'. This distance

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<sup>65</sup> J. Fish, "Missionaries and Activities of the Nineteenth Century," 55.

<sup>66</sup> John C. Gruesser, "Afro-American Travel Literature and Africanist Discourse," *Black American Literature Forum* 24, no. 1 (Spring, 1990), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2904063>.

and alterity allowed Sheppard to see and make sense of Africa and its people through the hegemonic discourses circulating widely in the southern United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, as Virginia Smith noted, 'Africa never leaves the consciousness of former slaves and their descendants'.<sup>67</sup> Sheppard also through this consciousness acquires a different point of view from the hegemonic white culture. Though he never evokes his belonging to African society and culture explicitly in this text, he acknowledges his ancestral ties with the continent elsewhere. For instance, after his arrival in the Congo, in a letter published in the monthly journal *The Missionary*, Sheppard conveys his happiness on coming 'to the land of his forefathers'.<sup>68</sup> In another report published in the same journal, Sheppard registered his grief on finding 'how blind my people are'.<sup>69</sup> Thus in common with other black travellers such as Colleen J. McElroy, discussed by Tim Youngs, who are often caught between affirming both the 'resemblance to and difference from other Black people', Sheppard, too, is torn between affinity and alterity, or trapped in his double consciousness.<sup>70</sup> *Presbyterian Pioneers* can be seen coming out of this double consciousness as Sheppard oscillates between the two identities: trying to claim affinity and belonging with both blacks and whites in Africa and America, at the same time trying to claim alterity and distance as well, trying to become both black and Livingstone. Du Bois argues that double-consciousness 'yields the Negro no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see

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<sup>67</sup> Virginia Whatley Smith, "African American travel literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, ed. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 202.

<sup>68</sup> quoted in Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary on the Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard and Middle-Class Black Manhood."

<sup>69</sup> quoted in *ibid.*; Pettinger, "'At Least One Negro Everywhere": African American Travel Writing," 81. [emphasis added]

<sup>70</sup> Youngs, "African American Travel Writing," 114.

himself through the revelation of the other world'.<sup>71</sup> However, I argue that the same 'dual identity' when transported to Africa, allowed Sheppard to play, select and exploit the insider-outsider position, which in turn empowered him to claim power and authority, and construct a textual identity that performs as a counter-narrative to hegemonic white discourses.

This photograph (figure 7) with Kuba dignitaries, published on the cover page of Sheppard's biography by Kennedy, and later analysed by her in the biography, depicts the dynamics of being in an in-between position, being an insider and an outsider simultaneously. Sheppard, with his pith helmet and white suit normally associated with white explorers dominating the photograph, resembles a Victorian hero standing in the African space; however, as he stands on the animal skin with an African hunting spear, amidst African hunters, his blackness also allows him to replicate the image of African huntsman and warrior. Since he possesses the symbols of power from both the cultures, he can be seen claiming power and authority equally and simultaneously in both the cultures. The photograph portrays him standing at the liminal space in both the cultures, as well as occupying the central stage- thereby becoming authority in both the cultures. The dual identity signified by this photograph depicts his ambiguous insider-outsider position as well. His blackness in this photograph allowed him to claim affinity with locals and also the locals to see him as one of them; thereby allowing him a kind of accessibility and acceptability in Africa that would not have been available to his white missionary counterparts. However, his attire resembling that of the colonial explorers allowed him to claim alterity: this clearly differentiates him from the local people and also

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<sup>71</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 5.



enables them to see him as a foreigner; thereby as an outsider, through photographs, he claims authenticity and objectivity to his representations about African people and life, and accessibility to the white-dominated power structure.



Figure 7 (William Sheppard with Kuban dignitaries)

Courtesy: Cover page of Pagan Kennedy's *Black Livingstone*

This ambivalent position and identity remained instrumental in attracting various titles throughout Sheppard's travels in Africa: Africans called him MundeleN'dom (Black-white man).<sup>72</sup> As Osumaka Likaka has noted, Africans gave names to the Europeans as part of the process of observing, interpreting and understanding colonialism; the names they gave employed 'signifiers' to describe colonial material conditions directly and 'riddles, allegories, proverbs, metaphors' to attach 'symbolic meanings to their observations'.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, Sheppard's name

<sup>72</sup> Samuel Lapsley, *Life and Letters of Samuel Norvell Lapsley, Missionary to the Congo Valley, West Africa, 1866-1892* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1893), 83.

<sup>73</sup> Osumaka Likaka, *Naming Colonialism: History and Collective Memory in the Congo, 1870-1960* (Madison, Wis.; London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 4.

MundeleN'dom speaks a lot about the way he operated in Congo, and the way locals interpreted his presence. His colour was the point of affinity but his attire, language, manners and position amongst white missionaries claimed alterity. Also, Sheppard's acceptance of this title informs us about his own position- not only did the local people see him as black but white, he also performed these colour codes. Similarly, another name depicting his ambivalence is Black Livingstone, a title that continues to represent Sheppard in the United States till date.<sup>74</sup> Similar to Livingstone, Sheppard wanted to open up the interior of Africa, but contrary to Livingstone, 'never wanted to strip' Africans 'of their culture and teach them to imitate Americans'.<sup>75</sup> This text and Sheppard's life have many parallels to the life of Livingstone: his claims to have been kind and paternalistic towards Africans, his construction of an exotic image of Africa, and his travelling with his wife and losing his children for the sake of exploration and mission.<sup>76</sup> Livingstonian enterprise and command can be seen in Sheppard's case as well. As I have discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Livingstone, though alone and weak, was powerful and commanding enough to make local chiefs and fighters adhere to his wishes. Sheppard also formulates a similar narrative when in

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<sup>74</sup> Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo*, xiii. Kennedy suggests that the title was conferred by Sheppard upon himself during his lecturing tour in America in the 1910s. I contacted the Presbyterian Historical Society as well as Archives and Special Collections at Hampton University Virginia to access the promotional poster for Sheppard's tour mentioned by Kennedy, but none of these archives confirmed that they held any such poster. John Turner mentions the presence of an undated bulletin contained in Sheppard's papers that advertised him as Black Livingstone for a lecture at Wyoming Presbyterian Church. The title exhibits Sheppard's or his supporters' desire to align him with legendary Victorian explorers such as Livingstone. So, the origin of this title 'Black Livingstone' and when and by whom it was conferred on Sheppard is not confirmed (at least not to me). I, therefore, focus on the title itself rather than its origin and originator. It is, however, to be noted that had this missing information been available, it would have informed us whether Sheppard explicitly enjoyed this duality as Black Livingstone, or it was imposed on him by someone else (who this 'someone else' may be is another strand of analysis).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>76</sup> For David Livingstone's life and the challenges he faced in Africa, see J. E. Lewis, "Empires of Sentiment; Intimacies from Death: David Livingstone and African Slavery 'at the Heart of the Nation'," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 2 (2015): 218-20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2014.974874>.

Kuba. After establishing the honesty and generosity of the Kubans, he narrates a story about when his cowries (money) were stolen, and he then commanded the chief, 'I would have my money or he would have trouble'. The chief and his men came at night with the lost money and asked me not to make any trouble about it, for already the women and children were frightened' (93-94). This story replicates the image of locals as dishonest along with allowing Sheppard to claim Victorian command, authority, and power. Thus, it can be said that Sheppard's reinforcing stereotypes was a way of claiming relevance in the Victorian literary scene of explorations and travels. His narrative is putting up a case for the need for mission and his importance in the mission as an insider-outsider.

Sheppard also praises the superior 'physique, manners, dress and dialect' of the BaKubas and considers them as the 'finest looking race' who are 'dignified, graceful, courageous, honest, with an open smiling countenance and really hospitable' people, along with 'the broad streets that ran at right angles' in their 'Really a Great Town' (105) with 'statues of four kings [...] carved from ebony' (112). He thus viewed and represented African culture differently to that of the stereotypical image of Africa proposed by many Victorian missionaries and explorers. The title 'Black Livingstone', however, does not fully acknowledge this difference. Whilst aligning Sheppard with the famous white missionary glorified his life, it also consumed his individuality; it only allowed Sheppard to retain originality in his race, reducing everything else to an imitation of Livingstone.

Sheppard followed the Livingstonian model of investing in Africa for the mission of 'commerce, Christianity and Civilization'. Yet, whilst this was the primary aim of Livingstone, Sheppard used his missionary status to enter the zone that was

otherwise closed for black men. He constructed a heroic image of saviour and claimed some power and authority, in America as well as in Africa. Sheppard's travel narrative can be seen as playing with his position as 'Black Livingstone'. 'Black' allows a sense of sameness with Africans, 'Livingstone' highlights his alterity in relation to them. This reiterates the cases of other African-American travellers, whereby 'physical similarities that imply kinship are countered by the cultural distance and economic privilege in the United States'.<sup>77</sup> Sheppard's travel account demonstrates this simultaneous 'physical similarity' to and 'cultural distance' from Africans. Sheppard's 'physical similarity' enabled him access to Kuban culture, the otherwise 'Forbidden country' (87), due to him being accepted as 'one of them':

"The foreigner who is at Bixibing," said they, "who has come these long trails and who speaks our language is a Makuba, one of the early settlers who died, and whose spirit went to a foreign country and now he has returned." The messengers hastened to return and accompany me to the capital. (101)

-I want to acknowledge to you, I said I, -that I am not a Makuba and I have never been here before. The king leaned over the arm of his great chair and said with satisfaction, -You don't know it, but you are 'Muana Mi'll (one of the family). (107-8)

By translating the Kuban words to English, Sheppard establishes himself as a linguist whilst simultaneously claiming some affinity and belonging with BaKuba. He remains silent on the matter of his 'physical similarity' with black Africans and we do not know how the BaKuba perceived Sheppard's skin colour. Instead, it is through language— that is, through voice – Sheppard represents his connection with the BaKuba. He even claims that the Kuba king rendered this as an ancestral

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<sup>77</sup>Youngs, "African American Travel Writing," 114.

connection, referring to Sheppard as a 'Muana Mi' returning from a foreign land. Even when Sheppard enacts alterity by stating that he is 'not a Makuba', he records the king's insistence that Sheppard belongs to 'the family', allowing him to celebrate his being wanted. This contrasts with Sheppard's American experience where he continually sought to build relations with white Americans, despite the unlikelihood of being fully accepted. Sheppard's race likely added a layer of conviction to this sameness that allowed the BaKuba to consider him 'Makuba, one of the early settlers' 'whose spirit went to a foreign country'. Sheppard's 'shade' (he was mixed race) may have allowed the BaKuba to believe him not exactly 'one of them', but surely related to them ancestrally – a connection strengthened by his ability to speak their language and 'knows all the trails of the country' (101). Therefore, Sheppard's 'physical similarity' to those in community- his reason for experiencing racism in America-along with his ability to speak the local language enabled him to be accepted.

Nonetheless, Sheppard's 'cultural distance' from the African subjects - symbolised by his Westernised appearance, manners and association – allowed him to reinforce the image of Africa as 'exotic' and 'savage', whilst representing himself as a Western 'hero' risking his life to save Africans, thus, allowing him to claim some authority in white American society. Highlighting his cultural distance, Sheppard plays the role of an 'outsider', or a 'foreigner', which enables him to act as if he was prone to same dangers and threats experienced by other Victorian missionaries. He also replicates images of untrustworthy Africans – for example, he describes the process of employing Ba-Kongo people as their load-bearers:

On the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1890, we secured twenty-five of these burden-bearers to carry our loads of tent, beds, bedding, trunks, chairs, gun, corned beef, hard tack, lard, salt, tea, coffee and sugar. We wrote carefully in our memorandums the name and town of each man, for we were told that very often a carrier hearing of the death of some relative will leave the caravan without notifying you, and the period of mourning often lasts six months [...] Having the name and town of your missing man, you can send runners to bring back your needed load. (26-27)

Sheppard is talking about the supposed disloyalty, and unfaithfulness of Africans described by European explorers in their travel narratives. Thus, he employs the same Victorian attitude towards the African auxiliary: using African people (and resources) to accomplish his journey whilst questioning their integrity. This 'never trust locals' attitude not only degraded the role of African people in Western mobility, but also reinforced the idea of Westerners being superior and moral evaluators of Africans.

This performance of ambivalence, through alterity and affinity, gives a chiasmic effect (as explained in the diagram below) to Sheppard's travel experiences, which further allowed him to be relevant and claim power and authority in both cultures. A confident, robust black man travelling as a missionary in Congo became a submissive person in the U.S. where he was subservient to societal norms based on the idea of white supremacy.

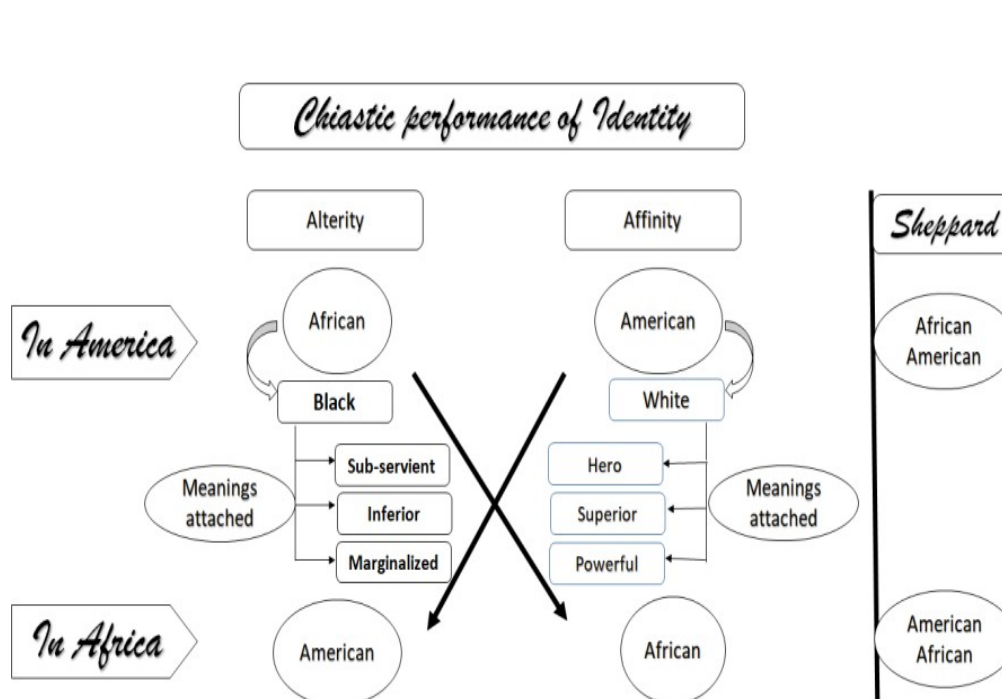


Diagram 1

### Sheppard: A Black-White Victorian Hero

Sheppard's text bears a close resemblance to contemporaneous white Victorian travellers who often claimed a heroic persona through their travelogues by over-emphasising danger, disease, and death in Africa, thus portraying themselves as risking their lives for Christianity and the civilising mission. Sheppard does this at two levels: firstly, he authenticates the heroic character of the missionaries who willingly embraced death to save the African people:

In Great Britain, Sweden, and America they were told that the climate was deadly; that they would be pelted by the rains, scorched by the sun and murdered by the natives. Yet in full knowledge of these conditions and with hearts imbued with the spirit of God they went forth on their mission of love. A kiss upon the cheek, a mingling of tears, a wave of the handkerchief and

they were off on their errand for their King. Emaciated by deadly fevers, pelted by tropical storms, stung by the tsetse flies fresh from the lazarette of misery, fatigued and foot sore from many a tramp, they have laid themselves down in this pleasant dale "Till He comes." (25-26)

Death, as discussed by MacKenzie, transformed the Victorian explorers into mythical heroic figures.<sup>78</sup> Sheppard evokes those 'mythical heroic figures' and then represent himself confronting the same threats and fears as by them. He narrates his encounter with a 'Hostile Town' in Kasai region. Members of the community reportedly 'brandished their spears, pointed their guns and called to us to leave at once or we would be killed' (45). Also, while crossing the Kasai River, Sheppard writes that their boat was saved by God from capsizing several times, and every time the boat seemed to capsize, 'We thought of our watery graves and all of our past life flashed before us' (25). Similarly, Fever, as Fabian noted, 'was the -sacrificell every traveller must bring to the black continent'.<sup>79</sup> Sheppard also reproduces this 'sacrifice' in his section 'Introduction to an African Fever' (24); elsewhere both Lapsley and Sheppard are shown having 'suffered a number of attacks of fever' (82). Lapsley's death from fever allows Sheppard to align him with 'the Faithful missionaries of Jesus' (25) who died for the mission. By aligning his case with other white missionaries and narrating their greatness, he claims the same self-sacrificing heroic image for himself and his colleague Lapsley.

Secondly, Sheppard portrays himself and his colleague as heroic through hyperbolic stories of their bravery. For instance, he narrates his crossing of the

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<sup>78</sup> J.M. MacKenzie, "Heroic myths of Empire," in *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, ed. J.M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 126.

<sup>79</sup> Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*, 61.



Congo River: he and Lapsley ignored warnings by the locals and other missionaries to wait for the right time, completing the crossing alone and without assistance. This story stretches the limits of the reader's credulity, asking us to believe that they were capable of completing a dangerous crossing considered impossible by others. Sheppard's tendency to dramatize his adventures is also noted by John Turner's analysis of differing versions of his first meeting with the king of Kuba: in Sheppard's earliest account, *Into the Heart of Africa*, he reports that the Kuba accepted him as the spirit of the king's grandfather.<sup>80</sup> In *Presbyterian Pioneers*, Sheppard maintains that the king's council recognized him as a Makuba, one of the early settlers who died, and whose spirit went to a foreign country before returning (101). Sheppard rose to the position of a missionary celebrity through his jaw-dropping accounts of the occult practices, such as accounts of cannibals, witchcraft, and wild encounters. These accounts both reinforced African stereotypes constructed by Western travellers and allowed Sheppard to claim a heroic persona: that of a robust, athletic adventurer, prompting local people to address him as the 'king of huntsmen'.<sup>81</sup> Certainly, Sheppard portrayed himself as an aggressive, strong and courageous leader through his speeches and stories of his hunting adventures. He claims to have killed 36 hippopotami, two elephants, and numerous crocodiles (35, 41). He used photographs to evidence these tales, in which he is seen brandishing massive Congolese weaponry, escaping from hostile locals, and undertaking other life-threatening adventures. The photographs (figure 8, 9) below, taken during

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<sup>80</sup> William H. Sheppard, "Into the Heart of Africa," *Southern Workman and Hampton School Record* 22, no. 12 (1893).

<sup>81</sup> quoted in Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary on the Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard and Middle-Class Black Manhood."

Sheppard's time in Kuba, similarly contribute to the idea of Sheppard as being a physically and culturally superior protector of the locals.



Figure 8 (Sheppard as a hunter)

Courtesy: Pearl Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society



Figure 9

Courtesy: Pearl Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society

Sheppard's white linen suit, pith helmet, and choice of gestures, such as brandishing his gun, aligns him with Victorian heroes: he poses with his hunt, and the African men stand in the background. In the text, Sheppard recalls how he was

asked many times by locals and even white colleagues to hunt in order to provide food for the hungry: Dr. Simms, at Stanley Pool, approached Sheppard and explained, 'how the people were on the verge of famine and if I could kill them a hippopotamus, it would help greatly' (35). Sheppard presents himself as providing food, shelter and sometimes his clothes to African communities, thereby saving their bodies and souls as a hero. He even enacts exceptional heroism, by saving white bodies as well, under explicit headlines such as 'To the Rescue of Mr. Rogers' (40). This was rarely associated with black Americans by white society in those days, thus playing into the narrative of exceptionalism. He claimed the persona of an exceptionally outstanding African-American who not only demonstrated his alterity by constructing a persona that emphasised his difference from Africans but was a replacement for white saviours in Congo as well.

Sheppard's narrating of heroic adventures – swimming in crocodile-infested rivers (32), saving men and women from drowning or being killed in other ways (47-48) – whilst rarely mentioning preaching Christianity, led Kennedy to declare that Sheppard was ill-suited for the task of a missionary (82). However, I suggest, as Sheppard oscillated between the sense of his own blackness and complicity with forms of behaviour and discourse associated with whiteness, he also moved between his identity as a missionary and a game-hunter. As other black Americans who, according to Fish and Griffin, felt 'to -redeemll the natives of the [African] continent' as their 'special duty', Sheppard also maintained that the gospel was a

light needed in Africa.<sup>82</sup> While waiting for the decision of the king of Kuba to allow Sheppard and his men to enter the kingdom, he prayed:

O Master, thou who art everywhere and who hast all power, govern the heart of King Lukenga, and may there be opened a road for thy gospel into the very heart of this dark land. (100-101)

Whilst describing the happiness, order, and management of the kingdom, Sheppard maintained the need for people to turn from 'their king' to 'our King' (108). Kennedy declares that Sheppard was using his missionary status to accomplish his ambitions of adventure and game-hunting, which would have required permission and assistance by whites. I argue that Sheppard was doing more than merely accomplishing his own ambitions with regard to hunting and leisure; he was challenging the white hegemonic understanding of the African-American self, and the superior-inferior binaries propagated by 'race' discourses, despite also upholding some of these binaries in his descriptions of Africans whilst constructing a black heroic self in response to white Victorian heroes. He was trying to negotiate his status and authority in the hierarchical structure of colonial power.

### **Challenging stereotypes as Black heroic saviour**

In the photographs (figure 10, 11) of his Congo journey, Sheppard can be seen as a symbol of the imperial male, posing with his Western attire, gun, and 'natives'. He dominates the photographs, similar to other white missionaries and explorers. In doing so Sheppard appears to be involved in mimicry, in Homi Bhabha's terms, for producing a 'a reformed, recognizable Other', who is 'almost the

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<sup>82</sup> At least 113 black missionaries served in Africa between 1877-1900 according to Cheryl J. Fish, see J. Fish, "Missionaries and Activities of the Nineteenth Century," 55.

same [as his Victorian predecessors] but not quite [due to his affinity with a subordinate culture]'.<sup>83</sup> To reduce this gap between 'same' and 'not quite', I argue, Sheppard constructs Africans as his alternative self, placing them in the 'uncivilised' category used by Western missionaries to describe Africans. Thus, Sheppard demonstrates how he, a black man, can co-opt the iconography and narratives of Victorian heroism. The Africans in the photographs are positioned behind Sheppard, either naked or in traditional dress, thereby distancing Sheppard from black 'half-clad natives' (56). As Dworkin suggests, nakedness was interpreted as 'an absence of civilization', which validated the 'need of missionary repair'.<sup>84</sup> Sheppard, having already established the role of the Church and white Christians in offering him the opportunity to transit from 'half clad, barefoot' boy to Black Livingstone, places the Africans in a similar position to the one that he once occupied, again invalidating his authority. Dworkin suggests that Sheppard's use of the same language to define his position before his own 'religious awakening' allows him to intimate that 'he is a Congolese'.<sup>85</sup> However, I argue that further to establishing himself as Congolese or African – he was not aware of the region of his ancestry – his use of similar language allows him to establish the logic and utility of black missionaries in Africa. He was 'half-clad' and they still are 'half-clad', and since he had covered the distance from being half-clad to being 'civilized' with the help of Church, he could be a perfect guide and saviour. This further validated Sheppard's presence in Africa; it seemed logical that he was the right person to 'civilise' the 'natives'.

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<sup>83</sup> Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse."

<sup>84</sup> Dworkin, *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State*, 68.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

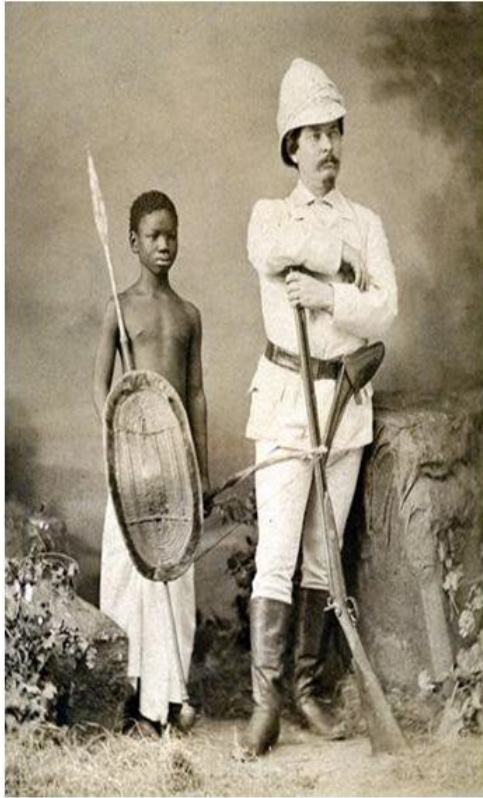


Figure 10  
H.M. Stanley and his servant  
(Wikipedia- H M Stanley)



Figure 11  
William Sheppard and Kuban chief  
(Cover page of *Congo Love Song* by Dworkin)

By demonstrating that a black man can occupy the space of heroic explorer, hitherto occupied by whiteness, Sheppard challenged, albeit subtly, discourse regarding racial differences. He also used the saviour-saved trope to challenge Western stereotypes about Africa. Whilst he did buy into the 'dark continent' narrative – and expressed the need to enlighten Africans with Christianity - he also produced a counter-narrative, portraying some Africans as intelligent, brave, better-organised and creative, rather than lazy and uncivilised (16). For example, though he found BaKubas completely different from his idea of faith and enlightenment, still they are not represented as negatively opposite to him:

Highly Civilized—I grew very fond of the Bakuba and it was reciprocated. They were the finest looking race I had seen in Africa, dignified, graceful, courageous, honest, with an open, smiling countenance and really hospitable. Their knowledge of weaving, embroidering, wood carving and smelting was the highest in equatorial Africa. (137)

By admiring certain skills, Sheppard challenges the construction of ‘savage’ Africans, and as ‘children’ in need of paternalistic missionaries, such as Livingstone.<sup>86</sup> Sheppard’s Africans in Kuba are, ‘Enlightened But in Darkness—I was astounded to find a people in Central Africa so intelligent and yet so far from the truth’ (132). Sheppard constructs BaKuba not as essentially inferior to Westerners; they are ‘Enlightened’ and are ‘intelligent’. Yet, he also sees them as needing Christianity; as being in ‘darkness’ and ‘so far from the truth’. Sheppard similarly challenged European depictions of Africa’s interior as being ‘dark’ and unexplored, whilst simultaneously agreeing with this notion: ‘You may be surprised to know that in that most isolated part of the planet there were "traveling minstrels"' (77-78). Sheppard both challenges the assumption that the interior of Africa is a blank space, while reinforcing this idea by referring to it as ‘that most isolated part of the planet’.

Sheppard documented the BaKuba astrological, political and judicial systems. He admired the knowledge system that taught BaKuba ‘the names of all the lakes, rivers and small streams. Roots that were good for medicine or to eat they knew. Flowers and ferns were called by name. The names of all the many varieties of trees, birds, and animals they knew’ (127). Even at Leubo, he represents that ‘little children could tell you the native names of all insects[...] The many species of fish,

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<sup>86</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985), <https://doi.org/10.1086/448326>.

eels and terrapins were on the end of their tongues, and these were all gathered and used for food. All the trees of the forest and plain, the flowers, fruits, nuts and berries were known and named. Roots which are good for all maladies were not only known to the medicine man, but the common people knew them also' (73). By highlighting this in-depth knowledge, Sheppard challenged the European myth of discovery and its claims to planetary consciousness; the idea that the world was a blank space before Europeans began to map and name it.<sup>87</sup>

Alongside complicating stereotypes of uncivilised, orthodox, blank African societies, Sheppard depicts African inquisitiveness in response to European curiosity, which has informed major disciplines such as anthropology, by exhibiting the Kuban men and women curious to know about "What do you eat?" "What language do you speak?" As soon as I answered one question they had another ready' (142). The travellers' gaze here is reciprocated by the gaze of the travellee, thereby assigning some voice to the travellee as well, that allows Sheppard to make these connections through voice and language, although still mediated through Sheppard's own selective representation of those voices. Sheppard's narrative also depicts brightness and beautiful landscapes in contrast to the image of Africa as the 'dark continent':

The moon and star light is glorious and is looked forward to with great pleasure, and they seem to shine no-where so brightly and beautifully as in -Darkest Africall (63)

By putting 'Darkest Africa' in quotes, Sheppard distances himself from this definition of Africa. Moreover, by choosing the moon to represent brightness, Sheppard rejects

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<sup>87</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and Transculturation*, 5.



the idea of darkness, even at night when darkness is to be expected. However, as elsewhere, Sheppard's ambivalent persona allows him to simultaneously challenge and acknowledge the 'darkness': 'Not only were the natives' skin dark as their minds and hearts, but there was not a visible light in all the town' (63). Here, the darkness in 'their minds and hearts' represents the absence of gospel, therefore the absence of life:

The parting with King Lukenga was touching. He was king, but he had a kindly heart, and I was removing from those thousands the only light they had ever seen and was leaving them in their usual darkness. (138-139)

In line with other Victorians, Sheppard represents indigenous beliefs and traditions as being inferior to Christianity. He assigns 'superstitions', such as witchcraft and burying slaves with their masters, to the absence of gospel and considers Africans as 'Poor, deluded people without God and the truth' (144). 'Poor' allows Sheppard to claim superiority for himself, and 'deluded' allows him to claim innocence for the Africans. Thus, Sheppard's representation of Congo plays into the binaries of superior-inferior by faith, civilized but uncivilized by occult practices, innocent but savage by tradition – Christianity, he depicts as the only way to 'eradicate the deep-rooted evil' (131). Thus, Sheppard aligns himself with missionaries, who were considered as the carriers of light into the 'dark continent'.<sup>88</sup> Whilst this light-darkness binary evokes the image of Sheppard as saviour of souls, his expression of 'how deeply in superstition and vice have my people fallen' allows him to sympathise

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<sup>88</sup> Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent."

with 'my people' and also evoke a sense of belonging, which distances him from other missionaries who were travelling in a foreign land, among others to 'civilize'.<sup>89</sup>

Sheppard's representation of 'half-clad natives' (21), tropical landscapes and climates takes a middle way; he does not completely reinforce European representations of Africa that demonstrated, as V.Y Mudimbe suggests, the 'ordering of othering' in which 'alterity is the negative category of the Same'.<sup>90</sup> His othering is not compulsively negative. Sheppard's text moves between him claiming affinity and alterity with African people, society, history and culture, establishing his struggle for identity. Though he tried to challenge stereotypical images produced by Western hegemonic discourse, he neutralised his accounts by pointing towards both the good and bad, as he saw it, in African societies.

Furthermore, Sheppard collected Kuban artworks and exhibited them in the U.S – perhaps an endeavour to establish value in African culture whilst remaining silent himself. The art pieces became his voice, challenging the typecast image of the 'dark continent'. This, as proposed by Shepperson, allowed Africa to compete with the West on its own terms, technologically, morally and politically, laying the foundations for 'African nationalism and collective achievement'.<sup>91</sup> As Shepperson suggests, the notion of the cultural and moral inferiority of African peoples elicited two responses from Sheppard's generation. The first was an acceptance of African cultures as inferior, and the second was to discredit the notion of Western superiority

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<sup>89</sup> quoted in Turner, "A 'Black-White' Missionary on the Imperial Stage: William H. Sheppard and Middle-Class Black Manhood."

<sup>90</sup> V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 12.

<sup>91</sup> George Shepperson, "Notes on Negro American Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism," *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 2 (1960), <https://doi.org/http://www.jstor.org/stable/180247>.

by investigating the achievements of the African past.<sup>92</sup> Alain Locke's essay —The New Negro, published two years before Sheppard's death, in which the African ancestral cultures of Black Americans are given value as equal to any in the world and declared the foundation of a unique -Negro American culture is the best example of the second response.<sup>93</sup> Sheppard could not be seen writing this kind of material. Instead, he publicly considered himself as a man saved by the Church. Nonetheless, Sheppard's silent revolt was perhaps established through his efforts to evoke respect for African culture: through his collection of art and photographs in his text. Through his valuing of African cultures, Sheppard found his voice, which was otherwise silenced under the 'mask'.

Sheppard undoubtedly wanted to 'educate' and 'civilise' African peoples, according to Western values. His style of preaching was very much that of his white masters. He was not competing with the west on his own terms; rather he was following and adhering to their terms of supremacy, superiority, and inequality. His connectivity to Africa through his assumed ancestry allowed him to be sympathetic towards African peoples and cultures, prompting his attempts to silently establish the valuing of the uniqueness of African cultures. However, Sheppard's American ties predisposed him to see Africa through the eyes of a Westerner of this era, thus commanding superiority over African peoples. His African art collection suggests, however, that underneath the 'mask', he may have had a vision of a different way of relating to Africa, beyond the missionary endeavour.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Alain Locke, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," *Survey Graphic*, March 1925, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/migrations/text8/lockenewnegro.pdf>.

## Conclusion

Sheppard's text demonstrates his movement between multiple selves: in Africa, he is sometimes a foreign missionary heroically struggling with tropical climates, diseases, and hostile locals. At other times he is a black man trying to assist Africans to come out of 'destitution' and 'death' whilst simultaneously trying to challenge stereotypes. In America, he is an African-American struggling for his identity in a racially segregated society and manoeuvring within white supremacy. His struggle of staying relevant to white-dominated power structures, at the same time making 'a positive account of black identity', disillusioned him to a level that he repeats twice in the text:

Babies Born White—We were astounded when we saw the first new-born baby. It was so very light. But in a few weeks the youngster rallied to his colors and we were assured that he would never change again. (124)

While zig-zagging between these multiple identities, Sheppard carefully selects between voice and silence to make claims to authority and power. His text is influenced and contained by the dominant power paradigms of America; in the 1890s, when Sheppard was touring and narrating his story for the first time in America, hundreds of African-Americans were reported to have been lynched. Therefore, it would have been very difficult for him to directly and explicitly challenge white supremacy. His text therefore runs into a risk of being read as appearing indifferent towards social inequality, if not understood within this context. By deciding to be silent on certain occasions and maintaining his position from which he could speak and be heard, Sheppard protected his voice, which otherwise would have risked being silenced had he tried to claim any superiority or even equality to his white companions. However, once he found his voice, even though inadvertently at

the behest of his European companions, he did speak for the rights of the Congolese.

This chapter demonstrates that Sheppard used selective silence to enter and manipulate the contact zone, and negotiate his power and position in white-dominated society. Once his eminence and acceptance were achieved, he carefully, if inadvertently, used his voice to put forward the African case challenging the white hegemonic understanding of Africa - through both his travel text and his art collection. Sheppard, through his voice and selective silence, not only enters the contact zone, in America and Africa, but also makes the Church fund his movement and settlement in Congo, which otherwise would have never been possible for an African-American in the post-reconstruction era. Due to this selection of voice and silence, the text, even after repeatedly slipping into the stereotypical binaries created by Western hegemony, appears as an answer to what Anthony Appiah pointed out as 'lack of positive accounts of black identity'.<sup>94</sup>

Though Sheppard, being a middle-class African-American missionary, enjoyed stronger political and social position as compared to the Bombay Africans and Tippu Tip, still his mobility and voice was constrained by the colonial power structures. Rather, Sheppard and the Bombay Africans were dependant on the colonial structures more than Tippu Tip. Even though Tip has also lost much of his power to the European colonialism, still he was financially, socially and culturally not dependent on the colonial structures: he was writing to reclaim some of his lost power and establish himself as a heroic friend of Europeans so as to align with

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<sup>94</sup> Anthony K. Appiah, "Reconstructing Racial Identities," *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 3 (1996), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820309>.

European colonialists to secure his already established voice and authority. However, Bombay Africans and Sheppard were dependent on colonial masters for financial, political, and social status: any direct confrontation with the dominant colonial ideology may have resulted in losing their voice and authority. Therefore, for Sheppard and the Bombay Africans, it is more on stake, which means to secure their voice they needed to employ strategic silence to perform as a 'good darky' or the 'faithfuls'- an identity that allowed them some power, recognition, acceptance and authority in Africa as well as in colonial society. Therefore, their texts may appear as an example of 'black obsequiousness' or the colonial mimicry, nonetheless, it is established in respective chapters that enacting as 'obsequious' or 'faithfuls'- or a dependable friend in Tip's case, is more of a strategy to employ the 'mask', through which they negotiate position, power, voice and status in the colonial hierarchy. Once the voice and recognition in the colonial power structure is attained, they then try to challenge the colonial hierarchies in whatever little way possible. They use, and even manipulate, the available structures to enter the contact zone of the readers, often placed in colonial societies, to construct a favourable self relevant to the power structures.

## CHAPTER 5

### ESLANDA ROBESON'S *AFRICAN JOURNEY*: MEETING 'MY PEOPLE' ON 'THEIR HOME GROUND'

I had always been deeply interested in Africa, and anxious to visit *My People* there. During two extended trips into the interior of the Continent I had come to know many fine African men, women and children; they had welcomed me with open arms, warm hospitality, and a kind of family affection, as if to say: -You have been very late in coming to see us- you *American Negro Cousin*- but though you have neglected us for so long, we are happy to have you now: and we hope many more of you will remember us, and come to see us.<sup>1</sup>

Eslanda Robeson was an African-American anthropologist, anti-colonial, anti-racism activist and the wife of the famous black actor, singer and activist Paul Robeson. In the summer of 1936, Robeson, along with her eight-year-old son Pauli, set out on a three-month journey from England to Africa, where she travelled by road from South Africa to Uganda and Belgian Congo. There she conducted fieldwork on the herd people of Toro for her graduate degree in anthropology.

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<sup>1</sup> Eslanda Robeson, "Loyalty-Lost and Found," *Arkansas State Press* (Arkansas), 8 July 1949, City. [Emphasis added]

Robeson's critically acclaimed book<sup>2</sup>, *African Journey*, first published by John Day Company in 1945, is a reproduction of her travel diary from this journey. It was published on the recommendation of Pearl Buck, Nobel Prize winner and supporter of anti-racism and anti-imperialist ideology. Her association with Robeson started during public rallies on similar subjects.<sup>3</sup> Buck's recommending *African Journey* for publication speaks of its relevance in the political milieu of the World War II period in America. Based on the first of three trips – Robeson later travelled to Congo (1946) and Ghana (1958) – the book became her earlier articulations of Black transnational identity'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming response to the first edition of the book has been analysed by Robert Shaffer. He notes that the first edition was sold out on the same day of publication. Also, the African-American press, such as *Chicago Defender* (Burns, Ben (25 August 1945) featured it in the column: "Off the Book Shelf," The writers, such as Prince A.A NwaforOrizu (columnist in Pittsburgh Courier) wrote "Africa Speaks: Mrs. Robeson's Book Is a Challenge to the Negro in America," in *Pittsburgh Courier* (25 Aug. 1945), 6); Prattis, P.L. Prattis wrote, "The Horizon: Mrs. Robeson Finds Herself Very Much At Home When She Visits 'Her People' ll, in *Pittsburgh Courier* (15 Sept. 1945) and Constance Curtis in her column "About Books," in N.Y. *Amsterdam News* (25 Aug. 1945) endorsed the book for its approach towards Africa and considered it as a case for black pride. The book was reviewed in other leading newspapers, such as *New York Herald Tribune* and *New York Times*, by white liberals, such as Stuart Cloete reviewed the book, "Contrasting Appraisals of a Still-Dark Continent," in *New York Times Book Review* (12 Aug. 1945); and other white authors such as Ernestine Evans ("An American Negro in Africa," *New York Herald-Tribune Weekly Book Review* (12 Aug. 1945)), and Lewis Gannett ("Books and Things," *N Y. Herald- Tribune* (13 Aug. 1945)) also reviewed the book. The book was critically contrasted with *Congo* by John La Touche. For all these details see, Robert Shaffer, "Out of the Shadows: The Political Writings of Eslanda Goode Robeson," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 66, no. 1 (1999), <https://doi.org/http://www.jstor.org/stable/27774176>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; Pearl Buck was engaged in debates regarding rights of minorities. Her childhood in China, where she was living as a member of white minority group, exposed her to the problems of minorities-lack of opportunities, education and inequality. This has influenced her stance towards African-Americans who were facing even worse problems as a minority in America. Buck supported the African-American argument of allowing African-Americans to participate in World War II, thus making the case for black patriotism. This debate revolving around African-Americans and their role in WWII called W.E.B Du Bois to say that it will transform the relationship between 'colored and white people'. Buck later wrote *American Argument* (1949) with Eslanda Robeson that advocated equality for African-Americans. Buck relied on Robeson for 'other voicell in American Argument. The same 'other voicell is what presumably got Pearl Buck to recommend *African Journey* for publication. (see Chris Dixon, "Jim Crow on the Run: Black America, Pearl Harbor, and the Patriotic Imperative," in *African Americans and the Pacific War, 1941–1945: Race, Nationality, and the Fight for Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).; Emily Cheng, "Pearl S. Buck's 'American Children: US Democracy, Adoption of the Amerasian Child, and the Occupation of Japan in The Hidden Flower," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 35, no. 1 (2014).)

<sup>4</sup> Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel, "Eslanda Robeson: Transnational Black Feminism in the Global South," in *Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women transformed Citizenship in the French Empire*



Robeson and her writings have attracted attention in recent scholarship on Pan-Africanism, anthropology and progressive politics.<sup>5</sup> *African Journey*, specifically, has largely been examined regarding its relevance to world politics, advocacy of Black pride, and as an ethnographic counter-narrative to Western discourse about Africa. Maureen Mahon, a cultural anthropologist, interpreted the text as a part of the African-American project of Pan-Africanism and racial vindication, a tradition that has developed among African-American intellectuals and activists in response to the ways the Black people have been depicted in scholarship and public discourse'.<sup>6</sup> Annette Joseph-Gabriel, an historian, examined this and other texts by Robeson, to analyse Robeson's ideas regarding liberation, citizenship and anti-imperial presentations of Africa.<sup>7</sup> Daniel Gover looked at Robeson's journey as the product of her American identity, stimulating her urge to visit Africa, allowing her to draw parallels between 'patronizing racism' prevalent in American, British and white South African society.<sup>8</sup> Leigh Raiford, similarly, looked at Robeson's political activism, and her anthropological vision through photographs produced in the text.<sup>9</sup> In contrast,

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ed. Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 149.

<sup>5</sup> Imaobong Umoren, "-We Americans are not just American citizens any longer!: Eslanda Robeson, world citizenship, and the New World Review in the 1950s.," *Journal of Women's History* 30, no. 4 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2018.0045>.

<sup>6</sup> Maureen Mahon, "Eslanda Goode Robeson's African Journey: The Politics of Identification and Representation in the African Diaspora," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society* 8, no. 3 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999940600882830>.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph-Gabriel, "Eslanda Robeson: Transnational Black Feminism in the Global South. II; Annette J. Gabriel, "Eslanda Robeson's African Journeys," *Black Perspectives, AAIHS*, 17 March 2016, <https://www.aaihs.org/eslanda-robersons-african-journeys/>.; "Replay: The Journeys of Eslanda Robeson," 2019, accessed 06 January 2020, <https://timetoeatthedogs.com/2019/01/25/replay-the-journeys-of-eslanda-roberson/>.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Gover, "Eslanda Goode Robeson's African Journey," *Journal of the African Literature Association* 2, no. 2 (2008): 78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21674736.2008.11690079>.

<sup>9</sup> Leigh Raiford, "The Here and Now of Eslanda Robeson's African Journey," in *Migrating the Black Body: The African Diaspora and Visual Culture*, ed. Leigh Raiford and Raphael-Hernandez Heike (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2017).

Barbara Ransby, Robeson's biographer and historian, examined Robeson's works as personal quest; as journeys to discover herself as she discovered Africa.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter on Robeson's *African Journey* builds on previous scholarship by examining the author's positionality and subjectivity as central factors in her agency and ability to negotiate identity and authority. In doing so, I argue that Robeson sometimes goes a step further than the racial vindication argued by Mahon, to construct a superior black identity by reversing the stereotypes. Robeson oscillates between critiquing racialised categories of white and black – by seeking out ways of relating to people outside racial boundaries – and countering racial stereotypes, but whilst maintaining racial categories. Considering Robeson's sense of Africans as 'my people' and of herself as an 'American Negro cousin' (opening quotation of this chapter), I consider her performance of affinity, with African space as 'my', and simultaneously alterity through 'cousin'. Deepening previous studies' focus on Robeson's production of a counter-discourse about Africa, along with the author's discovery of her own subjectivity, I analyse the ways in which Robeson constructs this counter-discourse emphasising the ambivalent identity through which she encounters and observes the African space.

In doing so, I explore the performativity of self. I argue that the multiple selves, through which she engages with the 'other', are actually the performance of selves leading to the construction of multiple 'other'. In other chapters I discuss how selectivity of voice and silence is employed to navigate through hegemonic hierarchical orders. In this chapter, I demonstrate how power is achieved in

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 99.

Robeson's text through silence and the interpretation of others' silence. I approach the text through the biographical details provided by Ransby and other archival material—e.g., newspaper articles and Robeson's unpublished *Congo Diary* from her second visit to Africa in 1946 – to better understand Robeson's ways of constructing her texts and the self.<sup>11</sup>

### **Eslanda Robeson's life as a 'Race-Conscious Woman': A context for *African Journey***

When recognising voices and silence in Robeson's *African Journey*, we need to consider the author's transition from somebody struggling to establish herself in the 1930s to somebody enjoying an important position in the CAA (Council of African Affairs) in the 1940s, along with W.E.B Du Bois, Max Yergan and Paul Robeson. Here, I consider Robeson's biography, demonstrating three key factors that formulated the context for her first trip to Africa: Robeson's intellectual growth in England, which shaped her political ideology; her economic and social status achieved through her marriage to Paul Robeson; and her historical connection with Africa and the US.

Born on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1895, Robeson was the maternal granddaughter of Francis Lewis Cardozo, an elected South Carolina official during reconstruction, and a pioneer in Negro education and in the fight for Negro rights'.<sup>12</sup> This, as stated in *African Journey*, allowed Robeson to be brought up in a household wide awake to

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<sup>11</sup> Eslanda Robeson, *African Journey* (S.l.: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1945).; I am thankful to Dr. Annette K. Joseph Gabriel for providing me with the copy of *Congo Diary*.

<sup>12</sup> quoted in Mahon, "Eslanda Goode Robeson's African Journey: The Politics of Identification and Representation in the African Diaspora."

every phase of the Negro Problem in America' (10).<sup>13</sup> However, Robeson's awakening was limited in her considering racial inequalities as an American issue only. In 1928, Robeson (along with other African-Americans seeking 'meaning outside the United States') moved to London to evade the racial discrimination of the US, and to aid Paul Robeson's career.<sup>14</sup> As Robeson's knowledge of the world increased, she started to look at the 'Negro problem' as 'not only the problem of the 13 million Negroes in America, but was and is the far greater problem of the 150 million Negroes in Africa, plus the problem of the 10 million Negroes in the West Indies' (10). In England, Robeson experienced similar racialised attitudes to those in America, although in English society this was manifested in different modes to the

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<sup>13</sup> The ban on slavery motivated the next generation towards emancipation, leading to struggle between white and black people in America. The black leaders' and activists' response to attack on the civil and political rights of African-Americans shaped the Racial Uplift Ideology that sought education, citizenship and economic independence for African-Americans. The Jim Crow laws rising out of the conflict between white American and African-Americans eliminated black people from politics between 1890 and 1906, specifically with the disenfranchisement of black people in 1870. This disenfranchisement, executed violently, shaped Southern politics and constructed African-Americans as a 'problem', and propagated a generalised view about African-Americans as criminals and immoral. The black activists, though with different approaches, tried to counter this image of 'the Negro problem'. In 1903 Booker T. Washington edited a book, *The Negro Problem* that compiled seven essays by activists such as W.E.B Du Bois. The book looked into the ways of improving the status of the African-American. The overall essence of the book was considering social status as a personal matter, thereby propagating the presence of elite among the African-American who were considered better than the other African-Americans. W.E.B Du Bois's essay 'The Talented Tenth' in the book described this essence, commenting on the personal responsibility of social status and considering only legal and social racism as a problem; however, Du Bois and other writers later revisited their views and added systematic and institutional racism influencing social status also as a problem. The 'Negro Problem' was also seen by some apologists as rising from the Western mistake of dislocating black people from their homeland in Africa to a place whose rules were not fit to be understood by black men. This approach also looked at African-Americans as inferior and unfit for America, thereby raising the 'back to Africa' movement. (see N.S. Shaler, "The Negro Problem," *The Atlantic*, 1884, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1884/11/the-negro-problem/531366/>.) Eslanda Robeson also engaged with this and wrote a term paper at Hartford Seminary titled 'The Negro Problem in the U.S.' in 1943; 'The Negro Problem: An Approach to the Problem of Race Relations in the U.S.' thesis for Ph.D. degree Hartford Seminary in 1944. She also presented a lecture in 1944 titled 'Why should we bother about the Negro Problem?' [These works are available at Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington D.C.; I could not access the archives personally, but I aspire to work on these pieces in future]

<sup>14</sup> Martin, "North American Travel Writing," 260.

American Jim Crow laws.<sup>15</sup> During her time in England, she was exposed to racism and witnessed striking parallels between the colonial mindset of Britain and America. Moreover, she came to understand the interrelatedness of oppressed peoples around the world by attending meetings in London with independence activists, such as M.K Gandhi. She then realised that 'the Negro problem was not even limited to the problem of the 173 million black people in Africa, America, and the West Indies' but was also 'the problem of the 390 million Indians in India, the problem of the 450 million Chinese in China, as well as the problem of all minorities everywhere' (10). This shaped her as an internationalist and, as the historian Imaobong Umoren calls her, a 'global race woman'.<sup>16</sup>

In recognition of their involvement and interest in the lives of African students and expatriates, Paul and Eslanda Robeson were made honorary members of WASU (West African Student's Union), London, an institution 'essential to, and the most visible by-products of, the making of black internationalists'.<sup>17</sup> Renowned Caribbean intellectuals and Pan-Africanists, such as George Padmore and C.L.R.

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<sup>15</sup> After the famous *Plessy and Ferguson* case, the Supreme Court legalised segregation. Jim Crow was a name given to the series of rigid laws guiding primarily, but not exclusively, the Southern States from 1877 to 1960s. These were a mix of social norms and legal laws that advocated the segregation of society on the basis of colour. Almost every aspect of life was considered under these laws: blacks were prohibited from using the same social space as whites, from restaurants to parliament; everything was divided by the colour line.

These laws dictating apartheid were given the name 'Jim Crow' after the theatrical character played by the minstrel Thomas Dartmouth Rice, who began performing the act called 'Jump, Jim Crow' by painting his face black and dressing in rags and a tattered hat. This performance in 1830s in North America would give its name to the social and legal apartheid which would go on ruling the country till 1860s. Any black person trying to break these laws, either trying to drink from the fountains for whites, or talking about the right to vote, or trying to approach whites, was subjected to violence; lynching was the highest form of violence. See Stetson Kennedy, *Jim Crow guide* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1990).; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1944).; Kevin Kelly Gaines, "Living Jim Crow: The Atlanta Riot and Unmasking -Social Equality," in *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (United States: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Imaobong Umoren, "Anti-fascism and the development of global race women, 1928–1945," *Callaloo* 39, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/http://muse.jhu.edu/journal/27>.

<sup>17</sup> Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 87.

James, were also the members of WASU. Exchanges and debates at WASU gatherings, and with her African friends in London, fuelled and animated Essie's imaginings about the vast continent [Africa]'.<sup>18</sup> This exposure to diverse cultural knowledge kindled Robeson's quest to understand human societies, leading her to undertake a graduate degree in anthropology at London School of Economics (LSE). Further to studying various courses on African society, culture and earlier European contacts, Robeson engaged in lively intellectual debate around issues of colonialism, fascism, and world politics' at LSE.<sup>19</sup> These interactions revealed racist tendencies in the field of anthropology, and the Eurocentric attitudes of British anthropologists who looked at Africans as primitive minds' unable to grasp the kind of ideas, we can' (10):

After more than a year of very wide reading and intensive study I began to get my intellectual feet wet. I am afraid I began to be obstreperous in seminars. I soon became fed up with white students and teachers interpreting' the Negro mind and character to me. Especially when I felt, as I did very often, that their interpretation was wrong. (11)

By being obstreperous in seminars', Robeson challenged stereotypical representations of black people by European anthropologists. The quotation suggests that Robeson was not only frustrated by the racist lens through which LSE anthropologists interpreted Africans, but she may also have seen their interpreting' of whites as them claiming authority over knowledge about the Negro mind and character', which she related to her own identity. In other words, whites' – as outsiders – were claiming knowledge of the Negro' and defining those who Robeson

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 88.

– arguably an insider – regarded as her people. Ransby notes that Robeson admired the intellect of her teacher Bronislaw Malinowski. However, listening to his ‘blatantly racist’ anthropological research made her question ‘whether a white anthropologist could do bias-free research on people of color’<sup>20</sup> – further shaping her as a ‘race-conscious woman’ with a focus on Africans and people of African descent.<sup>21</sup>

During an interview with the journalists in South Africa, Robeson said that she decided to take her son with her to Africa because she wanted him to appreciate his African ancestry, and to see ‘a black world, he will see a black continent’ (14). By referring to Africa as a ‘black continent’, Robeson creates a space of black majority and dominance. She also to some extent denies white presence in Africa facilitated through colonialism, as well as visualising a ‘black continent’ that excludes ‘North Africa’. She articulated difference between black people and North Africans by saying, ‘Of course when I speak of Africa I mean black Africa, not North Africa’ (90). As a race conscious woman, Robeson can clearly be seen as aligning with Marcus Garvey’s idea of Pan-Africanism that demanded Africa for Africans, defined in racialised terms with ‘blackness’.

However, according to Ransby, Robeson aligned herself with W.E.B. Du Bois's Pan-Africanism, which advocated for integration and equality among black and white people in America. Though Robeson shared political and ideological ties with liberal white people in America, Russia and elsewhere, her race-consciousness allowed her to look at ‘whites’ as the Other of the ‘fellow members in the very big

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 90.

family of Colored Peoples'.<sup>22</sup> This 'white Other', a 'decadent, destroyed' being, is constructed repeatedly in almost all of Robeson's writings.<sup>23</sup> As much as Robeson wanted white and black integration in America, she also seemed to be looking to reverse existing racial hierarchies rather than achieving racial equality. In an interview with M.K Gandhi in London, whilst discussing empire and potential solidarity amongst oppressed peoples, Robeson asked whether there might ever be -brown supremacy in the world, a unity of the colonies to counter white domination.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, I see Robeson, through *African Journey* and her biography, as taking a middle way between Du Bois and Marcus Garvey.

For Robeson, her classroom experiences represented a microcosm of racial representations that justified white supremacy and command. As stated above, she used her voice and knowledge to challenge racialised representations of Africans' 'primitiveness, ignorance and laziness' (13) by Europeans in the classroom, whom she clearly addressed as 'whites'. A consistent counter-argument used by white students and professors was the phrase 'You have never been out there!' (13). Robeson's knowledge was challenged on the basis of her lacking physical contact with Africa, rejecting her ancestral, cultural and social ties with the African space. This further motivated Robeson to travel to the continent, to 'see and meet and study and talk with *my people on their home ground*' (13) [emphasis added].

### **Contact Zone: A politically charged space**

Robeson's intention to 'see', 'meet', 'study', and 'talk' with 'my people' informed her way of operating in the contact zone. This contact zone, I argue, was

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<sup>22</sup> Robeson quoted in *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Eslanda Robeson, "Proud to be a Negro," *Asia and the Americas* (February 1945).

<sup>24</sup> Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 86.



seen by Robeson as an opportunity 'to show the white man that he was mistaken', a tendency amongst black people noted by Frantz Fanon.<sup>25</sup> This contact zone between Africa and Europe was more than a space for the meeting of cultures; encountering Africa physically was, for Robeson, a strategy for claiming authority and authenticity of knowledge, which further leads to claims on the power to construct self and the other. White anthropologists and explorers in central Africa had claimed to understand Africans through their first-hand accounts of being there.<sup>26</sup> The subjective observations of travellers were no more than, to apply Judith Butler's argument about gender as performed construction, 'stylized repetition of acts'.<sup>27</sup> The circulation of knowledge, through texts and institutional discourse, further enabled 'the performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, along with the actors' comes to believe, thereby emblematising the African space, or rather the space of all colonies, visited and represented by the European travellers.<sup>28</sup> To refute this emblematising of Africans, Robeson embarks on a project of counter-storytelling for which she herself needs to be in the same physical contact zone that enabled the emblematisation. Robeson's impulsive reaction, 'I'd *just have to* go out to Africa' [emphasis added] (13) to assert 'I know' because 'I have been there too' (13), further demonstrates the power inherited in the traveller to observe, represent and construct the space of the travellee. The expression 'my people' evokes her belonging to those she wants to study and her existing knowledge of them. However, she understands that to legitimise her knowledge she needs to have physically been there.

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<sup>25</sup> Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> Adam Kuper, *Anthropologists and Anthropology: The British School 1922-1972* (New York: Pica Press, 1973).; Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and meaning* (London: Routledge, 1978).; Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945).

<sup>27</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (Dec 1988):

519, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>. [original emphasis]

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 519-20.

Robeson's text also elucidates the partial simulation of knowledge in the politically charged contact zones, specifically where meeting of two cultures happens in a formal set-up arranged using interlocutors and translators. Robeson represents the traveller, mostly an explorer, ethnographer, or an anthropologist, in this formal set-up as being in the position of questioning and representing, and the travellee in a position of answering. The travellee answers keeping in mind his/her own assumptions and desires, which here are represented as sometimes arising due to their hostility towards asymmetrical relations of power between traveller and travellee. When the Ugandan chiefs say, 'Why should we tell them our sacred history, and, the details of our social organization?' they can be seen challenging the authority of the traveller in contact zone according to their capacity; thereby challenging the asymmetrical power relations. Robeson's question of 'visiting anthropologists, and how they liked being -investigated' (163), allows the Ugandan chiefs to directly, through first-person pronoun 'we', inform the readers about the authority of the travellee, and the skewed information received by those who authenticate their knowledge on the basis of their physical presence in the contact zone. The Ugandan chiefs said:

[...]they would often take the searching and impertinent questions as a game, giving the most teasing, joking, and fantastic answers they could think of, so that the interpreter would have a most difficult time trying to translate the answers into something that would sound -serious, and respectfull (163).

By including this in her narrative as the voice of the chief, Robeson gave a chance to an African, often ridiculed, to ridicule the so-called objective Westerner whose apparent knowledge was, in fact, based on 'teasing, joking' answers. The zone,

which is seemingly controlled by the Westerner, is actually controlled by the locals who deliberately silenced their replies through choosing to obscure truths and complicate the interpretation process, thus using silence as a form of power in this encounter.

Nonetheless, Westerners managed to keep some control through their use of interpreters, who used their linguistic skills as 'a means of getting a job and advancing themselves' and would 'frequently colour their interpretations in order to ingratiate themselves' (163), thus silencing the voices of those being addressed and filling that void with their own words. The knowledge produced by these exchanges was therefore influenced by the requirements, assumptions and expectations of the various participants. In this case, both the traveller and the travellee, by controlling the flow or exchange of knowledge, are claiming power in their own capacity. In the case of travel writing, such politically charged contact zones favour the traveller more than the travellee; the author is the one who ultimately chooses how to represent the subjects of the text. The subjectivity of the traveller is further complicated when he/she has a hyphenated identity; when entering the contact zone with multiple, evolving selves, through his/her complex positionality.

### **Performing gender, Challenging stereotypes**

Gender has facilitated women travellers, such as white Victorian women, to enter women-specific places, such as harems. Robeson's gender also empowered her to enter the exclusive space of Toro herdswomen whilst investigating the cattle

and *bisahi* (dairy).<sup>29</sup> Victorian women travellers, who were 'colonized by gender' back home, could relate to the sense of marginalisation felt by African and Asian women, creating 'an affinity with [these] subaltern people.'<sup>30</sup> Robeson's consciousness of kinship with, African people in general, African women, in specific, allowed her to claim a double affinity with the African women. This allowed her to represent 'self' in the same space as African women and enact as part of the same category of 'woman', thereby allowing reciprocity in knowing personal details: 'we each found out how the other managed her husband, home, and children' (128). This 'we' speaks about reciprocity in each other's intimate zone thereby rejecting the scrutinising gaze of the traveller as an observer while examining their 'hair, skin, clothes' (126). Robeson's representations of mutual discussions on managing 'husband, home and children' brings forth perceived shared norms of femininity, domesticity and submission that not only depict both the traveller and the travellee at the same level, but also relates to the tendency for women travellers to concern themselves with domestic details, and with the minutiae of everyday living arrangements such as food preparation, child care and laundering of clothes'.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, by demonstrating these women occupying 'definitely important, responsible, and respected places in their homes, families, and society in general' (108), Robeson illustrates them as superior to the Victorian image of the 'angel in the house' who was kept aside from social and intellectual responsibilities.

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<sup>29</sup> Carl Thompson, "Journeys to Authority: Reassessing Women's Early Travel Writing, 1763–1862," *Women's Writing* 24, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2016.1207915>.; Catherine Barnes Stevenson, *Victorian Women Travel Writers in Africa* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 2.; Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze*, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, "Journeys to Authority: Reassessing Women's Early Travel Writing, 1763–1862.," Thompson, *Travel writing*, 191.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 186.

I talked with the women through an interpreter. They first welcomed me and thanked me for coming to their obscure village. They wanted to know what kind of work women did -outside, how they brought up their children, how their men treated them, how they dressed, whether they went to school with the men. They wanted to know if I thought our black children will have a place in the world, a real place, or; will they only be told what to do? -We are tired of being told what to do. Our children will be more tired of it." (120-121)

As Robeson questions the women about life in Toro, she is also questioned by the women about her work, children, husband, way of dressing, and school. Through this reciprocity, Robeson engages in counter-storytelling about African women, specifically Toro women, who she represents as being inquisitive, optimistic, and sentient. This contrast with the clichéd image of African woman that was circulating at the time in Britain and America; of exotic African women whose bare bodies were available for Western scrutiny, as suggested by this photograph (figure 12) in Robeson's postcard collection.

When representing Toro women, Robeson performed as an African woman sitting amidst the Toro women, worried about 'our black children'. Through her use of 'I' in the above quotation, Robeson constructs a self that is empowered to anticipate 'a place in the world' for 'our' black children. Here, 'our' reflects a collective consciousness that relates Robeson's 'I' to the Africans perceived as 'other' by dominant colonial discourse – an idea that Robeson rejects due to her sense of shared blackness. Corresponding to Robeson's political activism, the women are also presented as longing for a 'real place' for their children, and as being unwilling to be told 'what to do'.



Figure 12

Image of an African woman in a postcard collected by Robeson in 1936 (published in Raiford 2017)

However, Robeson's position as somebody the 'same', but not quite the same, is also reflected in this quotation. Robeson talking 'with the women through an interpreter' depicts the linguistic barrier, which along with her being 'welcomed' and 'thanked' for 'coming to their obscure village', allows Robeson to perform distance with the same African women she performs affinity with. This distance in turn allows an outsider's position enabling her to question gender roles and what she perceived as traditional gender-biased rules in other localities too. On the way to Kampala, she purchases a sun helmet but is told that 'ladies don't wear them'. She does not reveal the identity of those telling her this, but refers to them as 'they', thus constructing it as a collective patriarchal attitude. She declares that 'this lady will wear one from

now' (95), questioning the order of gendered hierarchical structures as she perceives them.

. Robeson repeatedly points to the absence of females in the public sphere when discussing the many societies that she encountered. Her first encounter with unfamiliar gender divisions occurred in Butoke-Butotano, a tiny village just over the Buganda border in Toro', where she noticed that there are no women about' (105). After lunch, Robeson asked after the women from Nyabongo. Her host at Toro, the cousin of the Toro chief, told her that it is quite incorrect in their society for the women to eat with the men' (108). When documenting this social norm in the kingdoms of Uganda, we are reminded of Robeson's own gender – and of her being in 'men's placell' (47). This exceptionalism is further enacted when alleviating, if not altering, rules to please her expectations:

It was a pleasant and interesting visit...The ladies came out- the Chief's wife and daughters. It is a great pleasure to see the women, at last. Word has gone around that I always ask for the women so contrary to custom they come out now to see me. (159)

This quotation clearly demonstrates how, although Robeson hadn't requested for women to visit her, the 'word had gone around' that she was 'asking about them', resulting in women coming to see her in spite of their social norms; thus, opening up the male-dominated space for women. This enabled Robeson to enact her hope of destabilising gender hierarchies. Through her affinity and alterity with the Africans, she presented herself as being in a position of power and authority – not only observing social norms, but also alleviating them, at least temporarily.

## Performing ambivalence: Representing through affinity and alterity

The opening lines of the text, elucidating the leitmotif, evidently reflect Robeson's ambivalence as an insider-outsider; African-American; same-different:

I WANTED TO GO to Africa.

It began when I was quite small. Africa was the place *we Negroes* came from originally. *Lots of Americans*, when they could *afford* it, went back to see their *-old country*. I remember wanting very much to see *my -old country*, and *wondering* what it would be like.' (9) [Emphasis added]

Here, Robeson expresses that this journey means more to her than fieldwork; it began as a personal quest, her childhood desire to see her *-old country*. The expression *'my -old country'* reflects the ambivalence of Robeson's simultaneous sense of belonging and alienation. The possessive determiner *'my'* reflects belonging, whilst *'old country'* reflects her being conscious that her present belongs somewhere else. Whilst Robeson expresses her kinship to Africa, her *'fatherland'*, and her journey as a kind of homecoming - similar to other African-Americans, as noted by Virginia Smith – she also alienates herself from this *'home'* by *'wondering what it would be like'*.<sup>32</sup> John C. Grusser suggests that every African-American coming to Africa brings a *'romanticized preconception'* of its space; Africa's refusal to live up to their *'expectations'* alienates them.<sup>33</sup> Robeson's *'wonder'*, creating room for imagination and adventure, also facilitates alienation. The word *'wonder'*, ascribing curiosity for the unknown- a recurring theme in many European travel

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, "African American travel literature," 203.

<sup>33</sup> Grusser, "Afro-American Travel Literature and Africanist Discourse."



narratives about Africa - allows Robeson to contemplate a position outside of the space that she seeks to connect with.<sup>34</sup>

The complexity of her position as an African-American allows her to perform ambivalence of belonging and distance. Robeson, while criticising the bureaucratic hassles of getting a visa to Africa, maintains that it is a strategy employed by 'whites' to control the flow of knowledge in and out of Africa by keeping 'other Negroes out'. By discussing how she is one of the 'educated Negroes travelling around' to see 'how their brothers live', Robeson evokes familial ties with her 'brothers' in Africa (15). However, she goes on to state that these 'restless and dissatisfied' 'brothers' living in 'old country' need the intervention of modern 'educated Negroes', the 'brothers living in other parts of the world', to 'examine and re-examine' (16) their living conditions. This depiction not only points to the differences between African and African-American lives, but also points towards – as Cassandra Veney and other scholars have suggested – ideas regarding the cultural superiority of African-Americans over Africans, due to African-Americans being perceived as wealthy, literate, Christians who uphold Western values.<sup>35</sup> As Robeson attempts to forge a connection with Africans and her 'old country', she also maintains some distance,

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<sup>34</sup> For detailed description of the trope of adventure and curiosity in European travel texts see Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel-Writing, 1770-1840: 'From an Antique Land'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).; Barbara Franchi and Elvan Mutlu, *Crossing Borders in Victorian Travel: Spaces, Nations and Empires* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 1-14.; Barbara Korte, "Travel Writing in 'The English Woman's Journal' (1858-1864): An Area of Leisure in the Context of Women's Work," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 45, no. 2 (2012), <https://doi.org/www.jstor.org/stable/41638133>.

<sup>35</sup> Cassandra R. Veney, "The Ties That Bind: The Historic African Diaspora and Africa," *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1167082>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1167082>.; J.Fish, "Missionaries and Activities of the Nineteenth Century."

constructing Africans as lagging behind African-Americans- something which other African-Americans also did, as noted by Grusser.<sup>36</sup>

In yet another anecdote, when a European is showing Robeson and her son around his hotel, Robeson discusses 'innumerable African servants' who 'seemed interested in us, as we were in them' (94). The reciprocal emotion of being 'interested' allows Robeson to connect with the African servants. At the same time, she is being served by them, reminding us of their altogether different social, political and economic status. The African servants are 'interested in' the Robesons because of them having a similar skin tone to them, compared to the white colonial officials they are used to, and yet, still having a different economic and social position. Robeson's interest in the servants appears to be due to her wanting to forge a connection with African servants, which she is otherwise denied due to her status. Robeson's position, which allows her to enjoy 'British official luxury' and be served (174) – this time at a government house in Entebbe – distances her from Africans. The 'British official luxury', which she finds a 'little strange' (174), is her way to suggest that being black she is otherwise not authorised to be in this zone, however her social, political and economic position allows her to be there. As was the case in the other hotel, the 'African servants' appear to be interested in the Robesons; they 'watched' Pauli 'discreetly' when he swims in the pool made for 'British luxury'. Robeson interprets the sight of the servants as a sign of their being 'as proud' of Pauli, as she is too, 'when they saw how well, though modestly, he handles himself in the pool' (94). This interpretation of events allowed Robeson to represent the African servants as also looking to forge a connection with African-Americans. Yet,

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<sup>36</sup> Grusser, "Afro-American Travel Literature and Africanist Discourse."

Robeson's higher status, as discussed above, inevitably added a layer of alterity to this affinity. Pauli is seen using a space exclusively meant for elite, white, British people; a space that is not accessible to African servants due to racial segregation, white supremacy, and the servant-master hierarchy. The African servants being 'proud' of Pauli somehow links to their hope of rupturing this segregation in the future. Again, a tension exists here between affinity and alterity. African-American journeys, as noted by Youngs, are measured against 'ancestral memory of the middle passage', and 'a gauge of how much the race has progressed since'. Whilst Robeson undoubtedly wants to connect with the African servants, her descriptions of their interactions reinforce the sense that they are ultimately different; that Robeson and her son (the African-Americans) are privileged and superior to the Africans, thus pronouncing that 'progress' and claiming alterity from African peoples.<sup>37</sup>

Africa, as for other African-Americans such as Eddy L. Harris and Richard Wright, also becomes her space to affirm her Americanness rather than Africanness.<sup>38</sup> The 'sun helmet' episode allows her to enact her affinity with Europeans and the perceived otherness of African space. Whilst reflecting on her decision to go out for a 'short stroll' at midnight in Beira, when most of the local people were enjoying a siesta, she aligns herself with 'Englishmen' through referencing Noel Coward's 'delightful song', a parody, '—Mad Dogs and Englishmen Go out in the Midday Sun!' (88). The midday sun that made it 'hard to make our way

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<sup>37</sup> Youngs, "Pushing against the Black/White Limits of Maps: African American Writings of Travel," 81.

<sup>38</sup> Scholars of Travel writing and African-American studies have largely documented this tendency by African-American travellers of exploring or negotiating Americanness while travelling through Europe, Asia or Africa. Tim Youngs has documented the experiences of Eddy L Harris, Dorothy Lazard, Richard Wright, and Amiri Baraka encountering American identity in Africa or elsewhere (see Youngs, "African American Travel Writing."; Youngs, "Pushing against the Black/White Limits of Maps: African American Writings of Travel."; James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005* (New York: Penguin, 2007), xxii.; Martin, "North American Travel Writing.").

back to the ship' allows her to 'understand fully for the first time' (88) the song. She understands why 'everyone was having siesta', except for her who decided to go out; the experience allows her to represent Beira as 'small little wretched place', with a miserable African climate not fit for her. Whilst elsewhere in the text, she repeats that she is not European, by enacting a foreigner persona she implicitly aligns herself with 'Englishmen' who are also 'unable to stand the humidity for a longer period' (88). By explicitly saying, 'I can well believe it', she represents herself as a foreigner in this space.

Indeed, Robeson's use of tropes such as the tropical climate, disease and death aligns her text in certain ways with the use of such tropes by European travel writers. She, unlike Sheppard, does not depict herself manoeuvring in difficult terrains or amidst dangerous diseases. Nonetheless, she expresses similar concerns:

The days are warm but the air is cold and thin and very dangerous. Many actors and others coming out from England come down with pneumonia in Johannesburg, and Boucher and Fred Terry died of it. So I will be warned.  
(41)

The word 'dangerous' invokes 'the deadliness of tropical Africa' that had represented Africa as a threatening and difficult place for outsiders, along with portraying European explorers as heroic and self-sacrificing; the death toll of explorers of Africa formed an important part of even the most 'self-congratulatory' of travel accounts.<sup>39</sup> Robeson authenticates her descriptions of danger by citing actual examples, such as naming actors who died in Johannesburg. Having acted in films in England and

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<sup>39</sup> Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*, 58.

America – and being Paul Robeson’s manager – she belonged to the same profession and, therefore, spoke of the death of actors as the European explorers and missionaries spoke of the deaths of fellow explorers and missionaries – in this instance, claiming affinity with Westerners.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Robeson, throughout the text performs ambivalence through claiming affinity and alterity simultaneously with Africans and white Westerners at the same time.

### **Complex positionality: Multiple Selves, Multiple Others**

The complexity of Robeson’s position as black-American-rich-celebrity wife allows her to construct and select multiple selves: African, African-American, Western, rich celebrity wife. As much as Africans became the ‘Other’ to the relatively privileged African-American selves, Robeson also claims distance from these privileged African-Americans. Whilst Robeson clearly associates with the idea of African-Americans as ‘educated Negroes’, she also goes on to differentiate herself from this group as well. According to Robeson, visas are granted to those who are not ‘dangerous’ to the hegemonic order, such as the ‘missionaries’ (16). Whilst the issuing (or not) of visas keep ‘other Negroes out of Africa’, missionaries (both black and white) are permitted to travel as Gospel keeps them ‘quiet and resigned’ (16). By demonstrating that she is not in a position of easy access to Africa, Robeson constructs herself in opposition to somebody who is ‘quiet and resigned’ to white supremacy and control of Africa, such as William Sheppard. In the 1930s, this idea of ‘keeping Garveyism out of Africa’ was widely circulating, and led to the South African government refusing ‘entry permits to black missionaries unless a white man controlled the mission’ – yet another example of Western control over black

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

mobility.<sup>41</sup> Robeson demonstrates her determination to travel to and within Africa, 'with or without visas' (17), thus depicting herself as challenging this control. She presents herself as representing a brave contestatory voice amidst what she constructs as silenced blacks in America and silent blacks returning to Africa.

Robeson's distancing of herself from 'silent black people' is also largely facilitated by her marriage to Paul. Paul Robeson was a famous man in Africa, and Robeson described sensing 'Paul's hand somewhere' whenever a situation was made easier for her (93) – when visiting white societies in South Africa, or the fields of Toro; when making an international call without having to 'wait around' (32); when securing 'definite specific reservations' for plane tickets when she could not 'buy them at this end' (72); or when being served at white-owned hotels (93). She is able to imagine travelling 'with or without visa' as she instructs Paul Robeson to 'set up a real howl here' if she is refused permission to land. Her confidence in her husband's position convinces her to believe that his 'real howl' will make them 'do something' (17). Her position as a celebrity wife, along with allowing her the ease of mobility, also provides the luxury of being treated as different to other black people travelling in and around Africa. In a hotel in the Belgian Congo, she encounters a white host who first, detesting the Robesons, is unwilling to give them food or a room on account of them being black, despite the D.C. accompanying them. However, after returning from a Pygmy village, Robeson writes, 'By this time the hotel owner had for some reason decided we were very much pukka and so he rushed around serving us lunch himself' and said 'he had *never seen any black people like us*' (147-148)

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<sup>41</sup> William Seraile, "Black American Missionaries in Africa: 1821-1925," *The Social Studies* 63, no. 5 (1972), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1943.11019203>.; Leon F. Litwack, "The White Man's Fear of the Educated Negro: How the Negro was Fitted for his Natural and Logical Calling," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 20 (1998), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2999249>.

[emphasis added]. It seems possible that the news of Robeson's status as Paul's wife, which the D.C. knew very well, had reached the hotel owner, resulting in this drastic behaviour change. Foster and Mills suggest that white women travellers of the nineteenth and the twentieth century can be seen 'stressing their dependence on male figures', especially to those whom they married.<sup>42</sup> This is rather true for Robeson. This position as a rich celebrity wife also allows her to distance from 'Lots of Americans', through which she evoked collective black consciousness with 'we Negroes' in the opening lines of the text, who desire to travel to the 'old country'; to Africa as a place of shared origin: a recurring theme in Harlem Renaissance poetry and the speeches of prominent African-Americans, such as Alexander Crummell, who saw Africa as a 'motherland' of the 'Negro race'.<sup>43</sup> Yet, by signalling the luxury of mobility and constraining it as 'when they could afford it', Robeson reveals economic divisions within this collective consciousness. Robeson's position as a Western educated celebrity wife allowed her to 'afford' her mobility, thereby distancing herself to the stasis of those who could not.

As can be seen till now, she has created African other to the elite/educated African-American self; later she even distanced from that educated African-American self as well, thereby performing as an exceptional educated African-American. Now, her ways of constructing the white other to the black self needs to be discussed. Racial vindication, a style of intellectual discourse prominent amongst literate 'blacks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century' and onwards, 'sought to disprove slander, answer pejorative allegations, and criticize pseudoscientific generalisation about Africans and people of

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<sup>42</sup> Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, *Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (USA: Palgrave, 2002), 256.

<sup>43</sup> Grusser, "Afro-American Travel Literature and Africanist Discourse. II"; Anthony Appiah, "Alexander Crummell and the Invention of Africa," *The Massachusetts Review* 31, no. 3 (1990), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25090195>.

African descent.<sup>44</sup> Taking this even further, Robeson produced a counter-narrative to the Western hegemonic discourse of superiority. Her text not only invalidates derogatory ideas about blackness, but also reverses these paradigms in response to the questions, 'Why am I glad and proud to be a Negro? [...] Why do I actually feel superior to him [a white man]?' (183). In urban South Africa, where 'herdboys' would open gates for cars:

It is customary to throw a penny, and they cup their hands to receive it with a charming smile and a dignified —Danke,Baas. We came into a large town, whose last gate was near the outskirts. Some little poor white boys had ganged the herdboys and driven them away, and were opening and closing the gate for the cars. They opened it for us, then ran along beside the car, wild looking, with staring greedy eyes. When Pauli threw the inevitable copper they shrieked: —Penny, penny, penny! and grovelled in the dust for it. No thanks of any kind. An unpleasant sight. Where is the white prestige? (73)

Here, Robeson paints a picture where white and black children are equally poor, and yet they exhibit strikingly different characteristics: the black 'herdboys' display 'charming smiles' and offer a dignified acknowledgement of the money they receive, whilst the white boys appear as 'wild looking' and ungrateful. Moreover, when receiving the money, the black boys appear to be disciplined when they 'cup their hands to receive it', whereas the white boys run alongside the car, 'staring greedily' and then grovelling in the dust. Through this anecdote, Robeson questions 'white prestige' whilst highlighting 'black pride'. This passage is also interesting in showing a black boy, Pauli, in a paternalistic position, whilst the 'whites' – typically seen in

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<sup>44</sup> St. Clair Drake, "Anthropology and the Black Experience," *The Black Scholar* 11, no. 7 (1980): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1980.11414141>.



power positions in European travel texts – are the ones receiving a ‘hand-out’. This is a clear example of how Robeson used her gaze to reverse racial stereotypes and portray a superior black identity. In this sense, I argue, she was doing more than racial vindication; she was not only overturning ‘the old meanings associated with Blackness’, but was also painting a picture of black superiority.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere in the text, Robeson portrays her ‘neat African friends’ being flustered on entering the house of a ‘nice little Belgian’- a custom official in Congo- which was ‘in an uproar, with his wash hanging on the front porch, pyjamas thrown on top of the mosquito netting over the bed, empty bottles and boxes everywhere’ (137). Through her use of language, Robeson creates a strong visual image of ‘pathetic’ and ‘disgusting’ (141) white men against the disciplined, civilised and patient black people in the Belgian Congo.

In another passage, at the Ruwenzori hotel, the owner refused to give Robeson and her friends a room – despite the rooms being already booked for them by the Belgian District Commissioner, who was still accompanying them. Finally, after ‘considerable pressure from our D.C., and a lot of “*distinguee*” and “important” on his part against the “*noir, noir*”, they got rooms that ‘were scarcely fit for animals’ (141). The owner kept murmuring his concerns regarding the reaction of white people to him giving a room to black people. Robeson recounts how Pauli asked her, ‘–Mama, here in the Congo where nearly everybody is black, what white people does he mean?’ (141). In answer to this, Robeson, later, portrays an uncivilised, discomfiting character of ‘whites’ through the presence of two Belgian men in the room next to her. These men ‘seemed pathetic’ and ‘brought two women’, and they

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<sup>45</sup> Mahon, "Eslanda Goode Robeson's African Journey: The Politics of Identification and Representation in the African Diaspora."

noisily and unmistakably slept together' (141). After about an hour, Robeson describes how the owner came shouting and sweeping the young men and their ladies-of-the-night out of the room', in order to tidy up the room for other guests, the two heavy men', who entered and went to bed and coughed and spit and murmured drunkenly the rest of the night'. The text suggests that, though she had seen the two Belgian men in the corridor of the hotel, she had not actually seen the two heavy men, who occupied the hotel room after the two Belgian men left. Nonetheless, she assigned them with physical characteristics that allowed her to validate her claim of bearing witness, thus authorising her observations and representations of the scene. Robeson gave her answer to Pauli's -What white people?! [to herself] -Oh, those white people!!' (141).

Robeson constructs these whites' Others, who, are living at a much higher standard than they were accustomed to in the home country' at the cost of the African who is better trained and efficient' but is forced to lower his own normal standard' (102). This stance is maintained in *Congo Diary* as well, where Robeson explicitly represents an African man saying, 'The great problem of Africa is the WHITE PEOPLE OF NO QUALITY or VERY LOW QUALITY [capitalisation in the original text] who are here' (62). Robeson repeatedly represents white settler' as ill-suited at home' (102), but capable of maintaining their superiority by saying it loudly, insistently, regularly' (63), whilst having never proved himself superior' (63). This contrasts with the organised, humble and kind black people in the text, thus creating a white Other' to the African self.

This construction of the African self and her position as a travel writer allows Robeson to reverse racial stereotypes when depicting white Boers as 'porky' and 'ratty'. She describes a scene in Kroonstad where she was walking to the post office, being 'stared at all the way by the porky, pie-faced Boers' (79). She continues to describe an encounter in the post office with a 'ratty-faced clerk' who asked her 'rudely' what she wanted. This passage illustrates Robeson's anger towards the Boers as well as her desire to challenge and even reverse racial stereotypes of the time. She uses animalistic imagery to suggest that the Boers were behaving in a way that is less than human. This appears as a response to the widespread tendency in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of white Southerners in America, and other white travellers and commentators on African people, who so often depicted black people using animal imagery such as 'apelike' or the 'coon' stereotype.<sup>46</sup> Her position as a travel writer empowers her to reverse this stereotyping, hence by depicting white faces as 'porky' and 'ratty', she illustrates her desire to turn this discourse back on white South Africans. Robeson, along with diverting the racialised disapproving language of the era from blacks to white, also goes on to reverse the stereotypes.

Robeson's 'Africanness' enabled her to question the hegemonic invention of 'Africa', and 'Africans', in the Western imagination. In particular, she repeatedly, throughout her writings, questioned the authority of Westerners to represent Africa as 'primitive'. In *Congo Diary*, when discussing an upcoming conference in the Congo, she suggests that an African should be invited to discuss African family life stages: 'to me it seems ridiculous for Mrs. Ross, a white woman from America, to present a discussion on African family life here in Africa!!' (6). Despite this, as noted

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<sup>46</sup> "The Jim Crow Legacy: Propagandizing Race," *Economy and Politics*, Wall Street International Magazine, 26 November 2017, <https://wsimag.com/economy-and-politics/33103-the-jim-crow-legacy>.

by Youngs for other African-Americans, Robeson also sometimes rely on European texts and authors for knowledge on Africa, as a sign of literacy.<sup>47</sup> Robeson invokes European writers, such as Rider Haggard, known for their racist depictions of Africa and its peoples, whilst observing African landscapes – for example, she writes ‘the scenery is extraordinary and reminds one of the fantastic stories of Rider Haggard’ (97). Robeson also includes in her text a number of footnotes to support her claims, referring to Western authors such as Julian Huxley. Moreover, she describes the Congo forests through direct quotes from a book, *I Saw the Congo*, by Grace Flandrau, a white American writer. Through Flandrau, Robeson represents the pygmies’ forest in the Belgian Congo:

The Ituri is virgin forest. Here and there where native settlements have endured for nobody knows how many centuries, the original growth had been pushed back, and second growth or grassland made its appearance. But for the most part it is primitive towering forest in the depths of which elephant, rare okapi, antelope, red buffalo and great oily pythons live. (143)

This quotation not only depicts Robeson’s agreement with Flandrau, but also allows her to reinforce the image of pygmy dwellings familiar to the West, as ‘untouched by the influence of civilization and the world of modern man’.<sup>48</sup> The pygmies are shown living in an exotic set-up contrary to the metropolitan set-up Robeson associated herself with. This reiterates the image of a traveller from the metropole transferred to a foreign land with exotic inhabitants: ‘elephant, rare okapi, antelope, red buffalo and great oily pythons’ (143). Robeson, by reproducing Flandrau’s subjective

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<sup>47</sup> This tendency has even called some African-American writers, such as Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and James Baldwin to express their concerns about African-American authors ignoring their ‘individuality and creativity for group pressure’. (see Youngs, "Pushing against the Black/White Limits of Maps: African American Writings of Travel.")

<sup>48</sup> Tim Youngs and Peter Hulme, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 166.

representations, enacts as in agreement with this conventional depiction of pygmies and their dwellings as, in Stanley's words, 'a link between the average modern humanity and its Darwinian progenitors'.<sup>49</sup> Although Robeson does not explicitly align herself with modern humanity in the way Stanley does, she nonetheless does distance herself from pygmies and their dwellings which are referred to as 'primitive' - despite this being a word that had been most contested by her, as already discussed, and which was influential in shaping her as a race-conscious woman and anti-racism activist.

Further, while moving through the forest towards the pygmy village, she describes herself feeling as if 'taking part in the film' (143). However, Robeson's representation of herself passing through the forest as if in a film transfers her memory from the real world, to what Ukadike calls the 'reel world' Africa, which has been responsible for 'fictionally creating exotica of Africa to create a sensation, to titillate the imagination, to transport the [...] consumer to the wild, weird, and either wonderfully or terrifying Africa'.<sup>50</sup> Though there were anti-colonial films also being made in the early twentieth century, such as *Voyage au Congo* (1927), Robeson's authentication of the cinematographic representation of the pygmy forest is significant, specifically when she has known and experienced the dehumanising representation of the African indigenes through films: Paul Robeson's role in the film *Sanders of River* (1935), representing 'wild black savages in leopard skins, waving spears, and eating raw meat', left both Paul and Eslanda Robeson devastated as Eslanda felt they helped to 'perpetuate this misconception' (49). Therefore, it can be

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> N. Frank Ukadike, "Western Eastern Film Images of Africa: Genealogy of an Ideological Formulation," *The Black Scholar* 21, no. 2 (1990), <https://doi.org/www.jstor.org/stable/41067682>.

claimed that Robeson was well aware of the role of films in the presentation of Africa through the colonial ‘voyeuristic gaze’.<sup>51</sup> Colonial representations of Africa, which she detested, are nonetheless here seemingly approved of, in the case of pygmies and their dwellings.

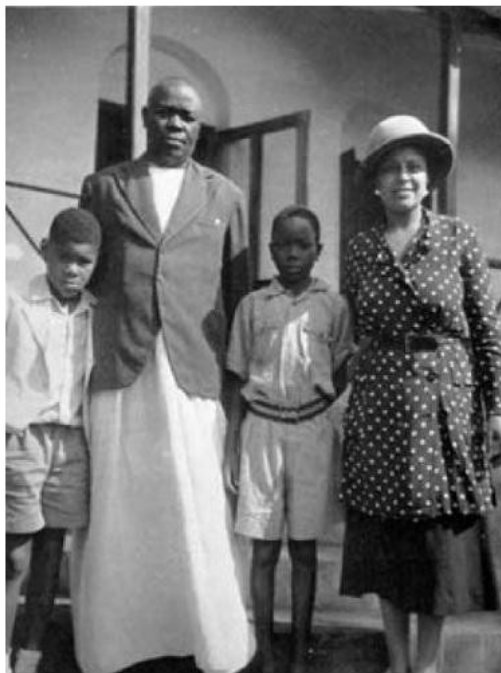


Figure 13 (Left) Eslanda Robeson and Pauli Robeson with Chief Justice of Buganda and his son  
Figure 14 (Right) Pauli with Pygmies, (both published in *African Journey*)

The first photograph (figure 13, 14) exhibits Pauli and Robeson in the same frame with the ‘Mulamuzi, the chief Justice of Buganda, at his home in Kampala’, in Robeson’s description, thereby placing the Robesons well in the African space. Furthermore, the similarity of the dress also highlights the sameness, thus allowing Robeson to forge a connection, as an African-American, with the African ‘Negro’. However, in the second picture, as Robeson describes ‘Pauli with the Elders of Ngite’, everyone standing in the picture is of the same height, despite the difference

<sup>51</sup> Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 6.

in age, occupying, as noted by Raiford, the same visual plane, contrary to 'safari photographs of full-grown white men and women' depicting 'towering whiteness' that 'emphasised dissimilarity and worked to disparage and ridicule the Pygmies'.<sup>52</sup> The reciprocity of gaze assigns equality: pygmies can be seen observing Pauli as Pauli observes them; but Pauli's Western dress, pith helmet (conventionally appearing in colonial photographs with the Ngite pygmies) and his hands in his pocket reflect his position as an outsider, thereby assigning distance and otherness. Also, the absence of Eslanda Robeson from the frame, and Pauli's presence in the edge of the frame, hints towards the possibility of taking this picture so as to exhibit the height of elderly pygmies as equal to that of a seven-year-old black child, thus confirming the construction of the pygmies as 'other' to the African self that she saw herself as a part of. The pygmies, whom she also confirmed as 'primitives', have nothing in common with the 'Negro'; they are the unreal/reel other of real Africans. Robeson not only approves of their colonial presentation but also distances herself from them by speaking through Flandrau, 'The Ituri Forest *Pygmy is not a Negro*, nor has he much in common with the black men of Bantu stock who live near him'(145) [emphasis added]. She steps further than distancing; she renounces the pygmies. Since, she as a black African-American has always considered herself as a 'Negro' therefore by saying that 'Pygmy is not a Negro' she disowns any historical or cultural link with them. 'Pygmies', though African, become the others of her African self.

### **Selectivity of Voice and Silence**

Robeson's fictional writing, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (a musical comedy) and *Color* (a novel), in the 1930s, gives an insight into her idea of using selective

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<sup>52</sup> Raiford, "The Here and Now of Eslanda Robeson's African Journey," 148.

silence as an agent for negotiating identity and relevance. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* depicts her characters 'scheming in various ways to climb the ladder of success'.<sup>53</sup> *Color* also deals with racial injustices and the compromises made by Black people in order to navigate the color line'.<sup>54</sup> Toni, a major character of the novel, is dating a white football star on campus, forcing Toni's dark-skinned mother to 'decline attending her daughter's graduation for fear of revealing her secret and compromising her future opportunities'.<sup>55</sup> Robeson transports the modus operandi of her fictional characters to the quasi-nonfictional *African Journey*. Robeson, herself a character, selects between absence-presence and voice-silence to control future opportunities coming out of her position and identity. In Cape Town, during a lunch invitation, Robeson chooses to stay silent during the encounter itself, on her 'ambition' of meeting Tshekedi Khama, who according to her is a 'remarkable man' 'so rightly a romantic hero to all Negroes who know about him', since 'Tshekedi is a pretty sore point with Europeans'(33). However, she then uses the text to voice the significance of the man. This strategy of adopting silence at the event but voice in the text is her way to reclaim some of the power that she is unable to attain. Indeed, she resorts to silence as a means to make space for her views where there is otherwise no space. For instance, in Cape Town, the image Robeson constructs of the 'Newspapermen' searching her out speaks of her exceptional position as a celebrity wife and raises her substance above the white fellow travellers; however, this exceptional position also forces her to manipulate her answers:

Reporters: Are you interested in Native conditions here?

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<sup>53</sup> Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 83.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*



Me: Yes, of course. I don't know anything about them, however.

Reporters: Will you try to find out about them while you are here?

Me: (In my mind: This is a trick question, Essie, be careful.) I'm afraid I won't have time. I'm sailing almost immediately with the ship. (In my mind: I'll certainly see as much as I can, and find out all I can. That's really what I came for.)(31)

Robeson suggests that her awareness of the colonial mindset prevalent in South African society and her intentions of completing the journey lead her to manipulate her answers. However, writing what she retrospectively presents as her 'real' answers in parenthesis allows the reader to see the pressure of dominant societies on the mind of someone belonging to the dominated society, thereby forcing the members of the dominated society to adopt selective silence in order not to put herself at risk by speaking her true views. The incident suggests that most of the time such potential activist or oppositional views are simply erased or not spoken at all, appearing to push the authors into silence on issues relating to race and colonialism. Nonetheless, Robeson by speaking in parenthesis reclaims her voice. She manipulates her answers to the reporters, and in her re-telling of this conversation, she is able to point towards the voice beneath the silence. Robeson's selective silence – to the speaker, but not to the reader - on her concerns about the 'Native conditions' emerges as a strategy to appear as a harmless anthropologist who is not interested in challenging the power structures. If these answers are read without the text in parenthesis, Robeson can be misunderstood as unaffected and untouched by the local conditions. Her indifference, thus, allows her to strategically make claims to silence in a way that actually makes space for her claim to voice

later: speaking about her political ideology, or even that she wanted to see and do something about 'native conditions' might have cut her trip short, so she diplomatically chose to be silent and enter the zone.

Elsewhere, she gives reasons for choosing to be silent or using voice as a tool to negotiate a place for herself in established hierarchies. At the Government House at Entebbe, when the Governor asked for her suggestions for improving African education, she finds herself in 'quandary' as she 'couldn't tell him I believe his office should be held by an African' (167). So instead of choosing to speak her mind, as it would have meant stopping the conversation and missing the opportunity to speak as much as she could, she tried using this opportunity to stay relevant by answering while not posing any danger to the 'patriarchal administration' (166). Thus, the manipulation of voice and selective silence are also instrumental in negotiating power and staying relevant to the hierarchical structure. The text, as a contact zone with her readers, appears to voice her silence.

Robeson's enhanced ability to voice her own politics in *African Journey* compared to at the time of the interview can also be understood in terms of her political trajectory after her African journey itself. This text was published in 1945, and Robeson makes her last entry in the text in 'December 1944' (185). This suggests that she was writing her account of her travels almost a decade later, when she had found her political voice and had made her identity as an anti-racism activist. Since her position as an anti-racist, anti-colonialist and propagator of equality had allowed her to claim an acclaimed persona in Russia, America, and elsewhere, this enabled her to voice her opinion more openly. The text can thus be read as possibly reflecting her increasing adoption of an anti-racist voice, meaning

that by the time of publication she was able to add views in parenthesis that were inaudible out loud in 1936.

Silence is also adopted to reclaim some power, in the text, by either refusing contact in the contact zone or by using the contact in the contact zones to choose her characters, deploy voice and select silence to construct them while constructing self. For instance, Robeson after boarding the boat, *Winchester Castle*, for South Africa from Southampton with Pauli Jr. (Pauli), her eight years old son, on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1936 says:

We keep ourselves very much to ourselves, and are entirely self-sufficient. I brought lots of good books, games, and jigsaw puzzles, so we manage to have a very good time together. The passengers seem friendly enough, but I am taking no chances. They are mostly South Africans, whose attitude toward the Negro I find very familiar, very much like that of our -Deep South Southern white folks in America, only more so. I will be extremely cautious socially. (19)

Robeson represents herself and Pauli as being in a social space with other passengers, but having prepared themselves to avoid any flow of information or communication, specifically with white South African 'whose attitude toward the Negro', she considers, similar to the racist attitude of someone from the 'Deep South' of America. As Gary Totten notes about Carl Rowan, an African-American journalist who chose to 'simply restrict contact with whites' to protect himself from 'further insult and psychic anguish'. Robeson is also in a form of a mental stasis even when in mobility; however, I argue, her silence is not only 'limiting the place in which she can move' but also obstructing the idea of mobility of white fellow

passengers in some way.<sup>56</sup> Bringing 'good books, games and jigsaw puzzles' to be 'self-sufficient', that is to be able to minimise any chance of verbal contact with the fellow passengers, is her strategy to claim power and authority to select and validate her silence. Later, however, on the seventh day of her journey, Robeson socialises with fellow passengers, including white South Africans and Rhodesians. She demonstrates, through the reproduction of the verbal exchanges- in the form of personal stories- between Robeson and other South African fellow travellers, their racist attitudes, thus validating her 'extremely cautious' silence as a defensive strategy. She uses her conversation with one 'Mrs. G.', whose husband was a close friend of Cecil Rhodes, to illustrate, through her story of her 'native servants', the similarity of the 'patriarchal attitude' to that of the 'White Southerner from our Deep South' (28). This interlinking allows Robeson to validate her knowledge about the intensity of patriarchal attitudes, influenced by race biases, and their impact on black consciousness. However, she listened without clearly registering any offense or judging their accounts (28, 30), in a manner that Ransby identifies as that of an ethnographer.<sup>57</sup> This is not exactly the same as Sheppard's seeming acquiescence to whiteness; Sheppard notably maintained silence on racial attitudes throughout his text, whereas Robeson voiced her feelings in the text while depicting herself as having remained silent in the event itself. Nonetheless by representing herself adopting a similar 'mask' of blankness in her encounters with white South Africans, marked with racial discourses, and not interpreting or reacting to them, Robeson empirically substantiates her idea of South African racialised understanding of Africans.

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<sup>56</sup> Totten, "Mobility, Skepticism, and Counter-storytelling in African American Travel Writing: Carl Rowan's South of Freedom."

<sup>57</sup> Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 103.

Similarly, while returning to England, Robeson describes how she and Pauli were on a seaplane amidst other white passengers from all over the world. Here also Robeson represents herself being 'extremely cautious with these passengers' (181). Although she seems happy with other 'American family' who 'in spite of their southern origin were charming, friendly and interesting', she represents herself as cautious of 'an English colonial from South Africa' whom she regarded as a 'special brand of poison to us, as Negroes' (181):

He has the utmost contempt for 'the blacks,' as he calls the Africans, and in fact does not think too well of anything or anybody not British. It took him quite some time and effort to adjust himself to the fact that Pauli and I—'blacks'—were actually fellow passengers with himself. Finally, as he saw the other passengers one by one become friendly with us, he too broke down and talked with us. (I'm sure it never once occurred to him that we did not want to talk with him!) (181)

She interprets his 'contempt for 'the blacks'' as the reason for him not talking to the Robesons, and later when he 'broke down and talked' she argues that he was just following other passengers. Here, Robeson interprets the significance of silence in two different ways, depending on the position and identity of the silent person: in the first case, where she has prepared herself and made up her mind, even before the journey, to 'keep ourselves very much to ourselves', she is claiming innocence, through scepticism, as a black woman anticipating likely prejudice and racism; in the second case, where a white man is keeping to himself, she is, by contrast, surmising his behaviour as the outcome of racial prejudice. Robeson's difference of interpretation itself thus implies that what seems on the surface the same behaviour but by different people can in fact be interpreted differently, depending on the social

context and the power dynamics surrounding that behaviour. Robeson, here, is thus reclaiming a discursive power to represent and interpret the actions of a white man that is unusual given the predominance, in mid-twentieth century Europe and America, of texts by white authors about black people, rather than vice versa. Also, by writing in the text about her unwillingness 'to talk with him' she is (re)claiming agency in the face of white racism: she is reverting the behaviour of many white people, as noted by Virginia Smith, who were 'appalled to travel with Negro'.<sup>58</sup> She thus uses her text to reclaim representational and interpretive power by writing about her encounter with colonial whiteness, through which she ascribes particular meaning to the behaviour and the silence of the white man. Robeson's position as a travel writer thus allows her to reclaim some power over the encounter, which as a black woman, more typically the subject of the gaze of a white traveller, is unusual in the colonial-era contact zone.

The Englishman's keeping to himself is interpreted by Robeson as a symptom of him being a man, much like other Englishmen, who has 'arbitrarily walled himself off' (182). This symbol of walling off, along with Robeson's unwillingness 'to talk with him!' points towards the possibility that encounters within the contact zone may be characterised by non-contact, or by lack of dialogue. Here both Robeson and the English coloniser are seen enveloped in their own assumptions about each other and the power dynamics that produced those assumptions – based, in Robeson's case, on her experience of racism. Though they are in a social space of encounter with each other, their expectations and assumptions, produced by the power structures of the societies they inhabit, separate out both the cultures –reflecting

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<sup>58</sup> Smith, "African American travel literature," 206, 09-10.

racist structures that already saw 'white' and 'black' as distinct racial categories – and do not allow any realistic meeting or any flow of knowledge.

At the same time, this non-contact encounter in the contact zone shows how silence can be wielded as a form of power. Robeson's voice in parenthesis, 'I'm sure it never once occurred to him', acknowledges the racialised power structures which empower the Englishman to distance himself from his black fellow passengers; however, in the next part of the sentence, 'we did not want to talk with him!' she challenges his power and interprets his silence as unkind and racist, while, at the same time, maintaining her innocence claimed in the first event. The politics of the contact zone therefore allows silence to be selected, observed and interpreted by the traveller, empowering him/her to construct self and the other, who is deprived of any power to speak in the text despite his/her position in the hierarchical structure.

The power of silence is also possible to generate by interpreting the silence of others: making a silent character speak the writer's mind in the story. While in the village, Matembe, 'where the people are again a mixture of Bakonjo and Pygmy', she demonstrates cultural curiosity rising from her gaze, representing pygmies as 'very interesting', as 'the women wear curious heavy iron ornaments— bracelets and neck halters' (146):

I bought some of these, and one old lady insisted on taking the halter from around her neck and presenting it to me. The men thereupon tied her to a tree and pried it off her neck. When I saw how it had to be removed I hastily protested, but they all assured me that it couldn't possibly hurt her, that it only seemed awkward. The lady herself looked at me with a twinkle in her eye and smiled as though to say, —This is a good chance for me to get this thing off my neck, so don't spoil it. She looked so pleased after it had been

removed I probably understood her smile. She had worn it since girlhood and it would probably have remained on all her life. (146)

Robeson here is interpreting the 'twinkle' in the eyes of the woman and her 'smile' through her 'gaze' that, as David Spurr suggests, is a powerful 'instrument of construction, order and arrangement' that 'conveys a sense of mastery over the unknown'.<sup>59</sup> Robeson's mastery over this 'unknown' comes equally from what she constructs as her racial and gendered connection to other women, which allows her to claim 'I probably understood her smile'. Robeson is interpreting the woman's silence by relating the 'twinkle in her eye' and her smile to her perceived wish of 'getting this thing off' her neck; thereby suggesting that the 'neck halters' are a shackle imposed on women by the male-dominated societies, which the old woman wants to get rid of, and Robeson is her 'good chance' to accomplish this freedom. Also, by choosing an 'old woman', Robeson's text hints at the length of time she believes an African body has to go through this oppression before an outsider, influential enough to buy freedom for them, enters the landscape as a saviour. In yet another example, Robeson portrays 'the ingenious and persistent Native miners' (86) in Mozambique, silenced by European domination and suppression, seeking to voice their cry for help through dance. She portrays dance as an alternative voice of a silenced miner who 'began to chant his grievances to the visitors who watched his dances in the mining compounds, hoping that some sympathetic ears would lend attention, and help him' (87). This portrayal of dependence on the assistance of an outsider feeds into discourses used in some cases by imperialists to justify claims of compassionate imperialism; however, Robeson, as an African-American woman

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<sup>59</sup> Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, 15.



connecting with an African, through the text represents herself becoming the voice of these silenced miners whose dance was also 'suppressed'(87) by the mine officials. This implied waiting for a saviour coming from outside interpreted through silences in the text becomes more voiced in *Congo Diary*, where Robeson documents 'some black men' coming to meet her knowing 'who I am and why I am here' 'after we had talked a while, that they said I was an Angel come to help them' (24).<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

*African Journey* is informed by Robeson's ambiguous positionality as a woman looking for individuality; as a celebrity wife, which allows her an exceptional position, thereby facilitating the journey as well as allowing her to observe African spaces through an elite gaze; as an African-American, which allows her to see complexities of oppression through her hyphenated identity in America; as a member of the African Diaspora, allowing her to forge connection and belonging to the African space; and her association with the global north which allows her to align, to some extent, with European knowledge structures while representing Africa and its people. While countering the stereotypical image of Africa circulating in dominant American and European discourses, Robeson takes a middle way of attempting to forge a connection with other Africans living in Africa, through her claims to a 'black' identity - as shared with the Africans she encounters on her travels- while simultaneously sometimes also distancing her from Africans. Robeson's African-American and celebrity wife position allowed her to be in the acquaintance of African chiefs and kings, elite educationists either black or white, and colonial officials. Her passing through Africa observing African struggles depicts her as not being a part of that

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<sup>60</sup> Eslanda Robeson, *Congo Diary*, 1946.

struggle, and her sharing the space with white people distances her from the African people while she tries to forge a connection with them. Despite her efforts to treat black Africans as her equals, these differences of social position are never far from her, and create an important distance between herself and the African subjects she encounters. Her selective silence also plays into this distance-connection dichotomy. As much as selectivity of voice and silence allows her to navigate through an ambiguous insider-outsider position and dichotomy of alterity-affinity and alienation-belonging, it also allows her to choose from multiple selves - woman, black, American, African, educated elite - to respond in specific situations, and to construct multiple others as well.

This chapter validates the hypothesis that the 'other' is not fixed, rather, it is also a performed and constructed entity in response to the performance of a favourable self by the travel writer, who is in control of choosing and representing the subjects to fit into the story he/she wants to tell. This story is further related to the agenda of the travel writer. The Bombay Africans and William Sheppard were highly dependent on the colonial power structures, and they were narrating to validate their relevance to the colonial power hierarchy. Therefore, they upheld the validity of white supremacy in their narrative, and performed self as aligning with Western colonial norms, in response to which an opposite inferior non-Christian other was constructed. However, Robeson, since, wants to challenge racial stereotypes through her narrative, she therefore constructs an inferior white 'other' to the civilised superior black self. Robeson is not fully dependent on the colonial structures; therefore her representation of superior black self is more direct than the Bombay Africans and Sheppard: the position in the asymmetrical power relations results in

the degree of voice one could exercise. Robeson enjoys the strongest position as compared to all the black travellers/travel writers discussed in this thesis, however, her voice was still constrained due to her position as a black woman. The chapter documents number of times Robeson chose to be silent during her journey to secure her voice from being silenced, in terms of permissions for the journey. The mask, which Sheppard employed to enter the contact zone and claim power, is also employed by Robeson to secure her voice. Nonetheless, by the time she started documenting her travel experience, her status as civil rights and international anti-racism activist enabled her to discard the mask; thus, she chooses to voice those silences in the text itself by writing in parenthesis. Thus the selective silence and voice, which risks being read as colonial mimicry, is indeed a strategy of those belonging to dominated groups to operate in the contact zone and claim power, voice and authority.

# **SECTION 3**

## **White-South African Journeys to central Africa**

'No Longer European, Not yet African'

-J.M Coetzee (1988, ii)

## CHAPTER 6

### WORDS AND COLOURS: EXPRESSIONS OF EXCURSIONS IN IRMA STERN'S CONGO

Irma Stern's travel text depicts central Africa from the perspective of a White emigrant writer and artist based in Africa. Stern (1894-1966) was praised as the 'grande dame of South African art' and was known for her enthusiasm to travel internationally and her diverse range of paintings of people of different 'cultures and races'.<sup>1</sup> Stern's journeys produced an extensive body of work including paintings, lithographs, charcoal sketches, sculptures, masks, newspaper articles, and travel texts. Although the works of visual art were highly regarded by Western viewers and art collectors, Stern's literary works remain lesser-known to art historians outside South Africa.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I examine the representation of the self and the other in *Congo* (1945), a 50-page illustrated account of Stern's journey from Elisabethville to Albertville in 1942, concentrating on its rendering of subjectivity, its self-conscious construction of others and reflection on the power dynamics of representation.<sup>3</sup> Stern visited Congo three times: in 1935, 1946 and 1955, and her letters, particularly to her patron, the politician Richard Feldman and his wife Freda, are a rich source of information about her travel experiences, as are her sketches and paintings of the Congolese, and an illustrated journal published posthumously.

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<sup>1</sup> LaNitra M. Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art: Audacities of Color* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> The account is, of course, selective: in separate letters and paintings, Stern describes to her friends – specifically her patron, the politician Richard Feldman and his wife Freda – her motivation and plans to travel, and then her encounters with people and details of the difficulties that she faced, such as threats, discomforts, fears, and scepticism. Stern chose to not include many of these details in her text *Congo*.

Stern, in her early career, was criticised for her non-traditional approach towards colours and sketches; later the scholars acknowledged that she had 'contested and criticised traditional aesthetics' of art by creating 'a visual language of her own'.<sup>4</sup> Stern's literary output also has never been taken seriously – her biographer, Karel Schoeman, wrote that 'she had no notable literary talents' and tended to express herself 'awkwardly and diffusely'.<sup>5</sup> Through this chapter, I argue her distinctive expressive style combining words and illustrations merits closer critical attention.

Stern's artworks, specifically her visual representations of African people, have divided the opinions of South African art historians, critics and journalists. As noted by LaNitra M. Berger, Stern is 'a polarising figure as some of the South Africans consider her work as revelation and many black South Africans view it as exploitation'.<sup>6</sup> A newspaper critic, astonished and perplexed by her paintings, wrote 'Was she a Romantic in love with the exotic? Or did she criticise the colonial system by painting disappearing cultures gradually being destroyed by white rulers?'<sup>7</sup> In 1942, Joseph Sachs became the first scholar to place this ambivalence in her work in the context of her artistic vision to combine the 'European culture with the spirit of African landscape'.<sup>8</sup> Also, Neville Dubow, director of the Irma Stern Museum in South Africa, published a slim volume on Stern's paintings, and on her early years

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<sup>4</sup> Hannah O'Leary quoted in "Irma Stern: A Life Well Travelled," news release, 2020, <https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/irma-stern-a-life-well-travelled>.

<sup>5</sup> Karel Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933* (Cape Town: South African Library, 1994), 7.

<sup>6</sup> LaNitra M. Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art- Audacities of Color* ([www.fondation-giacometti.fr/en](http://www.fondation-giacometti.fr/en): The School of Modernities, 06 May 2020), Lecture.

<sup>7</sup> quoted in Irene Below, "Between Africa and Europe," in *Irma Stern: Expressions of A Journey*, ed. Elsa Miles (Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery, 2003), 32.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Sachs, *Irma Stern and the Spirit of Africa* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, Ltd, 1942), 7.

based on her unpublished journal *Paradise*, putting Stern's life and paintings in a context. With this, art scholars started paying attention to Stern's words, as well as her paintings.

Scholars became interested in Stern as an artist in her own right, rather than the subjects represented in her art. Marion Arnold suggests that Stern's portraits are both studies of model and projections of self; that is, while painting or portraying the other, Stern sees herself in others and explores her own identity.<sup>9</sup> Irene Below, commenting on the representation of women in Stern's paintings, also suggests that Stern depicts her subjects as idealised —othersll [...] despite her identification with, and fascination for them.<sup>10</sup> Most of these scholars conducted a visual analysis of Stern's paintings; her textual material was peripheral. Nonetheless, recent critical works have started to pay attention to Stern's written texts along with her paintings to examine the politics of representation in her work. In a recent book, Berger (2020) more explicitly engages with the tension between Stern's exposure to South Africa's racial diversity and her deeply racist views, in her paintings and the written texts, that allowed her to support apartheid and represent diversity at the same time.<sup>11</sup>

The scholarly focus of the small library of books devoted to Stern remains either predominantly biographical or on Stern's subjects in a way that overlooks Stern's subjectivity and her politics of representation: what she chose to represent, and for what purpose, and how is that representation informed by her biography. Addressing this gap, I argue that Stern's texts deserve to be read and analysed for what they say about self-reflection in the representation and construction of others.

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<sup>9</sup> Marion Arnold, *Irma Stern: A Feast for the Eye* (South Africa: Fernwood Press, 1995), 98.

<sup>10</sup> Below, "Between Africa and Europe," 35.

<sup>11</sup> Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art : Audacities of Color*, 3.

Stern's texts offer an insight into what she paints, why and for whom, thus providing insights into the power dynamics of representation. I propose that Stern's literary texts provide critical insights into her use of contact zones to engage in the process of storytelling, and to perform her ambivalence and alienation to negotiate power, authority and voice.

We see this above all in *Congo*, a narrative of Stern's journey to Congo, from Elisabethville to Albertville, in May 1942.<sup>12</sup> Published by JL Van Schaik, a South African publishing house, *Congo* documents Stern's experience of finding her subjects for paintings and her encounter with the Watussi and Bakuba people, an artistic community of Congo. I agree with Berger that *Congo* slips into Eurocentric discourse about black Africans. However, Berger's argument that *Congo* and *Zanzibar* (1948) place these 'rich cultures into simple racial and social categories' for the political purpose of staging relevance of apartheid and minority rule, is an important point of departure.<sup>13</sup> Though this may be the case as well, I argue that the text is shaped significantly by Stern's professional anxiety as an artist - an anxiety reflected in her attempts to claim voice and authority - and challenge European patriarchal standards of art and supremacy over modernity and civilisation. Interpreting *Congo* only as a White South African woman's representation of black people, and in relation to racist historical epochs such as apartheid, risks a problematic conceptualisation of identity as a stable never-changing entity and a simplistic categorisation of Stern as a white 'self' and the people she represents as black 'others'. I have argued throughout the thesis, relying on Stuart Hall's notion of

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<sup>12</sup> Irma Stern, *Congo* (Pretoria: JL Van Schaik, 1945).

<sup>13</sup> Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art : Audacities of Color*, 102.; Irma Stern, *Zanzibar* (Pretoria: JL Van Schaik, 1948).



identity as an act of becoming rather than being, and Sidonie Smith's idea of multiple selves coming into play at multiple stages of storytelling, the self and the other are constructed through a process of narration. I interpret Stern's complex positionality as a white-German Jewish-South African-woman-artist resulting into the multiple selves, in response to which the other is constructed in *Congo*. In telling the story of her experiences in Congo, Stern attempts to perform an authoritative, coherent and empowered self.

In her portrayal of African people, Stern reflects on both her affinity with and her alienation from others. She sometimes aligns herself with Congolese people – specifically with artists; she sees herself as one of them—whilst simultaneously claiming distance from them. In the process of representing the Congolese in this way, Stern also claims her own voice and stages her own authority. I agree with Dubow's observation that *Congo* reflects Stern's 'enduring fascination with the exotic, her wholehearted identification with the natural rhythms of tribal life, her great respect for the artistic integrity and strength of traditional tribal artefacts'.<sup>14</sup> However, I demonstrate that this fascination, identification and respect – particularly for the figure of artist or craftsman - can also be read as a strategic challenge to male- and European-dominated structures of knowledge and supremacy. As Dubow suggests, 'In the Congo, she found a society whose primary needs were still met to a degree by the work of the artist/craftsman'.<sup>15</sup> *Congo* provides her a space to claim 'the

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<sup>14</sup> Irma Stern and Neville Dubow, *Irma Stern* (Cape Town: Struik, 1974), 19.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

recognition, that she felt, justifiably, was her due' by using the text as a tool to fight against the rejection of her artistic production by European patriarchal institutions.<sup>16</sup>

Sean O'Toole describes Stern's identity as 'tangled': she is 'an artist, farm girl, refugee, vulnerable romantic, aristocratic wanderer, and perpetual exile'.<sup>17</sup> A further argument elaborated in this chapter, therefore, concerns what I call the hyphenated identity of the travel writer. Stern's position oscillated between that of authority and powerlessness, dominant and dominated, and superiority and inferiority. This meant that she was able to express her voice in some instances, while she was silenced in others, depending on her location and audience. Stern enjoyed a position of power and authority as a German-Jewish-white South African with access to a safe home during the war period and with the benefit of education in Berlin. Yet concurrently, being a woman in a patriarchal art world and Jewish in both Nazi Germany and in South Africa where there was much anti-Semitism, meant that Stern was deprived of voice and authority at many points.<sup>18</sup> Thus Stern, as is the case for other authors with similar complex positionalities discussed in this study, played with voice and deployed selective and strategic silence in her travel texts to claim recognition, authority, and power.

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<sup>16</sup> Neville Dubow quoted in C.B. Braude, "Beyond Black and White: Rethinking Irma Stern' in Focus," *Focus, The Helen Suzman Foundation*, no. 61 (June 2011): 49, Johannesburg.

<sup>17</sup> Sean O'Toole, *Irma Stern: African in Europe – European in Africa* (Munich-London-New York: Prestel Verlag GmbH & Company KG., 2021), 11.

<sup>18</sup> The poorer class of Jews immigrating to South Africa were stereotyped as 'pettifogging Peruvian[s]'. In 1930, the South African parliament passed the Immigration Quota Bill reducing Jewish migration to South Africa. Though 'Jews' were not explicitly mentioned it was clear from the parliamentary language, that advocated avoiding 'an undigested and unabsorbable minority', that the target was the Jewish population. See Gideon Shimoni, *Community and conscience : the Jews in apartheid South Africa* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2003), 10-12.; Milton Shain, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994).; Leonard Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?: The Racial Place of the Southern Jew," *American Jewish History* 85, no. 3 (1997), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23885563>.

## War, Displacement, and Ambivalence

To understand Stern's texts as attempts at self-validation, rather than a more straightforward play into racial categories, we need to examine her biography. War and displacement made Stern the 'product of two cultures': Germany, where she was brought up and trained as a painter, and central South Africa, where she was born and the place that nourished her artistic imagination.<sup>19</sup> Stern was born at Schweizer-Reneke in 1894 to German-Jewish parents a few years after the Western Transvaal was established by white settlers in 1888.<sup>20</sup> Throughout her life, she travelled substantially across Africa and Europe—sometimes in search of a safe home amidst the war years; at other times in search of subjects for her paintings. Stern's mobility was marked by her wish to escape 'burning Europe' and her fear of war and destruction.<sup>21</sup> She witnessed three major wars during her life: the Second Anglo Boer war (1899-1902), the First World War (1914-1918), and the Second World War (1939-1945). These periods hold a specific relevance in the construction of Stern's sense of self, home, and belonging.

The Second Anglo-Boer War displaced Stern from the country of her birth, exposing her to the trauma of displacement and the complex ideas of home, affinity, alienation, and race-consciousness that would characterise her work.<sup>22</sup> Stern was

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<sup>19</sup> Marilyn Wyman, "Irma Stern: Envisioning the "Exotic"," *Woman's Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1999): 18, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1358980>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1358980>.

<sup>20</sup> Stern's father, Samuel Stern, came to South Africa as a wealthy German-Jewish man, and settled in Transvaal near the farms and mines for better business prospects. Samuel Stern, with his brother, established a mercantile business to serve the white farmers of the region. See Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art- Audacities of Color.*; Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Irma Stern and Neville Dubow, *Paradise : The Journal and Letters (1917-1933) of Irma Stern*, 1st ed. (Diep River: Chameleon Press ; Johannesburg : Thorold's Africana Books [distributor], 1991), 70.

<sup>22</sup> The on-going conflict of British and Boers over the struggle for control over the gold mines of Transvaal resulted in the outbreak of the war. The British occupied Schweizer-Reneke in May 1900...

five when the Second Anglo Boer War started, which saw many people displaced from their homes and put into concentration camps. In 1900 Stern's father was arrested for sympathising with the Boers and transported as a prisoner to Vryburg, South Africa. Stern and her mother were sent to Cape Town as refugees. Her 'prosperous and comfortable' life as a child in the South African community which, though small, seems to have been largely German' soon ended as a consequence of this war.<sup>23</sup> In her diary, Stern recounts her first experience of the war:

Then one day I went to play with Eva. Suddenly I stood enveloped in clouds of dust with a crowd of mounted men around me. I sat down and waited for them to pass I was so frightened. They were soldiers. The Boer War had begun.<sup>24</sup>

Amidst this period of uncertainty, war and fear, Stern developed an eye problem, which she recalled as 'the Egyptian eye disease' leaving her in 'great pain' and exposing her to 'a time of darkness and sadness'.<sup>25</sup> This encounter with near blindness, which she recalls as 'impenetrable darkness', enabled her to understand her love for 'the sun and the blue sky so much, and all the bright flowers!' It was her first vivid imaginative experience with colour:

Before my diseased eyes I suddenly saw a red, fiery lily trembling in the hot glow of sun, I smelt its sweet, somewhat mystical fragrance. I saw myself as though I were someone else, walking through the tall grass and moving straight towards the lily. I knelt down before its beauty, drinking in its

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(see Wyman, "Irma Stern: Envisioning the "Exotic"," 18.;Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 13.)

<sup>23</sup> Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Irma Stern quoted in *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

fragrance and its form, its wonderful colour. My entire soul was filled with its beauty.<sup>26</sup>

In this quotation, we see Stern contrasts the pain of her ‘diseased eyes’—a condition aggravated by the war, and full of the fear of losing her ability to comprehend colours—with an imaginative vision in which she beholds herself in a new sensory world. This experience was her first introduction to the power of imagination, to colours, and the natural world and later fed into her Expressionist aesthetic, marked by her use of intense and non-naturalistic colours, and broad textured brushwork. In Cape Town, while attending kindergarten as a refugee, she made her first attempts at the painting’ by beginning to ‘colour pictures’ in ‘the picture books’ where she gave ‘all the children’ ‘red cheeks and blue eyes’.<sup>27</sup> Although as Max Osborne noted, living in South Africa, most people around her (except the German community) were black, especially ‘her companions and her servants’, Stern’s tendency to paint people with ‘red cheeks and blue eyes’ reflects her childlike perception about racial appearances.<sup>28</sup> She was gravitating towards her white subjects; her kindergarten drawings (either taught or she chose these colours herself) demonstrate an emerging race-consciousness. Her sense of belonging and affinity with the white European world deepened when the family moved back to Germany in 1901.<sup>29</sup>

The Stern family finally settled down in Berlin in 1904; however her writing suggests that their frequent movements between Germany and South Africa resulted

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Schoeman (1994), p.17

<sup>28</sup> Max Osborne, *Irma Stern* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1927), 25.

<sup>29</sup> The family left Cape Town for Germany after the outbreak of the Bubonic plague in February 1901; the family then lived temporarily for two years among Jewish family and friends at Germany. This stay, and particularly her time with her grandmother, developed Stern’s love of *Marchen* (German fairy tales) further inspiring her imagination and her longing for Utopia. (see Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 18.)

in her adoption of an ambivalent sense of belonging.<sup>30</sup> Stern writes in her diary that, we gypsies actually had a home of our own.<sup>31</sup> Here the word gypsies reflects her sense of belonging nowhere, but her simultaneous identification of somewhere as her home reflects her sense of belonging to Germany; her deployment of both of these words in the same sentence demonstrates an ambivalence that had started surfacing in her sense of self. After living in Berlin for five years the family moved to Wolmaransstad, an English-speaking settlement in South Africa. Again, Stern's diaries record her feelings of homesickness: she was looking forward to the opportunity to get to Berlin, then life will really begin.<sup>32</sup> These examples make clear the extent to which her sense of affinity with Germany and rejection of South Africa gave meaning to her life.

Although South Africa was associated in her memories with war and displacement, a visit to Victoria Falls in August 1910 allowed Stern to see the distinctive nature of Africa, and built on her earlier childhood imaginative visions of the natural world.<sup>33</sup> Stern's experience was part of something larger: in the early twentieth century Victoria Falls was naturalized by evicting the local people and popularising racialised imperial and settler identities in which Africans often featured as a generic exotic and servile other through tourism.<sup>34</sup> This context for Victoria Falls

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<sup>30</sup> In 1903, growing anti-Semitism in Germany and the end of the Boer war made Samuel Stern decide to move back to South Africa and restart his business. However, the British had already burnt down Schweizer-Reneke to prevent its re-occupation by the Boers, and had destroyed the farms of the white-settlers. So the Stern family returned to Germany in 1904, settling down in Berlin, where the family moved into their own home. (see *ibid.*, 18,21.)

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Irma Stern quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> JoAnn McGregor, "The Victoria Falls 1900-1940: Landscape, Tourism and the Geographical Imagination," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): 719, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3557439>.

as a site of white imperial fascination thus attracted her towards Africa and distanced her from the continent as a white German.

Stern's emerging artistry and subjectivity was shaped by her new-found appreciation of South African scenery and exposure to European aesthetic traditions. In 1910, the Stern family went to Berlin, where the Gothic buildings and Bavarian villages furthered Stern's interest in German Romantic tradition.<sup>35</sup> This Romantic imagination, and her formal training as an artist in a local art studio in 1912, proved helpful during her short sojourn to South Africa in 1913, where the South African landscape again inspired her.<sup>36</sup> This, Clive Kellner notes, allowed Stern to be conscious of and start 'conveying aesthetic description of her visible environment [...] an external world populated by sight, experience and colour'.<sup>37</sup> The South African landscape inspired and developed her Romantic sensibilities, affording her a connection with the place and a way of claiming belonging. Hereafter in her diary, Stern reflects on her wish, while studying in Europe, to return to 'Africa - the country of my birth, the land of sunshine, of radiant colours'.<sup>38</sup> Although Stern would later publicly describe this period of 'divided upbringing' as formative for 'the feeling of

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<sup>35</sup> Helene Smuts, *At Home with Irma Stern : a Guidebook to the UCT Irma Stern Museum* (Cape Town: Committee of the Irma Stern Museum : Trustees of the Irma Stern Trust, 2007), 14.; While at Berlin, Stern started visiting her grandmother, who is supposed to have introduced Stern to *Marchen*, in Einbeck, a small town in the south of Hanover with remarkable medieval buildings, which according to Another medieval village, Rotherburgob der Tauber, further provided Stern with Romantic imagination and inspiration, which Stern expressed through two pencil sketches and a small romantic prose work, titled *An enchanted Sleeping Beauty castle, a remnant of the Middle Ages* in 1911.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Clive Kellner, "Representations of the Black subject in Irma Stern's African periods : Swaziland, Zanzibar and Congo 1922-1955" (University of Cape Town, 2013), 11, <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/14244>, University of Cape Town.

<sup>38</sup> Irma Stern, "My Exotic Models," *The Cape Argus* (Cape Town) 3 April 1926.

belonging to nowhere', her diaries and letters place her belonging in South Africa and Germany simultaneously, thereby shaping her ambivalent identity.<sup>39</sup>

### **Escaping Desolation: wounded by 'civilisation', searching for healing elsewhere**

As the previous section has shown, Stern's identity was shaped by her experiences of displacement following the Anglo-Boer war. Rising anti-Semitism in Europe further pushed her to search for her 'paradise' elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> Berlin had 'suffered a considerable loss of elegance' during the First World War according to Stern, who wrote, 'I'm still in ugly Berlin [...] Berlin makes me so tired—there's no real spring here'.<sup>41</sup> In this period she painted 'Eternal Child' (1916) (Figure 15), which she considered her 'first' painting 'different from my other works'.<sup>42</sup> Reflecting on this painting forty years later in an interview, Stern said that it was seeing 'a child with lanky limbs sitting, angular and awkward, with large shadowed eyes in a pale face of malnutrition' in a tram that inspired her to express 'the suffering and agony that a war means to all life'.<sup>43</sup> Importantly, however, this 'the little child with large mistrusting eyes' also held 'a few field flowers' with her 'underfed hands', which symbolised that 'some beauty was always left'.<sup>44</sup> This painting, which reflects Stern's inner conflict—traumatised by war but optimistic that beauty exists somewhere—also reveals her future choice of subjects and locations. The traumatised European child holding

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<sup>39</sup> Irma Stern, Interviewed in 'Highway of Women', *The Rand Daily Mail*, May 28 (1931), p 7, quoted in Lara Bourdin, "The Sculpture of Irma Stern (1922-1955)" (Masters in Art History University of Montreal, 2013), 29.

<sup>40</sup> Irma Stern quoted in Stern and Dubow, *Paradise : The Journal and Letters (1917-1933) of Irma Stern*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 46.

<sup>42</sup> Irma Stern, "How I Began to Paint," *The Cape Argus* (Cape Town) 12 June 1926.

<sup>43</sup> Irma Stern quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 51.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.



flowers echoes her motivation to find beauty in pastoral settings close to nature. Interpreted as a picture of hope in a time of war, this painting also reflects her desire for the ‘land of bright colours’—Africa—as an alternative to ‘burning Europe’. She reflected desire in her illustrative journal *Paradise* (Figure 16), Stern scribbled- ‘And fled from burning Europe into the land of strong colours’- contrasts the city on fire with the open landscape of the veld.<sup>45</sup>



Figure 15  
Eternal Child -1916



Figure 16  
Irma Stern fleeing from Europe to Africa-  
as represented in her Journal *Paradise*

*Eternal Child* also became a foundation for Stern’s relationship with her mentor Max Pechstein, who was highly influenced by the French post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin, and was also a prominent member of the artistic group, *Die Brücke*.<sup>46</sup> Both Pechstein and Gauguin developed visual representations of the so-called ‘noble savage’, described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a ‘mythical

<sup>45</sup> Stern and Dubow, *Paradise : The Journal and Letters (1917-1933) of Irma Stern*, 29., Stern has written it in German. Here I have used Neville Dubow’s English translation (70).

<sup>46</sup> Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 200-11.

personification of natural goodness by a romantic glorification of savage life'.<sup>47</sup> Paul Gauguin, disgusted by a 'materialistic and hypocritical Western civilization', is well-known for his Tahitian paintings which initiated the Romantic primitivism movement in art.<sup>48</sup> Not only were indigenous people from non-Western societies painted, but their artefacts were exhibited in London, Paris and Berlin.<sup>49</sup> In the beginning of the twentieth century German Expressionists started celebrating 'primitivism' through their groups such as *Die Brücke* (1905).<sup>50</sup> Expressionism is defined as a movement of 'rebellion by artists insisting on the validity of their individual emotional responses to what they were painting' by creating their own visual language.<sup>51</sup> Stern was trained by Expressionist Pechstein, and so also risks the aestheticization of black and indigenous peoples.

It was with the help of Pechstein that Stern's first solo exhibition was held at the Fritz Gurlitt gallery between May and June 1919.<sup>52</sup> Here, Stern first displayed her South African identity publicly; the catalogue stated, 'These works partly came into being in the Transvaal (South Africa), the artist's home, during the years 1913 to 1918'.<sup>53</sup> Stern's vision of the 'primal, the innocent and the exotic' was accepted immediately in Europe, where, according to Dubow, 'the hunger for the primitive' had

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<sup>47</sup> T. E. R. Ellingson, "Introduction," in *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (University of California Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>48</sup> Jean-François Staszak, "Primitivism and the other. History of art and cultural geography," *GeoJournal* 60 (2004).

<sup>49</sup> Charles W. Haxthausen, "'Primitivism' in Twentieth Century Art. Detroit," *The Burlington Magazine* 127, no. 986 (1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/882087>. ; James F. Knapp, "Primitivism and the Modern," *boundary 2* 15, no. 1/2 (1986), <https://doi.org/10.2307/303444>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/303444>.

<sup>50</sup> Ese Odokuma, "The Use of Primitivism in Some Twentieth Century Western Art Styles and Movements," *African Research Review* 4, 2 (2010).

<sup>51</sup> 'Eternal Child' attracted negative comments from some critic- even Stern's mentor Martin Brandenburg could not understand the painting, which led to Stern's break with him - but the same picture, attracting Pechstein's admiration, led to their friendship (see Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 52.)

<sup>52</sup> Irma Stern quoted in *ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 63.

become fashionable as war-torn Europe came to terms with the destruction caused by the so-called ‘civilised man’.<sup>54</sup> Stern, however, was affected more by the negative reception amongst some critics. In her personal clipping book, she kept pasted nine reviews, almost all harsh, from Berlin newspapers.<sup>55</sup> One German newspaper, wrote: ‘...a lady, Irma Stern, who comes from the Transvaal according to the catalogue. *Despite this*, she paints in an *essentially* Expressionistic style - with *uneven results*’.<sup>56</sup> Such reviews—where critics invoked Stern’s provinciality and South Africanness to criticise her work and distance her from Expressionism, a European art style—and Stern’s attention to such criticism, signals the alienation that she may have felt from European culture, thus encouraging her affinity with South Africa.

South Africa, to her, appears as an antithesis of European idea of civilisation so she feels motivated to travel to South Africa; nonetheless when she confronts Anglicisation of South Africa she feels unhappy and alienated. Stern documented her expectations of South Africa in her unpublished manuscript *Umgababa Buch* (1923)<sup>57</sup>:

Africa – the word was the personification of everything desirable to me. The land of my childhood. The sun – its brown people – its sheer mountains. The endless sky. The splendour of its flowers saturated with colour. The fruit with its sweet and yet so sharp fragrance.<sup>58</sup>

The place of ‘childhood’ is always a place where child’s innocence is accepted and even celebrated; Africa, thus, is a place, where her innocence, as a child, has

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<sup>54</sup> Stern and Dubow, *Irma Stern*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>56</sup> quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 63.[Emphasis added]

<sup>57</sup> In 1923 Stern sojourned for a brief period in Zululand and the Natal coast for several weeks. She completed her first travel narrative titled *Das Umgababa Buch* based on this experience in Natal.

<sup>58</sup> Irma Stern quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 65.

already been accepted opposite to the European rejection of the innocence in her new Expressionist paintings. South Africa, in her imagination and expectation, is thus a place of ‘everything desirable’ to her, and where she can be accepted as well as desired. Stern’s idea of Africa here is informed by her Romantic imagination; these lines evoke an opposite image of the ‘burning Europe’. The natural imagery of the sun, mountains, endless sky, and flowers is expressed in her paintings in the form of colours, light, and nature. However, similar to the African-Americans discussed in this thesis, Stern feels alienated by Africa when her ‘romanticized perception of the continent’ is not fulfilled.<sup>59</sup> As she experiences European impact on South Africa, she is disappointed. Writing to her Berlin-based friend Trude Bosse, Stern described that the social life she encountered in South Africa followed ‘English patterns and imitated English institutions and standards, and cultural life’—she was ‘[w]retchedly unhappy’.<sup>60</sup> As J.M. Coetzee suggests, South Africa has been ‘rival dream topography’: white people imagine it as a ‘vast, empty, silent space, older than man’ which is ‘destined to be vast, empty and unchanged’.<sup>61</sup> Stern’s encounter with people in Cape Town leading ‘a civilised life, almost like Germany’, destroys this dream, so she decided to travel to the interior to discover the ‘unspoiled’ areas of Natal, Swaziland, and Pondoland.<sup>62</sup>

Stern’s unique style of painting, which departed from the prevalent conventions of Expressionism and primitivism established in Germany, was rejected

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<sup>59</sup> John C. Grusser, "Afro-American Travel Literature and Africanist Discourse," *Black American Literature Forum* 24, no. 1 (1990): 9, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2904063>.

<sup>60</sup> Irma Stern quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 66.

<sup>61</sup> J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing : On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1988), 22.

<sup>62</sup> Irma Stern quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 69,75.

outright by the South African as well as European art establishments.<sup>63</sup> Stern's exhibition was not well received in Cape Town, which was yet to receive full exposure to Expressionist art.<sup>64</sup> One correspondent for the *SA Jewish Times* noted that the exhibition faced 'storms of abuses and denunciation'.<sup>65</sup> A review in *The Cape Times* stated that 'no serious attention needs to be paid' to the art, and expressed 'disgust at the general nastiness of work'.<sup>66</sup> For her second exhibition, a Johannesburg newspaper ran the headline, 'Art of Miss Irma Stern: Ugliness as a cult'. This led Stern to refer to members of South African society as 'petty minded people' for whom 'Everything that's new – and almost everything is new to them narrow-minded people – is simply laughed at, scorned and afterwards imitated'.<sup>67</sup> Stern was criticised and rejected as 'mad' and 'no artist' by the white European male-dominated establishment because of her different choice of subjects and broad colour patterns.<sup>68</sup> Stern expressed her disappointment and distress at her critical rejection in South Africa, which, after all is where European critics positioned her, in her journal illustrations depicting her anguish, distress, and grief (Figure 17 and 18). This professional context became another reason for her travel journey. She was looking for a place where 'there was no sign of Europe, no trace of civilization, just Africa' with its 'dark people' 'dancing through life with a peculiar animal-like beauty'.

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<sup>63</sup> Lisa Horstmann, "The Expressionist Roots of South African modernism," in *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context*, ed. Isabel Wünsche (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 525.

<sup>64</sup> Stern's first South African exhibition was held at Ashbey's Art Gallery under the title 'Exhibition of modern art by Miss Irma Stern' in February 1922, displaying 96 works.

<sup>65</sup> Hilda Purwitsky, quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 92.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>67</sup> Irma Stern, Letter to Trude Bosse on 15/6/1922 cited in Sandra Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966* (Cape Town: Bibliophiles in Cape Town, 2017), 74.

<sup>68</sup> Irma Stern, Letter to Freda Feldman on October 30, 1937 quoted in *ibid.*, 55.

She found this in what she called ‘the heartbeat of Africa – Umgababa’, the interior of present-day KwaZulu-Natal.<sup>69</sup>



And painted pictures with my heart's blood  
 Courtesy: Neville Dubow (p.71)



And gave them to the people and stood alone –  
 and all laughed and slung mud at me

Figure 17 (Left), Figure 18 (Right)

Irma Stern's autobiographical illustration in *Paradise*

Here Stern found the Africa of her dreams and visions; what she considered a rich ‘tribal life’ in a sub-tropical setting. She projected a marginalised, rejected self as a South African painter in Europe, and as a woman Expressionist in South Africa, onto a setting stereotypically seen as inferior by Europeans and white South Africans alike. This further allowed her to invert the existing hierarchies of the civilised and uncivilised: before her trip to Swaziland in 1933, she wrote to her friend Bosse: ‘I am going to the —savagesll [den Wildren] and probably I shall meet cultured people there’.<sup>70</sup> Such comments reflect the idea of the ‘Noble Savage’ but also ridicule the

<sup>69</sup> Irma Stern quoted in Stern and Dubow, *Paradise : The Journal and Letters (1917-1933) of Irma Stern*, 99, 75.

<sup>70</sup> Irma Stern, quoted in Braude, "Beyond Black and White: Rethinking Irma Stern' in Focus."

European ‘civilised’ man as lacking in culture, a strategy for positive self-definition by creating a parallel opposite.<sup>71</sup> By locating culture in the African landscape, Stern debases the myth of European civilisation that considered both Jews and indigenous people as inferior.

For Stern, signs of Europe and ‘civilisation’ invoked memories of rejection, displacement and trauma; therefore, wherever she encountered the sign she was saddened. On finding Swaziland and its people—who were apparently starting to lose their ‘natural picturesqueness’—Stern was distressed:

Today he has submitted to civilisation. He wears Everyman’s clothes and boots. He looks odd and drab in his garb, and its unnaturalness seems to have cramped his spirit. The joy of life is no longer there. He seems unhappy in the burden of civilised living. To those of us who saw beauty in the native in his natural state, the change is sad.<sup>72</sup>

The moment Africa starts showing signs of being ‘submitted to civilisation’ through ‘clothes and boots’, Stern starts relating it to the European ‘burden of civilised living’. She starts projecting her own rejection onto the people.

These travels to the KwaZulu-Natal form one part of Stern’s story and pave the way for her later search for the ‘real Africa’ in Congo where she sought to find ‘primitive’ man who has still not ‘submitted to civilisation’ and an alternative to ‘civilised living’. She regarded Congo as a place that could save her from witnessing more desolation and could heal her wounds given by European civilisation. In her

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<sup>71</sup> David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire : Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 76.

<sup>72</sup> Irma Stern in an interview with *Cape Argus* on 5/7/1933 quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 103.

letter to Freda Feldman while planning her journey to Congo, she stressed her need for a change:

The Congo- I am getting all the information I can- I am getting letters of introduction also to the Belg. Congo Government- I want a change badly. Here- if war is at the door- what do I do- but sit and get bombed- I have no bomb to through back! There I can at least enjoy adventure of a more primitive nature- cannibals or lions or such things. <sup>73</sup>

By visiting Congo, Stern was not only looking to invert the ‘colonial relationships to Africa’ as Braude suggests. She was also looking to heal her trauma—both of a displaced childhood and the professional criticism and rejection she experienced as an artist—amongst the ‘savages’.

### **Contact Zone: Representing the other, speaking for self**

Stern’s journey to the African interior was a quest to find the things that she feared she had lost in herself. As such, *Congo* is a narcissistic representation of Africa as a lost part of herself, rather than a place in itself. In 1913, Stern returned to Africa with the status of a white woman brought up, educated and trained in Germany:

I had broken the net - the watchful eyes. I went hunting, searching for black people, built up a collection of negroes whom I captured on fine white Ingres paper - how beautiful. A girl, Lettia was her name, seemed to have been created by Botichelli [sic] - slender and suffering [...] I carry her about with me, wherever I am I imagine Lettia walking in, in a dull olive-green gown, her arms raised, carrying a bowl of oranges- she bows her head slightly and

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<sup>73</sup> Irma Stern, Letter to Freda Feldman on March 24, 1942, quoted in Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966*, 24.



blinks her eyes as she looks up [...] One could have believed me to be perverse – falling in love with little negro flowers and beautiful female eyes, but I was afraid of a full, sonorous male voice, of the net, of the unknown, that is why I fled to the women.<sup>74</sup>

These lines, reflective of Stern's positionality, ambivalence, and conflicts, explicitly point towards her attitude and selection of her subjects. Wyman suggests that Stern's choice of representation was not an unconscious' one but deliberate'; the same can be seen in these lines when Stern describes going on a hunt' for black people' with the watchful eyes'.<sup>75</sup> Stern's wish of hunting' and then her claim that she had captured' black people' (on paper) relates to prevalent zoological tropes of the time, in a racist cultural context that permitted the exhibition of Africans at the zoological gardens in Berlin.<sup>76</sup> Berger saw Stern's hunt', specifically that under the title Treasure Hunt' in Congo, as evidence of Leo Frobenius's influence on her to collect and exhibit indigenous objects for demonstrating the ripeness of the area for plunder.<sup>77</sup> However, I argue that hunt' summons a sense of adventure, a theme already established by travel writers, such as Rider Haggard and Jules Verne, and reproduced in Germany specifically named as narrativized zoo'.<sup>78</sup> It gave writers the chance to dehumanise and objectify their subjects as animals who can be hunted and displayed in narratives as a trophy- what I call narrativised trophy hunting'. Stern's watchful eyes' tend to observe the black bodies and represent them through

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<sup>74</sup> Irma Stern, quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 31.

<sup>75</sup> Wyman, "Irma Stern: Envisioning the "Exotic", 20.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art : Audacities of Color*, 91.

<sup>78</sup> Aaron Santesso, "The Literary Animal and the Narrativized Zoo," *Modern Fiction Studies* 60, no. 3 (2014), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26421739>.

her 'apartheid gaze' that further 'regulate[s] meaning'.<sup>79</sup> By referring to 'Letitia' as a painting created by the Italian painter Botticelli, Stern is looking at 'Letitia' not as a human but as an object, thus objectifying the black body, a theme that recurs in Stern's paintings and texts.

Congo afforded Stern a contact zone where she could observe, classify and aestheticize her subjects, a space where she could represent the Congolese people and art to a white audience. Only 300 copies of *Congo* were published as a limited edition of a book with a handmade book cover using Kuban patterned cloth—a woven textile distinct to Congo that was heavily exhibited in Europe.<sup>80</sup> Since William Sheppard's displaying of Kuban cloth, and then European ethnographers and artists also taking an interest in this material, the textile became a symbol and metonym of Kuban culture. The textile acts as a boundary of this first edition of the published text, on which the word 'Congo' appears in flowing handwriting, along with her signature (figure 19). If, as Berger suggests, the cloth cover provided an opportunity for Stern's 'primarily white audience' to interact with Kuban culture without actually being there, it also allowed Stern to demonstrate her position of power in the contact zone: by putting her signature on the cover, Stern—or her publishers—demonstrated her authority over the culture—the trophy of her 'hunt'.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Colin Richards, "About face: Aspects of art history and identity in South African visual culture," *Third Text* 5, no. 16-17 (1991), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528829108576329>.

<sup>80</sup> Denise Murrell, "African Influences in Modern Art," *In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (April 2008). [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/aima/hd\\_aima.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/aima/hd_aima.htm).

<sup>81</sup> Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art: Audacities of Color*, 93.

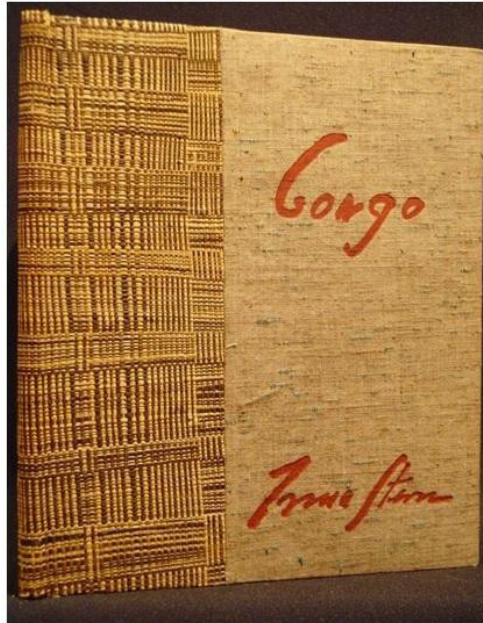


Figure 19  
Book Cover

Stern validates her presence in the contact zone by acting as an intermediary between Africa and the Western world, as a narrator for telling African stories to Western audiences. For instance, when speaking to Bakuba people through a translator, she says:

—I am a painter, and I am going to show all the pictures I paint in the Congo in my country, and after the war in Europe, so that people may learn to *love the natives of the Congo* as much as I do.¶ This was being translated to the king by his clerk. Who spoke French fluently. [sic] —Now I have come here,¶ I continued, —to try and collect from you some of the lovely work your tribe is known to produce.¶ The King smiled. —And then I shall also show *your people's work with my pictures*, so that the *white people* in *my country* may *learn* what beautiful things the black man in the Congo creates.¶ (24)  
[Emphasis added]

The artworks, which Stern intended to collect to show your people's work, would become evidence of her travels and her physical presence in Congo—a validation of

her presence in the contact zone for her readers. Stern performs power and authority in both cultures by performing her ability to translate the Congolese people and culture through her artwork to 'white people'. As much as she was a source of enlightenment for white people on Congolese art, she was also a source for Western acknowledgment of the 'lovely work' of the Congolese people, which may have further led the West to 'love the natives of the Congo'. However, Stern does not make European art available for the eyes of the Congolese people, denying them the power to bring their own critical gaze. Also, by pronouncing her 'love' for the Congolese people she signals at benevolent paternalism at the same time. She performs anti-conquest, a strategy adopted by a European bourgeois to 'secure innocence' as they 'assert European hegemony', as well as conquest through 'hunt' simultaneously.<sup>82</sup>

The rhetorical strategy of amassing Congo to herself is instrumental in making the Congolese people appear as submitting to her gaze as well as a chance for her to escape a male gaze. Stern throughout her life was conscious of her 'ungainly body', which she found to be 'terribly unattractive' and alienated her in Berlin's male world.<sup>83</sup> Stern's 'inferiority complex about my body' was aggravated by critics explicitly and sometimes implicitly. Her body was mocked by art critics through sketches (Figure 20), which further called her to isolate from the patriarchal world:

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<sup>82</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Travel writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

<sup>83</sup> Stern and Dubow, *Paradise: The Journal and Letters (1917-1933)* of Irma Stern, 100.

Now I do not even want to take part in social dances- so strong is my feeling of self-consciousness- my body bothers me- I am afraid of the eyes of strangers.<sup>84</sup> (Figure 21)

Yet Africa gave Stern the authority of surveillance under which the indigenous could be 'gazed upon': Stern's fear of the 'eyes of strangers' is turned into a power in Africa.<sup>85</sup> Since surveillance, as suggested by Spurr, enables 'an interposition of technique which safely conceals the body of the observer', Stern is also able to conceal her body that bothers her.<sup>86</sup> Defining, as discussed earlier, Lettia's beauty sensuously and alarming readers that Stern may be 'falling in love with little negro flowers' depicts three major points: firstly, 'little' reflects a patronising tone that also forms a recurrent part of Western hegemonic discourses in the form of referring to Africans as 'little boys' or 'children'.<sup>87</sup> Secondly, by focusing on Lettia's beauty, Stern tends to look at perfection and beauty outside her own body. Therefore, Africa offers her an opportunity to transfer her quest for beauty and admiration to black female bodies instead of her own, and also an authority to choose escaping 'full, sonorous male voice' of which she was 'afraid'. Stern's journey to the interiors of Africa was, thus, a quest to find the things that she feared she had lost in herself. Thirdly, by adding her acknowledgment that she may be believed to be 'perverse', Stern recognises the dominance of the male gaze, imposing a male gaze and thought on the female body with immoral intentions, she debases male authority and supremacy. Thus, Africa, beginning with South Africa and leading to Congo, was

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<sup>84</sup> Irma Stern, quoted in *ibid.*, 84.; Irma Stern, "Letter to Freda Feldman on October 30, 1937," in *Irma Stern: Are You Still Alive?*, ed. Sandra Klopper (Cape Town: The Society of Bibliophiles in Cape Town, 2000), 22.

<sup>85</sup> Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, 12.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

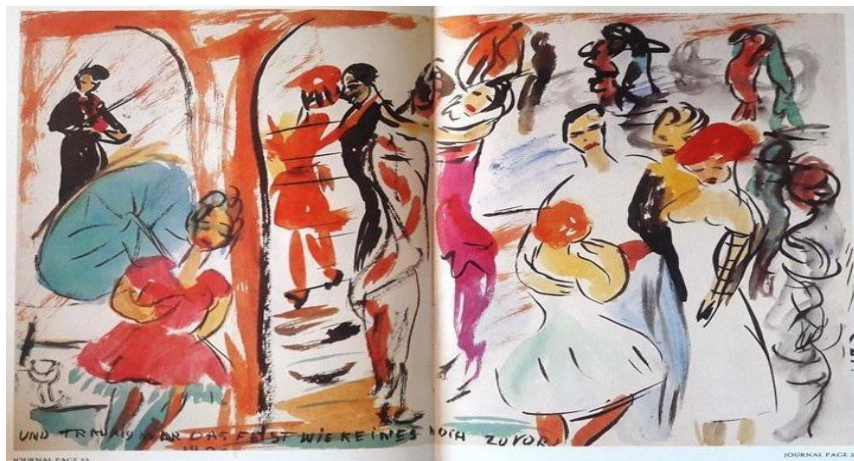
<sup>87</sup> Walter L. Fleming, "Jefferson Davis, the Negroes and the Negro Problem," *The Sewanee Review* 16, no. 4 (Oct 1908), [www.jstor.org/stable/27530928](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27530928).

Stern's first experience of imagining herself occupying the space traditionally afforded to the white male gaze but also maintaining her femininity. This occupation of the male gaze also drew her, throughout her life, to focus on women subjects more than men in her paintings and texts. In *Congo*, too, Stern represents women more than men, and looks at female bodies as her potential subjects.



Irma Stern at "The Firs" in 1960, Sketch by F.L. Alexander, Cape Town art critic

Figure 20



(*And sad was the Ball as never before. 1920.*) Courtesy: Neville Dubow (1991) p.69

This picture from Irma Stern's Journal reflects 'the emotions of exclusion'.

Figure 21

Stern depicts Congo as beautiful and extravagant, contrary to its prejudiced European description as the 'heart of darkness'. While on her way to Bakuba, she sees 'native huts' at Elizabethville 'all gaily decorated with a variation of geometrical ornaments, painted in fresco' (5). The chief is not a 'barbarian', but a man 'abundantly full of life' whose 'musicians play for him all through the day ceaselessly, even half through the night' (5). The women she meets are 'inquisitive', trying to interact with her. Nonetheless, Stern keeps these women mute—in the sense that their voices are silent in her text—thereby reserving the position of power to herself. The house that is provided to her, which she calls 'my little —gitell', is also described for its fresco— 'Angular pillars, painted with dark red snakes and white crocodiles, support the thatched roof' (5). However, when the painter of the fresco is sent to her by the Sultan to show her his methods, she finds it 'very simple'. She even refers to his style of making 'design into the wall' as a way of 'the primitive Italians' (6). Here, Stern claims proximity to the local people through art, whilst simultaneously downgrading their way of life as 'simple' and 'primitive'. Nonetheless, Stern seeks to persuade her readers to respect the art of the Bakuba people:

Here I was in the region of the Bakuba, the most artistically native race in the Congo, who only one generation back had been man-eaters. It was strange to plunge right among so savage a tribe, and yet only to be aware of a rare artistic taste which had for years been exciting and stimulating the art world of Europe. Here were the creators of magnificent pieces of sculpture, carved out of wood, of fetishes and masks, grotesque and beautiful revealing primitive Africa in all its fear-ridden phantasy [sic], with its witch-craft and taboos, with its ancestral worship and its world alive with spirits. Here live men who are treated with the respect due to their artistic craft. They do nothing but their own creative work (23).

When Stern portrays the Bakubas as the ‘most artistically native race’ who ‘only one generation back had been man-eaters’, she both challenges and reinforces stereotypes. She aligns herself with the locals (who ‘do nothing but their own creative work’) in her capacity as a fellow artist, yet distances herself from them through ‘race’ (‘primitive Africa in all its fear-ridden phantasy’). As a result, she claims recognition, respect, and authority as a privileged interpreter of their artistic world.

Stern’s *Congo* thus provides a contact zone for her to claim recognition and power in both worlds; the text itself allows her to speak literally to her audience. *Congo* is written in English, rather than in German—the language she used in all of her communications before 1933. Her decision to write in English may have been related to the rise in anti-Semitism in Germany, which caused Stern to sever ties with Germany. Nonetheless, when seen in the light of the book’s limited print run of 300, it appears to be more than that; presumably, Stern was looking for a readership amongst not only her German-Jewish friends, but also among English-language readers, specifically her critics, friends, and patrons in South Africa or other parts of Europe. The book, along with the style and content of writing, can be read as a message to her critics—a tool to fight against her artistic rejection literally wrapped in materials of Kuban culture. *Congo* itself provided her with a space to escape from the paternalistic domination of German-Jewish culture, which she depicted as a ‘constant pressure of being ruled, of being reduced to a child’, the masculinity of



artistic movements, and the snobbery of the art world that sees her South Africanness as provincial.<sup>88</sup>

### **Ambiguous positionality: Reproducing stereotypes**

Stern's alienation from the idea of European civilisation attracted her to an idea of belonging with the Congo where art and artists were acknowledged and respected. Nonetheless, her tendency to fall into established stereotypes of the Congo as a world of 'savage tribes' put such thinking under pressure. As Berger notes, the tales of 'Black African savagery' confirmed the European 'sense of racial superiority', and Stern's 'visual rendering' of the 'Black ethnic identities', as different to the white South Africans, allowed the government to acknowledge different 'ethnic groups' in South Africa, and thus make a case for 'racial segregation'.<sup>89</sup> This allowed government officials, who had earlier rejected Robeson as an artist, to laud her works and facilitate her in her future ventures.<sup>90</sup> Stern's position as a white painter thus allowed her a privileged position as a traveller: she received a 'letter(s) of introduction' from the 'British Resident', enabling her 'way to be smoothed', and was assigned a 'monk from the mission station' (23) to show her around.<sup>91</sup> In Congo:

The —town crierll had announced my visit to the King, and what I was wanting to buy, and now the people were bringing me their things – masks and figures, mats of all kinds, and paint and medicine boxes all covered with angular designs and with two or three horns as a kind of crest, cut out of the red wood of the N'gula tree (25).

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<sup>88</sup> Irma Stern, quoted in *ibid.*, 84.

<sup>89</sup> Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art : Audacities of Color*, 83-85.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>91</sup> Irma Stern in a letter to Richard and Freda Feldman, quoted in Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966*, 128.

The announcement of Stern's arrival as a European by the town crier evoked the prior knowledge of missionaries, who, as chapter 4 showed, were known to local people as potential buyers of their artworks. Therefore, Stern's portrayal of this scene, with local people selling their wares and the Kuban king waiting for her with gifts, grants her authority and power. At the royal event of national fete in Kigali, Stern's privileged position as a white European painter gave her access to the 'royal box', a symbol of the display of position and power in that society:

The huge market is turned into a kind of arena...Stands of yellow straw have been built up to shelter the Government officials and European guests, the Watussi ladies and the wealthy Arabs. A missionary takes me to see the Royal Box (38).

Stern's whiteness, aligned her with European identity, allowed her to access certain privileges. The Royal Box was only normally occupied by Congolese dignitaries, not Europeans, yet she was able to occupy the same spaces as African royalty. Stern's decision to take the less travelled path, and therefore behave as the courageous woman travelling alone, also reinforces depictions of pioneering white travellers. On the hand, however, Stern also effaced the seeming rationality associated with whiteness or Europeanness. For instance, when her car breaks down while travelling from Elisabethville, Stern shows herself susceptible to superstitions about Africa. She finds 'pineapple skins'—a sign that 'people have been here recently' (11). Stern also spots 'grass' 'tied in the same curious fashion as the bamboo', which immediately alarms her:

This morning after starting, we passed a stretch of bamboo, and one tall bamboo had been knotted. I noticed the driver hesitating before passing it. This means evil, witchcraft, bad omen; but soon we forget about it. (10)

She then informs her driver, —Pierre, look, they have tied up our roadll and then:

I take a knife and cut all the knots. I am not usually superstitious, but here the beliefs are so strong, the fears of witchcraft so potent...The air is dense with cruelty, the sun's rays shiver over the moist drops which still hang on the grass from the midday rain, sparkling with rainbow colours. (11)

In these examples, Stern believes, or at least reproduces, local superstition. Stern's act of giving meaning to pineapple skins on the roadside, and then alarming her driver before cutting the knots to leave 'behind the evil spirits' with a sigh of 'relief', all point towards her imaginative investment in the supernatural, or mysterious powers. Interestingly, however, Stern attributes these superstitions to the local people— 'the beliefs are so strong here', she comments—thus projecting her fear onto them. In a bid to retain her European rationality, she states that she is 'not usually superstitious'. Colonial discourse rested on the rejection of non-European beliefs and values as orthodox, superstitious, and unscientific and required Europeans to distance themselves from behaviour by creating a binary opposition of two concepts.<sup>92</sup> By choosing when to strike a distance with 'Africanness' and when to play into it, she strategically performs her European identity.

However, all too often Stern's *Congo* adopts a patronising belief in Western supremacy. In one instance, she describes how the clerk of 'The King of Bakubas', requested 'a small portable Remington' typewriter as a favour from her trip to

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<sup>92</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978)

Johannesburg (25). Stern is ‘breathless with astonishment’: ‘This king, only one generation removed from man-eating, the King of the Bakubas with six hundred and eight wives - a typewriter!! It does look as though centuries are easily leaped over’ (25). By looking at Bakuba and herself as belonging to two different metaphoric time periods, Stern is using temporal distancing to construct Bakuba as her other. She is indeed practising what Johannes Fabian has termed as ‘denial of coevalness’, ‘a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse’.<sup>93</sup> Her exclamation is not only patronising but also represents her desire for a distinction between Europe and Africa; the typewriter—which symbolises European modernity—is alien to her idea of an African mind. Although, this also signals the possibility that the ‘savages’ ‘can become civilized with time’, as Berger notes.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, Stern experiences this as a loss: in her travels she had longed to find life away from Western civilisation and felt sadness upon finding local people living in proximity to ‘civilisation’. Here, the juxtaposition of ‘man-eating’ and ‘typewriter’ with exclamation reveals how troubling the prospect of African modernity could be to her idealised view of Africa. Occupying the position of an astonished European, she insists on non-Western people’s ‘identification with the basic values of Western civilisation’—a rhetorical strategy according to David Spurr—even as she deigns the Congolese landscape as ‘prehistoric’, and its people as mythical or ancient characters ‘belonging to another age - a thousand years or more back’.<sup>95</sup> In other

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<sup>93</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/fabi16926>.

<sup>94</sup> Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art : Audacities of Color*, 93.

<sup>95</sup> Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire : Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, 32. Stern, *Zanzibar*, 55.

words, Congo allows Stern to move along the undercurrent of her own exceptionalism.

Stern's text frequently uses European tropes of representing Africa and its local people. There is a larger discourse at work here: the Khoikhoi people, pejoratively termed 'Hottentots', were often represented as sub-humans in early white South African writings: Christopher Fryke (1685) depicted the 'Hottentots' making 'a noise like turkeys', and then Johan Nieuhof (1654) represented them as 'lazier than the tortoises which they hunt and eat'.<sup>96</sup> Analysing the commonplace conventions of anthropological writing about South Africa, J.M Coetzee suggests that the 'Hottentots' were depicted as 'underdeveloped not by the standard of the European but by the standard of Man'.<sup>97</sup> Although Stern does not refer to the Khoikhoi in *Congo*, she applies a similar sub-humanity to the Congolese people whose language and bodies she does not recognise as that of humans. For instance, she represents a Congolese local market as 'an ant-heap, where the ants crawl one over the other' and the local women shoppers are 'a bunch of vultures' hanging 'around the meat market, screaming and yelling with excitement' (17). Elsewhere in the text, she represents an ill woman as 'a wounded animal' (34). This view of Congolese people as sub-human is a continuous trope in Stern's writings.<sup>98</sup> In sum, Stern's whiteness defined her as a 'European' in Africa and granted her clear privileges in Congo. It allowed her to present herself as an exception to the Congolese landscapes and people, even as her South African identity forced her to confront the ambivalence of her own affinity with 'Western civilisation'—defined in

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<sup>96</sup> quoted in Coetzee, *White Writing : On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, 15,17.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>98</sup> quoted in Schoeman, *Irma Stern: the early years 1894-1933*, 92.

terms of proximity to Europe— and ‘African primitiveness’. In *Congo*, Stern’s performance of a white identity is tantamount, and overshadows her affinity with Africa.

### **Exceptionalism: A heroic woman in the ‘heart of Africa’**

Stern’s positionality as a white South African raised and educated in Europe was ambiguous. The German magazine *Das Kunstblatt*, observed this about her paintings: that ‘although African by birth and still at home in the bush, [Stern] paints exotic humanity and landscapes in the European manner, seen through Pechstein eyes, as it were.’<sup>99</sup> This ambiguous position, I argue, allowed her to perform heroism and exceptionalism. Heroism, in the sense of a masculine, Victorian notion of intrepid traveller; and exceptionalism, as in Stern’s extraordinariness as an alone white woman in this ‘dangerous’ landscape. On entering Congo, Stern reflects:

I am on the road to the interior of the Belgian Congo. The Congo has always been for me the symbol of Africa, the very heart of Africa. The sound —Congoll makes my blood dance, with the thrill of exotic excitement; it sounds to me like distant native drums and a heavy tropical river flowing, its water gurgling in mystic depths.

And now I am travelling through the Congo, through miles of dense forest with dry trees and grey-green foliage, so many hours of it that it has a hypnotic charm. Not a living soul passes, just trees and trees, the great Congo forest (1).

These opening lines reflect Stern’s excitement about Congo as an exotic and mystical place in heroic terms. For one thing, the phrase ‘heart of Africa’ resonates with stereotypical images of Africa: though it is not referring to the clichéd image of

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<sup>99</sup> quoted in *ibid.*

'darkness' directly, the subsequent lines invite the reader to follow Stern into an unusual place that upholds the virtues of simplicity, primitiveness, time immemorial and myth. This contrasts with the familiar realities of Stern's everyday world as a rich, German-Jewish woman. Also, the image of a white woman going towards the same 'mystical depths' that have the power of engulfing the waters of a 'heavy tropical river', and the sound of 'native drums', evokes the risk of danger that had been used to represent white explorers, travellers, and writers in Congo as heroic.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, the 'exotic excitement' of going into the 'great Congo forest' where 'not a living soul passes' also demonstrates Stern's extraordinariness as a woman. Readers of the time may have seen Stern as more heroic than her male counterparts, since in the nineteenth century, as Sara Mills suggests, women were expected to demonstrate feminine qualities, such as paint 'flowers and butterflies', but not undertake adventure of any sort.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, it was this gender discourse that constructed heroism as a masculine quality. However Stern claims this heroism throughout the text by portraying herself as an intrepid traveller travelling alone and on 'off the beaten track'. It is heightened by her writing in the first person, which gives her additional powers of narration. This aligns Stern's *Congo* within a tradition of white Victorian travellers whose first-person narratives either eliminated their auxiliary from the scene or reduced them to the footnotes of history, as Fabian points out.<sup>102</sup> We find this in the scene where Stern's car breaks down: the driver, for the first and the last time, appears into the narrative frame and the first-person singular ('I') changes to the first-person plural: 'we'.

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<sup>100</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 15-18.

<sup>101</sup> Sara Mills, *Discourse of Difference : An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 30-33, 81.

<sup>102</sup> Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*, 24.

This opening paragraph of the text is representative of the text's major themes, not least Stern's quest for a 'primitive', 'tribal', 'ancient', and 'exotic' Africa. Continuing her description of the Congolese jungle, she refers to it as 'green and luscious; the forest is endless like a green dream of Creation Day' (1). By evoking the image of a 'green dream of Creation Day', she is portraying Congo as a Garden of Eden, the implication of this reference being that she is returning to a state of innocence. Another implication, of course, is the possibility to dominate the untouched, unexplored beauty of Congo's natural world; through her paintings she can transport the people of this 'Eden' to her Europeanised world—and to European audiences. At the same time, the 'endless' nature of the forest evokes a land of vastness, unruly and unknown; the description, appearing to be synonymous with the imagination and dreams, betrays a vantage point to celebrate the comfort of the known and the order of boundaries that guides Stern's life outside this place. Stern's car interrupts the picture of the garden of Eden—a kind of unreal landscape—crossing 'the bamboo bridges, the wooden planks moving with the weight, and a gurgling sound coming up from the muddy soil' (2). The car depicts her as an outsider: by 'crossing the bridge' the 'gurgling sound' of 'mystical depths', which has swallowed waters and sound, is conquered by modern technology. Her car is alien to this Eden. Not only does it belong to the outside world of modernity, but she, as its owner, becomes alienated from the Congolese space and yet possesses modern means of conquering the ferocity of nature. This scene's contrast of two temporal worlds, the 'ancient' Congo landscape and the technology of the 'modern' West, not only represents her as powerful in terms of mobility, it also constructs the Congolese people and their place as belonging to some other time and space.



Stern represents the Congolese landscape and society as primitive—and fashions herself as heroic— by reproducing mythical characters. For instance, she gives space to the imaginative story of the Leopard Man, a figure in lurid stories from the 1930s. Although the character of the Leopard Man is associated with various stories to its name, it typically relates to a secret society that plan to revolt against the colonial forces. According to Sandra Klooper, the Leopard men are known to have killed on behalf of chiefs as part of efforts to oppose colonial and missionary authorities in the eastern Congo, indirectly supporting colonial tales of African savagery.<sup>103</sup> The stories, which Stern encountered in a visit to the ‘Kongo museum’—now known as the Teruven—in Belgium, excited Stern’s interest in the museum’s large sculptural tableaux depicting scenes of central African savagery, particularly those of Paul Wissaert (*The Leopard Man of Stanley Falls* [1915]). The Leopard Man was also prevalent in popular culture of that period. Tintin—a popular European boy-traveller with Pith helmet by Belgian cartoonist Herge (1929)—is attacked by Leopard Man in *Tintin in Congo* (1930).<sup>104</sup> In the text, she describes the Leopard Man as ‘a native turned into a leopard’ ‘wearing the wrought-iron claws on his hands [to] slit his victim’s breast and throat open like a real leopard’ (11). Stern’s deployment of the Leopard Man trope in *Congo* suggests that this imagery from the colonial museum remained with her, and was part of the imaginative resources she drew upon to represent the Congolese landscape and local people. She emphasises

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<sup>103</sup> In later iterations, the Leopard Man is a secret society whose members are cannibals and kill solely for cannibalism. See Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966*, 66.

<sup>104</sup> Harry Thompson, *Tintin: Herge and his Creations* (London: John Murray, 1991).; Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966*, 66.

these colonial attitudes about cannibalism in a scene where she leaves Wamba, a territory in the present-day Democratic Republic Congo (DRC):

Leaving Wamba, where the Leopard Man lives, a curious spirit of evil seems to hover along the road; the *people have sinister faces*, their brows are threatening and their heavy dark glances avoid my eye, *like beasts after a kill*, shy but filled with cruelty and a lust for blood. —when you see a man with a half-moon tattooed on his stomach, one half-moon on top of another half-moon, then look out! You are face to face with a man-killer.¶ (10) [Emphasis added]

Stern does not see individuals but a homogenised portrait of a killer, who threatens her with a sinister face. She interprets the lack of eye contact with the people around her as a deliberate part of their cruelty and a lust for blood. Stern's description of her fear of being killed by the Leopard Man indicates her white European identity, which puts her in the position of the victim and risks representing every local individual as a potential murderer. This stereotyping image of the Leopard Man in *Congo* allows her to evoke fear, thrill, and a sense of adventure. All of this allows her to claim a heroic persona: Of course it is exciting being in the region of the Leopard Men, she writes (10).

Stern represents her fears, particularly of death, using symbols, metaphors, and anecdotes. While coming out of the Congo forest, she evokes fear through simile:

This is a place to be away from at sun-set, seething with hidden life. A huge tree covered with dark red blooms rather like clogged blood hangs over the road. (2)

Here, the 'dark red blooms', which find a place in many of her paintings and represent the beauty of nature, is likened to 'clogged blood', a symbol not only of death but also forgotten death. She warns the reader that the forest is a place that is 'seething with hidden life' and should be avoided at 'sun-set'; a mysterious and haunted place, unfit for humans to travel in. However, by positioning herself in the forest, Stern presents herself as a courageous and adventurous woman.

As Tim Youngs has noted, 'difficult terrains, illness and native resistance' has been used in travel writing to help create a heroic impression of the endeavour to 'penetrate Africa's interiors'.<sup>105</sup> This is certainly true of Stern's text: she repeatedly evokes threat, danger, and death, sometimes symbolically as in the example of the tree with the red flowers, sometimes through mythical characters such as the Leopard Man, and sometimes in referring to illness and death. For instance, in one chapter of the text entitled 'I WAS ON THE BARGE WITH DEATH' [original text] (33), she represents danger and discomfort by describing an encounter with a dying child and woman. Fabian refers to death and life as a way in which the intrepid traveller claims heroism; the 'fever', according to him, is a 'sacrifice every traveller must bring to the continent'.<sup>106</sup> Stern reproduces this trope, but in locating the illness in the child and woman, she challenges this long-standing trope somewhat. By representing herself as a witness to 'death leading the way', she validates this stereotype of Africa: a place that is both Edenic and full of risk and danger.

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<sup>105</sup> Tim Youngs, "Africa/ The Congo: Politics Of Darkness," in *The Cambridge Companion To Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 157.

<sup>106</sup> Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reasons and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*, 61.

## Silence and Voice: Claiming authority for self, giving meaning to others

Stern plays with selective silence and voice in *Congo* as a means of regulating the meaning and effect of the text. This is evident when considering the disparities between what Stern discusses in *Congo* and in her letters, interviews and articles addressed to her friends. Whilst discussing death and illness allowed her to claim a public-facing heroic persona, her letters demonstrate the warnings that she received from her friends against going to Congo alone, and her fears of her throat being ‘slit by the local’, or an ‘Arab choosing to murder’ her.<sup>107</sup> Such attitudes and fears are much less explicit in her travel texts. Even in the chapter with the dying child, she looks at the child from a distance—her car on the boat promises rescue from danger, disease, and threat. The world of desolation, agony, and pain that she has left behind in war-torn Europe thus confronts her in Congo as well. It appears as if her painting of the ‘Eternal Child’, with some alterations, is re-enacted in front of her—but here with no redeeming hope of beauty. However, while Stern openly voices these fears of disease in her letter, she remains silent about them in *Congo*. She mentions her ‘fear of getting ill, getting one of those thousand undesirable diseases’ in her letters to the Feldmans from Congo: ‘One lives in constant fear of getting this that and another here’.<sup>108</sup> She restricts herself from giving death and disease any elaborate representation in the text. She tries to keep Congo and Congolese as relevant to her imagination of the place as, beauty, the ‘exotic’, and ‘pre-historic’ ‘innocence’ (24) away from European despair and desolation. Even the description of the dying child is wrapped up in a few lines; she has neither informed

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<sup>107</sup> Letter to Freda Feldman in *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966*, 35 ; Letter to Richard Feldman in *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

the reader about the fate of the child nor spares him any space in his sketches. She tries to present before the readers a utopia.

In yet another letter from Congo, on 8 June 1942, she writes to Freda Feldman explaining the discomforts of living and working in Congo due to weather conditions, eating habits, and unhygienic water:

The meat is full of worms I hear- we can only eat it when properly cooked- I rather feel like vomiting each time I eat meat- but the vegetables if raw and not cooked with Pomanganate and boiling water are full of something else so what can you do. I do not drink a sip of water only soda and whisky. In some parts you cannot even wash in the water- it has Bilharzia in it. They put a bag in front of the tap to straine the bath water. Well such is life- They are building up the Congo- for the people in Europe- who would like to live in places [...] It is marvolous country- but my God- you must get used to it!<sup>109</sup>  
[The spellings are copied as it is from the original text]

The kinds of discomforts discussed above, referring to less glamorous realities, find no place in the text itself. Rather the text, more for public than personal, tries to glamorise her journey, amidst some discomforts, where Stern is seen meeting lively people, musicians of the king playing day and night, artists and artisans, and a national fete where the royalty, Europeans and Arabs enjoy the indigenous Watussi dance, without any hatred, bloodshed or fear of expulsion. Stern's relative selective silence on the everyday discomforts and difficulties constructs a picture of Congo as a direct opposite to the European industrialised destruction and desolation- where wars were leading people to death and displacement. The discomforts and fears in

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<sup>109</sup> Stern had a problem with writing English; her all the letters, published in Sandra Klooper's *Irma Stern: Are You Still Alive*, are published without correcting the spellings or grammar. Her letters, even journal entries, are written with erroneous punctuation. Stern appeared to write her mind; her ideas separated by dashes. (For this letter see Irma Stern, Letter to Freda Feldman on 8 June 1942, in Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966.* ,106.

Congo are shown as supernatural whereas Europe, which otherwise is assumed to be away from such natural discomforts or supernatural threats, is engulfed in bloodshed. This silence in the text is presumably an effort to keep her utopic idea of Africa alive.

Stern's text was a direct message to her critics, leading her to select what events and experiences would fit the narrative that she wanted to tell. On 15 March 1946, before her second trip to Congo, Stern described her earlier trip to 'the land of the Watussi' where she 'found herself in the dust of a speeding luxury car' to a reporter.<sup>110</sup> A man who spoke 'impeccable French' 'in a perfect accent', came out of the 'bright, fire-engine vermillion' automobile.<sup>111</sup> Stern told the reporter that it took her some time 'to realise that the exceptionally tall man' was 'the Tutsi King, Mutara Rudahigwa, who was about to enter a meeting with a group of judges, presumably in Kigali, the capital of present-day Rwanda'.<sup>112</sup> These tales found no place in *Congo*, but clearly left a strong impression in her mind. Klooper suggests that her choice to recount this in an interview shows us Stern being 'caught in the momentary excitement' that enables her to drop 'her guard' against articulating 'the complex social and political realities she encountered on her travels in search of exotic subjects'.<sup>113</sup> However, such tales reflecting Congo as a progressive or changing place had the potential to shatter Stern's own image of Africa and of herself as an intrepid female traveller. Richard Feldman had openly admired Stern for her courage and passion to 'travel to the centre of Africa to portray and document the people'

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<sup>110</sup> Irma Stern, quoted in *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>112</sup> Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966*, 10.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

because she wanted to, and for not allowing critics to change her mind; she was often criticised for painting ‘anything but a Zulu, miserable, mournful...face of drug-fiend, an outcast’ which, according to a critic, was a ‘mis-representation of Sunny South Africa’.<sup>114</sup> Again, through the silence, she maintained her construction of self as a rebellious, heroic woman challenging the patriarchal authority on the decisions of a woman.

Stern also voices the silence of the Congolese landscape. As we have seen, she was part of a tradition of writers who projected their own imaginative world onto the landscape. Stern assumes a position of dominance and power by giving meaning to the silence of the landscape. She looks into the vastness, silence and material of the landscape, in the form of rocks and stones, and attributes meaning to it by mythologizing it. As J.M. Coetzee suggests, this wider tendency has a South African inflection: the poet whose inability to imagine a peopled landscape in South Africa tends to seek a response from the silence and the emptiness of the landscape; this also allows the poet to make the ‘landscape speak, and peoples it with an ideal community’.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, when Stern looks into the Congolese landscape she tries to give it mythological history—specifically that of Greek and Egyptian mythology, which influenced her through her reading of classical literature. Stern confers meaning to the Congolese landscape by peopling it with mythological characters, for instance when she stares at Lake Kivu:

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<sup>114</sup>Mona Berman, *Remembering Irma : Irma Stern : A Memoir with Letters* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2003), 43.

<sup>115</sup>Coetzee, *White Writing : On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, 9.

As far as the eye can see, the world is black – a shining jet black, streaming from the distant volcanoes down to Lake Kivu [...] Like a huge expanse of bas relief, the lava is turned into fantastic forms: here is a triad of horses led by a gladiator, with their bodies tossed up in revolt; there is a woman mourning, like Niobe with her daughters perishing before her eyes; here a victory chariot rushing into space, the horses high up in the clouds. The lava is full of plastic form, taking the shapes of a bathing Venus, of groups of herdsmen, of girls in pleated togas running. The fields were like a vision from Greek Mythology. (9)

‘As far as the eye can see’ refers to the enormity and limitlessness of the ‘jet black’ world Stern imagines before her. Though it is a silent landscape, in terms of people, noise and speech, the reference to ‘shining jet black’ lava holds history in itself, specifically the geological history, unlike the European or other man-made constructions. Thus, Stern suggests that humankind has nothing to do with the creation of this vastness and no power in this place. Instead, nature, which has the power of constructing such a huge ‘jet black’ world, is depicted as a sculptor who knows the technique of ‘bas relief’; Stern relates to the creator of this huge silent landscape as a fellow artist. This sharing of traits with the creator of this huge landscape empowers Stern to make sense of herself, her work, and her artistic vocation, which she feels has never been accepted by European critics. By relating herself to the artist of this ‘bas-relief’ she is claiming acceptance and enormity for herself as an artist; however, by standing in presence, with authority to regulate meaning, she claims power, supremacy and voice. She gives voice to the silence by peopling it with mythological characters: Niobe, a Greek mythological character whose pride got her seven children killed by the wrath of Apollo; a gladiator, a Roman mythological character, often a slave but trained to fight wild animals; a



victory chariot, depicting the fight between God and Satan and fallen angels as depicted in the classic book *Paradise Lost*. However, in mythologizing the landscape, she gives it a voice of her choice, one that freezes the Congolese landscape in the deep past separate from the world of present she occupies.

Stern does not only mythologise the silence of landscape; she also silences and mythologises female African bodies. While attending Fete National at Kigali, she represents the queen and her people as mute characters. Stern describes the Queen mother of the Watussi as an Egyptian statue: the queen is altogether not a human, but rather an artefact from the past with no voice of her own. By muting her as a statue, she has opened the area for her Europeanised eyes to see, observe, name, and decide her past and present. Stern represents the queen by saying that she has never seen such beauty; it is like the black basalt foot of an Egyptian statue. It is expressive of a highly bred cultured ancient race' (38). Referring to her as Egyptian and ancient race allows Stern to mythologise the African bodies. Stern mutes her subjects to present an alternative representation of Congo and its people that assist her in challenging the gendered and racial hierarchies of the West.

As with her travel narratives, Stern's female subjects are passive in her paintings and do not interact with the viewer. All the power and authority in their representation belongs to Stern. The women are depicted as silent people populating the scene in her text. For instance, in one scene from *Congo*, Stern, while talking with fresco painters in Bakuba, sees a woman passing by:

Here passes my favourite model: she is carrying a huge black bowl of water on her head. She has rippling flowing lines; she has newly adorned her soft

limbs with blue-black decorations; she has little square angles on her breasts, but otherwise the lines flow downward on her body like sun reflections through palms (6)

The woman has made herself available to be observed in detail and considered a ‘favourite model’, just by moving through Stern’s focus. The woman’s silence works as her agreement to the surveillance and aestheticisation imposed on her body by a white traveller. Many other travel writers fail to seek permission before representing people they encounter. However, here the woman is not only observed and represented in writing by Stern, but is also required to sit and devote time to being observed and represented visually through Stern’s painting. The woman’s permission is of no significance, nor are her feelings of being painted by a foreigner important. Stern uses her authority to select her ‘favourite’ black body. Stern’s women have no control, at least as it appears from the text, regarding how they are represented. This silencing gains additional force when Stern transforms her sketch in the text to a painting, sexualizing and aestheticizing the woman’s body by highlighting her breasts (Figure 22).



Figure 22

Stern’s model (First figure is a painting as she posed, second is completed painting) published in *Congo*



Congolese Woman (1946)



African Woman (1940)

Figure 23

Moreover, the posture of these models (figure 23), by facing away from their viewers, symbolises the lack of contact, and the way the contact between these groups is always mediated by representation. It appears as Stern can see and represent the Congolese women for the European worlds, but not the other way round, thus silencing Congolese people and fulfilling her desire of ‘complete control over things’, claiming a position of ultimate authority.<sup>116</sup> Stern’s self-construction as a courageous intrepid traveller and painter rests heavily on her claim to visit ‘unknown’ places, inhabited by ‘savage tribes’ and populated by ‘mythical’ characters from the deep past. Thus, when she visits the Bakuba village, which was actually ‘rebuilt as a tourist site’ populated by ‘many artists, writers, and photographers’ for the ‘interests of European visitors’, she chooses not to acknowledge this information in the text.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Irma Stern, quoted in Klooper, *Irma Stern : Are you Still Alive? : Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934-1966*, 125.

<sup>117</sup> Berger, *Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art : Audacities of Color*, 89.

Berger notes that the villagers were accustomed to being photographed'. Yet, she silences them, making them appear as she is the only one doing it – thereby retaining the authority- preferring to focus on her encounter with primitive' people from another world, another time.

## **Conclusion**

Stern was partially motivated to visit Congo because she had exhausted all of her possibilities of finding her desired subjects in South Africa; she wanted to discover the real Africa' beyond the immediate associations of South Africa. She also wanted to escape from fear and helplessness—an effect of her difficulties in war torn Europe—to a place where she was in a position to control and decide things for herself. Stern considered Africa as a place to give expression to her thoughts and imagination. She used the space of Congo and its representation as a tool to challenge dominant ideas of European superiority, artistic perfection, and patriarchal supremacy—even as, paradoxically, she claimed voice and authority for herself. *Congo* was her answer to European desolation and destruction, as well as a tool to convey a message to her critics, and claim acceptance and recognition in the art world.

Stern observed and represented Congolese people through multiple gazes, informed by her multiple selves—what I have called her status as a hyphenated African. As her relationship with the idea of home and belonging was ambivalent, so was her relationship with her subjects. By representing her subjects, she demonstrated her accessibility to them as a fellow African from the south. However, by referring to her subjects as primitive' in her texts, Stern also distanced herself

from her apparently underdeveloped subjects. Similar to other hyphenated Africans in terms of the role played by their positionality, ambivalence, and personal motivations to visit Congo in construction of their respective texts. Stern not only slips into stereotypical representations of Congo and its people but also views them as an anti-thesis to her Europeanised white South African identity.

*Congo* is unique to all travel texts due to its structure, language, and choice of subjects; it shows us that the idea of monolithic unitary gaze is inadequate when it comes to discussing texts produced by authors with hyphenated identities. The travellers, due to their hyphenated identities, have flexibility to choose from multiple selves to construct multiple others. The chapter validates that even though Stern distances from black Africans and constructs them as the other, still it is not as simple as white constructing black others. At some instances, Stern also aligns with black Africans through art, and constructs white Europeans as the other. As discussed in previous chapters, here as well, the other is constructed as a difference to the performed self in dialogue with the agenda of the traveller and not merely because of her being a white woman travelling amongst black Africans. Though Stern has altogether different- as compared to the black travel writers discussed in this thesis - political, social and cultural position with respect to colonialism, still her authority and voice is also constrained by the dominant, in this case the patriarchal European art environment. She also employs selective silence; as the Bombay Africans chose to remain silent on Livingstone's relationship with the slave traders so as to avoid challenging the saviour identity of their hero – an exact opposite of the black slave trader villains. Similarly, Stern chooses not to document any detail that may compromise her utopia, Congo- an opposite to destroyed, burning European

dystopia. As much as the silence of the Bombay Africans and Sheppard can be misread as colonial mimicry, this text by a white South African apartheid apologist can also be misread as reproducing the clichéd colonial discourse about Africa. The major boundary that divides white South African travel writing from African travel writing is the idea of white writers either representing the black African as the other or documenting sympathetic stance towards the black Africans. By studying the text for Stern's performance of multiple selves evolving due to her ambiguous positionality as a hyphenated African, the chapter evaluates Stern as a hyphenated African travel writer negotiating power, authority and voice otherwise denied to her in European patriarchal world. The chapter tries to position white South African writing in line with broader African travel writing, rather than looking at white South African writing as different to the African travel writing.

## CHAPTER 7

### NOT EXACTLY 'THE FAIRYLAND': *THE LONG WAY ROUND* BY ANTHONY DELIUS

Anthony Delius (1916-1989) was a liberal white South African political commentator and journalist. In 1954, he embarked on a road trip from Cape Town to central Africa and back again with his friend John Torres, a white South African schoolmaster. According to Delius, he undertook the journey to escape the 'restlessness' of Cape Town.<sup>1</sup> He expected central Africa to be a 'fairyland' (148); a place to rescue him from the monotony of reporting the 'humourless intensity' of political debate between the Nationalists and non-Nationalists, the opposing political parties, in Cape Town (10). However, he found central Africa to be a 'sad country' (148). Delius's text, *The Long Way Round* (1956) documents his journey and experiences as a white man in central Africa. The text is a passionate account of African history, industrial hopes, political problems, economic and business struggles. It reflects the ambiguity of Delius's positionality as a white-liberal-British-South African-journalist, and its role in his multiple ways of seeing, observing and representing central Africa. Delius adopts multiple roles— a South African in central Africa, a white man amongst black people, and a liberal white amongst non-liberal whites— whilst narrating his experiences in different settings.

This chapter provides an original analysis of Delius's travel writing, revealing the potential of *The Long Way Round* to generate new insights into political and racial tensions in mid-century Africa. Moreover, my analysis allows us to better

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Delius, *The Long Way round* (Cape Town: Howard B. Timmins, 1956).

understand identity conflict experienced by white South Africans; their struggles to make sense of self whilst being members of a privileged racial minority. Through a close reading of the text, I examine the ways in which Delius grapples with the complexities of his ambivalent identity and ambiguous positionality, as an insider-outsider, a white South African liberal of British heritage and a male journalist. As is the case for other authors discussed in this thesis, Delius's positionality informs his multiple selves, which results in multiple gazes through which he observes and represents the 'Other'. With this in mind, I analyse the tensions revealed by Delius's ways of seeing, observing and representing African landscapes, its peoples, the idea of 'Africanness', and the author's relationship with the continent from an in-between position—all while representing self and other. In doing so, Delius oscillates between adopting a selective silence and voicing a binary of superior-inferior.

### **Positioning Delius: a liberal South African man in Congo**

Delius was an active participant and renowned figure in the South African literary scene. According to the poet Jack Cope, in whose literary magazine *Contrast* he published and helped fund raise for in the sixties, Delius was a 'fine poet and witty satirist'.<sup>2</sup> He produced an extensive body of work extending across several genres, namely novels, poetry, reports, plays, and travelogues. Despite this, Delius has received uneven attention in South African literary history; he only features in passing in Michael Chapman's *Southern African Literatures* (1996)—an attempt to

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<sup>2</sup> Jack Cope, "The World of Contrast," *English in Africa* 7, no. 2 (1980), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40238470>.; *Contrast* was a literary magazine started by South African writers of English language in 1959. With an intent to spread the journal to people all over the country, Rhodesia and Britain, they sent nominations to all the renowned writers such as Guy Butler, Nadine Gordimer and Alan Paton; Dan Jacobson and Peter Blum in London; Professor W.G. Gardner in Bloemfontein, Professor Arthur Ravenscroft in Salisbury; everyone agreed to be on the advisory panel. Cope addresses him as 'our great enthusiast- and optimist'.



produce a collective literary history in all languages of the region—and Stephen Gray's *A World of Their Own: Southern African Poets of the Seventies* (1976), which discusses sixteen celebrated poets of the period. Despite this, more recently, Delius was remembered as 'incomparably brilliant', 'a genius', and 'a pure poet [...] with masterly powers' in Christopher Heywood's *A History of South African Literature* (2004)—a work that has itself been criticised for its inaccuracy and idiosyncrasy.<sup>3</sup> His work is also mentioned briefly in anthologies of South African poetry; David Attwell (2000) places Delius alongside other influential voices of South Africa's lyric poetry of post-World War II period, such as Guy Butler and Sydney Clouts.<sup>4</sup>

If Delius's position as a satirist, poet and fiction writer has rarely been discussed, his travel writing is even more neglected: this chapter is perhaps the first critical analysis of his travel writing. Unlike other writers discussed in the thesis, little is known about Delius's life. I therefore rely on the text itself, rather than biographical information, to gain an understanding of his positionality, and to locate moments of silence and voice.<sup>5</sup> The chapter begins with a brief discussion of Delius's professional life and political ideology amid the larger racial and political tensions prevalent in South African society at that time. It then turns to *The Long Way Round*, an extensive text that documents his travels through various countries, including

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Heywood, *A History of South African Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20,58; David Attwell and Derek Attridge, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, ed. David Attwell and Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 8.

<sup>4</sup> David Attwell, "South African literature in English," in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, ed. F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 520.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Delius's biography or a dedicated critical work on his literary productions (satire, plays, poems, or travel writing) is not available. I believe that his biography along with references to his works will be a significant piece of literature for understanding the political tension in South Africa during apartheid, the identity conflicts in white South Africans, their quest to make sense of self in new phases of the South African history, exile and other relevant socio-political debates around white liberalism. Due to visa and time constraints, I could not access Anthony Delius's papers in Cape Town, but I will be trying to look at them in near future and come up with his biography.

Swaziland, Angola, Congo, Cameroon, Nigeria and the Gold Coast. For the consistency of this thesis, however, I will focus on Delius's time in Congo, specifically in Leopoldville, Brazzaville and Bukavu.

Delius's understanding of self and his relationship with Africa were influenced by two major events: World War II and South Africa's system of apartheid, instituted by the National Party of South Africa following their election to power in 1948. At the outbreak of World War II, South Africa was a Dominion within the British Commonwealth following British colonization, and was obliged to support Britain in their war against the Nazis following the German invasion of Poland. Some pro-Nazi Afrikaner politicians did not want to commit South Africans to fighting on the side of the British. Other Afrikaners, including the Prime Minister James B.M. Hertzog, wanted South Africa to declare neutrality in the war.<sup>6</sup> However, after the removal of Hertzog, his deputy Jan Smuts committed South Africa to support the British and Allied war effort. This caused political and social tensions between Afrikaners and the British, and initiated a period of unrest.<sup>7</sup> Paul Rich notes that South Africa's role in the war resulted in 'cultural links with Europe', allowing some South African writers to align themselves even further with a European identity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Dale, "Afrikaner Renegades and the Conduct of World War II," review of *Ob: Traitors or Patriots?*, George Cloete Visser, *Africa Today* 25, no. 1 (1978), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4185756>.

<sup>7</sup> Albert Grundlingh, "The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45," *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 3 (1999), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/183618>.; Gideon Shimoni, "Jan Christiaan Smuts and Zionism," *Jewish Social Studies* 39, no. 4 (1977), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4466970>.; Rebecca Hodes, "'Free Fight on the Grand Parade': Resistance to the Greyshirts in 1930s South Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24393404>.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Rich, "Liberal Realism in South African Fiction, 1948-1966," *English in Africa* 12, no. 1 (May 1985).; Some South Africans had direct links with Britain, some with the Dutch-descended 'Boers'. So 'European' doesn't mean one thing in this context.

*The Long Way Round* partly explores Delius's relationship to his own Britishness in this context. Delius began his career as a journalist in Port Elizabeth, before joining the South African Intelligence Corps as a captain between 1940 and 1945, which was investigating 'disloyalty' amongst the white South African population, and monitoring Afrikaners suspected of being pro-Nazi.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that Delius's role in the Intelligence Corps aligned him to his British ancestry. However, Delius hints at the complexity of this relationship with his ancestry in the text. In one scene, Delius is made responsible by one of his companions to 'show these stuffy Britishers how to loosen up' at a Christmas party, to which Delius says, 'I never feel so stuffily British when such things are expected of me' (147). This quote in itself suggests that Delius was looked at as a British, and his friends expecting him to show 'stuffy Britishers how to loosen up', suggests Delius's relaxed behaviour as compared to formal race-conscious Britishers in Africa.

Simultaneously, according to Geoffrey Haresnape, 'the rigors of war and homesickness' led Delius to 'a new awareness' of South Africa as his home.<sup>10</sup> After the war, Delius returned to journalism and worked as a parliamentary correspondent for the *Cape Times* from 1952 to 1954, and later between 1958 and 1967. As a journalist and war veteran, Delius witnessed the socio-political changes occurring in South African society and experienced, as other British South Africans, the ambivalent sense of belonging to South Africa and yet also having a 'cultural' home in Europe. These European connections acquired a further fraught valency with the

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<sup>9</sup> Kent Fedorowich, "German Espionage and British Counter-Intelligence in South Africa and Mozambique, 1939-1944," *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2005), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4091684>.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Haresnape, "The Literary Picture in South Africa," *Books Abroad* 39, no. 1 (1965), <https://doi.org/10.2307/40119306>.

election of the National Party, an Afrikaner ethnic nationalist party, into power in 1948 and the construction of apartheid policies and laws. The majority of British-South Africans started advocating liberalism, partially because of the ongoing political conflict between the British and the Afrikaners and partially because the British started advocating decolonisation after World War II.

In 1953 Alan Paton founded the Liberal Party of South Africa and the conflict between liberals and apartheid advocates was further strengthened, leading to the fierce political arguments between Afrikaners and Liberals in the South African parliament, Delius's work place. White liberalism was not new to the post-World War II: according to Peter Blair, the history of liberalism, rather 'liberal paternalism', in South Africa dates back in the nineteenth century when British settlers imported it to Cape colony 'as a part of the cultural baggage of British administrators'.<sup>11</sup> White liberalism in South Africa was further influenced by the 'internationalisation in white political debate on race' in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, as Paul Rich suggests.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, many black South Africans distrusted white liberalism—Phyllis Altman's *The Law of Vultures* (1952) described it as 'unreliable'—leading to the creation of the Black consciousness movement under figures such as Steve Biko.

According to the poet Guy Butler, South African white liberals formed an ambivalent love/hate relationship with South Africa.<sup>13</sup> Delius remained a strong critic

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Blair, "The liberal tradition in fiction," in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, ed. David Attwell and Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 476.

<sup>12</sup> Paul B. Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism 1921-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Guy Butler, "On Being Present Where You Are; Some Observations on South African Poetry 1930-1960," in *Poetry South Africa*, ed. Peter Wilhelm and James A. Polley (Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1974).

of the Nationalist party and its segregation policies, motivating him to see and witness racial tensions closely. His fictions, such as *The Day Natal Took Off* (1963), as well as non-fiction writings in magazines, such as *The Black Sash Magazine*, are illustrative of this.<sup>14</sup> While working for *Cape Times*, he also wrote as a correspondent for several international papers, including *New York Reporter*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *BBC* and *The Washington Post*, including articles that were strongly critical of the Nationalist government. He also published essays and non-fictional pieces that were anti-apartheid in sentiment, along with contributions to liberal anti-apartheid magazine named *The New African*. Delius saw colonial history of Africa as beneficial for the continent for the education, administration and settlement the white missionaries and colonial brought into it, but he was also an advocate of multiracial South Africa. The anti-apartheid ideas of Delius, along with other white liberals during the apartheid regime, forced him to live in exile, thereby evoking a sense of rejection from the fellow white South Africans. White liberals, as Delius, were also not accepted by South Africa's black population, and other white liberals, including Alan Paton.<sup>15</sup> Their idea of liberalism, that wanted the 'assimilation of Blacks' into the 'set norms drawn up and motivated by White society', was seen by the critics as an exercise in paternalism that could not extend to the 'kind of integration that would be acceptable to a Black man'.<sup>16</sup> The fact that they were neither accepted by the larger apartheid-supporting white or black populations pushed them to explore their affiliation with elsewhere in Europe. Ian Tromp rightly noted that 'no one in South

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<sup>14</sup> Randolph Vigne and James Currey, "The New African 1962–1969: South Africa in Particular and Africa in General," *English in Africa* 41, no. 1 (2014), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24389593>; Anthony Delius, "Southern Africa Faces the Modern World," *African Affairs* 72, no. 289 (1973), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/721152>.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Watson, "Cry, the Beloved Country and the Failure of Liberal Vision," *English in Africa* 9, no. 1 (1982), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/stable/40238499>.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Turner, "Black Consciousness and White Liberals," *Reality* 4, no. 3 (July 1972), <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/black-consciousness-and-white-liberals-richard-turner>.

Africa escaped apartheid and its deep scarring of cultural life'.<sup>17</sup> As was the case with other South African liberal writers, Delius was aware of his South African location and root but also appeared 'alienated from their setting'.<sup>18</sup>

Delius was writing amidst racial, political and ideological tensions and was caught in a duality that was characteristic of his position. Most English-speaking South African writers were 'numerical, linguistic and political minorities' in South Africa, positioned between the indigenous cultures and languages they regarded as 'alien' and the metropolitan centres of Europe they regarded as constituting their literary, 'spiritual and cultural base'.<sup>19</sup> Prior to the 1960s, England had functioned as the dominant site for the publication of English-language South African literature.<sup>20</sup> As Haresnape observed, 'It was a convention and still is' that an English South African writer 'had to be recognized overseas before he could be anything here'.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the English language writers formed an affinity with Europe, whilst publishing opportunities also forced them to focus on overseas English-speaking readers. All of these factors—their ambivalent relationship of belonging and alienation from South Africa, their affiliation and dependence on literary opportunities coming from Britain, and the focus on overseas readership—meant white South African writers produced literary texts that demonstrated an apologetic stance towards colonialism while trying to advocate liberalism simultaneously. The connection with Europe, and specifically Britain, also manifested in South African travel writing during the apartheid and post-

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<sup>17</sup> Ian Tromp, "The Heart in Exile: South African Poetry in English, 1990-95," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 27, no. 1 (1996): 105.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, "On Being Present Where You Are; Some Observations on South African Poetry 1930-1960."

<sup>19</sup> David Wright, "South African Poetry," review of *Poets in South Africa: An Anthology*, Roy Macnab, *Poetry* 95, no. 4 (1960), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20587769>.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Ehmeir, "Publishing South African Literature in English in the 1960s," *Research in African Literatures* 26, no. 1 (1995), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820092>.

<sup>21</sup> Haresnape, "The Literary Picture in South Africa."

apartheid period in which writers inserted themselves, consciously or unconsciously, into a long colonial and postcolonial tradition of scripting the African continent'.<sup>22</sup> As noted by Jonathan Crush, they were generally critical of colonialism's impact on Africa', but their modes of seeing and telling' were highly steeped in the colonial conventions of the imperial eye'.<sup>23</sup> Delius was also caught in this duality: in a talk delivered at the Royal African Society on 4 March 1970, he stated 'Sometimes I envision a future in which it seemed mandatory for the white powers to re-establish a colonial system in the interests of global order.'<sup>24</sup> In another article, he condemns the colonial mindset of racial segregation in South Africa.<sup>25</sup>

Delius addressed the political issues of his day from a close proximity as a parliamentary reporter. He felt so alienated by the political debates, which according to him gave little to deal with the world about us', that he described reporting proceedings as 'like being swept into somebody else's delirium tremens' (10). The phrase 'delirium tremens' associates the South African parliamentary chaos with hallucinations, confusion and nightmares and presents him as a victim of the chaos; he looks at the parliamentary debates from an outsider's position and is passively

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<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Crush, "Africa Unbound: Redemption and Representation in the New South African Travelogue," *Journal of Economic and Human Geography* 91, no. 4 (November 2000): 439.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. In the 1960s, white settler minorities in South Africa and Rhodesia (after Smith's UDI) were independent of British colonial rule, but they used this independent political status to pursue their own interests at the expense of the black majority. Some political commentators argued that the entire problem stemmed from the history of European colonialism on the African continent. Others argued that the colonial state had mediated the interests of white settlers and those of the black majority, such that the majority had actually been better off under colonial rule than they were under independent white settler minority rule. Some political commentators argued that whilst colonial rule had been problematic, it contained the potential for reform and for the principle of legal equality to be gradually extended to all. Apartheid, on the other hand, was based on the idea that blacks and whites were so fundamentally different that the goal was separate development of each race and not legal equality for all individuals.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony Delius, "Internal Argument and External Policy in South Africa," *African Affairs* 69, no. 277 (October 1970),

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a096047>. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a096047>

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<sup>25</sup> Anthony Delius, "A Social Casualty Ward," *The Black Sash Magazine* 18 (February 1976), [https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/pdf\\_files/BSFeb76.pdf](https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/pdf_files/BSFeb76.pdf).

‘swept’ by a chaotic political chorus. This dramatic and non-realist imagery is extended when he describes the ‘annual battle’ in parliament between Harry Oppenheimer, ‘a cautious liberal’, and Dr. Verwoerd, ‘the Apostle of Apartheid’, as nothing more than a ‘bizarre entertainment’ where ‘two pink elephants’ debate ‘how many other pink elephants could stand on the point of a needle’ (10). Here, ‘pink elephant’, a symbol of drunken hallucinations, is once again used to represent the absurdity and possible irrelevance of the session compared to the fraught scenes beyond Parliament.

Delius uses the language of confusion and chaos in taking the responsibility of a parliamentary observer. In the same section of *The Long Way Round*, he uses such language to question the very existence of the African continent and his own ambiguous identity:

It was enough sometimes to make me doubt the reality of the earth I stood upon. And Africa – that vast, bulky question-mark that rose above our heads – was it only a question-mark? Were the maps I had been brought up to believe in no more reliable than those earlier maps with circular ranges of mountains, strange empires of Monomotapa and Prester John, and countries full of unicorn (10).

The confusion caused by South Africa’s political chaos prompted Delius to encounter his ambiguous identity and question his relationship with Africa, and Africanness. Reflecting on the vagueness of the continent, which appeared to him as a ‘vast, bulky question-mark’, Delius undertakes his journey through Central Africa seeking an answer to this ‘question-mark’. Delius, who considered Africa as his home, was losing certainty after World War II. His inherited idea of Africa was coming under pressure, which is why he likens it to the legends and colonial adventure fiction, as



Prester John, from earlier era. His association with the continent was also growing 'brown and vague', calling him to find a 'convincing proof of Africa's existence' (10), something beyond mythical or earlier legends. The opening pages of the text, thus, informs the reader about Delius's reasons for travelling 'a long way round' from 'Cape Town and back via the Congo, the Ruwenzori, Mount Kenya, and Kilimanjaro' (7).

The imagination of Africa as a 'question-mark' was also informed by the complex relationship of South Africa to the rest of the continent, and the ways that it affected 'different inhabitants of Cape Town in different ways' (9). He notes that the 'recurring suggestion of not belonging, sometimes made lightly, at other ponderously' to Africa encourages 'the more impressionable [South Africans] want to rush away and leave it forever, others want to withdraw deeper into the Peninsula, and some are filled with a zeal to re-establish a contact between their city and their country' (9). For Delius undertaking this journey from Cape Town to central Africa and back, 'it was no desire to restore a lost liaison between my city and my continent that drove me out at last along the road to the north' (9). This comment not only allowed Delius to distance himself from other South Africans travelling internationally, but also encouraged his readers to believe that the sole motivation for his journey was to briefly escape both the monotonous political debates that have hazed his senses and the saturating racial and class conflicts of South Africa. Thus, he discards carrying a journalistic or exploratory Eurocentric 'travellers' gaze with him to present himself as a counter-travel writer.<sup>26</sup> The possessive pronouns: 'my city' and 'my

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<sup>26</sup> Maria Lourdes Lópes Roperó, "Travel Writing and Postcoloniality," in *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations*, ed. Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 54. The term was given by Holland and Huggan, to explain a way of writing where writers 'locate

continent' allowed him to place himself within the African space rather than creating a foreign gaze of observing and judging Africa. South Africans, as J.M Coetzee suggests, who claim their belonging with the African continent as their home, are able to claim an identity 'better than that of the visitor, stranger, transient'.<sup>27</sup> Delius also becomes an insider, enabling him to see Africa from the inside, rather than remaining at its peripheries as a white observer. Also, by intending to leave the chaos formed by white settlers in South Africa, he presents himself as ready to give up his association with them and their ideas and intends to explore reciprocity with Africa as an insider.

Delius was conscious of his cultural affinity with British culture: this allowed him the position of an outsider. This affinity allowed him to admire explorers, such as 'H. M. Stanley, discoverer of the Congo Basin' (108), whose memory is evoked through the untameable nature of the Congo River: 'the river's flow was so broad, powerful and sinister in the evening's early shadows that we wondered how anybody ever managed to cross it' (123). It also allowed him to claim innocence for the colonial missions by 'Stanley, Livingstone, Speke and Thompson', to the 'heart of darkest Africa', who came 'only to introduce two parts of the one great world grown curious about one another, and anxious to know each other's mysteries' (110). Here both cultures are shown as being equally curious about each other; both wanted to explore the others' 'mysteries'. By undermining the construction of Africa in the European imagination as 'mysterious' and 'darkest', Delius tends to place both

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themselves in opposition to 'conventional' modes of travel; nonetheless 'such oppositional narratives cannot escape being haunted by an array of hoary tropes and clichés' (see Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters : Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 198.).

<sup>27</sup>J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing : On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1988), 8.

worlds at the same level. Thus, downplaying the role of the explorers and missionaries in the colonial expansion, and the impact of the explorers on African people. Their role appears as that of facilitators between two cultures who are equally curious about each other; the explorers here appear to be at the service of Africa as much as that of Europe, thus obliterating their prejudiced and racial stereotyping of Africa that assisted the cruelties of Empire.

### **The Politics of the Contact Zone**

As I have argued in this thesis, the contact zone—i.e., the space where authors physically come into contact with other cultures, as well as the text as a contact zone between the author and audience—is a politically charged space where both the culture of the traveller and the travellee try to claim authority in whatever ways possible. To have physically been in the contact zone provides eligibility for the travel writer to represent the space; it gives legitimacy to the authenticity of their representations, as we have seen in the case of Eslanda Robeson. Delius, too, plays into this legitimacy through his use of photographs in the text. Photographs, as visual images, become ‘central to certifying the author’s eyewitness claims’.<sup>28</sup> Delius’s captions of the pictures help him to elucidate various situations, and allow the reader to follow his journey visually and be convinced by its authenticity. Through his use of photographs and written descriptions, Delius comes into dialogue with the reader,

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<sup>28</sup> Stephanie Leitch, "Visual Images in Travel Writing," in *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, ed. Nandini Das and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 456.

presenting 'reality to the eyes' of the reader which can further 'inflect reader's sense of place'.<sup>29</sup>

One example of this method appears early on in the text, when he produces a photograph of his vehicle, which Delius and John choose to name as 'The Coelocanth', because we believed that nothing like it had ever been seen on land before' (15):



Figure 24 (The Long Way Round)

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 456, 68.

The photograph and description of the vehicle provide the reader with material evidence of Delius's presence in the contact zone. Delius personifies the vehicle in the description of the first photograph, by using the verb 'brooding', which presents the vehicle as an extension of himself: an outsider bearing the 'severe battering' of difficult African terrains, a trope associated with the myth of Victorian heroes.<sup>30</sup> The next photograph and caption legitimises the authenticity of Delius's eyewitness account by confirming 'that objects, signs and elements have been seen'.<sup>31</sup> These two photographs on the same pages are dialogic in nature; that is to say, they validate each other and steer the reader to visualise the vehicle reaching what they call the 'heart of Africa'.

Nonetheless, the photographs that supposedly validate the objectivity of the travel experience and representation are actually 'less realistic' than they appear. They 'distort rather than reflect social reality'.<sup>32</sup> This distortion informs the politics of the contact zone. For example, let us examine this photograph of some 'pigmy' posing for Delius and his friends:

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<sup>30</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians And Africans: The Genealogy Of The Myth Of The Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985), <https://doi.org/10.1086/448326>.

<sup>31</sup> Giorgia Alù & Sarah Patricia Hill, "The travelling eye: reading the visual in travel narratives," *Studies in Travel Writing* 22, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645145.2018.1470073>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

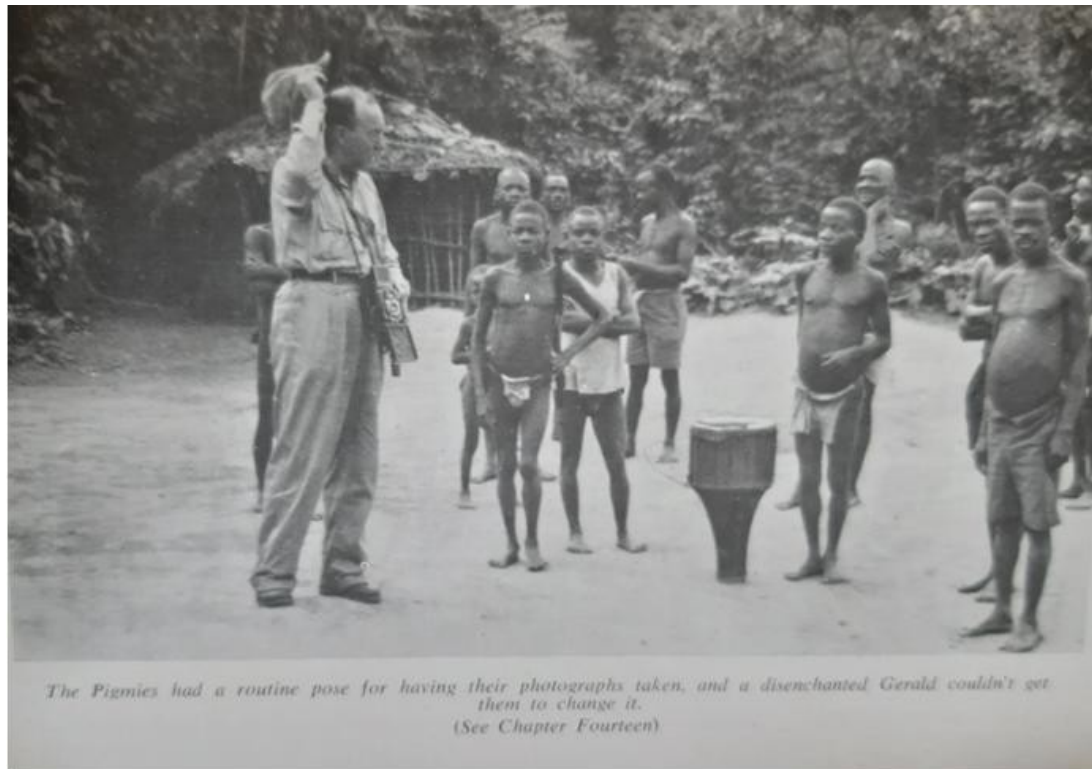


Figure 25 (*The Long Way Round*)

The 'pigmies' can be seen standing with Delius's friend Gerald, who joined Delius and John in Congo. Though Delius himself is not in the frame, the description encourages the reader to visualise him standing close by watching Gerald communicate with the local people. The photograph demonstrates the 'iconotext[ual] quality' where written text and visual material each tell a different story.<sup>33</sup> The effect of spontaneity in the photograph elicited by Gerald's hand on his hat mid-motion, and the Africans various postures— some of them looking at the camera, others looking at Gerald, one of them in conversation, and others busy in conversation—is ruptured by the description. The description comically dramatizes the scene, with Gerald unsuccessfully trying to change their positions and the inability of the 'pigmies' to understand his command, or their reluctance towards agreeing to it. The description

<sup>33</sup> Margaret Topping, "Travel Writing and Visual Culture," in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 83.

in the photograph thus undermines the appearance of spontaneity, and makes it a 'mediated or sanitized experience', where the traveller chooses what to capture and what not.<sup>34</sup> This distortion of reality, as Giorgia Alú suggests, is 'evidence of specific phenomenon: mentalities, ideologies and identities'.<sup>35</sup> Thus the contact zone that legitimises the knowledge produced by a traveller is a politicised zone which indeed facilitates the compromising of knowledge.

As demonstrated in Robeson's case, the knowledge produced in contact zone is also mediated or appropriated by the travellee, who tries to reclaim some authority. In the above example, the 'pigmies', too, are claiming some authority by deciding for themselves how to stand. By refusing to make themselves available to Gerald's command, they are limiting his power to mediate the contact zone. Rather they retain power by negotiating the terms of the contact, by using their bodies and material possessions as commodities. Delius observes that '[s]ome brought out bows and arrows and offered them for sale. Others struck hunting poses and offered to be photographed- in return for cigarettes' (138). In other words, the 'pigmies', make the traveller's visit work for them, as much as it will work for the traveller. In another incident, the local people mistake the vehicle for an 'American film truck' and think that Delius and his friends had come to 'take our dancing', as other Americans had done (116). Thinking this to be the case, the leader immediately starts 'assuring of the excellence of local dancers', and begins the bargaining process with Delius. The moment they discover that these men are not going to pay for their dance, they lose interest in the outsiders. Only a 'few people lingered, staring at us with only

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<sup>34</sup> Margaret Topping, "This is not a photo opportunity: verbal/visual struggle in Francophone travel narratives," *Journal of Romance Studies* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2013).

<sup>35</sup> Hill, "The travelling eye: reading the visual in travel narratives."

perfunctory curiosity' (116). This demonstrates that both the traveller and the travellee negotiate the terms of the contact zone.

Nonetheless, the power of representation is compromised by the traveller to construct the self among the 'other'. The traveller has the power of representation, allowing him more authority than the travellee when in the contact zone. For instance, in Leopoldville, Delius describes a scene where Africans refused to be photographed:

Near the gates of the market were tall and stately black men from the other side of the river. They were dressed in skull-caps and long, light robes of good material. With an elegant movement of long sensitive hands they refused to have their photos taken (101).

Although the travelleses try to claim authority in this incident by not allowing themselves to be photographed, Delius maintains authority by deciding how to represent them in the text. His description of their features and dress is a visual description. Even though he was unable to photograph them, he still allows the reader to visualise their bodies and dress. Travel writing allows the traveller an authority to represent the travellee- thus making the contact zone work more for the traveller than the travellee.

As the discussion elsewhere in the thesis has suggested, the contact zone is a politically charged and racialised space in which travel writers draw upon rhetoric strategies to construct difference. We can see this by contrasting black and white-authored travel representations of the 'other'. For instance, in chapter 5, I described how Robeson represents 'little poor white boys' who 'ran along beside the car, wild looking, with staring greedy eyes', and 'shrieked -Penny, penny, penny!!!' on seeing



rich black people in the car, to invert the meanings typically associated with the dynamic of giving and receiving, whereby whiteness is symbolized in the rich (white) giver and the poor (black) receiver. Robeson repeatedly constructed whites with ‘shameless stares’, ‘greedy eyes’ and a ‘ratty face’, in contrast to her ‘charming’, ‘disciplined’, ‘neat’ black friends. In other words, she used the contact zone to question white prestige and assert black pride. Whereas Robeson’s white subjects shriek ‘Penny, Penny, Penny’ on seeing a car—a symbol of status and wealth—Delius’s subjects shout ‘-Dollars?’ on seeing white men with a vehicle that resembled an American film company’s truck. Indeed, Delius makes it appear as though all black people in Congo see Delius and John as givers of money. For instance, in this example, he represents local Congolese people of all ages, groups and professions looking up to a white man for matabeesh, or a tip:

If a road gang in the normal course of its duty clears away one of those innumerable small landslides which block the progress of a traveller round the Basin, three or four of the workers will tear up to the driver yelling -matabeesh!! If a man with a particular handsome set of filed teeth exhibits them for a cameraman he will demand -matabeesh!! Idle spectators giving the comfort of their presence while a motorist tickles his carburettor or changes a wheel will suddenly request -matabeesh!! A dispensary assistant who tells a traveller something about his job will very likely ask for -matabeesh!! Even once when we asked a black policeman the way to a certain street he asked for —matabeesh!! (115).

Delius represents black Africans asking for ‘matabeesh’— ‘nothing more than the universal tipping system’—with ‘unwinking, unashamedly curious faces’ (140) and

'mutterings of unmistakable abuse' (139) to assert white superiority. Both of these examples from Delius and Robeson show that the contact zone is the politically charged space where rhetorical strategies are materialised.

The contact zone is not only used by writers to represent the 'other' as an antithesis of the self, but it also becomes a political tool. Gary Totten has noted how African-Americans use the language of 'skepticism' to 'allow white readers, especially resistant ones to suspend judgement and recognise the truth'.<sup>36</sup> In line with Totten, I propose that contact zones allow writers to negotiate the prevalent judgements of their society, though not always through the language of 'skepticism'; the travel writers in general use the contact zone to produce a narrative through which they can claim power and authority that demands the social recognition desired by the writer.

White liberalism in South Africa, as already discussed, was not accepted by black activists; Steve Biko later criticised the white liberals as 'do-gooders', the people who 'always knew what was good for the blacks and told them so'.<sup>37</sup> Alan Paton, in a letter to Neville Curtis, also reflected on the hostility he received from the 'same black people whom he had hoped to help'.<sup>38</sup> Even Delius mentions in the text about his skin colour exposing him to the vulnerability in the hostile African space, where 'South Africans are still not very welcome' (11), and are given 'suspicious glare' (54). In this fraught context, *The Long Way Round* becomes part of an

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<sup>36</sup> Gary Totten, "Mobility, Skepticism, and Counter-storytelling in African American Travel Writing: Carl Rowan's *South of Freedom*," *Journal of American Studies* (2020): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875820000730>.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Bantu Biko, "Black Souls in White Skins?," *Frank Talk* September/October 1984.

<sup>38</sup> Mabel Raisibe Maimela, "Black Consciousness and White Liberals in South Africa: Paradoxical Anti-Apartheid Politics" (Ph.D. University of South Africa, December 1999), [http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/17296/thesis\\_maimela\\_mr.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/17296/thesis_maimela_mr.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

argument in favour of white liberal generosity. He enters the physical contact zone with African communities —represented by the journey to central Africa—to demonstrate Christian charity, a testimony for white men's progressive and compassionate intentions towards black people. By adding vignettes of Christian sacrifice, such as that of 'Père Foucauld'—a French army officer who lived amongst Bantu people and 'became the most famous exponent of a policy of Christian charity towards the Moslems', led his life helping them, and was finally 'killed by one of them' (140)—Delius inadvertently emphasises the white civilising mission and black hostility towards innocent well-intentioned whites.

Delius demonstrates this threatening atmosphere by recounting an event where the 'friendliness of the Pygmies vanished' when Delius refuses to give them cigarettes, and he 'began to wonder what it felt like to die with a Pygmy poisoned arrow in the back' (139). Delius further juxtaposes these threatening Africans with the Catholic 'Little Sisters' living 'in huts' (140). In doing so, he foregrounds the sacrifice of these two 'beautiful women', by leaving their 'own country and people' to live in 'such strange surroundings' (141). He highlights their good motivations, for instance to help 'the Pygmy mothers to look after their children, getting medicines for their sores and ulcers, and even getting an occasional Pygmy into hospital' (140). This assists him in practicing, as Mary Pratt would say, anti-conquest; 'the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony'.<sup>39</sup> The sacrifice is further elevated by a monologue in which he questions the inner motivations and external forces that might create such a situation whereby women would live 'in mud

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<sup>39</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Travel writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

huts in the middle of a Congo Forest making friends with Pygmies? Harradins? Lumpish peasants?’ (141). The answer he returns to is ‘Christian Charity’ (142). Though he does not explicitly inform the reader about his religious inclinations, his repeated references to ‘Christian charity’ (also at 108-109), and the description of Christmas allows us to think that he may have been Christian, and thus believed in the ‘civilising mission’. Again, he uses photographs to authenticate his account of Christian Charity (figures 26 and 27). As much as these photographs demonstrate the physical reality of compassionate white people ‘extending the hand of modern medical science to primitive Africa’, the description also presents a voice to the photograph. Thus, the text becomes a contact zone to interact with the readers, either black or white, to forward the case of authenticity of white liberalism where white people ‘believe in living in as nearly the same way as those around them as possible in order to lessen local consciousness of their being strangers’ and assist the black people towards ‘civilisation’.

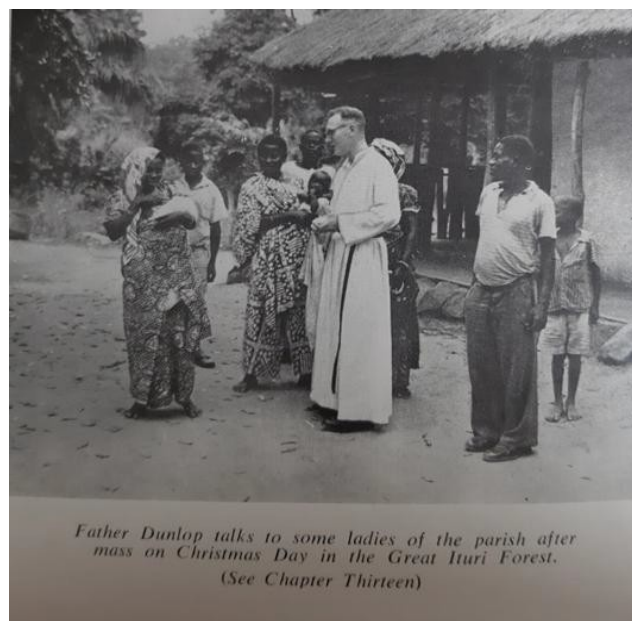


Figure 26 (*The Long Way Round*)

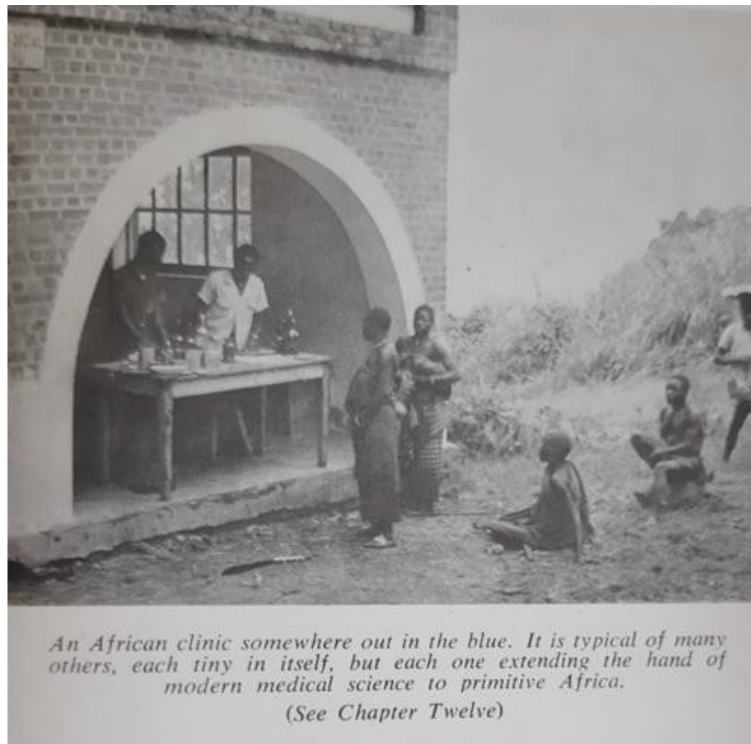


Figure 27 (*The Long Way Round*)

### Congo: 'White man's wonders' and a wonder for white men

Delius's physical appearance as a white man, the most visible marker of his distance from black African people, informed his journey as an outsider, and made him vulnerable. At the same time, his whiteness was also a marker of 'privilege', and allowed him to shape the behaviour of the local people towards him. For instance, in Leopoldville the 'Congoese cyclists' adopts subservient position and hides his bicycle as soon as they see a white man.

Such fright was often *comic*, but always very real [...] The white man in a motor car still retains the *craven respect* that the black man had for him in the days of Leopold, The Collector of Hands. This type of extreme deference, however, is quite different in Angola. There any African of middle age or beyond who happened to be passed by some white man in a car would stop and make a most curious and *discomforting (to me) obeisance*.

He would turn towards the car, remove his hat reverently, and, generally placing his hand crosswise on his chest, he would bow humbly. (111-112)  
[Emphasis added]

Here, Delius attributes the 'craven respect' of the Congolese to the white man to their memory of Leopold II of Belgium; whiteness is viewed as a symbol of cruelty. Whilst this 'craven[ness]' is missing in the Angolans, still their gesture of bowing humbly also suggests the privilege of whiteness in Africa. Nonetheless, by referring to the first gesture as 'comic' and the other as 'discomforting (to me)', he performs the sensibility of a liberal white who does not expect—nor wants—to be treated differently based on the colour of his skin. Therefore, the African space allows him the privilege of being treated as a 'colonial' superior, while also, the textual reproduction, allows him a space to demonstrate his liberalism and to distance himself from these same forces.

Delius was himself conscious of his position as a white man: how his whiteness informed his way of looking at black people and his reception by them. On his visit to a market in Leopoldville, he writes, 'we two whites wandered like daylight ghosts' who were looked 'back [through] blank stares' and 'were prodded or shouldered out of the way by some hurrying black housewife' (102). His whiteness, and its consciousness as 'ghosts', reflects him occupying an outsiders' position, invisible to the eyes of the travellee. This allowed him to perform surveillance, which according to David Spurr, is a rhetorical strategy that makes the travellee available to the traveller's gaze, whilst not allowing the traveller to be gazed upon.<sup>40</sup> By gazing

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<sup>40</sup> David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire : Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 12.

upon the Congolese people and denying them the 'power of gaze', Delius occupies a position of authority through the whiteness that renders him invisible. His consciousness of whiteness and its association with colonial history and cruelty further allows him to 'masquerade' as a 'means of deflection, the means of covering up a crime, theft, illicit acquisition or assertion of power'.<sup>41</sup> This allowed him to give away his invisibility by being 'prodded or shouldered', where he immediately becomes visible and thus available for the gaze of black people, which, as demonstrated in Angolan restaurant, was of 'utter contempt for us' (54).

Delius's position as a white South African allowed him to perform ambivalence through visible-invisible roles, which allowed him authority in some places and contempt in others. Delius's liberalism allowed the traveller an equal opportunity of surveillance, which his whiteness had earlier denied. As much as Delius 'inspect[ed] the toothbrush of the black men of Congo Basin, his toothbrush was also 'prodded' by them 'gingerly' (122). The possessions of white men also evoked curiosity among African men, as seen in chapter 2, but in Delius's case he – along with the black men – 'tried to cross the barrier of ignorance of each other's language' (122). Delius's position as a liberal allowed him to assert that white people, too, should be expected to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries. This is further demonstrated through Delius's agreement with 'one of these excellent officials' who told him that 'white' has 'got to learn to get on with these Congolese face-to face and at every level, even the social one' if they want to 'continue as a permanent citizen of the Congo' (104).

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<sup>41</sup> Georgina Horrell, "A whiter shade of pale: white femininity as guilty masquerade in 'new' (white) South African women's writing," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 4 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305707042000313004>.

However, Delius's position as a liberal white meant that he was cautious about using racial language and reproducing stereotypical binaries of the inferior (black) and superior (white). In one scene he describes a tailor in Congo:

The clothes he turned out were not exactly Saville Row fits. Yet they looked well enough, and I dare say that the once -naked heathensll of the Congo are now among the most adequately dressed people in the world (113).

Through phrases such as 'I dare say' and by putting 'naked heathens' in quotes, Delius demonstrates his consciousness about the currency of these words. Simultaneously, by choosing to reproduce this racialised language, he slips into the same tropes that he wanted to distance himself from. His liberal white position therefore pushes him to oscillate between a colonial 'whiteness' and his own South African 'liberalism'. In *The Long Way Round* Delius navigates the ambiguity of his positionality as an insider-outsider, positioned between white supremacy and liberalism, power and vulnerability. Delius's ambiguous position informs his multiple selves, through which he also constructs the 'other' whilst representing Africa and its peoples.

Whiteness, as Georgina Horrell suggests, cannot be 'free from histories of domination and power', which were constructed primarily on the logic of Empire through repetitive production of inferior-superior paradigms in colonial racialised discourses.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, Delius could not escape seeing through racial hierarchies, but his liberalism complicates his ability to be as direct as other white travellers in pronouncing these hierarchies. His way of validating the stereotypical

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



constructs of white supremacy is indirect: he uses the actions of his characters to comment on the hierarchies. For instance, whilst getting his vehicle repaired at a motor workshop in Congo, he employs a 'kindly Portuguese mechanic', who informs Delius about the 'not genius' African mechanics.

I got the impression, rightly or wrongly, that when their initial training became more comprehensible to them and thus more thorough, they would become better artisans. But people who should be able to judge better than myself shook their heads and said that it would take two generations before the African would acclimatize himself to the mechanical revolution. For the present it will still be necessary to have every ten black artisans supervised by one white one. (114)

We have experience of having the Coelocanth serviced, before we began this part of the trip, by five most efficient looking black mechanics under the remote control of a white one [...] we discovered that the battery was flat because somebody had left the ignition switch on all the time it was in the garage. After the first 100 miles our steering wheel seized, and we found somebody had forgotten to put oil in the steering box. Two hundred miles further on our bearings started burning out – somebody had forgotten to grease them. (115)

In the first quotation, Delius cautiously removes himself from any position of judgement, simply repeating what other people have said. After, in the second quotation, he reproduces a scene validating the observation in the first quotation to confirm that the black mechanics are new to modern technology and will, indeed, need at least 'two generations' to reach the level of white mechanics. Though the black mechanics are working under one white mechanic, still, by using pronoun 'somebody' and relating it to the working hands, he clearly removes the white

mechanic from the scene. In doing so, he reinforces the notion that black people are intellectually inferior to whites.

The role of white man and his culture to guide the black man to reach 'civilisation' is established elsewhere also in the text, through same play of making his characters speak and validate the colonial argument. He presents a black man, 'neatly dressed in European clothing', who asked them for a lift, and while answering to John in Portuguese, he maintains, 'It is through this [Portuguese] language we can become civilised' (62). Delius's 'civilisation' is still at many removes from the black people who 'could never have known' the modern symbols of white man's civilisation, such as 'cars with self-starters' (123). Delius's efforts, in Congo, to repair his vehicle are presented as being seen as a kind of miracle by the locals, who 'raised their hands to their mouths in astonishment' on a thought that 'one could go in front of the car, bow up and down like that once or twice, and it would start!' (123). As Anthony Appiah noted regarding the white travel writer Redmond O' Hanlon, 'natives are always amused'.<sup>43</sup> Delius notes that for the Congolese people, 'white man's wonders would never cease' (123).

Certainly, the white man and his wonders amuse Congolese people in the text. Likewise, the African landscape and its inhabitants remains a wonder for Delius. This wonderment enables Delius to reproduce the tropes of colonial discourse that tend to construct the African 'other' through denying their coevalness and placing

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<sup>43</sup> Anthony Appiah, "Mokélé-Mbembe, being the Faithful Account of a Hazardous Expedition to find the Living African Dinosaur," *London Review of Books* 19, no. 8 (24 April 1997).

himself in a 'Time different to the other'.<sup>44</sup> As Irma Stern (Chapter 6) does, Delius also repeatedly portrays his modern vehicle moving in the 'primeval forest' (109,119, 120,123). His journey takes place in a dream-like landscape that gives him a feeling of 'flicking over the pages of some sky-high photograph album provided in natural colour' (129). This imagery of the landscape as a 'photo album' allows him to freeze the African landscape in the past, and makes him an outsider to the 'photo-album'; a photograph still refers to the past even if seen immediately after clicking.

By representing himself as seeing this 'photo-album', Delius also claims the authority of surveillance over the African space and its people. The viewer of a photograph is 'necessarily distanced' by turning the 'subject' of the photograph into an 'object' and thus 'promoting fantasy'.<sup>45</sup> The fantasy allows Delius to imagine the landscape and its inhabitants as pre-historic, or at least more 'primitive' than his modern self. For example, the captain of the *pont* appears to be a 'Roman Senator' (120) and 'old Triton' (119). And an African woman cycling is seen as 'the daughter of Sion' (111). In representing the Congolese landscape and its people as mythical and, therefore, unreal, Delius distances himself from these people who carry a 'sense of living in eternity': static and fixed identities (119). This distance allows Delius to view the Congolese people and landscapes as 'material' for 'aestheticization' and, ultimately, dehumanisation of the Congolese people.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/fabi16926>.

<sup>45</sup> Catherine Lutz and Jone Collins, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of *National Geographic*," *Visual Anthropology Review* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1991), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1525/var.1991.7.1.134>.

<sup>46</sup> Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire : Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, 46.

Observing a Congolese market, Delius makes repeated symbolic reference to animals: the 'coloured fabrics worn by the women gave the market the appearance of a field full of butterflies, twitched and fretted by the wind' (101); the women cyclists are 'beasts of burden' (112); local people in jungle at night appears as 'fireflies' (134); the 'pygmies' are represented as 'mosquitoes' (138). As discussed in the previous chapter on Stern, the representation of African people through animalistic metaphors dehumanizes Africans as 'others'.<sup>47</sup>

The aestheticization is further materialised and progressed into the eroticization of black bodies and space. Delius's performance as a white man allowed him to employ sexualised language to represent the landscape through metaphors: 'they were huge hills with great smooth grassy domes and hair of forests at their groins' (98). Even though the sexualised portrayal of language was a common trend in literature, this also reveals the 'tastes, values, aspirations, and even fears', of the writer.<sup>48</sup> Delius's male 'self' gazing at the feminine Congo 'other' is more explicit when he, amidst the chaos of pygmies asking for cigarettes and threatening the white men with arrows, abruptly observes that 'One Pygmy girl nearby had breasts like balloons and nipples like cocktail sausages' (139). This three lined paragraph positioned abruptly in the middle of a description of chaos is not only a sexualised description of the girl, who attracts Delius's attention, but is also a

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<sup>47</sup> Nick Haslam, "Dehumanization: An Integrative Review," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10, no. 3 (2006). The aestheticization is further materialised in the eroticization of black bodies, black women specifically. Delius often employs sexualised language to represent the landscape.

<sup>48</sup> Janice Monk, "Approaches to the Study of Women and Landscape," *Environmental Review: ER* 8, no. 1 (1984), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3984519>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3984519>.; Smethurst Paul, "Natural Sublime and Feminine Sublime," in *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768–1840* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).; John Culbert, "Theory and the limits of Travel," *Studies in Travel Writing* 22, no. 4 (2018).

performance of Delius's gender as a white man who cannot help but sexualise the virgin land and its people, even amidst dangers and death threats.

As a white man, Delius not only assumes an authority to see and represent the femininity of Africa and black people; rather, his position invites him to access the space and aesthetically observe its landscape and inhabitants. In Congo, while waiting for the *pont*:

Down the road we had come, walked a tall young woman, swathed in a bright cotton fabric, and balancing on her head a basin. She passed us with a slight nod and went down to the water-side. Slowly and without a backward glance she unwound her dress and laid it down beside the basin. She stood in complete ebony nakedness. At her feet a slender lovely woman floated waveringly in the water. She bent and washed herself until her whole form glinted and sparkled with the dark water. At last she picked up her dress, dried herself with it, and wound it around her body again. Then she replaced the basin on her head and went back past up the road. (121)

The woman's 'slight nod' welcomes Delius to follow the black body to 'complete ebony nakedness', a situation that lay her black body bare for the scrutiny of the white male gaze. This 'nod' is significant because it saves Delius from being accused of objectifying Africa and African women. Her nod invited Delius to watch her; to observe the 'glinted and sparkled' body and present it for the consumption of his audience, presumably mostly English-speaking audiences overseas.

Delius as a liberal, however, produces representations of Congo that reflect the co-existence of two cultures: the white and the black, the colonial and the settlers. In Leopoldville, 'Five years ago', one M. André Scohey, an advocate of sociable proximity between blacks and whites in public, was told that the 'African

service listeners' will not accept anything other than 'the most monotonously rhythmical popular music' (106). Yet, Scohey's efforts to introduce 'classical music' to them were 'rewarded by enthusiastic letters from Africans in the heart of darkness asking for more Bach, Mozart and Handel' (106). By juxtaposing 'heart of darkness' and 'enthusiastic letters from Africans', Delius validates that the 'light' of Western civilisation – the civilising mission of white missionaries – was being accepted by Africans. Delius represents the imposing of western civilisation on Africans as being not for the purpose of asserting superiority, but to assist Africans to achieve wealth, prosperity and modernity. For Delius, the paternalistic efforts of the west to change 'old social security of the tribe' to a 'new model social security of the state' was benefitting African people who deposit 'Millions of francs' by bringing 'in their savings wrapped up in banana-leaves' (102). Here, 'Francs', a symbol of Western cash currency, wrapped up in 'banana-leaves' represents the transitional phase of Congo. This also represents the co-existence of both cultures, whilst also making a case for 'Francs' as being not a threat to local culture, but rather a necessity for people to progress. 'Millions' represents the progress, wealth and prosperity that was apparently enabling people to move 'in spirit at least, always towards the north' whilst turning their backs 'to the poverty of their fellows in the South' (101). Many political commentators felt that whilst colonial rule was problematic, it also brought necessary reforms to the colonies. This is indeed a case of liberal paradox.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Bernasconi, "The Paradox of Liberal Politics in the South African Context: Alfred Hoernlé's Critique of Liberalism's Pact with White Domination," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 4, no. 2 (2016), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/critphilrace.4.2.0163>.

However, I argue that by allowing the colonised some agency to engage with this 'progress' on their own terms (e.g., putting francs in banana leaves), Delius makes a case for mutual cultural appropriation. Another example of this occurred when Delius documents how the 'new era is the African on the bicycle' (110). This time it is the bicycle that represents western intervention in Africa (110). And the fact that Africans use bicycles represents their acceptance of that (110). Despite Africans embracing the bicycle, they also reclaim some authority by 'beginning to decorate their bicycles as they once used to decorate their bodies for war or beer dances', with 'vivid streaks of red, blue, violet, mauve or magenta paint, sometimes with ox-horns and even with pictures of the members of the Royal Family' (111). Here is a black man using western symbols on his terms, contrary to the argument of black consciousness that critiqued white liberalism for wanting black man to adopt western patterns. Again, this portrays the possibility for the co-existence of both cultures. In another example, Delius discusses sign-boards in Congo, with the Belgians having 'concentrated on putting up the names of villages':

Yet, however welcome, a sign-board looks very much a foreign importation- it sticks up out of the ground like a newly amputated thumb. It stands there alien, proud, efficient- but it doesn't quite belong [...] These have obviously jarred upon the Africans who have to live nearby. So that at nearly every village in some areas these name-posts have been converted into pedestals for clay busts. Surmounting each notice board is an African face. At once the notice-boards are transformed, and become fully something of the pattern of life about them. (116-117)

Congolese people are therefore presented as being in control of the 'foreign importation' of sign boards, in this case. The foreign importation jarred upon the Africans', but they were free to transform them to fit the 'pattern of life about them'. As each notice board - a sign of western order- is surmounted by 'an African face', Delius portrays liberalised appropriation of the African space, allowing the indigenous communities to convert the 'foreign importation' that 'doesn't quite belong' to something more relatable. Delius's liberalism also allowed him to acknowledge that 'Even our science may condescend one day to learn a little from the theories and practices of herbalists and witchdoctors' (93). Yet his whiteness did not allow him to maintain this reciprocity; he goes on to represent Africans as being culturally and intellectually inferior to the white settlers and other outsiders. Thus, it can be seen that Delius chooses from his multiple selves when communicating in different situations and representing Congo. As a white male he constructs Congo and the Congolese as a feminine 'other'; as a liberal he presents Congolese culture as being allowed to undertake cultural appropriation on their own terms.

### **Silence all about us, silence in ourselves**

Delius is selective in his use of voice and silence to navigate his multiple selves. He demonstrates a deep awareness of memory in deciding what to represent or not. As, in his chapter on Bukavu, he remarks, '[t]here are so many criss-crossing lines of memory to choose from' (127). Delius chooses when to speak and when not in documenting the history of places marked by colonial injustice, violence and brutality; he reflects on pain and cruelty the local people had undergone over centuries but keeps silent on the colonial responsibility of creating that history of pain



and cruelty. His silence in these instances of silence on colonial oppression acts as a kind of mask to cover up the cruelty related to colonial rule. For instance:

A placard informed us that we were at Namutoni, where 600 Ovambos were killed in a desperate uprising against the Germans more than half a century ago. It was a melancholy spot, this, the site of a long forgotten battle between a vanished colonial power and a broken tribe. Perhaps men on both sides died believing they were fighting for the future (43).

Delius not only remains silent on the reasons for the battle and the uprising, he, in a quintessentially liberal bid for 'balance', gives equal attention to the reasons for the battle on both sides. Delius's silence validates the intentions of the German colonizers in fighting for a legitimate future—a move that shifts the burden of war on those Africans, also, who stood in the way of that future. Even the choice of words also evokes equal sympathy or sentiment for the European losses. The anthropologist Ana Dragojlovic describes silence as 'affective, situated presences, that is historically and politically located, reverberating across times and geographical locations as affective presences of historical inequalities.' Silence, she suggests, stands in contrast to 'romanticized memories of colonial life'.<sup>50</sup> This interpretation applies to Delius's text, whose references to African colonial history veil a certain colonial nostalgia, as seen in his appetite to dignify both sides. As the result of his white liberal position, he pays attention to the suffering caused by war to humans, but does not document historical injustices directly.

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<sup>50</sup> Ana Dragojlovic, "Affective geographies: Intergenerational hauntings, bodily affectivity and multiracial subjectivities," *Subjectivity* 8, no. 4 (2015), <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/affective-geographies-intergenerational-hauntings/docview/1866648484/se-2?accountid=8630>.

Instead, Delius uses indirect methods, such as metaphors, to establish his sympathy with Africa's colonial past. In narrating the historical destruction of Okoukeijo, he describes becoming aware of the many human souls that are still present in this place:

Every time I glimpsed the pan, lying there like the day-light ghost of another country, I felt I was looking towards some area of immense activity, more often than not it seemed a place where millions of humans were congregated...-but I cannot explain my illusion of always looking towards murmurous population of mankind. Perhaps there was a murmur, a restlessness of air and sand, but when I asked John he could hear nothing though he too had a feeling of being haunted by a ghost of sound (44).

He metaphorically speaks about the impact of colonial violence through the restlessness of the landscape. Yet although Delius claims that John could hear painful voices of people enslaved and killed, he categorically remains silent on the central issue: responsibility for heinous colonial crimes. This silence allows him to not contradict the positive role of colonialism as a reformer in the African society- which he displays throughout the text- while also documenting the pain of the people through metaphors and hence playing into white liberal ideology.

Delius employs the silence of the African landscape as a metaphor for his own (existential) feelings of death and fear of death, to build on the trope of the riskiness of the traveller's journey. In one scene, Delius and his friend's vehicle gets stuck in the Western Cape:

It was obvious we would never be able to struggle out again past the drifts and barriers of sand over which we were now sliding so easily into the black profound. I had abandoned hope of ever arriving at the bottom. We drove in silence all about us, and silence in ourselves. (21)

The tropes of death, danger and disease prevalent in colonial and postcolonial travel texts about Africa surfaces here as Delius envisages himself sliding into the 'black profound' and never being 'able to struggle out again' or 'arriving at the bottom'. The feeling of vastness, uncertainty and despair this evokes is projected onto the African landscape, against which two helpless white travellers surrender. Man-made technology is helpless against nature, which appears victorious. His imagination of being dragged into the sand leaves him silent: the 'silence all about us' and 'silence in us'. Such silences, are, however, projected from Delius himself. The powerful landscape seizes their voice and they have to trust the landscape, which is the best they could do.

Alternatively, Delius uses the silence of the landscape to represent the white men as conquerors of this victorious landscape. When entering central Africa from South Africa, he represents 'the vehicle running over the road is quite pitiless-equally vengeful whether the passage is slow or fast' and 'the grim country, shrivelled and skeletal, watches the torture in silence'(24). Here, the vehicle has now taken over the road 'quite pitiless', and the country, its landscape watches 'the torture in silence' without any protest. The continent, and its history, has experienced 'pitiless' conquering by the outsiders, who came with their technology - cameras, vehicles, binoculars, magnetic devices, etc. - to run 'over the' country, while the 'grim country' silently watched the 'torture'. Here the silence of the landscape also allowed

Delius to present the traumatic experience of the continent. The silence, thus allowed him to mask himself towards the colonial history and the pain associated with it, and to reproduce the tropes of danger and death. Delius's liberal stance however allowed him to speak in metaphors about the pain inflicted on the continent by the outsiders. Delius's voice and silence enabled him to critically engage with his whiteness, which is important, as suggested by Njabulo Ndebele in case of white South Africans, 'to find a legitimate way of belonging in South Africa'.<sup>51</sup>

Delius also uses silence as a mask to his colonial hegemony. In speaking through the voices of other figures in *The Long Way Round*, he reproduces stereotypes while also claiming innocence for himself. In one example he refers to Gerald's excitement at the prospect of seeing the 'pygmies': Gerald 'had gone tree-hopping with a crazy pilot in search of rhinos, hippos, elephant and buffalo, but the obsession remained with him'(127). Here, Delius exoticises the pygmies by talking about his friend's (white colonial) fascination. Not only does he bracket the pygmies with other wild animals, he replicates Gerald's own voyeurism in discussing it, and tries to distance himself from such stereotyping by shifting the responsibility to Gerald. 'We could, and did, say what was a pygmy but a small black man?', he writes. 'He would see thousands, possibly millions of black men. Had he not seen the bushmen at the Tercentenary Festival?' (127) In referring to the pygmy as 'a small black man' Delius reclaims his liberal position as someone who does not 'see' indigenous people through the exoticising lens of colonial discourse. However, Delius agrees to accompany Gerald 'out of sheer travel-fatigue' (128) thereby supporting Gerald's endeavours while failing to properly disrupt their stereotypical

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<sup>51</sup> Sally Matthews, "Becoming African: debating post-apartheid white South African identities," *African Identities* 9, no. 1 (2011/02/01 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2011.530440>.

colonial representation. In doing so, he plays into the trope of anti-conquest by claiming innocence, that is, by staying relatively quiet about his own intentions and ethics.<sup>52</sup>

Elsewhere in the narrative, he over determines the silence of others. In Angola, he interprets the silence of the (black) restaurant's proprietress as 'sultr[iness]' and a sign that white guests are treated with 'utter contempt' by the black owner. The food is apparently 'shoved' into another white guest's hands, who are then intimidated by 'a big man' who 'seemed angry', (54). The scene is narrated only through the perspective of white guests. The black people- i.e., the restaurant owner, her 'sultry' waitress, and an 'angry man' - are all silenced, giving Delius the power to interpret their silence. These brief textual gestures present friendly liberal white men as the victims of racial categories and black contempt. Whilst in Belgian Congo, Delius gets frustrated by the indifference of black people towards what he sees as progress in terms of the schools, doctors and technology made by white planners, which he struggles to decode in terms other than contrasting the 'blacks against all these helpful white officials' (109):

He seemed to me often to be suppressing wither suspicion or anger. Good was done all round him, and yet he seemed enraged by it[...] Could it be that he feels, quite unjustly, that he has exchanged the earlier human degradation of being a slave for the latest one of being a statistic (109).

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<sup>52</sup> Pratt, Mary L. (1992). *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 7.

After recounting multiple episodes of black people being 'politely indifferent' to white people (132), he declares 'I found the black in the Congo not a readily friendly person' (109). Delius's expectation of coming to 'a happy country, -the fairylandll' that 'Winston Churchill wrote about', resulted in a 'country tinged with sadness' (148). This sadness speaks to the relative silence with which Delius was met by black Africans, who resist being photographed and refuse to give hospitality on white terms.

## Conclusion

This chapter, along with the last chapter on Irma Stern, on white South African travel narrative shows how central the alienation of white South African figures, who travelled nationally and internationally, is to the constructions of central Africa. Delius enters central Africa—a politicised contact zone—with an ambiguous positionality as a white-liberal-South African-male-journalist. Delius's positionality as a white liberal meant he straddled the boundaries between inside and outside, someone steeped in a colonial way of seeing who nonetheless saw himself as above racist thinking. *The Long Way Round* is produced of this ambivalence. Delius often reinforces stereotypical representations of black Africans, but his liberal commitments force him to adopt alternative ways of doing just that. He adopts numerous metaphorical turns of phrase that exoticise, aestheticise and even eroticise and speaks through other figures accompanying him. As in other chapters, silence is an important theme in the text. It characterises Delius's representation of the historical cruelties of the slave trade, the sublime African landscape, and the challenges of travel. Nonetheless, silence also provided Delius with an opportunity to represent white people as victims of racial categories. Delius's white characters are not accepted by black country

mates, thus leaving them lonely and sad. Yet, he also tries to claim the counter-position of a travel writer who performs anti-conquest ideas by allowing the travellee to gaze upon the traveller. In other instances, Delius represents the white man's positive influence in central Africa even as he fails to disrupt colonial violence. This account, I argue, seeks to claim authenticity among black as well as white readers, as a white liberal who would otherwise be rejected by both black activists and white supporters of apartheid in South Africa. Delius began his journey on a quest to explore Africa- a 'question mark' (10) –and returned home 'as puzzled' (150) as before.

Being white South African is not as straightforward as being an outsider white colonial in Africa: Stern and Delius both claim belonging with Africa, and thus are insiders as well. However categorising white South Africans and their writing as exactly different to other black Africans has resulted in further marginalisation of the African travel writing genre, as well as generalisation of white South African writing. They, as other hyphenated Africans, also try to forge a link with Africa and Africanness, and in doing so they also confront their multiple selves evolving due to their hyphenated identity. This chapter, along with the previous chapter, validates that white South African writing is not only about reproducing colonial racial discourse or sympathising with the black population through anti-colonial and anti-apartheid narratives. Delius uses the text to put forward the case for white liberalism, seeking acceptance and relevance in both white as well as black population. However he was apologetic towards colonialism as well, and since voicing this apologetic stance may have compromised his performance as a liberal self, therefore he employs strategic silence that allowed him to navigate the colonial and

other racial questions. As much as William Sheppard employed the 'mask', Delius also employs 'masquerade' to escape getting caught in a difficult situation. Also, his voice is also constrained as other hyphenated Africans: appreciating colonialism openly may result in criticism for 'fake white liberalism', and thus rejection of his status as a liberal journalist, and speaking against colonialism may risk his position as a parliamentary journalist in apartheid times. So, he employs strategic silence by speaking metaphorically about the colonial atrocities. Therefore, for those with limited power, strategic silence is a way to operate in the contact zone regulated by asymmetrical power relations. By studying Delius and Stern, the white South Africans, along with black African travel writers, this section draws parallels in the ways of operating in the contact zone as hyphenated Africans. As much as the Bombay Africans or Robeson, or Tippu Tip use their text as a contact zone to perform as a favourable self and thus negotiate authority and voice; the white South Africans also do the same. The section, as a whole, reconfirms that there is no fixed other, rather it is constructed in response to the performance of self. Reading the text for the agency of the travellers/ travel writers allows us to appreciate the genre to its fullest, whereas looking at white writings for black representations and vice-versa entrap us into the very binaries we need to evade in order to decolonise the genre.



## CONCLUSION

The thesis has dealt with politics of representation, construction of self and the other, and claiming power, authority and voice in travel writing by people with hyphenated identities. George Olakunle stated that scholarship on African literature has a 'common tendency to frame African literature primarily as cultural self-retrievals or disillusioned critiques of dictators'.<sup>1</sup> This limitation applies to scholarship on African travel writing: critiques have typically read authors as writing either in approval or disapproval of colonialism. Complicating this, present study has revealed additional motivations: I argue that the writers in this study used their texts to negotiate identity, and to gain some recognition from those at the centre of power structures. Whilst the selected texts were produced during the colonial period, the writers were doing more than simply expressing their support or opposition to the regimes. Colonialism formed a historical context, and the writers were in dialogue with this, however they were also engaged in the act of self-fashioning and meaning-making. For instance, the writers discussed in the Section 1 of this thesis, exploring the theme of self-fashioning and autoethnography as a performance of identity, attempt to convince their readers – who are presumed to be white colonial masters – that they are significant and relevant to power structures, thus negotiating some place, authority and voice. Both the Bombay Africans (Chapter 1) and Tippu Tip (Chapter 2) perform their loyalty to white colonial missionaries (abolitionists in the case of the Bombay Africans, expansionism in the case of Tip).

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<sup>1</sup> George Olakunle, *African Literature and Social Change: Tribe, Nation and Race*, 5.

This study focuses on travel writers who were significantly impacted by colonial regimes- migration and displacement caused by colonialism resulted in their hyphenated identities. By reading the texts produced, during, or after, the colonial period by the people impacted by colonial history, essentially for their relation with colonial and imperial history, we risk erasing their individuality as travellers and writers. In this thesis I demonstrate that the travellers and travel writers had their own agendas as well, informing their motivation for the journey and the textualisation of the same, with which they enter and manipulate the contact zone; they were travelling and writing for specific purposes, and then producing their texts to claim power and authority otherwise denied to them due to colonial displacements. For instance, Section 2, focusing on the theme of double consciousness and chiasmic performance of identity, exemplifies that African-Americans were not only involved in producing 'counter-narratives', or agreeing to the imperial power structures and hierarchies. Rather they were adopting the ways in which they chose between their ambiguous positionality and performed ambivalence to negotiate identity, power and authority. In doing so they moved between a sense of American consciousness, their English education, and their ancestral African connections. They strategically chose when and where to perform these multiple selves.

As much as Congo was an Africanspace highly stereotyped by outsiders, it also formed a social space, or a contact zone, where the studied travellers and writers were able to perform authority and claim power. In other words, Congo provided them a space to be all that they could not be in their respective societies. The textual representation of their journey to Congo also enabled them to use their texts as contact zones to 'meet, clash and grapple' with the cultural space of the

reader, who is mostly placed in the dominant culture, and negotiate identity through the complex performance of multiple selves enabled by the ambiguous positionality of the hyphenated Africans. This contact zone is also studied as a site of politics. The writers discussed in the thesis were conscious of their readers and the potential impact of their writing on their status and recognition within the existing power structures. The writers entered the physical contact zone of the travellee and then enacted, not just reproduced, their experiences in the text. When doing so, they entered the contact zone and tried to negotiate voice and authority. The enactment of their journeys was shaped through selectivity of voice and silence. Silence, in a more direct form, as well as metaphorical, formed an important instrument in allowing the writers to achieve self-fashioning. The events and characters that the writer chose to represent in the text were carefully selected to achieve the agenda of producing the text.

Relating to Africa in some way, and simultaneously to elsewhere, that is by being African and someone else simultaneously, allowed them the flexibility of claiming both affinity and alterity with African spaces at the same time, which further enabled them to become African in some situations and someone else in others. Navigating through this ambiguity and ambivalence, in their texts, the writers perform their most favourable selves in an attempt to achieve social mobility; they attempt to claim voice, power and authority, which would otherwise be denied to writers situated in asymmetrical power relations. The thesis demonstrates that African travel writing from the colonial period is more than mere conforming to or contradicting colonial discourse; the writers were using familiar tropes to negotiate identity, status and recognition within racialised structures. These travel writers were not operating

in a 'dependency complex', but were navigating asymmetrical power structures imposed on Africans, engaging in constructing the self and claiming authority.

All the writers discussed in this thesis were responding to power structures, working in the margins and in the interstices of these structures. They tested out different elements. Sometimes they directly imitated powerful white individuals, but in doing so they did not simply reproduce power structures; rather, they reshaped them, even if just a little. In other instances, they conformed to the position that white people had allocated to them in the hierarchy, presenting themselves as loyal servants, thereby emphasising their own moral virtues. Alternatively, they directly confronted the hierarchy. In short, the authors' strategies were multiple, ambiguous, and complex.

Similarly, the diverse range of texts presented in this thesis by liberated slaves, slave traders, African-Americans, and white South Africans demonstrate that processes of representing the 'other' whilst constructing a favourable self are actually negotiations of identity. The thesis agrees with the idea of identity as not being a stable, fixed entity; rather it is constructed 'across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions'.<sup>2</sup> The travel writers discussed in this thesis were navigating through complex and ambiguous positionalities, to negotiate an identity, which they worked out (at least in part) through their conceptions of Africa and Africans. Their ambiguous positionalities allowed them to simultaneously enact affinity and alterity with the Africans they encountered on their journeys. In doing so, they performed their ambivalence and constructed a self they

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall, *Questions of cultural identity* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage, 2011, 1996), 4.

imbued with some kind of voice and some kind of capacity for action and influence in the world. Interestingly, though, the writers never created the same kind of selves: Tip and Sheppard constructed the 'heroic self'; the Bombay Africans constructed 'moral' selves; Eslanda Robeson constructed a 'moral' and 'heroic' self; and Anthony Delius tried to construct a 'liberal' self.

These constructed selves are a consequence of the travel writers moving between different positions and responding to different situations. In addition to constructing multiple selves, the authors constructed multiple others. For example, I discussed how when Robeson travelled to Congo, oscillated between representing African 'others' and European 'others'. When it was advantageous for her to do so, she constructed herself as superior to the black Africans, as she aligned herself with western identity by othering black Africans. Yet, when attempting to construct herself as a hero undertaking the responsibility of 'saving' Africa from demeaning stereotypes of Africa, she chose white people as her others. Robeson was not alone in othering some Africans in parts of her text.

Throughout this thesis, I demonstrate how during the colonial era authors—including these hyphenated African travel writers themselves - often created 'others' who were inferior to Europeans. The construction of the self that slips into constructing the other as an antithesis is central to the travel texts of colonial to the early postcolonial period by both: black and white, African and European writers. Indeed, the writers in this thesis tried to establish superior-inferior binaries in their desire to validate their own self as relevant, moral and positive, thereby claiming an identity closer to equivalent in status to the powerful. While seeking this validation, they sometimes reinforced dominant cultural stereotypes. Interestingly, hyphenated

Africans - considered as 'other' by Europeans— who had moved into positions of power, in some cases slipped into the politics of constructing moral and sometimes heroic 'selves' over a less privileged 'other'.

Building on the literary debates about unravelling travel writing from its Western chains and to open up a space for the examination of non-Western forms of journey literature, this thesis examined the legacy of African journey writing traditions. The thesis has used writers and travellers from varied social and political backgrounds to demonstrate that the history of African travel writing needs to consider the complexity of the term 'African' itself. It was not possible to consider other hyphenated Africans, such as African Indians and African Sikhs, in this study; nonetheless their experience of travel in Africa also forms a rich source that needs attention. African travel writing is as vast and complex as the term 'African' and 'travel writing'; to fully appreciate this legacy the non-Western forms, reasons and modes of travelling and writing need to be considered. African travel writing, with its varied typography of travel and forms of writing, calls for the expansion of the 'exclusivist' definition of the genre. This thesis demonstrates that African travel writers of the colonial period were not producing works that can be referred to as belated or mimicry in any sense; rather they were engaged in the process of constructing self and representing others through the trope of sameness and difference, which was central to the genre at that time. The most self-centred work, that is of Tippu Tip (chapter 2) – in which the author only seems interested in narrating his various successes –reflects the sameness and otherness central to travel writing genre. This thesis places travel writing produced by the marginalised firmly in the genre. That is not to undermine the individuality of the sub-genre; rather,

to acknowledge the place of African travel writing in the travel writing genre. During this period, other European and non-European travel writers were engaged in the process of Othering, which was central to the construction of Western hegemony. Through their texts, they further asserted their agency, superiority and voice. The travel writers discussed in this thesis were similarly engaged in this process; they constructed 'others' against which they could present themselves in a favourable light. By moving away from exclusively approaching travel writing in terms of colonial legacies, the thesis supports the decolonisation of academia.

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