

## Travelling Objects



# Travelling Objects: Modernity and Materiality in British Colonial Travel Literature about Africa

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*In loving memory of my grandfather,  
Olle Elisson*



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Hats off!

## **PART I: INTRODUCTION**



# **Modernity and the world of objects**

## **Colonial Travel Literature, Objects and Modernity**

Visiting the town of Kano, Constance Larymore, a British lady traveller and wife of a colonial judge stationed in Nigeria at the turn of the nineteenth century, is overwhelmed by the dazzle and exotic splendour of a large party accompanying the local emir on his evening ride. The sound of drums and the smell of burnt gunpowder drift towards her as the procession passes through the town gates. Larymore is mesmerised by the sight of colourful dresses, snowy-white turbans, enormous trumpets, ancient firearms and curiously shaped stirrups, dripping with horses' blood (79-80). In the passage describing this scene, Larymore's experience is translated into a kind of journey in time, from the now-and-here from which the narrating voice of her text speaks, to an exotic and pre-modern then-and-there. The "curious spectacle" before her seems to her to be "widely apart from the world of to-day" (80). The sight of exotic objects moves her momentarily from a present riddled with logistical difficulties and wifely duties into a past characterised as much by grandeur as by primitive brutality. When the sun is almost below the horizon, and the last of the emir's party disappear into the gloom, Larymore is "suddenly jerked back into civilization and modernity," to the dusty village street where her native language is spoken and English fox-terriers run about (81).

The Romantic trope of travellers' psychological removal from the now-and-here to a distant then-and-there, from the familiar to realms of exotic otherness, is an established trope in British nineteenth century travel writing. However, Larymore's removal from the modern present is not triggered by the conventional natural scene celebrated in Romantic travel

literature, but by the sight of the clothes, musical instruments and weapons that are carried by the emir's retinue. And yet, as will be shown in the following chapters, the fact that Larymore associates certain objects with the past and other objects with the present makes her far from unique among writers of colonial travel literature. This book will show how objects described in a selection of colonial travel narratives about Africa become a means of constructing and distinguishing the modern present of the metropolis from the present that travellers, like Larymore, experience in the colonial periphery. Before formulating a more elaborate thesis statement, however, it is necessary to briefly consider the context in which these texts were produced.

The fact that the sight of exotic objects makes Larymore momentarily drift away to a distant past may partly be explained through the meaning-making practices surrounding material objects in Larymore's contemporary metropolitan culture. British anthropology became increasingly institutionalised towards the end of the nineteenth century and the public gained access to anthropological collections through museum exhibitions (Stocking *Victorian Anthropology* 263-265). Whereas artefacts had previously often been included in natural history museum collections, they were now increasingly incorporated into anthropological collections (273). In palace-like buildings like the British Museum in London and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, carefully selected objects were organised and displayed so as to communicate to the visitor a sense of otherness and temporal distance. Such institutions enjoyed an increasingly central position in metropolitan public life in the late Victorian period, which coincided with the period in which conquest of African colonies was carried out.<sup>1</sup> During the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, British museums and exhibitions drew large crowds of both working and middle class visitors (Coombes 123-124). The rise of museums and exhibitions that presented colonial and pre-modern cultures to the British urban population can be seen as a result of developments in anthropology, which, in turn, must be seen as a result of developments within European colonialism (Coombes 6, Asad 133, Stocking "Essays on Museums and Material Culture" 5).

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (eds), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

Innumerable objects were shipped from different geographical locations in the British Empire to the colonial centre, where what was seen as the objects' anachronistic or grotesque features were presented as characteristic of the cultural production of colonised societies. Masks and spears, so-called totems and fetishes, exotic and primitive art were used as material signifiers in the dissemination of narratives about cultures beyond the horizon of the modern industrial city. In the light of the meaning-making practices used in museums, travel writers' association of certain objects with the primitive and exotically archaic thus had a parallel in the curatorial emphasis on the connection between certain objects and the notion of pre-modern cultures.

At the same time as ethnographical rhetoric based on the exhibiting of objects was formed, the colonial expansion of European economic and cultural spheres of influence into the African continent also entailed a reverse migration of material objects. The key to understanding the links between objects and constructions of time in the texts that will be studied here is the fact that such exotic objects as the ones that Larymore describes forms a stark contrast to the abundance of things available to her countrymen in London and Manchester. These manufactured objects were not confined to the domestic markets, however, but followed the logistical and economic currents of the European empires. From the days of the triangular Atlantic slave trade, Africa was used as an external market onto which the surplus production of metropolitan industry could be deposited. Therefore, while certain kinds of objects were bought or stolen in different African regions and transported to European metropolitan areas, goods that were manufactured in factories in cities like Manchester or in overseas colonies travelled in the opposite direction. In the European and fundamentally colonial perspective that is adopted in the travel accounts that will be analysed in later chapters, this bidirectional movement assumes the form of a flow of things between two spheres, of which one is conceived as modern and the other pre-modern. With this bidirectional flow of objects as a basis of discussion, the initial broad claims that were made above can be developed in more detail.

The overarching thesis in this book is that objects are instrumental in the separation of a modern now-and-here from a pre-modern then-and-

there.<sup>2</sup> While the function of the object in the selected travel accounts must be studied in relation to the bidirectional flow of objects described above, the roles of objects in these texts are also an effect of the way in which the story about the journey is narrated in this specific genre. The material object becomes a means with which the modern here-and-now and the pre-modern then-and-there are constructed as separate in geographical and ethnographical writing, and in such political discussions as travel writers' propagation of trade between Europe and Africa. A final context in which the object attains this instrumentality is stories about how literature, by means of its material manifestation in the form of a book, enters into the African periphery and once there becomes a sign of the arrival of modernity. Narratives about a modern now-and-here and a distant pre-modern then-and-there in which objects are involved in complex ways tend not to be stable, however. The object, like other phenomena that take on certain ideologically charged meanings and functions in colonial literature, is also surrounded by the ambivalence that characterises colonial discourse. While taking on certain ideologically charged symbolic values in certain environments, they also tend to be unstable in their symbolic functions and appear where they are not expected to appear. Therefore, the projection of meaning onto objects, and their function in narratives about temporal difference between modernity and pre-modernity, as a rule become destabilised precisely because the object is always also a dead, mute thing.

## Introduction to Travel Accounts

As this book focuses on British travel literature about Africa, it has more to do with British colonial travel literature than with Africa or actual African regions, histories and linguistic or national communities. The body of literature that is discussed here is deeply rooted in the British colonial project of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Some of the texts helped

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<sup>2</sup> The term pre-modernity does not refer to an actual period or condition in this book, but refers to that which contrasts to the idea of the modern metropolitan present. That is, it can be seen as a word for modernity's other - that which is excluded from modernity. The prefix *pre* is not only meant to signal the idea that something is not modern, but the idea that this non-modernity, through the efforts of Europeans, will eventually become modern. This idea is of course inherently colonial because *modern* is almost always used to refer to a condition in European imperial states and *pre-modern* in colonised or soon to be colonised regions in Africa and elsewhere.

pave the way for the colonial project by mapping regions that were soon to be colonised and by speculating about where and how profits could be made through the exploitation of natural resources. Others may be read as first-hand accounts about the progress of the colonial project and directed to certain segments of the general public in the metropolitan centre.

The texts that will be studied here range from John Hanning Speke's 1863 *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* to Constance Larymore's *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria*, which was published in 1908. Other texts that will be analysed are Verney Lovett Cameron's *Across Africa* (1877),<sup>3</sup> Henry Morton Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878), Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa: Congo Francais, Corisco and Cameroons* (1897), Ewart Grogan's (and Arthur "Harry" Sharp's) *From the Cape to Cairo: The First Traverse of Africa from South to North* (1900) and Mary Hall's *A Woman's Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907).<sup>4</sup> Even though these texts will be considered together, as examples of British travel literature about Africa in a period of intensified colonisation, it is important to observe the diversity of the present selection of texts. This selection spans over more than four decades, and describes journeys in eastern as well as western Africa. The selection includes texts that were written by male as well as female authors with different social backgrounds and authorial ambitions. However, these writers will not be studied biographically, other than in the subsequent context chapter, nor will their literary merits be evaluated. Kingsley, Stanley, Speke, Cameron and to some extent also Grogan have been closely studied by numerous biographers and academics, while Hall and Larymore have received less attention.<sup>5</sup>

The reason that John Speke's and Constance Larymore's texts have been mentioned separately is not only because their respective dates of publication mark the two extremes of the time span of the selection of texts. It is also because they represent two different kinds of travellers, and while

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<sup>3</sup> An early American version of *Across Africa* will be used in the analysis, which means that quotations from this book are in American English (see Works Cited).

<sup>4</sup> Because of its long title, John Hanning Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* will be referred to as the *Journal* where appropriate. Likewise, Hall's text will at times be referred to as *A Woman's Trek*.

<sup>5</sup> None of the writers are unknown in the field of travel writing studies, while some are widely known among the general public. Readers who take a biographical interest in any of the travel writers discussed here are advised to consult the literature that is referenced in the more detailed presentation of the travel writers in the next chapter. The texts will be analysed through close reading of narrative structures, tropes and themes, rather than through biographical information about their authors.

Speke's travel account belongs to the classics of the genre, Larymore's does not. They travelled through Africa at different stages of the European colonisation of Africa, and this causes their texts to differ slightly in terms of theme and focus. The official reason why Speke, like Cameron and Stanley, travelled in East Africa was to explore and map its geography. His main object of attention was Lake Victoria Nyanza, which he (rightly) believed was the source of the White Nile. His account of these travels was ostensibly part of an unresolved geographical debate about what constituted the source of the White Nile and therefore stands in contrast to Larymore's travel account. Larymore's *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* was written in the late stages of the so-called Scramble for Africa, when no European nation with imperial ambitions was unfamiliar with the geography of the African continent. In contrast to Speke's *Journal*, Larymore's *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* as well as Kingsley's, Grogan's and Hall's travel accounts, may be read as literary inventories of colonised regions. They typically describe the means to economic growth that can be found in certain regions, such as natural resources, labour and already existing or potential markets for the surplus production of British industry. They describe what may be found and observed in particular colonised regions – such as groups of people, and the infrastructures, administrations and topographies of colonies as well as specifically enjoyable natural scenes.<sup>6</sup>

Speke's and Larymore's texts may also be assigned to different chronological and stylistic categories of travel literature. Helen Carr suggests that travel writing between the 1880s and 1940s can be divided into three stages. Two of them are relevant here. Travel literature written between 1880 and 1900 – including the texts by Speke, Cameron and Stanley – is often “realist” and triumphant (75). Carr points out that *realism* in this case is not “synonymous with reliable” (75), and that “even the most jingoist of travellers' tales could not always gloss over the conflicts at the heart of the white civilising mission” (75). However, even though detailed descriptions and prose styles inspired by scientific prose could not hide the conflicts and ambivalence of colonial literature, travel accounts written in the latter half of the nineteenth century are commonly characterised by detailed description, ethnographical portraits of groups of people and notations on geographical and meteorological matters. The next stage that is of relevance in this book

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<sup>6</sup> As will be discussed in the following chapter, Kingsley, Grogan, Hall and Larymore do occasionally adopt a rhetoric that is most readily associated with the literature of exploration.

begins around the year 1900 and continues up until the outbreak of the First World War. Realist writing was not abandoned entirely during this period, but “much travel writing [became] less didactic [and] more subjective” (75). This move from the scientific and ethnographical style of the previous stage of travel writing does not mean that colonial travel literature became less conflicted or less riddled with ambiguity. In the earlier texts ambiguities and conflicts often arise from attempts to argue for and legitimise British intervention in certain regions which are not yet colonised. The latter texts, however, often involve conflicting attitudes towards colonial politics and projects that are described and form conflicting accounts about different degrees of success in the civilising mission.<sup>7</sup>

Speke and Larymore travelled not only in different decades, but also in different regions of the African continent. As has been mentioned, Speke explored the lake systems of eastern Africa and Larymore travelled in Nigeria. Cameron and Stanley also travelled in eastern Africa, but crossed the continent and described the interior as well as parts of the region that was to become King Leopold’s Congo. Mary Kingsley travelled in what is today the Gabonese Republic, the Republic of Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while Ewart Grogan and Mary Hall travelled in the Cape Colony and from Portuguese East Africa in the south to Cairo in the north (Blake 20).<sup>8</sup> Grogan’s and Hall’s texts focus mainly on Sub-Saharan Africa, as all these texts do, but they also describe Africa north of the Sahara.

Mary Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa* and the books written by the Nile and lake explorers, especially Cameron and Stanley, are given more attention than the other texts in the following chapters. One reason for this is their relatively “literary” style of prose; that is, they present a diversity of perspectives, topics, and narrative styles and belong to the most topical travel accounts about Africa from the time in which they were written. Consequently, they will function as pivotal examples, while the other texts will be used to support arguments that are built up around these main texts and to show that tendencies in the more central travel accounts also exist in those that are and were less widely read. Kingsley’s and the Nile explorers’

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<sup>7</sup> The last of Carr’s stages begins after the First World War (since the war made travel virtually impossible) and continues through the interwar years up until the Second World War and is characterised by the fact that the authors of travel accounts were often better known for their poetry or fiction (75).

<sup>8</sup> See the next chapter for a discussion about the fact that the titles of these two writers’ books imply that they travelled from the Cape Colony to Cairo, even though they actually started from Portuguese East Africa.

books are also around twice as long as Grogan's, Hall's and Larymore's, and are therefore a richer material to work with. As the bibliographical perspectives of the texts are only touched upon briefly in the analysis, there is little need to maintain a symmetrical relation between them regarding the analytical attention that they are given. While relevant differences between the texts will be commented on, the primary sources will be analysed as a group of text that are representative of the genre, because the analysis aims to detect similarities and repetitions among the texts.

### *Travellers and Narrators*

In the following analysis chapters, the subject, which in travel writing studies is usually treated as a biographical historical person, is dealt with as two different narratological functions. This approach allows for certain crucial distinctions to be made between the experiencing, travelling subject and the narrating subject in the close reading of the texts. The travelling subject, which is treated in the following analysis as a literary and social construction, is the main subject in the text. The travelling subject's narratological function in the narrative is continually emphasised through references to sensuous experiences and bodily presence, to weariness and the body's exposure to imminent danger and pain.

The other level is that of the narrator, which like the travelling subject is a textual function and a literary construction. The narrator is the "speaking" subject, who articulates ethnological and geographical knowledge. While the traveller moves through and experiences different environments, the narrator is the voice that describes these movements and experiences as if they happened in another time and in another place. Therefore, in the following analysis, Mary Kingsley, for example, will be referred to as *Kingsley-the-traveller* or *Kingsley-the-narrator* depending on the quality in which she is discussed. In contexts where the narratological specifics are not central, however, she will be referred to simply by her name.

As will be demonstrated in the analysis chapters, the traveller and narrator have different functions not only on a narratological level, but ultimately also in the construction of separate time-spaces in which the traveller and the narrator have different roles and positions. Suffice it to say here that the traveller and narrator belong to two levels or spaces that may be understood in structural terms: these two levels correspond roughly to the

concepts of *story* and *discourse* (which in this specifically narratological sense is not to be mistaken for discourse in the sense outlined below) that are the basic elements of narrative in structuralist understandings of narrative (Chatman 19). Seymour Chatman defines story as “the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting)” and discourse as “the expression, the means by which the content is communicated” (19). Consequently, “the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse is the *how*.” The story then, the sequence of happenings, corresponds to the traveller’s journey, while the discourse, the way in which this story is delivered to the reader, corresponds to the narrator’s narrative.

### **Modernity in the Colonial Context**

As the passage from Larymore’s *A Resident’s Wife in Nigeria* illustrated, the travelling subject’s journey into the colonial periphery in late Victorian travel literature is not only a process of displacement in space, but also a process of displacement in time. To be removed from the steam driven commotion of the metropolis is to be removed from the metropolitan present. As travellers make their way into unchartered African regions, or visit upriver villages in West Africa, they are described as entering a more or less remote past. The present from which the travelling subject is removed when he or she enters the periphery and the here-and-now from which the otherness of Africa is separated, will be referred to as modernity. Modernity is to be understood as a term for how the present (the “now”) in Great Britain and certain other places in what is today normally called the West or the North (the “here”) is conceived as separate from the present elsewhere.

Even though the term modernity refers to how the present of the metropolis is conceived in the texts, it often coincides with how modernity is understood in academic theory and literature. In academic literature, definitions of modernity tend to be organised as lists of economic, cultural and social phenomena that together either define a historical period in the West or a condition that is understood as modern. In this perspective, in which modernity is defined through characteristics that are loosely interconnected, modernity is the sum total of specific economic, political, psychological, technological and juridical phenomena that serve to form subjectivity and condition subjects’ relations to the communities of which

they are formally members. Together, these characteristics are commonly understood in theory about modernity as bringing about a more or less sharp break from what came before, from pre-modernity.

However, the modernity that is indirectly discussed in the travel texts is not as elaborately defined as it normally is in academic attempts to describe processes that are associated with the advent of modernity. However, the notion of the metropolitan present can be compared to more academic definitions of the modern condition or period. The particular characteristics and the amount of them that scholars include in such lists differ, of course, depending on how modernity is discussed, why it is discussed and in what context. Consequently, the following list is to be seen as a list of phenomena that are relevant for the construction of modernity in the historical and literary contexts that are discussed in this book. Literature about colonial Great Britain tends to include the following relevant elements associated with the concept of modernity: an economy largely based on industrial, mechanised production, but also on colonial trade and European exploitation of resources in the colonial periphery; the production of more or less technologically sophisticated commodities; science based on empiricism and rationalism; that material objects and labour are defined as commodities; the existence and wide use of a mechanised and rationally planned infrastructure.<sup>9</sup>

Most of these characteristics are obviously material, which is one reason why the material object is central to the understanding of the metropolitan present in the late nineteenth century. Most of the characteristics listed above have to do with production, economy and infrastructure, but modernity also tends to be understood as bringing about a shift (in relation to the past and to places and communities that are understood as pre-modern) in subject-formation. In Enlightenment philosophy, the modern male subject (again in relation to the pre-modern subject) was seen as rational and capable of logical thinking (See for example Mudimbe 72), whereas others were not. Objects come into discussions about this non-material side of modernity too. In their form as commodities, objects are adopted in descriptions of African peoples' "irrational" desire for what is described as trinkets, their presumed incapacity for economic

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<sup>9</sup> This is a selection from a list of characteristics that is presented in the "General comments" in Malcolm Waters (ed.), *Modernity*, vol 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

calculation as well as to estimate value (this will be discussed in detail in chapter three, “Objects in Trade,” in part two).

Industrialism, rationality and reason, fast and mechanised modes of transport and capital accumulation are not only associated with the advent of commodity capitalism and the European Enlightenment and thereby the colonial metropolis, but also typically associated with hegemonic constructions of masculinity and with certain social classes (Felski 4). However, Rita Felski points out in *The Gender of Modernity* that modernity also involves aspects that are traditionally associated with femininity and to some degree with non-West Europeans and the metropolitan working class (4). This point is obviously crucial, but it requires that modernity is discussed as a condition or place-specific time period that can be more or less accurately described rather than an ideological construct. It is an observation about the “nature” of modernity, and thus suggests that modernity is something that can have a so-called nature. It is therefore necessary to discuss modernity, temporarily and for a specific strategic purpose, as a condition or a period in Western history. To see it, briefly, as a condition that exists objectively makes it possible to consider Felski’s claim that modernity has a side that is not as instrumental and rational as that which is most often ascribed positive connotations.

What is important for the following analysis and illustrative for the present discussion of the concept of modernity is that Felski points out that Adorno and Horkheimer attribute this two-sided nature of modernity to “the irrationality and barbarism of a modern capitalist society driven by the dual imperatives of instrumental reason and commodity fetishism” (5). The discussion of the elusive and ideologically charged concept of modernity is turned towards the more concrete discussion of commodity capitalism. Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that the irrational side of capitalist modernity shows itself particularly in contexts in which the material object, in its commodity form, is central. To them the irrational, or rather non-rational, side of modernity is associated with desire and less than rational and controlled behaviours produced by economic forces. The libidinal and semi-erotic rhetoric of advertising, which is aimed at enhancing consumption, is one example of the irrationality that is an integral element in capitalist society. If industrial capitalism is equated with modernity, as it often is in the texts concerned here, this underlying non-rationality must be seen as characteristic of metropolitan modernity. What Felski describes as a

non-rational side of modernity will be discussed in later chapters, but will not be seen as a forgotten or repressed side of something that exists objectively, regardless of how it is conceived and understood. The inherently dual structure of conceptualisations of modernity that Felski describes will rather be seen as an example of the ambivalence in the conception of the metropolitan present. The ambivalence in texts such as the present travel accounts will be discussed in some detail in the section about colonial discourse below.

However, because of the ambiguity of the word modernity, and especially its different applications in various fields of research (Felski 12), it is necessary to first discuss in some detail the ways in which this concept of modernity is intended to be used in this book. In the following chapters, modernity primarily refers to an ideologically constructed idea of a condition that defines the metropolitan centre and that distinguishes it from the colonial world. This is not to be understood as a claim that these characteristics either actually do define places like Great Britain of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or that they refer to inherently European phenomena and were therefore absent in colonial Africa. These characteristics are *associated* with Great Britain, as opposed to Africa, in significant examples of colonial travel literature as well as in the public debate during the period in question. In other words, modernity will not primarily be used analytically; that is, modernity will not be used to answer questions like “is context X modern, given that modernity is defined as Y?,” but to describe certain conceptions that are prevalent in the travel accounts and instrumental in the construction of a metropolitan present that is distinguished from the pre-modernity of the African periphery.

The characteristics listed above are all in some way involved in the ethnographical accounts of societies and communities in the texts that will be discussed in this book. As will be shown, technology and the commodity form of things form points where difference between the present of the colonial centre is distinguished from that of the periphery. Likewise, the irrationality and superstition ascribed to groups of people in Africa are defined and contrasted against the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and reason, on which ethnography and exploration literature ostensibly are based. Whereas the modern subject, epitomised by the learned British middle class gentleman, is typically described as acting rationally and according to his own interests, the idea of the colonial subject as a child that

is in need of discipline is an established trope in colonial literature (JanMohamed 68, Bhabra 23, Ashcroft et al. 184-202). This “child” theme runs through this kind of literature and plays a significant role in colonial discourse because it is part of covert or overt arguments for the colonisation of such societies by an external government that is destined to bring colonised populations into modernity (or adulthood, as the child-metaphor suggests).

### *Modernity and Exclusion*

One interpretation of the word *modernity* is that it refers to a time period that is preceded by a pre-modern era. However, apart from naming periods in time and history, modernity must also be understood as an essentially spatial concept because it does not name a universal time period, but something that separates some places, such as Europe, from other places, such as colonial Africa and India. This means that the idea of modernity excludes certain areas and certain communities. It also denotes a more or less sharp break with the metropolitan centre's pre-modern past. For this reason, Felski refers to modernity in terms of “a process of separation” (13). In the analysis of the primary literature, the idea of a modern now-and-here will be understood as entailing two kinds of separation, which are often described in the texts as one and the same: one is the separation of the metropolitan society (now) and its past (then); for example, late Victorian London's separation from London before the Great Fire in 1666. The other is the separation of metropolitan society (here) and its contemporary but pre-modern periphery (there).

While the concept of modernity essentially entails the notion of a sharp break with the past, it is difficult to say when in (Western) history modernity starts and where it ends, or will end. Scholars and thinkers in different academic fields have stipulated different dates for this historic moment while others consider it to be unanswerable (Felski 12). This debate is a further example of how modernity is understood as an actual period or condition, rather than a notion or concept that has been constructed for certain purposes and from a certain perspective. However, the concept of modernity is relevant in this case because whenever and wherever it has been used, it has been used to distinguish a here-and-now from a then-and-there.

In his seminal lecture on “Modernity’s Consciousness of Time and its Need for Self Assurance,” Jürgen Habermas, one of the most influential theorists of modernity, pointed out that for Friedrich Hegel and his contemporaries there were three monumental events around the year 1500 that constituted the “epochal threshold” between the Middle Ages and what was conceived as “the modern age”; namely, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the discovery of the Americas (qtd. in Ashcroft et al. 130). However, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out that difference and exclusion were already semantically implied in the Latin word *modernus*, from which the words *modern* and *modernity* derive. The authors state that *modernus* “was used to distinguish an officially Christian present from a Roman, pagan past” and that it was used in medieval Europe to distinguish “the contemporary from the ‘ancient’ past” (130). Therefore, regardless of when this break is thought to have occurred, it is an important element in the idea of modernity itself.

Again, Constance Larymore’s removal from modernity and entrance into pre- or non-modernity in the town of Kano serves as an illustrative example. Having drifted away in her mind to a place and time “widely apart from the world of to-day,” she is “suddenly jerked back into civilization and modernity” (80, 81). Modernity here contrasts to a distant past. This past, however, is not only a past in a historical sense, but an anachronistic time that is simultaneous with, but separate from, the present in which Larymore normally exists. In the passage that describes this moment of transition between modernity and pre-modernity, time assumes the status of a phenomenon that is experienced psychologically by the subject in interaction with her material environment. The Nigerian periphery, modernised through British colonial presence but outside of modernity proper, is in Larymore’s text a space where the modern exists side by side with the pre-modern.

Consequently, modernity distinguishes itself not only from a past in terms of shifts in history or time, but also differentiates itself from a spatiotemporal outside. In *Rethinking Modernity*, Gurminder K. Bhambra points to the centrality of the notions of difference and historical rupture in mainstream theories about modernity. According to Bhambra, the concept of modernity “can be seen as resting on a basic distinction between ‘the West’ and ‘traditional’ and ‘pre-modern’ societies” (3), and more often than not theory about modernity “rests on two fundamental assumptions: *rupture* and *difference* — a temporal rupture that distinguishes a traditional,

agrarian past from the modern, industrial present; and a fundamental difference that distinguishes Europe from the rest of the world” (1). This claim could be extended from *theory* about modernity, which implies that modernity is associated with rupture and difference on a strictly academic level, to *discourse* about it. Discourse about what is generally referred to as modernity includes such imagination about the modern world as is brought to the surface in contexts like ethnological museums, novels, poems and, of course, travel texts.

Likewise, in a passage where modernity is understood both as an actual historical period and as a theoretical concept, Ashcroft et al. write:

The emergence of modernity is co-terminous with the emergence of Euro-centrism and the European dominance of the world effected through imperial expansion. In other words, modernity emerged at about the same time that European nations began to conceive of their own dominant relationship to a non-European world and began to spread their rule through exploration, cartography and colonization. Europe constructed itself as ‘modern’ and constructed the non-European as ‘traditional’, ‘static’, ‘prehistorical’. (131)

According to the authors, modernity or Europe’s self-conceived notion of itself as modern was (and is) dependent on an outside in relation to which it could, paradoxically, imagine itself as separate and self-contained. This demonstrates how British industrial modernity is constructed as self-contained only by assuming, and therefore requiring, an exterior other.

If industrial capitalism is seen as a defining feature of what is here called modernity, then modernity excludes its others also in an economic sense. In *Modernity and its Futures*, Stuart Hall, David Held and Gregor McLennan write that in the nineteenth century “modernity became identified with industrialism and the sweeping social, economic and cultural changes associated with it” (2). They also write that, on an economic level, steps were taken towards the establishment of a global capitalist system, while society at large moved towards secularisation (2). Even though it is pointed out that no single “‘master process’” produced these changes, which together characterise post-Enlightenment modernity, industrial capitalism seems to form a core aspect of this process (2). This economic system, whether thought of as a constitutive element of modernity or not,

undoubtedly facilitated the concentration of wealth on a world scale, beginning with the slave trade and continuing with colonial trade and the exploitation of African natural resources after the British slave trade was abolished. What was celebrated as the wonder of British industrialism, then, was intimately interlinked not only with the considerable domestic poverty that it created among the metropolitan working class, but also with the outside of that modernity that Hall et al. claim it was identified with, and without which the economic systems of imperialism could not be created in the first place.

## **Methodology of reading objects and texts**

The fact that objects were used in the dissemination of images of Sub-Saharan Africa in the metropolis will be used as the basis for a reading strategy in this book. Material objects that appear in travel narratives will be studied for their ability as well as functions in accounts about the African other, in differentiating groups of people from each other and in the organisation of the basic narrative about the traveller's journey. Even though it would be ill advised to imply that these texts present coherent and consciously organised narratives about objects, it is motivated to suggest that there is a metaphorical correlation between travel literature and the ethnographical museum. The identities of the traveller and people that he or she meets are represented partly through descriptions of objects that they possess or use. In this sense, the texts use a similar symbolic economy as museum collections, which in the second half of the nineteenth century were often organised in typological developmental terms to present to the visitor a narrative about European civilisation's technological superiority over its pre-modern periphery and about racial and cultural otherness (Stocking 264, Coombes 160).

As objects in museum exhibitions, the meanings or functions of objects in travel literature is not static. The way in which objects are interpreted changes depending on the cultural, historical or geographical context in which they appear. When the object is bought and sold it is a commodity and is therefore perceived as having the attributes of this form, such as specific kinds of value. These values are usually not projected onto objects that are used in religious practices, such as Bibles and so-called

fetishes, but such objects are nevertheless occasionally taken out of their ritual contexts and placed on the market, which makes them take on attributes associated with the commodity. Another example of the relational nature of the object in travel literature is how the object's symbolic status changes depending on the environment. A certain garment or mechanical gadget may be regarded as anachronistic in, say, Oxford Street, but may become a metonymy for modernity itself as soon as it enters a certain colonial setting, such as a rural village or a remote part of the interior of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Therefore, the ways in which objects are imbued with meaning and functions must be seen as an on-going process. To study objects in text from one perspective only, or according to one theoretical understanding of the diverse world of things would be to implicitly suggest that an object exists only in one specific form regardless of cultural, spatial or temporal context. This, however, is not the case. In *Collecting Colonialism*, Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles point out the fact that the "apparent singularity" of museum objects is misleading, and write that objects are "always in a state of becoming" and their meaning changes in relation to their cultural surroundings (4). What is a tool in one context can become a decoration or a souvenir when brought into a different environment and hung on a wall or put in a glass case. Gosden and Knowles's claim that objects are always in a state of becoming can be used in (at least) two different, but related ways. The most obvious one is to point out the fact that because travel writing is characterised by negotiations of cultural difference and by colonial ambivalence, objects' functions, meanings and values tend to change. Cheap, trivial trinkets become wonderful curiosities and utensils become anthropological specimens as they enter new spaces or are considered and described from different perspectives. The other way of using Gosden and Knowles's observation is to point out the theoretical implications of the fact that objects undergo changes in travel narratives. If objects mentioned in travel accounts are undergoing a continual process of becoming, they cannot be discussed exclusively in terms of them being commodities, anthropological material, art or scientific instruments. Objects must instead be regarded in relation to the practices and environments that they are defined by.

This relation between object and environment is an integral part of how the term object is understood in this book. The term *object* refers to a

material artefact or a thing that has been picked up by someone and attributed with a function. This means that the term *object* does not encompass all the *things* in the world, which, in contrast to objects, by definition stand outside of the instrumental and epistemological subject – object relation (Brown 5).<sup>10</sup> A wild flower is a thing as long as it is left alone on the hillside or in the meadow, but becomes an object when it is picked and given to a lover or used to decorate a dinner table. In contrast to things, objects are “things thrown in the way of [an] observer or actor,” as museum and anthropology historian George W. Stocking writes in the foreword to *Objects and Others* (4). The object stands in relation to one or several subjects, and in extension to consciousness. It is by definition relational, which distinguishes it from the thing, which stands on its own, self-contained, outside any social relations and cultural or economic practices. The object is in other words a thing with, as Arjun Appadurai suggests, a “social life” (see Appadurai): it plays one or several roles in the lives of people.

While a more precise definition of the object, grounded in a specific theoretical tradition is avoided at this point, the materiality of the object demands that what the term *object* is used to refer to is limited to some extent in terms of physical attributes. The plurality in the world of things demands that a rough limitation of the kind of things that are discussed in the following chapters is necessary. For example, such objects as architectural structures and vehicles, which are typically included in the term “material culture,” will not be discussed in terms of objects. The following meaning of the term *object* summarises the previous discussion of the term object and provides a working definition that will be used in the following chapters: an object is a material artefact or an item that has been given a function or role in everyday life. It is portable, in contrast to such man-made, functional structures as buildings and roads, and has a solid and more or less durable structure.

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<sup>10</sup> See chapter three for a more detailed discussion about the subject-object relation, and see Bill Brown’s “Thing Theory” (2001) for an introduction to the relation between subjects and objects and the difference between objects and things.

### *Objects and Difference*

Difference is relevant here as a theoretical concept that refers to the way in which one category (Europe, modernity, certain objects) is distinguished from another (Africa, pre/non-modernity, certain other objects). This concept will be used to analyse the construction of a metropolitan now-and-here and an African then-and-there.

Difference is one of the main theoretical concepts in this book, simply because basic narrative structures cannot be understood without this concept. For example, travel narratives would be little more than stories about toilsome marches and sore feet if it were not for the comparative difference that distinguishes one place or community from another. As the travelling subject travels further away from his or her point of departure, subtle climatic or cultural differences are written into the text. Arriving in a strange village, the traveller notices that people wear slightly different clothes than in the neighbouring village, or stepping off a train, he or she observes how the landscape is different from where the journey started. Difference may be expressed in historical, material, racial, cultural or geographical terms, but it is an essential element in narratives about travel.

The concept of difference can be illustrated through linguistic theory from the formative years of structural linguistics and through its defining text, Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*.<sup>11</sup> According to Saussure, language is based on differences between a multitude of elements. It is their relational difference to each other that gives linguistic units such as phonemes and lexemes their function and meaning in ordinary conversation. According to structural linguistics, the difference between /h/ and /k/ in spoken English is what enables these sounds to distinguish words like *hat* and *cat* from each other, which in turn allows these words to refer to different concepts. Therefore, according to this linguistic theory, a word is assigned a meaning at the same time as it is distinguished from all the other words in the vocabulary of a language.

This idea has been used to explain imagined structural relationships between such concepts as masculinity/femininity and racial categories. In contrast to the theory of structural difference in language, much theoretical engagements with such categories as gender or ethnicity see difference as

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<sup>11</sup> *Cours de linguistique générale* [*Course in General Linguistics*] was published in 1916 and is based on students' notes taken at lectures given by Saussure at the University of Geneva, where he served as professor between 1901 and 1911 (Culler 9).

exceedingly problematic because of the political meaning that tends to be assigned to perceived differences.<sup>12</sup> To an imagination in which racial categories exist and have political significance or meaning, the “white race” (for example) is given meaning at the same time as it is distinguished from “coloured races”. Like words, different races can hardly be assigned with meaning before they are distinguished from each other. Racial superiority, for example, must be imagined as one or several races’ superiority in relation to one or several races that are imagined to be inferior. Likewise, to a European imagination, to be European requires that the European is not African, Asian, South or North American or Oceanian. Colonial travel writing’s close connections with the colonial project make colonial travel accounts a relevant and important empirical material for studying the implications of the narratological function of difference, as well as specific expressions of difference in colonial texts.

The arbitrariness of signifying systems is another important theoretical idea that has relevance for the understanding of the concept of difference and that also stems from Saussure and structural linguistics. This includes the signifying systems of colonial literature and discourse, which attach certain specific meanings to such things as skin-colour and, as will be shown, material objects. Saussure observed that language is arbitrary, and argued that signifiers (or words) and what they signify are not linked to each other according to a predetermined essence. According to this generally accepted theory, any sound can be linked to any concept and any concept can be linked to any conventionally accepted sign. This arbitrariness extends also to the concepts in themselves. This theory suggests that it is not inevitable that a certain community should recognise differences in skin colour, to extend the above example, as signs with an inherent meaning. The idea that the African belongs to a world that is “widely apart” from the modern metropolitan world is indeed not an idea that necessarily arises from travellers’ experiences of other cultures (Larimore 80), but is a result of certain signifying systems and a context in which difference between European and African carries political and cultural significance.

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<sup>12</sup> Even though this is a non-trivial observation, it is equally important to acknowledge that difference is an element in all acts of interpretation, including literary analysis. Here, for example, a certain amount of cultural and historical difference is assumed to separate the present writer, on the one hand, and the authors whose texts are analysed, on the other hand.

A point of departure for the following analysis chapters is the ambiguous argument that, in Hannah Arendt's words, the "things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life and their objectivity lies in the fact that ... men [sic] ... can retrieve ... their sameness by being related to the same chair and the same table" (qtd in Bill Brown, "The Matter of Materialism" 65). The grammatical structure of this passage allows for two readings: firstly, this passage can be understood as describing the differentiating function of the object. In the travel account presented above, the relation between subject and object tends to define the subject and mark his or her difference from certain other subjects. In these texts, identity (or meaning) is formed through relations between subjects and objects — not exclusively, of course, but to a significant extent. A given subject's relations to such objects as garments, books (including the Bible), wooden idols, guns, beads, cloth or tools allow for a reconstruction of the person's religious denomination, class, gender, hobbies and affiliations. People's relation to objects also, as an element of identity, allows for the exclusion of certain individuals and groups of people from imagined communities such as Christendom, British culture, and, as will be argued throughout this thesis, the here-and-now of modernity.

However, the passage from Hannah Arendt can also be read as a comment on the capacity, existing perhaps primarily in literature, of objects to subsume difference among subjects into sameness. It can be read as meaning that whatever economic status, social and cultural background, gender and sex or colour of skin one might have, "we" all live our lives surrounded by objects that can be reduced to the same materiality. The material structure of a chair presents itself to a certain individual as it presents itself to his or her superiors as well as inferiors. If someone approaches a certain object as a commodity that is ready to be consumed, enjoyed and expended, while another person approaches it as a fetish object with magical properties, the two individual understandings of the same object are equally viable from the perspective of a disinterested observer. Needless to say, such disinterested observers are rare to find, but however simplified and utopian this idea may seem at first, it is a presupposition of the differentiating function of materiality that is explicated in the first understanding of the passage: the fact that different persons relate to the same material environment in different ways is a condition for the construction of difference that is studied in the following chapters. The

subject-object relation is not a sanctuary from the hierarchical structures that permeate other domains of the socio-cultural sphere. From a certain perspective, like that from which Larymore tells her story about her time in Nigeria, certain subject-object relations are understood as rational, appropriate or desired, while others are regarded as inappropriate, immoral and/or as having their origins in superstition. Such ideological separations of what is conveyed as different modes of a subject's relations to objects are part of other differentiations, such as the separation of modernity and pre-modernity and modern and pre-modern subjects.

### **Discourse and Colonial Discourse Analysis**

The analysis of the functions of material objects in the texts presented above will amount to a set of conclusions about the texts considered together; that is, as different texts that share common tendencies. It is therefore necessary to understand how these texts, whose internal differences have just been discussed in some detail, can be regarded as parts of larger narratives about the colonial world.

The most important common denominator that links the selected texts, apart from their strictly literary and aesthetic similarities, is that in one way or another they all discuss the British colonial project. They all describe a continent that was underway or had already been colonised by Great Britain or other European imperial powers at the time when the texts were written and published. This historical fact can be read as having an effect on how the texts deal with such ideological concepts as modernity, cultural and racial difference and commercial contact between Africans and Europeans. In other words, the travel accounts in question were not only written and published within a certain historical context, but they also share certain similarities in how this context is described. Equally important is the fact that material objects are described in similar ways and have complex but similar functions in the different travel accounts.

To assume that texts are not self-contained, closed off entities, but that they share a common ground that is not simply aesthetic or thematic requires that what makes them part of the same whole is named and described. The tracing of the similarities between the texts that will be studied in the following chapters are not to be understood as suggesting that these specific texts form a unified group because of their internal similarities,

but that they, like other texts that in one way or another describe the colonial world, are part of a *discourse* that transcends but also has a profound effect on each individual text as well as travel literature as a genre (Foucault 26).

### *Outline of the Concept of Discourse*

For the present purposes, it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of discourse. The most important reason for this is that this concept can and has been used to discuss slightly different phenomena. Therefore, an initial distinction needs to be made between discourse as a system of representational practices, and discourse as a system of representations.

A helpful analogy that can be used to illustrate the difference between these two understandings of discourse is the concept of art. This word is often used to refer to certain cultural practices that typically (but not always) result in a more or less durable product, such as a painting or sculpture. However, such products are also conventionally referred to as art. Therefore, when people praise the art scene of a certain city, they use the word *art* in the first sense of the word – art as practice. However, when people discuss the qualities of art that they have come across in a certain gallery, they refer to the products of this practice. Similarly, *discourse* is often used to refer to a system of representation, but it can also be used to refer to certain products of this system; that is, to certain examples of meaning and knowledge. Accordingly, it is equally possible to understand the term *colonial discourse* as referring to the production of meaning in colonial contexts, and as certain kinds of meaning that have been produced in such contexts.

The tendency to use the concept of discourse to refer both to the production of representations and to the representations themselves can be further illustrated by a reading of Michel Foucault's theoretical writing about discourse, which is central to discourse theory. Foucault's theories about discourse have been seen as problematic because of the fact that his use of the term *discourse* is not consistent. Sara Mills points out that Foucault himself writes that he has used the term to refer to "the general domain of all statements, sometimes to an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (qtd. in Mills 53). The first meaning of the term seems to describe the production of meaning in general, whereas the third meaning of the term

appears to refer to more particular practices through which meaning is formulated, such as travel writing. In contrast, the second sense of the term describes a definable set of utterances that share some common feature(s). Thus, the first and third meanings of the term refer to the production of meaning while the second meaning refers to a group of statements.

In this book, the concept *colonial discourse* refers to the production of meaning in the context of British colonial interventions in Africa during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Because the focus of analysis is travel literature, the reader is advised to understand “production of meaning” primarily as the production of texts, or in other words, writing. However, colonial discourse also comprises other kinds of meaning, such as museum exhibitions, laws, maps, art, scientific literature, philosophy, music, certain tropes and metaphors and so on. Furthermore, the concept of colonial discourse makes it possible to connect the present discussion and analysis of travel accounts with studies of other kinds of colonial texts and of colonial history in general. This association is the single most important reason why the concept of colonial discourse is used here.

Therefore, these travel accounts should be understood as being encompassed by colonial discourse, a term that is not to be seen as a synonym for colonial travel literature. However, to talk about a specific process of meaning production as opposed to the production of meaning in general, is, in extension, to talk about a finite, though not always identifiable, group of statements that are the product of this practice.<sup>13</sup> This perhaps explains, at least partly, why the meaning that Foucault attaches to the word slides from a regulated practice to a group of statements as pointed out above. Therefore, in this book, discourse is primary understood as a practice, and secondary as a group of “statements,” as it is formulated in the English translation of Foucault’s *Archeology of Knowledge* (*L’Archéologie du Savoir*, 1969). However, this group of statements should be conceived as an overwhelming amount of meanings, texts, images and so on, rather than the tidy list of propositions that the term conveys.

To fully understand what is meant by discourse in this book and in the passages quoted from Foucault, it is necessary to know what can constitute a “statement” and how statements relate to discourse. Foucault

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to note at this point that discourse is neither universal, nor timeless, but specific to a certain context. For example, statements about Africa are pronounced by someone, somewhere, in a certain moment and for a reason.

writes that the statement is the “elementary unit” or “atom” of discourse (90). The statement is, in other words, that which is produced by discourse (if it is understood as a “regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements”) or that which it consists of (if discourse is understood as an “individualizable group of statements”). The statement is not simply a linguistic unit such as a word, sentence or utterance —maps and drawings can also be elements of discourse (Mills 65). Foucault nevertheless compares it to sentences, propositions and speech acts (91), but takes care to point out that a statement is not synonymous with any of these concepts. He also points out that “a classificatory table of the botanical species is made up of statements,” and that a genealogical tree and the calculations of a trade balance may be statements (92-93). For the present purposes, where prose text is the primary material that will be analysed, it is not necessary to delve deeper into Foucault’s discussion of the relations between statements and other concepts. The close reading of the corpus texts in the following analysis chapters may be understood, in the light of Foucault’s examples of statements, as an analysis of atomic elements produced within colonial discourse.

The aim of this thesis is not to prove the existence of a certain discourse involving historical difference, whose atomic statements may be found in travel literature. The aim is to create a comprehensible narrative about *how* objects are used in colonial travel literature as a means to create and maintain two different spatiotemporal spheres. As Sherrill E. Grace has pointed out, Foucault’s “archaeology,” his proposed methodology for studying discursive formations, aims at arriving at a *what*, at the singling out of an object, rather than a *how* or a theory about that object (28). In connection with this, Grace also points out that many scholars who have used Foucault’s proposed theory have used it as a point of departure when attempting to understand how certain spatially and temporally specific discursive formations work. For example, Grace’s own area of interest is in the idea of the Canadian North and its functions in Canadian self-imagination (21), or, in other words, to study the *how* and *why* of the discursive formation of the Canadian north. This is evidently a project in which one (or indeed *the*) pivotal procedure is to interpret and investigate what the researcher recognises as a discourse. Grace’s project is therefore, in a sense, a broader commitment than that which is outlined in the construction of a methodology in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

*Materiality, Consciousness and Ambivalence*

To study colonial literature is also to study a historical situation that is extreme in several ways. In his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978), which is conventionally seen as the founding text of postcolonial discourse analysis (Loomba 44, Quayson 4, Pennycook 164), Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said sets out to describe “the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, military, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” (Said 3). To Said, discourse analysis is a tool that can be used to understand material processes and not only certain currents within the history of Eurocentrism.<sup>14</sup>

As is implied in the passage from *Orientalism*, the discourse of Orientalism is closely associated with material practices such as military interventions. Following Foucault, Said emphasises the conceptual implication of the transmission of meaning through texts, and writes that texts can “create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it” (94).<sup>14</sup> This passage is of specific relevance for the following chapters and for the study of colonial discourse in general for two reasons: the first point that is of crucial importance for what follows is Said’s reference to the displacement of the author-subject as the locus of authority and agency. The displacement of the idea of the author has implications for the way in which texts are dealt with in the following chapters.

The second point is that texts can create a “tradition” or discourse. Said writes that the formation of a discourse, such as Orientalist discourse, is a process that involves the production of numerous texts. These texts, which form part of the discourse, are then “responsible” for the production of further texts. Thus, if Orientalism can be seen as a certain kind of colonial discourse, Said suggests that the discourse of Orientalism both produces texts and is produced by texts – it is both formed by what is said about the Orient and conditions what is said about the Orient. This idea points towards the exceedingly problematic relation between the textual and material

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<sup>14</sup> Only added emphasis will be noted in this text. The reader may assume that it is the original author’s emphasis if it is not noted parenthetically that emphasis has been added.

practice outside of the text; that is, the colonial project as a very real material history.

Robert J. C. Young and Homi Bhabha (who will be further discussed below) have both pointed out that Said's way of managing the relation between the productivity of Orientalism and its relation to the Orient become problematic in his text (Young 169, Bhabha 102). Young points out a fundamental contradiction in Said's main argument, when he observes that:

on the one hand [Said] suggests that orientalism merely consists of a representation that has nothing to do with the 'real Orient,' denying any correspondence between Orientalism and the Orient, looking instead for Orientalism's 'internal consistency' as discursive object or field, while on the other hand he argues that its knowledge was put in the service of colonial conquest, occupation and administration. (169)

The problem that Young locates in Orientalism is in other words that Said insists on the constructedness of the object of Orientalist discourse. The fact that European literature and imagination about the geographical and political region that has traditionally been referred to as the Orient have affected relations between European nations and nations in the Middle East, for example, can hardly be denied. However, Said takes the constructionist element of discourse theory very far by claiming that the Orient is "created" by Orientalist literature. However, the knowledge produced in Orientalist discourse is anything but objective truth, as shown by the many examples of such literature that Said presents. Without going into further technicalities and ontological discussions, suffice it to say at this point that there is a considerable and crucial difference between the notion that texts create an object like the Orient and that texts can create persistent and widely spread stories about places like the orient and Africa and that such stories can serve to motivate and facilitate such political, military and economic projects as invasions and colonisation.

The result of Said's analysis of texts about the Orient is the uncovering of a monolithic, homogeneous and, his critics say (for example, Bhabha 103), static discourse about the Orient. In Said's analysis, the discourse of Orientalism locks the two enormous poles, the West and the Orient, in a seemingly static oppositional relation. Homi Bhabha has pointed

out that Said's use of Foucault's concepts of knowledge and power causes problems in his study of Orientalist discourse. Bhabha writes that by polarising the West and the Orient, Said fails to see more intricate and complex power relations or the plurality of power positions in the discourse he describes (103). However, Bhabha describes a more dynamic and complex relation between what can, on a somewhat less philosophically sophisticated level, be called the coloniser and the colonised.

In Bhabha's discussion of discourse, he refers primarily to an essentially *colonial* discourse, to the discourse of colonialism, and secondarily to the kind of Eurocentric narratives about Europe's others that Said studies. Bhabha's examples often refer to, but are not limited to, the historical context of the British Raj in India and its historical aftermath. While this may seem to be a superficial difference, it has profound theoretical implications. Said mainly focuses on what he calls Orientalism, which he initially defines as "a style of thought based upon the ontological and epistemological distinction" between the Orient and the West or the Occident (2), but Bhabha understands the relation between the British colonial power and the colonised Indian peoples in a different way. While he does not deny that the colonial situation is characterised by an opposition between coloniser and colonised, he sees the relation between coloniser and colonised as exceedingly complex.

Describing some "minimum conditions and specifications of colonial discourse" (100), Bhabha writes that colonial discourse "employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism" (101). Through this system of representation, the coloniser asserts power over the colonised by the "creation of a space for a 'subject peoples' through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised" (100). Further, it produces the colonised "as a population of degenerate types," that is "at once 'other' and entirely knowable and controllable" in order to justify and facilitate colonial conquest and to "establish systems of administration" (100-101). To Bhabha, then, colonial discourse is an "apparatus" that, by means of psychological, textual and other kinds of representations, seeks to create a reality in which domination can be justified and maintained. However, this is the "objective" and not the inevitable effect of colonial discourse.

Bhabha uses the concept of mimicry, a concept that is influenced by the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, to discuss the dynamics of the

relation between a coloniser and a colonised. He writes that “[w]ithin the conflictual economy of colonial discourse which Edward Said describes as the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination – the demand for identity, stasis – and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history – change, difference – mimicry represents an *ironic compromise*” (122). He describes mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (122) and as a “strategy of authority” in colonial discourse, but later he refers to mimicry as also involving the threat to the ostensible coherence of the authoritative colonial discourse. He writes that mimicry is “a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing and history” (130).

Mimicry is, then, a way of being that colonial discourse imposes on or recognises in those subjects that it distinguishes as its others. The colonial power needs these others to be similar to its own perceived identity without ever becoming the same. However, it is also a strategy or possibility for the negotiation of the impulses imposed by colonial authorities that the colonised may use or seize in order to undermine this authority. While on the surface this means that the other enters a position of perpetual fluctuation, the identity that colonial discourse recognises as its own, say Englishness transposed onto an Indian setting, is conceived as static and self-contained: even though segments of the colonised population are forced or expected to emulate or “mimic” the British, the latter conceive themselves as being unaffected by their relation to the colonised. Translated into Saidian terms, the demand for mimicry could be described as the West’s need for an Orient that its own influence westernises without ever actually becoming part of the West and without entailing that the West becomes more like the Orient. At the same time, mimicry would undermine knowledge and constructions of identity that are based on perceived racial, cultural and historical difference. In other words, mimicry exposes a profound ambivalence within colonial discourse – ambivalence between sameness and difference, in Bhabha’s psychoanalytic terms.

It is important to note that mimicry is not a flaw that is inherent within an otherwise rigorous and coherent ideology or ideational program, but an effect of the imposition of difference as a means of power. It is an effect of the desire, to use a psychoanalytic term, to perceive someone or something as an “other” over whom the self can exert power and domination.

Therefore, Bhabha talks about mimicry in terms of an (almost instrumental) function rather than an error. He does refer to it in terms of a weakness in the colonial system of domination, but a weakness that the colonial system accommodates and utilises. He writes that “*in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference*” (122: emphasis added). However, mimicry has an effect on the colonial discourse itself, and this is where Bhabha’s understanding of discourse differs from Said’s in a way that is important for the understanding of discourse in this thesis. Bhabha writes that “the effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in ‘normalizing’ the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms” (123). Whereas Orientalism in Said’s analysis ultimately displayed a remarkably powerful hold over the object it produces, the Orient, Bhabha sees a colonial discourse that is riddled with fissures and contradictions that not only fails to produce a stable other, but must produce this other as at the same time similar and dissimilar.

Bhabha’s use of terms like “must” gestures towards a point where Foucauldian discourse theory and Bhabha’s Lacanian perspective on colonial discourse are not fully consistent with each other. This dissonance is of course not a problem in itself, but may cause problems if it is not recognised and its implications understood in the application of Bhabha’s discourse concept. Bhabha treats colonial discourse as a kind of entity that can be studied through a psychoanalytical perspective; that is, he understands colonial discourse partly as something that can be the seat of “obsessions” and needs, like Said did before him (Bhabha 102). Discourse as defined by Foucault, however, is not conceived as a (mass)consciousness in the same ways as Bhabha’s (admittedly metaphorical) treatment of the concept of discourse. In this thesis, Bhabha’s psychoanalytical understanding of colonial discourse will not be adopted in its full complexity. However, it is possible to translate Bhabha’s elaboration of Said’s use of discourse theory back into Foucauldian terms. The basic assumption in Said’s treatment of Orientalism, that it construes an other that has a function in the simultaneous construction of the West, will be adopted here. A further assumption that will be adopted is Bhabha’s fundamental insight that colonial discourse produces contradictory statements about the object it produces, which Bhabha understands as the other and Said as the Orient.

This makes the study of the fluctuations, differences and inconsistencies in colonial discourse possible and these fluctuations, differences and as will be shown, this ambivalence and these inconsistencies are common in colonial travel literature.

## Previous research

This book leans on previous research in several different disciplines and academic fields. One area of research is studies of material objects in travel literature and in the cultural contexts of the European colonial project. This is the most important, but perhaps the least developed of the different research areas that the following analysis draws on. The study of commodity culture in Victorian Britain is a better researched area, as is the colonial origin of late Victorian museum practices and their relation to colonialism, which has been given some attention in museum history as well as postcolonial studies. Both the roles of material objects in so-called intercultural exchange and the representations of foreign cultures in the metropolis have naturally received considerable attention in research within the history of anthropology.

The salience of objects in British nineteenth century travel writing is a strangely neglected object of research, as it ties together such major intellectual and academic areas as postcolonial literary theory, Victorian studies, the history of imperial economics and the history of anthropology. However, a major contribution to the present research area is Tim Youngs's "Buttons and Souls: Some Thoughts on Commodities and Identity in Women's Travel Writing" (1997), which was published in *Studies in Travel Writing*. This article can be read as an extension of the chapter "Beads and Cords of Love" in Youngs's *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues, 1850-1900* (1994), in which he states that the aim of the chapter was to show how "during a period of significant social change, anxieties about self- and cultural identity were projected onto goods that accompanied the traveller" ("Buttons and Souls" 117). In the article that grew out of this study, he concentrates on travel texts written by women travellers in Africa and studies how commodities tend to become a means of "negotiating and affirming identity at a time when it is under threat" (118). Youngs's research has been helpful in the process of writing this book because it provides an

insight into the functions of objects in nineteenth century travel literature. Therefore, Youngs's two texts will be consulted in the following chapters. However, while Youngs focuses on travellers' identities, this book will primarily discuss the functions of objects in a broader sense, as described in this introductory chapter.

The roles that objects play in Victorian travel literature can be read as an effect of the fact that commodities are produced and consumed in increasingly large numbers in the metropolitan sphere, and that Victorian middle class homes become packed with new kinds of objects. However, it is important to note that metropolitan commodity culture cannot be understood as a purely domestic phenomenon, but must be studied in relation to British imperialism and colonial trade. Furthermore, the complex roles and relations that the object plays and enters into in travel literature are to some extent due to the specific and idiosyncratic contexts and environments that objects and the travelling subject enter. A work that deals with the functions of objects in the cultural contexts of nineteenth century colonialism and which has achieved considerable attention in postcolonial studies is Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995). One of McClintock's main foci of discussion is the domestic Victorian milieu, but she reads Victorian commodity culture in relation to the colonial context and brings a gender as well as postcolonial perspective to this field of study. Drawing on Thomas Richards's study of Victorian commodity culture and advertising, she presents soap bars as a symbol of a "crisis of value: the *undervaluation* of women's work in the domestic realm, the *overvaluation* of the commodity in the industrial market and *disavowal* of colonized economies in the arena of empire" (208). She shows how what she calls "commodity racism" or the "reinvention of racial difference" in Victorian advertising, transmitted an imagery that was grounded in evolutionary racism to virtually all parts of Victorian society, whereas racist ideas that were prevalent in anthropology and the sciences reached almost exclusively the educated classes (209). By focusing on the symbolic economy of race and of imperial conquest as themes in Victorian advertising, McClintock is able to connect the metropolitan domestic sphere with images of a conquered Africa and its inhabitants.

More general readings of British commodity and thing culture are more numerous than postcolonial readings such as Anne McClintock's. However, such books as Cynthia Sundberg Wall's *The Prose of Things:*

*Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (2006) have contributed to the present field of study by providing a history of the poetics of descriptions of things in British literature. In *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006) Elaine Freedgood makes use of Wall's findings when comparing tendencies in Victorian literature with eighteenth century literature. She reads major Victorian writers such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë in order to extract "fugitive" meanings from seemingly mundane and insignificant objects, and uncovers the histories of tobacco cans and furniture that are mentioned in passing in these authors' works. Wall's and Freedgood's books will be discussed in some detail in the following chapter. Another example of a work that examines commodity culture in Victorian literature is Andrew H. Miller's *Novels Behind Glass: Commodity Culture in Victorian Britain* (1995), in which Miller reads Thackeray, Gaskell, Dickens, Eliot and Trollope to study, among other things, the commodification of social life in Victorian Britain.

As far as the theoretical aspect of this book is concerned, certain previous research in the study of modern anthropology is of relevance. The separation of the present of the modern metropolis and that of the colonial periphery can be seen as related to the tendency in anthropological writing that Johannes Fabian calls the "denial of coevalness" in his seminal *Time and the Other* (1983). Fabian demonstrates how the object of study in European anthropological writing, traditionally non-white, non-western people, or as Fabian writes, "the savage, the primitive, the Other" (1), has often been described as belonging to a different present than the studying subject, who is traditionally white and from the West. According to Fabian, the denial of coevalness is "the systematic and persistent tendency" among anthropologists to place their referents in a time that is different from "the present of the producer of anthropological discourse" (31). The time that the referent or object of study is described as belonging to, Fabian argues, has often been presented as a timeless elsewhere that is distinct from the modern institutions in which anthropology is produced. In *Out of our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (2000), Fabian also discusses how German and Belgian travellers and explorers used certain kinds of objects, such as mechanical toy elephants, to impress locals (106). As will be shown in the chapter on "Objects in Geography," this tendency is also common among British travellers and explorers. Fabian's

*Time and the Other* has been important to the field of postcolonial studies and has been a major source of inspiration in the writing of this book because of its focus on temporal difference and the denial of coevalness.

## **Outline of the book**

This dissertation is divided into three parts. The first part is introductory and is comprised of this introduction and the following context chapter. The context chapter provides a general contextual outline of the travel accounts that will be analysed in the second part of the book. This contextual chapter situates these travel accounts in the geopolitical, literary and ideological context in relation to which they will be read, and also discusses the object culture of nineteenth century Britain, which has been described briefly above, in some further detail.

The second part is composed of four analysis chapters. These chapters present different theoretical and thematic perspectives. In other words, the chapters in this second part are organised thematically. Of course, this means that the four chapters are not divided according to the specific geographical regions that are described in the texts or in relation to their respective years of publication. Each chapter will therefore include close readings of travel accounts about different journeys in very different regions.

The first chapter, "Objects in Geography," in the second part deals with geographical writing; that is, writing about space and its complex relations to temporal concepts. The main, guiding argument in this chapter is that the way in which certain kinds of objects are described as being distributed in space serves to generate narratives about temporal difference between different locations. This tendency, it is further argued, is both an effect of the internal structure of the travel narrative itself, and makes certain stories within the narrative possible. Certain kinds of commodities, associated with industrial production and modernity, are at times described as having reached a certain place, but not others. The diffusion of European goods may be read as establishing a kind of invisible frontier (invisible because imagined) of the values that are associated with industrial production. This frontier, in turn, allows for certain kinds of stories about travellers' transitions into regions that are unaffected by modernity,

civilisation and the colonial centre that embodies these values. On a theoretical level, this relation between how space is written and the narratives that this makes possible is referred to as *narrative geography*.

The second chapter, "Objects in Trade" in the second analysis chapter is about trade and the ambivalence that is caused by the fact that trade is promoted as a tool for transformation and progress. Closer trade relations between the centre and the periphery are often advocated because colonial trade is described as having a modernising influence on regions and communities. At the same time, trade is indirectly treated as having the power to destabilise the temporal difference between centre and periphery, and this is for precisely the same reason as it is promoted: if trade brings modernity and civilisation to the periphery, it also dissolves the spatiotemporal differences on which the modernity/pre-modernity and centre/periphery dichotomies are based. A main argument is that while trade is promoted and given the power to extend the metropolitan modernity to the periphery, the disavowed, "feminine" characteristics of modernity that Rita Felski describes are projected onto the other. In other words, the pre-modern other is ascribed inherently modern characteristics.

The next chapter, "Objects in Ethnography," discusses descriptions of material objects in ethnographical portraits of people. This chapter focuses on the grammar of ethnographical passages and its implications for the conception of time, and to a lesser degree, space. The main argument in this chapter is that the perspective in descriptions of certain objects tends to shift from travellers' interaction with their environment to a kind of ethnographical description where the voice of the narrator takes the traveller's place at the centre of the text. The two functions are not only narratologically different, but are also associated with different spatio-temporal positions. The traveller — the travelling persona seen, as it were, from outside — is grammatically located in the then-and-there that the travel narrative describes, as opposed to the now-an-here of the narrator — the voice that pronounces "knowledge" about Africa and Africans. In the analysed texts, then, ethnographical portraits enhance the epistemological distances between traveller and the object (both inanimate and human "objects") of ethnographical discourse. At the same time, ethnographical writing tends to include statements and stories that are presented from a point within the ideological and literary sphere of the metropolitan centre rather than the colonial periphery. These statements and stories are more

often generic than specific and are written in the present rather than the past tense, in which the traveller's experiences in the periphery are normally narrated.

Together with the two previous chapters, this third analysis chapter reconstructs a kind of spatiotemporal map that the analysed texts rely on. Together, these chapters show how narratives tend to reserve certain points in time and space for certain communities and groups of people and how these points relate to each other. The remaining analysis chapter differs from the previous chapters in that it focuses on one specific object.

The fourth and last analysis chapter in the analysis part, "The Signifying Object," focuses on the book as an object that is mentioned in travel narratives and as the end product of travel writing. The main argument in this chapter is that the book as a symbol for European modernity in the wake of the Enlightenment, is ascribed the power to make the immaterial material. The traveller becomes a substitute for the book because the traveller's journey is part of the production process that leads up to the travel narrative as a commodity (the travel book) and as a text. In their quality as producers of literature about the periphery, then, travellers become outposts of modernity in the periphery. This production process also serves to objectify and commodify the black body. When the often semi-naked black body is inscribed into the travel narrative it also becomes an element in a commodity — the travel book and can be consumed by consumers and readers in the metropolitan sphere. As a symbol of Enlightenment ideals, Christianity and modernity, the book also becomes symbolically significant within the travel narrative. However, as this chapter shows, the book is often destroyed when it enters certain spaces of the narrative geography. In other words, while the book come to embody immaterial philosophical and religious ideas, it is often reduced to the immateriality when it enters spaces that in the travel text are defined by the absence of the same ideas.

The third part of the book consists of a concluding discussion in which a summary of the analysis is presented and the conclusions in each chapter are discussed together.

## **Contexts: Markets, Colonialism and Travel**

The aim of this chapter is to place the texts that will be analysed in the following chapters within a contextual framework. It also describes developments within British nineteenth century commodity culture and its effect on British literature. While textual analysis is the dominating methodological approach to the texts in the following chapters, this chapter will present some background information that sheds light on the nature of the individual texts, their similarities and differences and some information about their authors. What will be discussed here are issues such as travel writers' self-constructions, the travellers' professed reasons for travelling and the ideological perspectives they carry with them. Consequently, the selected travel accounts will be approached by means of textual interpretation and readings of the historiography about the period in which they were published. The presentation of relevant information about the texts and their authors will be supplemented by a brief discussion about gender and class differences within the selection of texts.

### **A Changing World Map and a Changing Metropolitan Book Market**

The latter half of the nineteenth century saw extensive developments within British travel writing, both in a strictly literary sense and in terms of material transformations that determined the conditions of travel as an activity. The

phase in European exploration and mapping of Africa that began around 1850 and continued a further few decades into the latter half of the nineteenth century paved the way for the European nations' race to grab as much land in African as possible. This race and the political tensions it created has been named *the Scramble for Africa* in the historiography of European colonialism.

During this period, the map of colonial Africa was redrawn many times because of European exploration of its interior and the European colonisation the African continent. In 1876, during the early stages of the Scramble and the year of the battle of Isandhlwana, a humiliating military setback for the British Empire, European colonising countries held comparatively small strips of land along the coast of Sub-Saharan Africa. France held Senegal and Gabon in the west and had seized Algiers in 1830 (Ajayi 7). The Portuguese crown had recently annexed "estates of the Afro-Portuguese rulers" in Mozambique (Uzoigwe 28) and had held parts of the coast of present day Angola for centuries. The Ottoman Empire held parts of present day Sudan and Egypt in the north, but had lost its hold on Africa at the end of the Scramble. After the Berlin West Africa Conference in 1884-1885, the African map had been divided between European colonial powers, and only Ethiopia and Liberia remained free from some kind of colonial control. Two years before the outbreak of The Great War, Great Britain controlled in one way or another, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, The Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Union of South Africa, Swaziland and Basutoland (British protectorates), Bechuanaland, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, British East Africa, Uganda, parts of the Horn of Africa, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Egypt (Pakenham 670).<sup>1</sup>

The rapid increase in the British colonial acquisition of African territories together with economic and religious enterprises had considerable effects on the literary market for narratives about colonial Africa. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the British book market saw a rapid but unstable increase in the number of books published in a year. According to a survey based on figures from *The Publishers' Circular*, the number of titles

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<sup>1</sup> Colonial territories and geographical bodies are here referred to by their 1912 names in order to avoid a politically and geographically complex comparison of the maps of Africa of 1912 and the present. See Pakenham's *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003) for a map of the political borders of the areas under foreign rule at the end of the Scramble (670).

published in a year more than doubled between 1851 and 1913, while 1914 saw fewer books published than the previous year (Eliot 29). The removal of newspaper taxes in 1855 boosted the numbers of periodicals and daily papers, thus creating new and better opportunities for travellers to publish journalistic texts (Steward 41). Travel journalism ranged from accounts of journeys to foreign countries to pieces of advice from traveller to traveller on “how and where to go,” including instructions on how to observe one’s “etiquette,” general behaviour and what to wear while travelling (Steward 44). In 1886, a year after the Berlin West Africa Conference, the number of published travel books were reported by a reviewer at *The Times* as taking the form of a “shower of travel stories” with which publishers “deluged” the British reading public (“Books of Travel”). Judging from another review in the same British newspaper, by the end of the century the torrent of travel books had increased even more. The reviewer complains that “each week seems to add to the immense mass of our literature on travel,” and states that “in proportion as the unexplored regions of the world become fewer, those who visit them, or even approach their confines, become more and more impelled to record their experiences” (“Books of Travel and Sport”). These observations about the growing publication rate of travel books may be read as reflecting the public interest in stories that focus on the exploration of Africa in the 1860s and the following decades. They may also be understood as reflecting what geographer Cheryl McEwan has called “the widening of spheres of travel to Europeans in general as a consequence of the expansion of overseas empires” in the decades before and after the turn of the nineteenth century (25).

### *Introduction to the Texts and their Contexts*

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the primary texts are different in various ways, including their times of publication, the biographical background of their authors, their motivations for travelling and the regions of Africa they describe. In this chapter, relevant contextual differences and similarities between the texts will be discussed in further detail. The purpose of this discussion about the selection of texts is not to organise them into groups and to maintain this division in the following analysis chapters, but to demonstrate the scope of the present selection of texts in terms of their respective historical and literary contexts. Some biographical details about

the different authors will also be presented. One reason for this is to demonstrate differences among the authors, in terms of gender, social background and formal education, but also to give the reader some insight into public debates surrounding the publication of their books, as in the case of Speke's *Journal*, for example.

The group of texts that will be studied in the following chapters should be seen as a continuum rather than a selection of texts that belong to two essentially different sub-genres of travel writing. The later texts repeat many of the tropes, themes and images of the former texts. The authors of the former texts, in turn, often emphasise the ordeals that the traveller faces when travelling in uncharted land, while in reality Speke, Cameron and Stanley partly travelled along the same routes. Even though the exploration texts undoubtedly describe parts of Africa that had not been mapped by European geographers and the latter a continent that is to a large extent subjected to foreign rule, they are not as different from each other as it may at first seem. In this chapter, however, the groups of exploration and post-Scramble texts will be described separately. The reason for this is that it allows for the accentuation of the relevant differences between the texts that nonetheless do exist.

The instrumentality (or purpose) of the texts and the journeys they describe is one respect in which the present travel accounts differ. While the expressed reasons that the travellers' undertake the journeys in the texts that describe colonised Africa differ from each other, they also differ in some respects from those of the exploration texts of the decades before the Scramble and the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-1885. Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863), Cameron's *Across Africa* (1877) and Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) all describe journeys around the Great Lakes in eastern Africa. In contrast to Speke's text, which is the earliest of the three, Cameron's and Stanley's texts also describe cross-continental journeys from the east to the west. These three texts facilitated and had effects on the Scramble for Africa. Their most obvious function in the British colonisation of East Africa was their function in the mapping of East and Central Africa and the role they may have had in presenting these soon-to-be colonised regions to people other than initiated geographers. Adrian S. Wisnicki writes in "Cartographical Quandaries: The Limits of Knowledge Production in Burton's and Speke's Search for the Source of the Nile" that the texts that came out of Speke's and Burton's

expedition were of a kind that invited imitation by other writers (470). In relation to this he points out that Speke's and Burton's texts "were to serve as a kind of fieldguide ... for future travelers and explorers" (470). This instrumentality is relevant in the following chapters because it suggests a link to the later texts. Not only did these texts influence other travellers in relation to where they decided to go and how they planned their journeys, but they also established themes, tropes and literary styles that were adopted in texts about African travels in general, and this influence was not solely reserved to texts about exploration expeditions. An example of this is that Constance Larymore, who travels in colonial Nigeria, at times describes herself in terms of an explorer and draws upon what Mary Louise Pratt has described as the essentially masculine "monarch-of-all-I-survey" trope, which Pratt discusses in relation to Speke and Francis Burton (McEwan 68, Pratt 205). Furthermore, while it is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate the actual practical value of travel texts in the colonisation of Africa, they certainly map and describe regions where certain valuable resources can be found and suggest how they can be extracted and exported.

Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897), Grogan's *From the Cape to Cairo* (1900), Mary Hall's *A Woman's Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907) and Constance Larymore's *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* (1908) were published around the turn of the century and in the first decade of the 1900s. Kingsley, Grogan, Larymore and Hall travelled through regions that had been colonised in one way or another by European colonial powers or claimed by European business. In contrast to the texts by the explorers, colonialism and imperial politics determine the nature of the journey in these texts. The travellers often come to rely on the goodwill of local European authorities for their safe passage through certain regions and other kinds of aid. As has been pointed out, while these texts, to a greater or lesser extent, draw on rhetorical devices that are commonly associated with literature about exploration, they describe colonised rather than unchartered regions.<sup>2</sup> A further textual difference between the travel literature of the late 1890s and early 1900s and the exploration texts of earlier decades is that the former texts are endowed with a different intertextuality because they describe journeys through colonies or regions where other Europeans have

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<sup>2</sup> Cheryl McEwan points out that Mary Kingsley "crossed unchartered territory between the Ogowé and Rembwé rivers" (19), but unlike a text like Cameron's *Across Africa*, Kingsley does not claim to describe important geographical discoveries in her text.

been before them. The logic of exploration literature entails that the geographical writing about unchartered regions cannot be intertextually associated with other travel accounts in the same way as narratives about places like Egypt and the Cape Colony are.

### *The Explorers and their Texts*

This part of the present chapter will sketch out a background to Speke's, Cameron's and Stanley's texts. It will show how their travel accounts received considerable attention from British geographers, mainly through the Royal Geographical Society, but also from large segments of the public. This attention from the public and experts provides an insight into the popularity of colonial exploration literature as literary genre.

One of the main feats that these travellers set out to accomplish was to find a suitable trade route into the centre of Africa, which was rumoured to be full of boundless riches. This endeavour they accomplished, in a sense, by mapping the Arab trade routes that they often travelled along, the lakes of eastern Africa and the river systems of the Congo basin, and thereby paved the road for colonisation.

Their texts and geographical work placed the explorers in line with such historical figures as Ptolemy, Herodotus and Julius Caesar who all sought to solve the geographical "mysteries" that had been formulated about Africa in the very antiquity of European geography. One of these mysteries, which had troubled European geography from its very beginning, was what constituted the source of the White Nile. The very public and equally fierce quarrel about the Nile's source that followed from the publication of a number of travel accounts and periodical articles in the early 1860s has dominated the historiography of the British expeditions of eastern Africa. What is more relevant in this context, however, is that this quarrel aroused considerable public interest at the time of the debate and drew considerable public attention to such texts as Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Wisnicki 458). Therefore, Speke's journeys in Africa and the debate about what constituted the source of the Nile will be discussed in some detail, before the rest of the texts are presented.

In 1858, John Hanning Speke (1827-1864), a former officer in the British Indian army, claimed to have found the source of the Nile in the East African lake that he named after Queen Victoria. Speke had travelled with

Richard Burton (1821-1890) in the Horn of Africa in 1855, where they both were attacked and wounded, and to the Tanganyika between 1856 and 1859 on an expedition that was financed by the Royal Geographical Society (Youngs 82-83). The primary goal of the their journey to Tanganyika was to verify geographical information deriving from Arab traders, which indicated that there were several big lakes in the interior, of which one could be the source of the White Nile. Burton and Speke travelled from the coast of present day Tanzania to Lake Tanganyika, which they subsequently claimed to have “discovered.” Because Burton had fallen too ill to carry on any further, they separated after arriving at the shore of Tanganyika. While Burton stayed in Kazeh (present day Kwiwara in Tanzania), Speke went on to investigate information about a second big lake, or several lakes, to the north of the Tanganyika. There he saw, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1858, the largest body of water on the African continent, which he subsequently named Lake Victoria.<sup>3</sup>

Having spent three days at the coast of Lake Victoria Nyanza, Speke went back and reunited with Burton. He told Burton that he believed that the lake was the source of the Nile, but could not convince his travel partner of his theory. Having returned to the coast, Speke was to go back to Great Britain without Burton, who stayed in Zanzibar to attend to the expedition’s financial business. Speke therefore promised Burton that he would not submit his theory about the source of the Nile to the Royal Geographical Society before Burton had made it back to London (Carnochan 51). Having arrived in Great Britain, Speke broke his promise to Burton and presented his theory to the financiers of the expedition. This set in motion what has been called “*The sad story of Burton, Speke and the Nile*” (Carnochan).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph L. Awange and Obiero Ong’ang’a note in *Lake Victoria: Ecology, Resources, Environment* (2006) that “the name Lake Victoria is ‘foreign’ in that it was named after an individual in a foreign land” and that attempts to rename the lake have been made subsequent to the formal decolonisation of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya (10). They ask if *Nyanza* could be a good candidate for the new name. *Nyanza*, they write, appears to derive from the Basuba name for the lake (9). Here, the lake will be referred to as *the Victoria Nyanza* rather than *the Victoria*. To refer to the lake as *Lake Victoria* in this book would be to ignore the fact that the name is essentially colonial, while it would be to ignore the colonial history of the region to call it simply *Lake Nyanza*. It should, however, be acknowledged that several names for the lake are used in the region.

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Wisnicki writes that the quarrel between Burton and Speke and their respective allies had many dimensions, of which their different theories about the source of the Nile were only one. See his article “Cartographical Quandaries: The Limits of Knowledge Production in Burton’s and Speke’s Search for the Source of the Nile” for an extensive list of references to texts about the many other points of disagreement between the two travellers. These vary from personal resentments of different kinds to disagreements concerning the economy of the expedition and lie outside of the scope of the present discussion.

Even though the dispute between Speke and Burton about what constitutes the source of the Nile was subsequently officially blamed on Burton's "different" temperament in *The Records of the Royal Geographical Society* (1930) (Mill 88), the debate can be traced back hundreds of years before Speke's and Burton's journey. According to Henry "Harry" Johnston (1858-1927), the author of *The Nile Quest* (1903) and a key figure in the Scramble for Africa, what constituted the source of the White Nile was at the time of Speke's and Burton's journey "the greatest secret after the discovery of North America" (qtd. in Collins 245). In the 1850s, the Blue Nile, or the Abbay, was better known to European geographers than was the White Nile.

While Scotsman James Bruce (1730 - 1794) and other travellers had explored the eastern arm of the Nile system by the time of Speke's and Burton's journey, the western arm remained largely unknown to the institutions of European geography. One theory about the source of the Nile was that the western arm of the Nile proper consisted of snow water that flowed down from the mythological "Mountains of the Moon." This theory went as far back as to the geography of Ptolemy (appr. 90 - 168) who placed the Mountains of the Moon in eastern Africa on a parallel with, but south of, the equator (Ptolemy 110). According to Ptolemy, two big lakes were formed by the water from the mountains, and from these lakes two arms of the Nile flowed out and converged to the north. The same hypothesis was even promoted by geographer and traveller Charles Tiltstone Beke (1800-1874) after Speke had reported his claim to the Royal Geographical Society. Beke wrote in the preface to his *The Sources of the Nile* (1860), that his book had been ready for publication when the news about Speke's claims to have found the source of the White Nile reached him (vii). "Whilst heartily congratulating the travellers," Beke writes, "and in particular my friend Burton, on their successful accomplishment of their great endeavour, I need not dwell on the gratification I have experienced at seeing the soundness of my hypothesis now at length established" (viii). Of course, it was not in the interest of Beke's friend to see support for Speke's theory about the source of the Nile. What made matters worse for Speke, but perhaps more interesting for the reading public, was that Burton managed to write and publish his account of their mutual journey before Speke was able to publish his.

Burton's two-volume narrative *The Lake Regions: A Picture of Exploration* was published in 1860.<sup>5</sup>

However, the attacks that were made against Speke in Burton's text proved less than effective. When the Royal Geographical Society decided to send out a second expedition to resolve the controversy about the source of the Nile, it chose to give Speke the command, which infuriated Burton (Carnochan 50). On this second expedition, Speke was accompanied by a fellow officer in the British Indian Army, James Augustus Grant (1827-1892). Setting out from Zanzibar on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1860, Speke, Grant and their hired carriers travelled to the northern coast of Lake Victoria Nyanza via its western side. On July 28, 1862 the expedition, much delayed, arrived at the waterfalls, which Speke named *the Ripon Falls* after the president of the Royal Geographical Society, north of where the White Nile flows out of the lake (Youngs 83).<sup>6</sup> He named the part of the lake that flows into the Nile the *Napoleon Channel* – a token of appreciation directed at the Paris Geographical Society, from which he had received a gold medal for having reached the lake on his previous journey (83).

Speke wrote about his and Grant's journey and the text was published by Blackwood in 1863 as *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. In the introduction Speke uses a rather philanthropic tone while advocating European exploration and presence in Africa. His introduction develops into an ostensibly religiously inspired discussion about "preconceived notions as to the primitive races" which the reader is encouraged to reconsider (xvii). "While the people of Europe and Asia were blessed by communion with God ... the Africans were excluded from this dispensation," he writes, and emphasises the need to "teach them" about Providence (xvii). Behind the philanthropic approach in the text, however, economic and political motives can be discerned. The *Journal* accentuates the value of the geographical space that was considered Speke's "discovery" after his report to the Royal Geographical Society. Speke's descriptions of the region around the great lake present it as a region that is rich in resources, but troubled by violence and political despotism, and therefore in need of British colonial influence. As with other texts pertaining to the body of

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<sup>5</sup> See Richard Francis Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration*. 2 vols. London: Longman, 1860.

<sup>6</sup> The falls were submerged under water when the Nalubaale Dam was built in 1954, eight years before Uganda attained independence from the British Empire.

literature about British exploration of eastern Africa, Speke's text reads as a catalogue of resources, facilitating future commercial and colonial projects in the region. Speke describes the character of political authorities, the flora and fauna (in which he includes "the true curly-head, flab-nosed, pouch-mouthed negro") (xx), and the current rate of taxation that travellers are required to pay at different locations.

The year after the publication of Speke's book, Blackwood published Grant's *A Walk Across Africa: Or, Domestic Scenes from my Nile Journal*. Grant implies that the book is to be read as a supplement to Speke's *Journal*. Grant writes in the preface that he "never dreamt of a separate publication" from Speke's book and that the important data and information he had collected during their journey had gone into Speke's book (vii). Accordingly, his intention in writing the text was not chiefly to present this information but "to render my countrymen more familiar with the interior life of Africa, to which Speke and Livingstone have recently imparted fresh interest" (ix-x). What is not mentioned in relation to Speke's book is that apart from contributing material, Grant was very much involved in its making. He effectively acted as an intermediary between his former travel partner and the publisher (Youngs 84). Grant told Blackwood that many parts of Speke's manuscript were "*slightly indecent*" and that he would like to see it cut down "to half its dimensions" (qtd. in Youngs 84). Blackwood, however, did not agree that the manuscript was too voluminous, but told Speke in a letter that descriptions of "extreme nudity" in the text had been "slightly" altered (qtd. in Youngs 84).

The great lake was still shrouded in mystery to British and European geographers for more than a decade after the publication of Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. Even though Speke had reached the place where the Nile flows out of the Victoria Nyanza, the dispute between himself and Burton had not been entirely settled (Pratt 206). The mystery increased even further when David Livingstone (1813-1873) was told by Arab traders on his last journey that the Victoria Nyanza, or *Ukerewe* as it was called by Arab travellers, was not one but several lakes (Youngs 83). Livingstone travelled along the west coast of Tanganyika in 1871 and was the second European to see the big lake (Youngs 83). He arrived in Ujiji on the eastern coast of the lake on 14 March 1869, where he was "rescued" by Welsh-American traveller-journalist Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) two years later. No news about Livingstone's whereabouts had

reached Europe for some time and an expedition that was headed by Stanley had been sent to Africa to search for him. Stanley was at the time employed by the US and British periodicals *The New York Herald* and *the Daily Telegraph* and subsequently published his story about his journey and search for Livingstone. Stanley and Livingstone explored Tanganyika for a few weeks after their famous encounter in Ujiji before Stanley returned to the coast.

When Stanley and his party did not return as soon as expected, the Royal Geographical Society opened for subscriptions to fund “the Livingstone Search Expedition.” A British naval lieutenant by the name Verney Lovett Cameron (1844-1894) applied for the position as head of the expedition, but it went to another lieutenant by the name Dawson (Cameron 18). Cameron had served as senior lieutenant on a ship on the East Coast of Africa and had become determined to set out on a journey after reading about John Speke’s and Richard Burton’s journey to the Horn of Africa (Cameron 17). Eventually Cameron did take charge of the expedition, only under different circumstances, which are described in his book *Across Africa* (1877).

When it became known to the Royal Geographic Society that Stanley had found Livingstone and that the search expedition was no longer needed, Dawson resigned his position (Cameron 18). The command of the expedition was later taken up by Livingstone’s son Oswald Livingstone, who like his predecessor eventually abandoned his plans to join his father and resigned (18). At the same time, Cameron was planning a grand journey from the east coast to Lake Victoria Nyanza via Mount Kilimanjaro and from the lake to the River Congo and down to the Atlantic coast (Cameron 19). Cameron applied to the Royal Geographical Society for the money necessary to carry out his journey across the African continent, but his request was denied by the Council (19). However, the Royal Geographical Society decided to use the money that had been raised for the Livingstone Search Expedition to form a new expedition that was to join Livingstone and whose command was to be transferred to him in order to support his geographical exploration of the African interior. Cameron again applied for the command of the expedition and now received the Royal Geographical Society’s approval (20).

On 2 February 1873, Cameron set out from Zanzibar together with hired “soldiers, servants, and donkey-drivers” (Cameron 23), a naval surgeon by the name W.E. Dillon who was Cameron’s old friend, and a lieutenant of

the Royal Artillery whose name was Cecil Murphy. On 20 October 1873, half way between the East Coast and Lake Tanganyika, and while being “prostrate, listless, and enfeebled from repeated attacks of fever” (Cameron 123), Cameron received a letter addressed to Oswell Livingstone that contained news of Livingstone’s death.

This news meant that the expedition had once more lost its purpose. Cameron describes in his travel account how Murphy decided to accompany the members of Livingstone’s crew who insisted on carrying his body to the coast. Cameron and Dillon, however, decided to carry on to Ujiji and to continue Livingstone’s explorations of Tanganyika and eventually travel to the Atlantic coast. One of the great mysteries that remained to European geography, apart from what constituted the source of the Nile, was whether or not the Lualaba River in the interior of the continent was part of the Congo River system and thus connected with the Atlantic Ocean. At the time of his death, Livingstone was heading to the Lualaba to attempt to prove that it was connected to the Nile system in the north (Mill 115). Cameron aimed to go down the Lualaba River and to prove, by going downstream and eventually reach the coast, that it was not part of the Nile system but of the Congo River.

However, this plan failed and Cameron and the remaining members of his expedition were forced to cross the river and travel to the coast by foot. When they reached the coast of Angola almost three years after leaving Zanzibar, Cameron was suffering badly from scurvy, as he describes in his book (430). Dillon, his “old messmate,” had committed suicide while suffering from fever (20). While in several ways Cameron’s journey was a disaster, and even though he had not been successful in his attempt to travel down the river, he was accredited with proving that the Lualaba was connected with the River Congo and not the Nile system as some had believed. His calculations showed that the Lualaba contained more water than any other river in the area save the Congo and that its level above the sea was lower than that of the Nile, which meant that it could not be part of the Nile system (Cameron 466).

Many questions posed by British geographers about Sub-Saharan Africa were ultimately answered by Henry Morton Stanley. In *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) Stanley describes his journey to Lake Victoria Nyanza, whose circumference Speke had not been able to map in 1862. Stanley’s controversial book was at the time, and is today, probably one of

the most widely read texts about the British (and in Stanley's case British-American) exploration of Sub-Saharan Africa. The condemnation of his aggressive attitude towards Africans, at least in a historical perspective, has probably to some extent contributed to the spread of his accounts of his exploration journeys (Wisnicki 458). After tracing the coast of the great lake, Stanley travelled westwards and went down the Congo in a boat that could be dissembled and carried on land. Stanley's expedition, decimated to about a third of its size when setting out from the east coast, reached a Portuguese outpost at the mouth of the River Congo in August 9 1877, the same year as Cameron's book was published. Stanley's journey down the Congo once and for all showed that Cameron was right when he contended that the Lualaba was connected with the Congo.<sup>7</sup>

Stanley managed to prove that the Lualaba was part of the Congo river system and that Speke was right about the source of the Nile, but his accounts of his travels were not received with unanimous enthusiasm in Great Britain. *Through the Dark Continent* vividly portrayed Stanley's readiness to violence, which its author contended was necessary in order to pave the way for future expeditions and European presence in the areas he travelled through. Describing a situation in which his expedition is met with hostility by people living at the shores of the Victoria Nyanza, Stanley writes about the importance of creating "good impressions for the benefit of those who might succeed the pioneer" (Stanley *Through the Dark Continent* 1: 288). He decides to stage a full on attack on a group of people who were assembled on the island of Bumbireh and blocking his expedition from reaching Uganda. Stanley describes how he and his hired soldiers anchor in one of Bumbireh's bays, outside the range of the warrior's spears, and how he discharges his rifles into the lines of warriors, leaving "several dead and wounded" (292). According to Stanley's own diary, the dead amounted to thirty-three and the wounded to over a hundred (Pakenham 28).

Not everyone in Britain found Stanley's vivid descriptions of his readiness to violence as agreeable as did Sidney Low, who described Stanley as "Warm in love, and sudden in his wrath" in a poem named after the

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<sup>7</sup> Cameron writes in the introductory chapter of *Across Africa* that the journey down the Congo to the West Coast "is now attempted by Mr. Stanley, one of the most successful and energetic of African travelers, under the auspices of *The New York Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*" (19).

traveller.<sup>8</sup> This episode was described by Stanley in a journalistic article that he sent from Africa via telegram and published in *New York Herald* and *Daily Telegraph* (Andersen 162). It created a stir in Great Britain and America where it enraged philanthropists and parts of the general public. Frits Andersen has argued that Stanley, when he had returned from Africa and was writing *Through the Dark Continent*, had the opportunity to present the attack on the Bumbireh island in a different light, but could not retract his story about the massacre and risk being accused of lying (162). He did however point out in his travel account how he did what he could to solve the situation diplomatically, which he had neglected to emphasise in the article (163).

Complaints were filed to the Royal Geographical Society and to the Foreign Office in Great Britain (Pakenham 28). According to *the Records of the Geographical Society*, British Marxist and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society H. M. Hyndman demanded of its Council that Stanley should not be invited to lecture before the Society, and that the Council should speak out against exploration that was facilitated by violence (Mill 119). Hyndman, along with other fellows left the Royal Geographical Society when its council concluded that it had no say in issues concerning expeditions that it did not finance (119). Sir Samuel Baker wrote to his fellow African traveller James Augustus Grant that neither Speke, Grant, Livingstone nor himself “ever presumed upon such acts” as Stanley did, “but suffered intrigue and delays with patience” (qtd. in Pakenham 28). After his return to Great Britain, Stanley addressed the Royal Geographical Society at St. James’s Hall, Baker nonetheless presided on the podium together with the Prince of Wales (Pakenham 59). However, numerous empty seats in the hall showed that the story about Stanley’s explorations had been more violent than many could find acceptable (Pakenham 59).

The massacre on Bumbireh and the moral outraged that Stanley’s report about it caused in Great Britain are mentioned here for two reasons. It shows how Stanley tried and failed to describe himself in a heroic light in his articles as well as in his travel account(s). Stanley almost assuredly exaggerated the It demonstrates how his text and thus also other pieces of travel literature engaged poets, scientists, politicians and the general public in fierce debates about British involvement in Africa.

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<sup>8</sup> Low’s poem was published in *The Autobiography of Henry Morton Stanley*, edited by Dorothy Stanley and published after Henry Stanley’s death. See Stanley, Dorothy in Works Cited.

*Comments on Class and Gender Issues in Exploration Literature*

By definition, exploration accounts of the kind that the pre-Scramble explorers' texts belong to contain ethnographical and geographical narratives that were not in circulation before the texts were published. Exploration literature as a genre is naturally based on proclaimed originality – the production of new knowledge that imbues the travel writer with considerable authority to describe and make observations about people and geographical environments. This authority must also be seen as emanating from a certain construction of class through the use of a vocabulary that attributes a certain level of formal education to the author. This, however, does not mean that the author in question actually did belong to the educated classes. As has been indicated above, none of the explorers came from especially privileged backgrounds.

Another characteristic feature of these texts is that the journey is conceived to be an accomplishment of the individual traveller or travellers, on the one hand, and an accomplishment of their nation on the other.<sup>9</sup> Some went as far as to claim that the British explorer, through his personal accomplishments, stood as an ideal example of British masculinity. For example, author and MP Laurence Oliphant wrote a piece in *Blackwood's Magazine* entitled "Captain Speke's Welcome" in which he contended that in the British explorer "we have all those qualities which we consider typical of the race brought out in strong relief. They are, in fact, our representative men" (qtd. in Wisnicki 456). Oliphant celebrates the explorer not only as an exceptionally courageous servant of the empire, but as the archetypical British man.

It is obvious that both the question of authority and the tendency in exploration literature to describe the successfully completed journey as a personal and national triumph leans on a certain Victorian construction of masculinity. The authority that the narrative voice gains from the claim to be describing hitherto "undiscovered" places and people must be seen in relation to the privileged position male travel writers enjoyed during the latter half of the nineteenth and a good part of the twentieth century. The class and gender positions from which travel writers could attain such

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<sup>9</sup> It may be presumed that, at a time when national identity was formed in relation to the growing British Empire, this nationalist angle contributed to the popularity of exploration literature among the reading public. This applies also to Stanley's texts, even though Stanley did not describe himself as British in the same way as the others. However, Stanley flew the Union Jack besides the Stars and Stripes and contributed largely to British colonial interests.

authority were not only the privilege of male writers, but must be continually claimed and re-claimed through the construction of masculinity in the text.

One way in which masculinity is constructed in the exploration texts is that travel is conceived in terms of physical labour and the exertion of bodily strength. The logic of the (fictional or non-fictional) travel narrative presupposes that it is through travellers' physical efforts and their ability to overcome the hardships of travelling that their travel accounts can come into being. Thus, the production of narratives about certain places and people, which can be understood as a certain kind of knowledge, are dependent on the theme of physical and psychological exertion. Physical exertion, in turn, is often described in terms of physical labour.<sup>10</sup> This way of narrating the journey entails that the traveller takes on characteristics of the worker, whose body is his (because the archetypical Victorian explorer and worker are undoubtedly both men) primary tool, which gets dirty and worn out by unceasing labour. In Cameron's *Across Africa*, to mention one instance, the traveller becomes more exhausted and worn out the closer to the coast he gets. The increasing stress is played out on the body and on Cameron's possessions – especially his clothes. Towards the end of the text, the journey becomes a race in which the body finally triumphs over disease, starvation and exhaustion as Cameron reaches the coast. He is by then bleeding from his mouth (430) and the clothes on his back are rotting (433). "I was almost dead-beat by *this day's work*: for, including all halts, we had been traveling for thirteen hours over rough and difficult country" he writes (426, emphasis added).

The construction of travel as labour entails a certain superficial construction of class and gender in the narrative. The vocabularies of geography, ethnography and biology construct the subject at the centre of the text as a (semi-)learned, male subject insofar as science and academic learning constituted a domain reserved for the Victorian middle- or upper-class man. The construction of travel as labour complicates the construction of the present exploration texts as narratives that are dominated by constructions of middle-class experience. On the one hand, they are written in a way that signals that their authors are educated men who are well versed in geography, anthropology and other areas of study, while on the other hand, the construction of gender in the texts relies equally as much on the

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<sup>10</sup> It may be worth noting that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word *travel* has its etymologic provenance in the Old French word *travail*, which is defined as "suffering or painful effort."

metaphor of labour, which is normally associated with a very different kind of social background.

### *The Scramble Era Travellers and their Texts*

The texts by Mary Kingsley, Ewart Grogan, Mary Hall and Constance Larymore describe an Africa that is characterised by the presence of European economic, missionary and geopolitical interests in Africa. In some of these texts, travellers ride trains and travel roads that have been built on the order of European colonial governments. This body of texts are therefore in many cases different from the texts of the river and lake explorers that were presented in the previous section. However, as will be shown, these differences do not necessarily motivate that the texts written after and describing the colonisation of the Sub-Saharan continent are read as belonging to a separate body of literature than the texts written before the period of intensified colonial competition between European nations. As has been hinted above, these differences primarily concern such things as the available modes of transport, rather than the way in which Africa and Africans are described.

An example of a text that is hardly an exploration text, but which repeats many tropes and themes that are characteristic of the explorers' travel accounts is Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897). Kingsley made two journeys to West Africa in the 1890s, primarily to Gabon and Cameroon, professedly to undertake anthropological and zoological studies in the region. In *Travels in West Africa*, which describes her second journey, Kingsley does not claim that her text will solve old geographical debates, as Speke, Cameron and Stanley do. However, in a passage that is comparable to a similar passage in Speke's book, she writes that her journey has taken her to places "where people have been little, or not at all, in contact with European ideas" (431).<sup>11</sup> Alison Blunt accredits Kingsley with being "the first European to cross from the Ogowé to the Rembwé by the route she followed" (73). Blunt also points out that Kingsley claimed to be "the third Englishman to ascend the Peak [of Cameroons, or Fako] and the first to have ascended it

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<sup>11</sup> Speke writes in the introduction to the *Journal* that he "profess[es] accurately to describe naked Africa — Africa in those places where it has not received the slightest impulse, whether for good or for evil, from European civilization" (xvii).

from the south-east face" (Blunt 74; Kingsley 550, emphasis added).<sup>12</sup> The fact that Kingsley includes herself among Englishmen is an example of how Kingsley tends to oscillate between different gender roles and between the role of explorer and lady traveller.

Kingsley's idiosyncratic vocabulary highlights the gender dimension of the way in which discourses of exploration literature meet less homogeneously gendered discourses of other kinds of travel literature in her text. The claims that Kingsley makes are similar to, for instance, Cameron's claim to be the first (European man) to cross the African continent from east to west. The construction of gender in Kingsley's book is indeed complex, and as Dea Birkett writes, this complexity is partly because she uses humour and irony "to soften the contradictions inherent in her position as a lady *and* traveller in West Africa" (50). What is more, as McEwan points out in *Gender, Geography and Empire: Victorian Women Travellers in West Africa* (2000), Kingsley "adopted several masculine personae (explorer, trader, ichthyologist, anthropologist" to lend credence to her opinions on the state of British imperialism" (17). Therefore, whether the focus is on the content of the text – its wide variety of topics, ranging from tea parties to detailed discussions of anthropological and zoological matters – or on the construction of the travelling subject's identity, Kingsley's text is impossible to classify in terms of the exploration literature/generic travel literature distinction. Kingsley's text could, and should, in other words be seen as belonging to the same kind of literature as the Nile and Congo explorers' texts, *and* as a more traditional travel account describing a personal experience rather than an event of national concern.

According to herself, Kingsley's main motivations for her journey were to collect specimens of fresh-water fish and study what she calls *fetish* (7). The term is derived from the Portuguese language, she explains, and was used by Portuguese traders "to designate the objects they thought the natives worshipped" (429). However, in her own vocabulary the word *fetish* refers to "the African form of thought" (429), or "the wild West African idea" (430). Ideological tenets, such as "legal and social systems" as one of her biographers has it (Birkett 81), are included under the generic concept of *fetish* in Kingsley's book. The other aim with her journeys to West Africa was

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<sup>12</sup> Mark W. DeLancey and H. Mbella Mokeba write that "the mountain is located in the Buea area and is known by the local inhabitants as the Fako" (134). Fako is the highest of the peaks and the mountain is also known as Mongo ma Ndemi

to collect specimens of fresh water fish. She brought back specimens of several species of fish and presented them to the British Museum, which financed her second journey. In an appendix to her book, Kingsley's finds from her journey along the Ogooué River in Gabon are listed and described by an assistant at the zoological department at the British Museum.<sup>13</sup> Some of the specimens included in the list, its author writes, are "of considerable interest" (718). Three species of fish had not been incorporated into the taxonomies of European science and were named after Kingsley; *Ctenopoma Kingsleyae*, *Alestes Kingsleyae* and *Momryrus Kingsleyae* (Birkett 81).

Kingsley first travelled in West Africa from August 1893 to January 1894, and returned for a second journey (from December 1894 to November 1895), which she describes in *Travels in West Africa* (Blunt 48). Writing about Kingsley's first time in Africa, Alison Blunt states that Kingsley "called in" at Freetown, Cape Coast, Accra, the Bight of Benin, Bonny and St. Paul do Loanda (48). She travelled several months through Cabinda, the Congo Free State, French Congo and Cameroons until she reached Calabar, from which she sailed home (50). On the second journey she travelled to Bioko (which was then called Fernando Po) in the Gulf of Guinea, via Sierra Leone, the coast of what is today Ghana, and Calabar in Nigeria. From Bioko she sailed to the coast of Gabon and landed there just south of Libreville at May 20<sup>th</sup> 1895. From there she went to the mouth of the Ogooué River and travelled upstream as far as the rapids west of Ndjolé.<sup>14</sup>

*Travels in West Africa* was an instant commercial success. Six months after its publication four more editions had been printed, earning the publisher a good £3000 (Blunt 61). Kingsley became a sought after speaker and gave public lectures that were attended by audiences two thousand strong (Birkett 153). Blunt writes that Kingsley made "political proposals and presented her research on, most notably, fetish" In her second book *West African Studies* (1899) (61). Kingsley's second book is, as Blunt implies, an ethnographical book rather than a conventional travel narrative. However, it draws on the authority that the previous travel narrative may have given the author. The title page of the first edition of *West African Studies* points out that the book is written "by Mary Kingsley author of 'Travels in West Africa'" (iii), and her second journey to West Africa as well as her first book are

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<sup>13</sup> In *Travels in West Africa*, the name of the river is spelled *Ogowé*, while *Ogououé* is the conventional spelling today.

<sup>14</sup> *Ndjolé* is now the conventional spelling of the place name Kingsley spelled *Njole*.

alluded to already in the preface: “You may remember that after my return from a second journey to West Africa, where I had been to work at fetish and fresh-water fishes, I published a word swamp of a book” she writes in the preface (x). This sentence alone is a telling example of the fact that Kingsley, at times, speaks with considerable authority. As she indicates, this authority comes partly from the astonishing amount of information she made available to anthropological and zoological experts and to the common and metropolitan reader.

Ewart Scott Grogan (1874–1967) travelled in his early twenties from Portuguese East Africa to Egypt around the turn of the century. He had been asked to discontinue his studies at Jesus College in Cambridge after having herded a flock of sheep into a tutor’s office and kept them there for a day or two (Paice 21) and soon decided to go to Africa to answer colonial celebrity Cecil Rhode’s call for volunteers to fight the Ndebele who were revolting in Southern Rhodesia (23). After the war, and after Grogan had caused considerable inconvenience for the British administration by killing a Portuguese soldier in a dance hall brawl in Biera, he went home to England (43). However, he soon left England again, this time for New Zealand, where he met a young woman by the name of Gertrude Watt. Only a few days after first meeting her, Grogan asked her stepfather, James Coleman, for permission to marry Gertrude. When Coleman asked him about his prospects in life, Grogan answered that he intended to undertake the first north to south traverse of Africa and by doing so “hope[d] to prove worthy” to marry Coleman’s stepdaughter (qtd. in Paice 50). Having received financial backing by Gertrude’s aunt Caroline Eyres and having teamed up with Gertrude’s wealthy and bored uncle “Harry” Sharp in England, Grogan sailed to Africa.

The fact that one of the reasons for Grogan’s decision to go to Africa and to endeavour the symbolically significant trans-African journey was to impress his future father-in-law can of course be seen as part of the explanation for the boastful tone in his text and the eagerness with which he describes himself as an able and determined young man. However, even though the misleading title of his book, *From the Cape to Cairo: The First Traverse of Africa from South to North*, suggests that Grogan started his journey in the Cape colony, Grogan only travelled in the Cape colony before setting out on his journey from Portuguese East Africa (Blake 20). In other words, the title of his book misrepresents the journey that he actually made

through Africa. The exorbitant title is only one example of the romantic misconstruals that are prevalent in his book, particularly regarding the way he describes himself.

In his text he represents himself as a person of “public significance” by posing as a surveyor of Cecil Rhode’s project of building a telegraph line between the Cape colony and Cairo (Grogan xv, Blake 20). Grogan’s obvious admiration for Cecil Rhodes is significant, and not only because it shows how Grogan is at pains to inflate his own public persona by associating himself with this colonial celebrity and capitalist genius, but also because Rhodes is what David Livingstone was to his predecessors, such as Speke and Cameron. While Livingstone was known to the general British public as a visionary and philanthropist with an unceasing Christian pathos, Rhodes is praised by Grogan simply for being a determined and successful colonial businessman. Colonial Africa, to Grogan, is not a place that needs to be illuminated by the word of God, and the British man in Africa does not have to play the role as a firm but fair instructor of his fellow man. Instead, Grogan’s archetypal colonial persona is, as Rhodes, someone who is there to build railroads and telegraph lines and, ultimately, to make a fortune out of this rich continent. Rhodes was convinced to write a brief introduction to Grogan’s book, and produced one that can be described as rather stand-offish in tone. Rhodes does complement Grogan on having realised “the ambition of every explorer,” to travel through Africa from South to North (vii), but soon shifts his attention from this, admittedly exceptional, “Cambridge undergraduate” to vague visions of future infrastructural projects (vii).

The second reason that he undertook his journey was to go big game hunting and *From the Cape to Cairo* is full of detailed stories about how Grogan shoots a wide variety of animals. Discussing these passages, Susan L. Blake rightly states that “the protagonist” of his travel narrative “is in constant combat with Africa” (22). She makes this point when comparing Grogan’s *From the Cape to Cairo* to Hall’s *A Woman’s Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907) published some seven years after Grogan’s travel account, and calls attention to the differences in terms of the travellers’ relations to Africa and the anonymous, stereotypical African other. Grogan’s metaphorical battle against the landscape and the African other certainly separates him from Hall’s persona. However, he shares this battle with other, male, travellers. In asserting authority by battling the landscape, by physically

punishing his carriers and by describing the landscape in terms of a female body which he conquers sexually (Blake 24), Grogan adheres to the literary genre of accounts of exploration and colonial conquest, written predominantly, if not exclusively, by men.

In his travel account, Grogan describes the progression of the British imperial colonisation of East Africa and the modernisation of the parts of the continent that are colonised by Europeans. As suggested by the fact that he construes his journey as part of Rhode's grandiose project of building a transcontinental telegraph connection, he forms his own persona as a pioneer of modernity in Africa. In the introduction to his book, he writes that he wants to convince his readers that "the trans-continental communication by electricity and steam, so far from being the wild dream, treated with such shameless cruelty by those whose range of vision is limited to the end of their nose" is, thanks to people like Cecil Rhodes, "a looming reality of the near future" (xv). The modernisation of Africa, which to Grogan is obviously inseparable from the colonisation of the continent, is described as a project that is well under way. Therefore, even though the triumphant title of his book is similar to such titles as Cameron's *Across Africa* and Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent*, Grogan's book is different from these earlier texts in that the continent that it describes is an already colonised Africa.

Grogan further describes the railroads, the printing of literature at missionary stations and how coffee plantations could be made more profitable. Such descriptions are combined with long narratives about big game hunting and quarrels with his carriers and his co-traveller Arthur S. Sharpe who also contributed a chapter to the book. Grogan returned to Africa, mainly Kenya, during the First World War. He became the President of the Colonists' Association and was, according to Thomas Pakenham, so "keen on showing that Kenya was 'white man's country'" that his firmness against the native population outraged people back home (654).

Mary Hall's (1857-1912) *A Woman's Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907) describes Hall's journey through Africa from South to North. Like Grogan, she did not actually travel from the Cape Colony, as the title implies, but from Portuguese East Africa to Egypt. Similarly, the title of her book, like Grogan's, is justified by previous travels in southern Africa, as Susan L. Blake has pointed out (20). At the time of her journey through Africa she was an experienced traveller whose reason for travelling was from the beginning, as Blake writes, for health reasons (21). Hall claims to have visited "all the other

great continents of the world” before turning her “attention” to Africa (Hall2). The motivation she gives for the journey is her interest in “new countries and peoples” and the fact that she has always “considered travelling the most delightful method of studying geography” (2).

Hall’s text constructs Hall-the-traveller as a tourist and Africa as being rapidly transformed by Eurocolonial presence. On her journey through Africa Hall used different modes of transport, ranging from trains to rickshaws. She was also carried for long stretches by hired men in a *machila*, a kind of hammock suspended from a pole. She crossed Lake Nyasa, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Victoria Nyanza and Lake Albert and took the route down the White Nile to Cairo. In the text, European colonial presence in Africa has effects on travel. Railways stretch out across the landscape and old steamers take people across the big lakes that were explored by travellers like Speke and Stanley a few decades before. Consequently, the traveller is constructed as a tourist, who does not travel “as an explorer, or in furtherance of any scientific object such as zoology, or botany,” but “simply as one who is interested in fresh countries and peoples,” as a reviewer of her book put it (“Africa from South to North”).

While the infrastructural and cultural effects of colonialism shape the way in which travel is portrayed in Hall’s text, the way in which travel is portrayed also feeds into the narration of Eurocolonial presence in Africa. Susan L. Blake points out in an article on Hall’s book that:

[t]he argument of her narrative is that ordinary travelers, particularly women, can travel in Africa. It is supported by references to comfortable hotels and convenient trains in colonial southern Africa and Egypt and by accounts of amicable relations with porters and villages in the less known and therefore more interesting territory between. (27)

Whereas hotels and railways make it possible for “ordinary” Europeans to travel in Africa, travel itself has effects on the way in which people and the landscape are interpreted, as is shown in a paragraph about the “tourist’s” encounter with a group of monkeys. The monkeys are imagined by Hall to be thinking that the “British tourist is even here, now! Where shall we get away from the monster!” (7). As an effect of colonialism, travel patterns push the

borders of spaces where Europeans are not usually seen. However, even though travel in *A Woman's Trek from the Cape to Cairo* involves train rides and days spent aboard steamships, Hall's text at times draws on the image of the traveller as a pioneer who crosses land where people are "hardly yet accustomed to white people, even of the male sex" (218). Hall draws upon exploration literature by making a similar claim as the Nile and Congo explorers did, and, it could be argued, even compares herself with them by pointing out that she is not only the first white woman, but the first white person in some of the places she travelled through. It is worth noting, however, that while the pre-Scramble explorers claimed to be the first to travel from one point to another, or to "discover" certain places, Hall focuses on her encounters with the African other. In other words, she does not claim to be the first white person to see a certain region, but typically describes herself as the first white person to be seen by someone in a certain region.

Constance Larymore's *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* (1908) tells the story of Larymore's five years in Nigeria.<sup>15</sup> Larymore travelled to Nigeria together with her husband in the spring of 1902. She and her husband travelled through Nigeria by train (64), pump-trolley (65), and steel canoe, on horseback and aboard steamers (26). From Sierra Leone they went to Lokoja in Nigeria, from which they made trips into the surrounding region before travelling to Bida to the northwest of Lokoja and Egga in the East. They stayed for periods of different length at Kabba, Kano and other locations where Larymore's husband, who was employed within the colonial administration, was stationed. Cheryl McEwan emphasises that Larymore had limited "personal control" of her journeys, because the journey was conditioned by her husband's "changing responsibilities" (29). Her journey is in other words not her own personal project, which may be one reason why travel is described in terms that to a large extent are suggestive of leisure rather than work. When describing her travels away from Lokoja, Larymore uses words like "tour" (11) and "trekking" (61). She holds dinner parties, plays with exotic pets and enjoys a game of polo.

Larymore's book is made up of two distinct parts, the first consisting of a travel narrative and the second of "household hints" – instructions and pieces of advice directed to compatriots on how to set up and maintain a

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<sup>15</sup> No data available concerning Constance Larymore's years of birth and death (McEwan 18).

household in Nigeria. When discussing the latter part of Larymore's book, McEwan writes that:

As well as performing the supporting role of 'wife,' she also undertook what she perceived to be the necessary public service of studying and observing life in west Africa, and passing on her advice to other prospective colonial wives through her publication. She was concerned to inform other women how best to fulfil their domestic duties in an imperial setting, and to contribute to the cause of British imperialism in west Africa. (29).

McEwan's discussion of the household hints points to two aspects of gender relations in the Victorian Age. First that Larymore-the-traveller, though travelling in the colonial periphery, largely remains within the frame of the role of dutiful wife in the Victorian construction of gender. The section on household hints is based on a specific construction of gender, and a division of labour that is based on gender in an imperial setting. Secondly, McEwan's discussion of Larymore's hints points to the fact that the proposed division of labour and the construction of gender in Larymore's text are interpretable as being instrumental in a pro-colonial political agenda. In the section about household hints, as well as the first part of the book, the colonial wife's duties are constructed as duties to her husband as well as to "the British Empire in Nigeria" (McEwan 29).

Compared to *Travels in West Africa*, Larymore's text conforms to a greater extent to the way in which the travelling subject, as well as the themes and narrative style that belong to the subgenre, are constructed in relation to the context of the journey. While the travelling subject in *Travels in West Africa* oscillates between the roles of tourist and explorer, and between casual observer and scientist, the subject in *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* is less dynamic, which is not to say that it is without complexity. Larymore's text, like Hall's and Kingsley's, contains rhetorical devices that are commonly associated with literature about exploration. Larymore at times professes to be one of the few Europeans to have seen certain places (McEwan 68). As has been pointed out, the kind of literature in which such claims are common – that is, literature of exploration – was already considered by contemporary readers to be a body of literature that described

the archetypical British man. Thus, when Larymore claims to be the first human to have “penetrated” a certain forest, she draws upon literary tropes from a genre of literature that is dominated by male authors and that is characterised by “masculine” activities like hunting and fighting.

However, Larymore does not construct her narrative around the same kind of prefatory claims as those that structure the texts by Speke, Cameron, Stanley and Kingsley. She does not maintain that her book will solve age-old geographical mysteries or present stories about how certain kinds of animals were incorporated in the taxonomies of the natural sciences. “My excuse” for submitting the text for publication, she writes in the preface, “is that I have been specially fortunate in having opportunities and privileges of travelling about a little in the world where few Englishmen have been” (vii). The term “Englishmen” does not necessarily include the travelling subject as it does in Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa*.<sup>16</sup> Larymore’s prefatory “excuse” is however characteristic of her text. While her “opportunities and privileges” speak of class and her “travelling about” suggests that her journey does not have a single, predominant goal but rather acts as an aim in itself, the claim that she has visited places where few “Englishmen have been” works to distinguish the text from accounts of journeys, for example, within Europe.

Larymore’s itinerary differs from the more linear and circular itineraries of the travellers discussed above. Larymore’s and her husband’s itinerary can be described as neither linear nor circular because Larymore and her husband travelled back and forth between different locations and often returned to Lokoja in the south. In contrast to Mary Kingsley and the East Africa explorers’ texts, Larymore’s travel account also includes more than one journey back to Great Britain. On one of these journeys back to Great Britain Larymore and her husband meet two Arab traders heading to London to attempt to make a profit out of a load of ostrich feathers (140–141). Larymore describes how she and her husband decide to try to help the Arab merchants and, eventually, how they all go shopping for clothes in Tottenham Court Road so that the “colourful” Arabs could blend in (142–143). In other words, Larymore does not travel from the metropolitan sphere into the colonial periphery and back, but moves in and out of what she calls “modernity” (81).

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<sup>16</sup> See page 65 above for a quotation from *Travels in West Africa* where Kingsley claims to be the third Englishman to have ascended Fako or “the Peak of Cameroons.”

As the above presentations show, the Scramble era texts do not repeat narratives of personal and scientific accomplishments to the same extent as their predecessors did. The exploration texts often describe how the traveller manages and controls a large body of (predominately African) carriers through threats of violence and even, in Grogan's case, by threatening to kill those of his carriers who fail to obey his orders (122). The fact that colonial infrastructural projects made it possible for the latter group of travellers to hire a comparatively small number of people to carry their supplies and equipment means that these travellers' relations to their hired carriers are different from the relation between the explorers and the members of their expeditions, which could be several hundred strong.

Furthermore, the later texts often discuss sites and activities that other travellers may want to experience or that they should avoid. They are therefore part of a general discussion of African travel, whereas texts such as Speke's, Cameron's and Stanley's are more easily read as being associated with speculative discussions about African geography and the potential for future colonisation and missionary projects. It would, however, be less than accurate to understand this fact as meaning that the Scramble era texts do not discuss geography, missionary projects and colonialism. The difference between them is rather in *how* these topics are discussed. The exploration texts draw conclusions about whether certain people are receptive of religious instruction or not, what regions should be colonised, where traders may make profits and where certain rivers flow into the ocean. The Scramble era texts, in turn, discuss the effectiveness or weaknesses colonies and protectorates and report from already mapped regions. Their difference, in other words, is historical and contextual to a larger extent than discursive or literary.

### **The Material Object in Victorian Culture: Exhibitions, Museums, Empire and Text**

With the rise of commodity capitalism in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain, and through the expansion of markets through changes in colonial geo-politics, the number of commodities that were available to the consuming classes of the metropolitan centre proliferated. The nature of industrial capitalism accelerated the commodification of natural resources and human labour. At the same time, material objects,

disengaged from the circuits of economic exchange, played the role of signifiers in visual regimes that were associated with both the colonial periphery and the industrialised centre. In colonial metropolises like London and Manchester, objects that had been bought or stolen in Africa by travellers and missionaries were used, in exhibitions and later through institutions like the Victoria and Albert museum, to represent the colonial periphery to the metropolitan public.

In the 1851, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, which was held at the Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park, at the centre of the centre of the Eurocentric world map. This event stands out as a pivotal moment in the historiography of Victorian commodity culture and commodity capitalism. It was a monumental event that served to illustrate both the Victorian celebration of the diversity and splendour in the world of objects and the fascination with objects' capacity to embody stories about foreign lands, technical revolutions and the accumulation of different kinds of value. When it closed, six months after the grand opening, there had been more than six million paid entrances (Auerbach 1). It attracted millions of visitors from the highest social stratum, including Queen Victoria, to London working class visitors, who could attend the exhibition on days when the entrance fee was reduced from more than five shillings to one (Auerbach 128). A special transportation system, including railways, was constructed in order to facilitate the traffic to and from the Great Exhibition (Richards 4).

The exhibition did not only display the most extraordinary of things, but also dramatized the diversity of the world and the capacity of industrialised production. By displaying the means of production, the commodities that could be produced and the raw materials they were made from, the exhibition demonstrated the economic and industrial capacities of the contemporary market. More than one hundred thousand objects were exhibited, including samples of different kinds of wood and metal, clocks, sculptures, heavy machinery and different kinds of raw materials and a multitude of other classes and forms of objects (Auerbach 91, Cole). However, new inventions and sophisticated machinery were not the only types of objects that were exhibited at the Crystal palace. The "grandeur" of the exhibition, Charlotte Brontë wrote in the summer of 1851, did "not consist in *one* thing, but in the assemblage of *all* things" (Brontë 115-116). The colonial world, which was to rapidly grow in size before the end of the century, was represented at the Exhibition through certain symbolic objects

and samples of raw materials. The visitor could examine such objects as African spears, the Kōh-i Nūr diamond and various art objects, ostrich feathers, pieces of coal and the hides of various animals. According to the map in the first part of the exhibition catalogue, the very core of the Crystal Palace was devoted to crafted objects and, especially, raw materials from colonised regions that were under British rule.<sup>17</sup>

Through such objects, the exhibition turned the complexity of the world, which increased with the mapping and narrating of the most remote and inhospitable regions of the globe, into a “universe of commodities,” as Walter Benjamin writes in “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century” (153). Through juxtaposition of objects associated with the modern metropolis and objects that represented the colonial periphery, the great Exhibition was conceived as an event that temporarily and in a limited space reduced the temporal distance between different societies and different parts of the world. In a lecture on “The General bearing of the Great Exhibition on the Progress of Art and Science”, English polymath William Whewell wrote that “by annihilating the space which separates different nations, we produce a spectacle in which is also annihilated the time which separates one stage of a nation’s progress from another” (qtd. in Miller 54).

The sheer number of objects that were shipped from remote colonies to the Crystal Palace is suggestive of Great Britain’s capacity to organise logistic circuits across the world. This logistical demonstration can in turn be seen as a demonstration of a nation’s capacity to establish and maintain an empire of the scale that the British Empire would attain a few decades after the Great Exhibition. The visitor could read in the exhibition catalogue that the reason why the Great Exhibition was held in London rather than elsewhere in Europe was due to the “perfect security for property; the commercial freedom, and the facility of transport” guaranteed by Great Britain as an industrial and civilised nation with imperial ambitions (1). Therefore, while the visual rhetoric of the Great Exhibition presented the material manifestation of civilisation through machinery and commodities, the industry’s access to the most exotic raw materials and the abundance of different commodities in circulation, the planning and the establishment of the exhibition in itself, according to the catalogue, embodied civilisation at work.

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<sup>17</sup> The exhibition catalogue is listed under “Cole” in Works Cited.

Subsequently described as a “monument to industrial progress,” a “museum of modernity” (McClintock 57), and as one of “the sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish” (Benjamin 151), the Great Exhibition staged the convergence of industrial capitalism and the concept of civilisation, which at the time went through a process of semantic transformation. In *Victorian Anthropology* George W. Stocking writes about the denotations of the concept in England in the decades after the 1830s. According to Stocking, *civilisation* took on a set of implicit associations in the mid-Victorian period, and debates about civilisation drew on economics, politics, morality, and class. He writes that, although “the ostensible reference was still to a generalized progress of knowledge, technique, social organization, and morality, civilization often tended to imply a number of things that were more specific reflections of recent British experience” (35). “Recent British experience,” it seems, is to be understood as referring to transformations within British industry as well as the impact of ideologies that followed with these transformations. Stocking lists political and material elements like “the factory system and free trade[,] representative government and liberal political institutions” as well as “a middle-class standard of material comfort,” but also ideological phenomena such as “the middle-class ethic of self-discipline” as parts of the semantic substance of the word *civilisation* in the mid-Victorian era (35).

From the point of view of Stocking’s discussion of the concept of civilisation, it is possible to understand the Great Exhibition as an embodiment of both the ostensible and covert semantic substance of *civilisation* as it was manifested around the mid-1800s. Through objects and commodities, the Great Exhibition represented the factory system, free trade and, among other things, “a middle-class standard” of comfort. What the Exhibition ultimately embodied, then, was civilisation as a combination of industrialism and colonialism.

Paradoxically, the concept of civilisation was intimately associated with the nation. In the discourses in which the idea of civilisation was crystallised, industrial capacity was brought together with other material as well as ideological tenets that were associated with a specific nation. The authors of the exhibition catalogue therefore thought it motivated to suggest, “without presumption, that an event like the Exhibition could not have taken place at any earlier period, and perhaps not among any other people than ourselves” (Cole 1). Even though the innumerable objects that were crammed

into the Crystal Palace derived from the industries of rivalling countries and their colonies, the exhibition itself formed a body of material evidence that proved the self-perceived logistical superiority of the British. Consequently, though the rhetoric that surrounded the presentation of the Exhibition emphasised its international character, the civilisation on display was first and foremost the queen's empire. Therefore, and in conclusion, the Great Exhibition can be seen from the vantage point of the present as an event in which the object was given a central and important symbolic and semiotic role in the British imperial project.

However, the combination of this semiotic role with the idea of newness and modernity produces a kind of paradox that points back to the colonial world and the ambiguities and uncertainties of colonial discourse. The fact that the Great Exhibition presented rapid developments within industry and the new face of civilisation to its visitors meant that written accounts that described the exhibition could describe it as defying interpretation. The thousands of objects displayed at the exhibition thus, via the concept of civilisation, motivated narratives about the lack of available vocabularies to describe the innumerable objects that embodied industrial progress and the width and breadth of colonial economic networks. When Charlotte Brontë visited the Crystal Palace in the summer of 1851 and wrote about her impressions of the spectacle in a letter to her father Patrick Brontë, she used the idea of semiotic overload and the inability of language to describe the sparkling newness of the spectacle for effect: "It is a wonderful place" she wrote, "vast, strange, new and impossible to describe" (Brontë 115-116). Her lack of adequate words to describe the spectacle, when seen against the backdrop of Stocking's delineation of the concept of civilisation, enters into a paradoxical relationship involving civilisation and its conceptual opposite: words like "strange" and "wonderful" as well as the subject's inability to describe what is new are common in descriptions of encounters between the peoples of the colonial periphery and European traveller's possessions. The theme of the African's first encounter with Victorian commodity culture has been discussed by Tomas Richards in *The Commodity Culture of Victorian Britain* (1990) and by Anne McClintock, who refers to this trope in *Imperial Leather* as "the myth of first contact" (223). While the African other is portrayed in travel narratives as unable to interpret objects that embody technical developments and elements of civilisation as a concept, the same kind of semiotic confusion pertains to

accounts of descriptions of objects that are metonymically associated with the very heart of the colonial metropolis.

While such public spectacles as the Great Exhibition celebrated modernity through the commodities and objects and the unprecedented ability to collect them in one place, other institutions that the proceeds from the Exhibition helped to establish created a complimentary image of modernity's outside. McClintock writes in *Imperial Leather* that the museum, "as the modern fetish-house of the archaic ... became the exemplary institution for embodying the Victorian narrative of progress" (40). Bones, stones and bits of earthen pots were displayed in museums in which they created a link to a past time that the male middle and upper class segments of the metropolis had ostensibly left behind in the rapid progress towards new forms of modernity.

This past time can be understood in terms of what McClintock calls "anachronistic space." Anachronistic space, as McClintock uses it, is the corresponding time-space to that in which the rational, enlightened modern subject belongs. The colonised peoples of the British Empire are inhabitants of this anachronistic sphere, which therefore may seem synonymous with the colonial periphery. However, British women and the urban (and indeed metropolitan) working class are also inhabitants of anachronistic space, which also takes the form of a metaphorical space. The trope of anachronistic space, McClintock writes "reached full authority as an administrative and regulatory technology in the late Victorian era. Within this trope, the agency of women, the colonized and the industrial working class are disavowed and projected onto anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity" (40). Early metropolitan museums, together with exhibitions such as the seminal Great Exhibition, created a kind of spatiotemporal separation of modern centre and anachronistic space, including the primitive periphery, through the organisation of things into spectacles.

To conclude this brief discussion of the Great Exhibition, it can now be stated that because of its unprecedented scale, it stands out as a symbolic event in the formation of Victorian commodity culture, and the specific spatiotemporal imagination that accompanied Great Britain's imperial ambitions around the world. The Great Exhibition translated a great part of the world into an abundance of objects, packed into one architectural space, in an inherently imperial demonstration of logistical capacity. Even though

this display of over a hundred thousand objects demonstrated the diversity in the world of objects, the commodity form functioned as a universalising principle at the exhibition (McClintock 58). The Great Exhibition showed that the commodity form applies to (almost) all objects, regardless whether they are ostrich feather or diamonds, machinery or pieces of coal. While the universalising power of the commodity form was celebrated at this museum of modernity, other objects that were on display served to show to the metropolitan visitor that time and condition to which modernity is contrasted to. At institutions like the British Museum, the visitor could study archaeological objects as well as ethnological exhibits that indicated the merits of modernity by giving the visitor a glimpse into a primitive, pre-modern world and modernity's past.

### *Objects in Victorian Literature*

Sometime around the turn of the eighteenth century, a change occurred in the way in which objects were described in English literature. This change, Cynthia Wall argues, was qualitative rather than quantitative, since with the advent of the Victorian novel detailed description became "respectable" after having been viewed with suspicion in the previous centuries (4). Description and the enumeration of things were now given considerable attention. In the Victorian realist novel, characters' possessions signified social class and gender. Commodities and collectibles filled the homes of heroes and heroines. Personal items had the potential of exposing the most intricate details of the identity of their owners, as Elaine Freedgood points out when reading Arthur Conan Doyle's fiction (150).

In *The Ideas in Things*, Freedgood utilises this relationship between objects and their presumed processes of provenance in her analysis of Victorian realist literature. She shows how commodities that emanated from the colonial periphery, like mahogany furniture in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, hint at the wide stretched empire beyond the borders of Great Britain (81-110). They do this through a metonymical relationship between cause and effect. In *Jane Eyre*, a piece of mahogany furniture (the effect) is connected to British colonies overseas through its production process (the cause). The piece of mahogany furniture in Moor House where Jane Eyre stays with the Rivers siblings, is there because trees have been cut down in a colony far beyond the premises of Moor House and made into pieces of wood

that have been fitted together to make a piece of furniture and that eventually ends up in Moor House. Likewise, the wonder and sense of newness that the Great Exhibition obviously inspired as well as the wonder which traveller's possessions arouse in the other in British travel writing are due partly to the idea that certain kinds of objects represent civilisation or modernity by being products of certain technical developments. In such cases, objects do not inspire awe and wonder because they gesture metaphorically to wonderful ideas beyond themselves, but because they exist in a certain place because of certain technical, economic and logistical processes.

This way of reading objects in realist literature, including travel literature, may seem to be a rather simple analytical operation, but shows how realist description links even the most domestic spheres described in Victorian fiction with an increasingly complex economic and political reality. To read the environment and material culture in realist literature in this way is to base the reading of the text on the very basic assumptions of realist fiction, namely that the world as we perceive it is the effect of complex chains of cause and effect in every facet of everyday life. Benita Parry sees material culture, or objects, as a trace of the colony in the metropolis — a “material and psychic dispersal of empire within the everyday life of British society” (113). In “Reading the Signs of Empire in Metropolitan Fiction” she writes that in the last decades of the nineteenth century:

Britain's renowned rule over a quarter of the globe was everywhere visible within the domestic space, whether in the shape of luxurious carpets, furniture, ceramics, shawls and jewellery, or in the rubber and copper widely used in manufacturing industries, or in the form of ordinary household goods such as foods, textiles and soaps containing raw materials from the West Indies, Asia and Africa, and often bearing names and logos associated with overseas ventures. (113)

As implied in this passage, the British import of rather trivial commodities from distant parts of the empire is a concrete example of how imperialism was domesticated in the metropolis. Things associated with the Orient (luxurious carpets), Africa (rubber) and India (textiles) became constitutive elements of the middle class home. The metropolitan consumption of

colonial goods can be read as part of the general concentration of wealth, and also demonstrates how the colonial world, the economic engine of progress and accumulation, is simultaneously absent and present in domestic space. However, the luxurious carpet in the drawing room in a Victorian novel can also be read, on a more symbolical level, as a material sign of the perceived political, economic and cultural superiority of the British middle class in relation to the subjects of the growing empire.

Parry writes that objects such as the ones listed above, and the proliferation of narratives about empire, show how “facts and fantasies about vast overseas possessions ... enlarged the imaginative landscape of significant numbers in the imperial homeland” (113). At the same time, imperial goods and narratives about imperial adventures “form[ed] or confirm[ed] an elevated self-image in the reader/viewer” (113). However, while the consumption of foreign and exotic goods as well as narratives about the colonial world informed the self-image of the British middle class, “the ready acceptance of commodities and artefacts,” as Parry points out, “was joined to the refusal of the cognitive and cultural traditions of the foreign lands as authentic systems of knowledge” (113). Therefore, the fact that exotic objects deriving from the periphery were brought into the metropolitan home is not to be understood as an acceptance and domestication of exotic culture. If Parry is right, the presence of exotic rugs and other luxury goods in the Victorian novel is not primarily justified by their tacit stories about the cultural contexts they derive from. Instead, the exotic objects and materials in question gain their symbolic status through their metonymical and material relation to colonial economics and politics. In other words, these objects speak of the British colonial/imperial project, rather than colonised cultures and peoples.

Material changes at the site of industry and in relations between the colonial centre and its periphery do have effects on the metonymical reading of objects. In the travel narratives studied in the following chapters, commodities of industrial provenance are metonymically linked with contemporary markets and the contemporary modes of production. Other objects that are described in travel accounts have metonymical relations to narratives about places that had only recently been mapped and groups of people who had recently been described in European ethnographical literature for the first time. They are therefore in one sense unlike objects that appear in the literature of the previous century, which, as a result of

their different modes of production and different relations to the colonial centre, are associated with a different historical and material context. Consequently, regardless of developments within travel literature itself, there are inevitably qualitative differences between the metonymical meaning of objects in Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799) and Henry Morton Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) as much as between *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-69) and *Great Expectations* (1860-1). In Stanley's and Dickens's books the object, whether a commodity in the British middle-class home or a bracelet worn by Mtesa, king of Uganda (1837-1885), was associated with a different materiality than the objects mentioned in the literature of Laurence Stern (1713-1768) and Mungo Park (1771-1806).

While Freedgood investigates the metonymical potential of objects in realist fiction in her study of the "fugitive meaning in the Victorian novel," she also points out that even though objects may allow readings of themselves as metonyms, the bulk of objects in realist prose perform other roles. While objects may be read as hinting towards processes and places beyond themselves, their potential to take on metonymic meaning does not mean that in the context of the Victorian novel their primary job is to evoke associations to colonies and factories. Drawing on Roland Barthes, Freedgood argues that, in most cases, material objects in Victorian realist prose do not demand interpretation as metonyms, but rather cause a "reality effect" by signifying "a generic real" (9). "Insignificant notation" of details creates an ambiance that is needed for a text to be a realist text. In Barthes's use of the word, "insignificant" means "apparently detached from the semiotic structure of the narrative" (Barthes 12). To Freedgood, this reality effect ensures that readers can "interpret realism adequately *and* protect it and [themselves] from being overwhelmed by allegorical surfeit" (9). Therefore, objects become significant for the realism of Victorian literature to the extent that they are not salient in the text, but make up silent and insignificant matter in the background of the story.

The realist preference for the detailed description of objects is also manifested in the realism of the travel literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century. In this body of literature too, insignificant notation causes a kind of "reality effect." Travel writers describe ornamental objects, clothes, weapons, cooking utensils and other possessions belonging to people that they encounter during journeys through Sub-Saharan Africa, because, as

Barthes has it, the reality which insignificant notation simulates “becomes the essential reference in historical narrative, which is supposed to report ‘what really happened’” (15). However, in the context of places that are coded and described as being thoroughly different from the travelling subject’s home environment, *insignificant*, in the sense of not being loaded with metaphorical meaning or being essential to the development of the main story, is not necessarily the same as not salient. Objects that are mentioned in ethnographical portraits of groups of people, besides signifying a “generic real,” often become instrumental in exoticising the people that make out the object of the travelling subject’s ethnographical attention. Consequently, from the point of view of the realist prose of travel writing, realist fiction, and in Barthes’s structuralist terminology, the real “can be expressed without there being any need for it to be integrated into the [semiotic] structure, and ... the having-been-there of things is a sufficient reason for speaking of them” (15). In other words, objects in travel literature about Africa in the period that the travel narratives cover may be considered to be central to the narrative both as metonyms and as tacit things that do not signify concepts beyond themselves but serve as the elements of the modern centre and a different part of reality, namely the colonial periphery.

## Summary

This chapter has presented the texts that will be analysed in the following chapters. Some biographical information about their authors has been presented, as well as brief sketches of the political contexts of the journeys they describe, and readings of how the conditions of travel are portrayed in the texts. Speke, Cameron and Stanley travelled in Africa to explore and map what would later become European colonies and the latter group of travellers describe colonial Africa during and at the end of the Scramble for Africa. There is in other words some relevant differences between these travellers and their texts. However, this distinction between the early explorers of Africa and later travellers will not be maintained throughout the following chapters to any significant degree. The distinction between these groups has been used here in order to point out some relevant historical differences between the selected texts and some literary conventions that derive from exploration literature but can be found also in the accounts written during the Scramble.

Presenting the Great Exhibition as a pivotal event in the historiography of Victorian commodity culture and British capitalism, the second part of this chapter discussed the role of material objects in Victorian culture at large and in Victorian realist literature. The way in which the Great Exhibition embodied the concept of civilisation made some contemporary commentators describe the exhibition as defying interpretation and accentuating gaps in the contemporary vocabularies used in description. The theme of semiotic confusion involves connections to travel writing about Africa because it is similar to “the myth of first contact” between Africans and European commodity culture (McClintock 223). The chapter has also shown that the centrality of material objects in British urban middle class environments in the latter half of the 1900s was reflected in literature where objects came to signify the real at the same time as they gestured towards their processes of production and their places of provenance. The connection between object and production process can be discussed in terms of a metonymical relation between cause/process of production and effect/object. Lastly, the Barthesian concepts of the “reality effect” and “insignificant notation” were discussed in relation to travel writing in order to show one reason why the object attained centrality in this literary genre.

## **PART II: ANALYSIS**



# Objects in Geography: Narrative and the Diffusion of Manufactured Goods

Africa has lots of stuff in it.

Mary Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*

On one level, this chapter investigates the function of difference in the way movement in space is simulated in travel literature. An initial observation that is important to the rest of the chapter is that the traveller's movement away from the point of departure is simulated partly through a series of shifts in the material environment. In other words, certain kinds of differences between groups of people and places that the travelling subject visits in the African periphery come to represent the traveller's spatial distance from a geographical centre. At one point in his narrative, Stanley notes that "it was strange what a sudden improvement in the physiognomy of the native had occurred" (2: 80). What Stanley says is not, of course, that he has observed how certain individuals' features have changed, but that the inhabitants of the region he has just arrived to look more agreeable than the people that he has come across previously on his journey. The perceived difference in physiognomy between different groups of people, in other words become part of the construction of space and the narrative about the traveller's movement through space. Differences that are involved in the construction of space and simulation of movement can be topographical, cultural, racial or climatic, but what will be discussed throughout this chapter are economic and cultural differences between different places and regions.

On a more specific level, this chapter investigates the functions of commodities and material objects in geographical writing. The differences between spaces and groups of people are expressed partly through the location of objects that are associated with the modern metropolis. The presence and absence of European commodities in space and among groups of people come to represent shifts in European influence in certain regions

and on certain groups of people. These shifts in the travelling subject's environment, in turn, function as milestones that mark his or her distance from civilisation, which is conceived as a space as well as a qualitative category. To the extent that European commodities and technologically sophisticated objects are associated with the European metropolis, and especially, in this case, Great Britain, absence of such objects signals not only spatial, but also temporal distance from their source. The signs of the absence of technologically complex objects in a certain region, including people's reactions to such objects among the traveller's possessions, signal the travelling subject's arrival in the primitive and temporally distant periphery.

Spatial elements in the text generate narrative. As Franco Moretti observes in *Atlas of the European Novel* (1999), "external frontiers ... easily generate narrative" (37). Travel accounts are essentially narratives about one or several subjects' movement between spaces that are conceived as different from each other. Movement is in turn conveyed in relation to points in space, to more or less politically or symbolically significant landmarks, since travel loses its meaning in a landscape that never changes. This means that spatial elements must be read as narrative functions, and not only as more or less accurate representations of an exterior material reality. Spatial elements (borders, mountains, a subject's notion of home) condition the narrative of a travelling subject's journey (across borders, over mountains, away from home and back again). Therefore, abstract or vague shifts in the traveller's environment or natural borders like rivers or mountain ridges may be seen as signs that attain central functions in the narrative. In this chapter, the border or landmark that is of primary interest is what is conveyed in the texts as the outer rim of the space in which material objects associated with the colonial centre are disseminated – the juncture where such objects cease to be part of the traveller's immediate environment.

Edward Said's rather undeveloped concept of "imaginative geography," with which he discusses how difference informs the conceptualisation of space, can be used as a point of departure in the present discussion. While imaginative geography does not belong to the most sophisticated theories about space and place, it emphasises some key ideas that are of importance in this chapter. When explaining the concept of imaginative geography in *Orientalism*, Said shows how perceived cultural differences are involved in cartographical politics. He writes that imaginary

geographies are created when groups of people “set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call ‘the land of the barbarians’” (54). To Said, boundaries that groups of people imagine in order to conceptualise their spatial environment in a meaningful way, distinguish what the members of at least one group term *ours* from what they call *theirs*. The boundary, then, is motivated from a grammatical first person perspective that distinguishes the *here* of the subject from the *there* that is ascribed to the grammatical third person; that is, to the other. According to the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre, the theoretical separation of one space from another is indeed dependent on difference, “since a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates difference” (*The Production of Space* 52). The demarcation of one space from other spaces, Lefebvre implies, necessarily creates a dialectical relation between this space and its surroundings.

A second point in Said’s concept of imaginative geography that is of consequence in this discussion is that imaginative geography “extends beyond positive, empirical knowledge of geographical place to include its arbitrary constructions” (Garane ix). It is an *imaginative* geography in the sense that it involves conceptions that exceed “what appears to be merely positive knowledge” (Said 55). The arbitrary constructions are, in Said’s terms, produced through a “universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’” (54). They are *constructions* because they are ways of understanding or conceiving space rather than cartographical representations of space and they are *arbitrary* “because imaginative geography of the ‘our land – barbarian land’ variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction” (54). A construction in imaginative geographies is arbitrary insofar as it is a way of conceptualising space that is specific for a certain group of people whose relations to other groups are defined within the construction in the form of boundaries. While Said emphasises arbitrariness by opposing imagination and positive knowledge, arbitrariness in the writing of space will in this chapter be seen as an effect of the construction of difference in colonial discourse. The geographical constructions that are discussed in this chapter are spaces that are produced through differences and shifts that attain salience and significance in the text. It is therefore motivated to talk about *narrative* geography rather than an *imaginative* geography.

What is meant by the term *narrative geography* is not the literary description of space, but the narrative construction of space. It is a product of how certain cultural and economic differences are described in the text the travel narrative, as the above example from Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* shows. Consequently, in the following discussion, *geography* refers to "the two elements contained within the word 'geography' itself. *Geo*, 'earth,' [that is, space] and *graphein*, 'writing'" (Garane ix). The emphasis on the word *geography* (or *earth writing*) is however shifted from *earth* to *writing*, and thus from an encountered material reality to discourse.

The journeys considered in this chapter are largely (but not exclusively) undertaken in what are conveyed as uncharted regions. These regions tend to be described as involving the absence of clearly defined borders and boundaries that are politically recognised by the travelling subject. Explorers like Cameron and Speke mention borders between regions of the African interior that are ruled by different chiefs. Travellers are obliged to pay a kind of tax to be allowed to pass such borders, and these borders and taxes are a source of irritation, since such taxes threaten to exhaust traveller's stores of trade goods (Speke 60, Cameron 46). They are, however, of little significance to the narrative geography of the text because they constitute a political geography that is largely ignored in the texts.

Instead the shifts and differences that the subject travels across take forms that are in some ways different from those of the political borders between nation states or regions within nation states. Rather than defining political units like countries or other politically (as opposed to topographically) defined areas, they mark subtle or dramatic shifts in the landscape and differences between groups of people that the traveller encounters. In other words, travelling subjects' or narrators' recognition of various shifts in the environment may be read as (land)marks that indicate that the traveller moves into new and different spaces of the text's narrative geography.

## **The Space of Diffusion and the Space Beyond**

The narrative geographies of the colonial travel texts that are considered in this chapter describe a gap that divides the colonial world into two spheres; that is, the way in which the space of the world is organised and conveyed on the macro-level of the travel narrative includes a division between the point

from which the traveller sets out and the parts of the world to which he or she travels. This dichotomous view of the world could be seen as the most abstract but also most important structure on which the narrative geography of colonial travel accounts is based. The reason for this is because the colonial journey is typically described in terms of a movement from modern metropolis to pre-modern periphery.

In a passage about the necessity to expand the trade with resources emanating from the African continent in Verney Lovett Cameron's *Across Africa*, metropolitan Britain and the African periphery are separated and defined through their different levels of material development. Cameron wonders why "steamers flying the British colours [are not] carrying the overglut of manufactured goods to the naked African, and receiving from him in exchange those choicest gifts of nature by which he is surrounded, and of the value of which he is at present ignorant?" (479). In the light of the present discussion, what is especially conspicuous in this quotation is the way in which the centre and periphery are defined by what they contain. In this passage "manufactured goods," or commodities that emanate from industrial Great Britain attain the status of material examples of the progressivity of the centre when they are juxtaposed to the natural resources that are associated with the periphery. The space where "the naked African" resides is defined by the crude natural resources within it, and the centre is defined by its steamers and its economic system.

Furthermore, the centre and periphery are not only conveyed as separated by spatial distance but also a kind of temporal separation. This temporal separation takes the form of a difference in material conditions. Steamers that fly the Union Jack are juxtaposed to the body of "the naked African," while the industrially manufactured commodities in their cargo hold are contrasted to the unrefined natural resources among which the African lives. The steamers come to symbolise European technological superiority when juxtaposed to the naked and ignorant African. Africa, then, is distanced from Great Britain by being placed at the threshold of a history of material development. The manufactured goods and the steamers that are mentioned in the passage indicate that as far as Great Britain is concerned, this history belongs to its preindustrial, pre-modern past.

On a more detailed level, the narrative geographies of texts like Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* depict, in Henry Stanley's words, a "dark continent" beyond semi-civilised coastal regions. Kingsley, who describes a

West African region where European colonial powers and economic interests are never far away, constructs a geography where there is considerable communication between semi-civilised and primitive spaces. These different geographies describe Africa before and after the Scramble, of course, and can be read as comments on the current state of Eurocolonial projects in Africa. They describe the modernising and civilising effects of trade between Europeans and groups of people in the periphery. Therefore, these geographies also involve the element of colonial ambivalence: while travellers like Kingsley describe the material manifestation of the civilising mission – how people in certain areas adapt to the use of certain commodities, attend missionary schools and trade with European firms at the coast – the very fact that they have been reformed by the influence of Europeans seems to suggest that people beyond these areas have not. Therefore, through the dialectics of space, the civilising of one place, or as Lefebvre has it, “the creation of a new space,” means that a different, primitive space is created beyond it (Lefebvre 52).

Stories about the movement of objects that are metonymically associated with the metropolis give rise to the notion of a space beyond the reach of the European market, or as Mary Kingsley writes, beyond the British “sphere of influence” (674). This space is conveyed as the extreme periphery, where European colonisation has yet to be endeavoured. In the narrative geography of Mary Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa* the dispersion of European commodities in the interior serves as a set of landmarks in relation to which spaces are organised. The effect of the way in which the diffusion of matches in the interior and the matches’ movement away from the coast are conveyed is the separation of two spaces. One of these spaces has been “penetrated” by the commodity and the natives living in it have adapted to the use of Lucifer-matches in making fire. This space relates dialectically to a space beyond where the European commodity has not yet arrived and where people consequently live a different life.

I ask my boys how they would “make fire suppose no matches live.” Not one of them thinks it possible to do so, “it pass man to do them thing suppose he no got live stick or matches.” They are coast boys, all of them, and therefore used to luxury, but it is really remarkable how widely diffused matches are inland, and how very dependent on them these natives are. When I have been away in districts where they have not penetrated, it is exceedingly rarely that the making of fire has to be resorted to.

(599)

Implied in the binary conception of space that this passage is based on is the idea that objects, like matches, move in one direction — from the coast to the interior. Kingsley-the-narrator seems to be positioned so as to view the African continent from the outside. She is positioned, it seems, in the place that the matches come from. The traveller who visits regions where matches are not used is consequently “away.” People who live in coastal regions and therefore closer to where the journey begins for the British traveller are used to the “luxury” of using matches. This claim gives rise to a kind of frontier, not because it is revealed in the text just how far into the continent matches have travelled, but as an effect of the perspective from which the story about the travelling commodity is told. This implies that the matches have moved in one direction, from coast to interior and reached a certain point, but no further. Thus, the idea of the diffusion of matches has effects on the way space is conveyed; this diffusion creates an inside and an outside to the European sphere of influence.

The shift in material conditions in the quoted passage from Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa* is, in the widest sense, a cause of cultural difference between the two spaces. The inhabitants of the two spaces, Kingsley explains, live under different conditions and therefore have different customs. No explicit comment is made about whether one or the other of these customs or ways of life is best suited for the African other, but they are conveyed as mutually exclusive. Importantly, only the ways of life and material conditions in the match-less space are described. As an exterior space, from the point of view of the more industrial coastal region, the space where there are no matches can therefore be discussed with greater authority by the traveller who has left the coastal region and “been away” (Kingsley 599). In the space that matches have not yet reached, women fetch burning pieces of wood from other families’ cooking fires when their own have gone out (599). This habit, Kingsley-the-narrator explains, involves certain

phrases and customs and has a function in social life in that it promotes hospitality. In contrast to village dwellers, (supposedly nomad) hunters “now” use flint and steel, but not in “districts where their tutor in this method – the flint-lock gun – is not available” (599). Life, then, is conditioned by the diffusion of certain European commodities and this movement is directed from the colonial centre and the colonised coastal region to the periphery and the interior. This movement has a limited sphere of reach, however, because the space *outside* of the “sphere” where European commodities are expected to be found is radically different from that in which matches are used (674), and this fact together with the fact that this space is accessible to the traveller is precisely why it is of interest in the narrative.

This spatiotemporal outside may be understood in terms of Anne McClintock’s concept of “anachronistic space” which was mentioned in the previous chapter. McClintock’s anachronistic space is a trope that involves ideas about geographical space as well as space in a metaphorical sense. She presents the concept in *Imperial Leather* when discussing the idea of an outside to modernity that is suggested in museum exhibitions, but the concept also identifies the marginal social “space” that is occupied by the British working class as well as British (supposedly working class as well as middle and upper class) women (40). However, in this chapter anachronistic space must be interpreted through the idea of narrative geography, which requires that it is studied in relation to discourse about the colonial periphery rather than in relation to stratifications of gender and class in the metropolis. McClintock writes:

According to the colonial version of this trope, imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory. By extension, the return journey to Europe is seen as rehearsing the evolutionary logic of historical progress forward and upward to the apogee of the Enlightenment in the European metropolis. Geographical difference across *space* is figured as historical difference across *time*. (40)

What McClintock implies is that anachronistic space is experienced, or “seen,” as such by a hypothetical or actual traveller moving in and out of this

space, and it is “figured” as anachronistic by a subject who describes it from an exterior position. McClintock offers an example from the Italian-French philanthropist and philosopher Joseph Marie Degérando, who, in *The Observation of Savage Peoples (Considération sur les diverses méthodes à suivre dans l'observation des peuples sauvages*, 1800), wrote that “the philosophical traveller, sailing to the ends of the earth, is in fact travelling in time; he is exploring the past” (qtd. in McClintock 40). This is what the philosophical traveller does, but the time-spaces he enters are where “we” can find “the material needed to construct an exact scale of the various degrees of human civilization ... and we shall come to know what needs, what ideas, what habits are produced in each era of human society” (Degérando 63). People that the philosophical traveller encounters in far off regions, Degérando implies, belong to a historical past that is separate in terms of time from that in which the “we” of his text observe material empirically and gain knowledge about human prehistory. The use of the pronoun *we* includes the reader and the student of philosophy and social anthropology and at the same time excludes the primitive “material” that is studied. This exclusion and inclusion could be read as opening up a second space in relation to, and *from* which, the “ends of the earth” seem anachronistic. This space is the here-and-now from which Degérando addresses his reader and from which Mary Kingsley discusses the anachronistic space where matches cannot (yet) be found.

Before McClintock, Johannes Fabian has used the same passage from Degérando to discuss how travel literature and the emerging field of anthropology in the wake of the Enlightenment mirrored what Fabian calls the secularisation of time (7). In the Christian tradition, the lives of Christ and the Christian saints were seen as monumental events in a sacred history, and occasioned travel to certain religiously significant places. Consequently, before the secularisation of time, people travelled to certain places, as Fabian points out, while the philosophical traveller who Degérando describes travels “*from* the centers of learning and power” (Fabian 6). When the pilgrim is replaced by the modern, scientific or “philosophical” traveller a perspectival shift also occurs, in other words. The modern traveller travels away from the centre of learning and knowledge, but travel to the philosophical traveller is a kind of science in itself, undertaken to “quench the thirst for knowledge” as S. Moravia writes (qtd. in Fabian 7). So while the pilgrim travels to the sacred centres of the Christian world for religious reasons, the modern

traveller travels *from* the centres of science, philosophy and knowledge for scientific and philosophical reasons.

The way in which space is organised in an inner and an outer sphere in *Travels in West Africa* is evocative of the diffusionist imagination of space. J.M Blaut describes this nineteenth century conception of space and cultural and economic relations in *The Colonizer's Model of the World* (1993). *Diffusionism* designates, in Blaut's words, a "belief system" comprising the Eurocentric model of Inside/Outside (or centre/periphery) and a fundamentally colonial grand narrative about the role of Europe in the historical progression of the world at large. "The basic model of diffusionism" according to Blaut "depicts a world divided into the prime two sectors, one of which (Greater Europe, Inside) invents and progresses, the other of which (non-Europe, Outside) receives progressive innovations from Inside" (14). In the diffusionist model, diffusion is a teleological process in the sense that the influence of the centre on the periphery is believed to have modernising or civilising effects on the backwards periphery (16). Thus, according to diffusionist historicism and geography, the influence of the centre on the periphery strives towards the diffusion of civilisation from Europe to the world outside it (14).

In Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*, order, high prices and European commodities dominate the coastal areas, but are replaced by disorder, low prices and African "trade stuff" in the interior. "White traders" are established at the coast from where commodities are carried into the continent by black traders. The space that is furthest away from the coast is comprised by "district[s] no white man has ever penetrated" (314) and is homogeneously black. Between the coast and the districts that no white man has entered resides "the middleman."

One of these black trader factories is an exceedingly interesting place to stay at, for in these factories you are right down on the bed rock of the trade. On the Coast, for the greater part, the white traders are dealing with black traders, middlemen, who have procured their trade stuff from the bush natives, who collect and prepare it. Here, in the black trader factory, you see the first stage of the export part of the trade: namely the barter of the collected trade stuff between the collector and the middleman. (310)

While Kingsley uses the word *trade* and describes a bidirectional movement of objects, the ways in which objects and agents are designated emphasise difference between agents, objects and places. The titles that refer to the different agents involved in trade show how the middle-space is where the coastal part of the trade route, which is industrial and capitalist, overlaps with the interior part, which is described as neither industrial nor capitalist. From the point of view of the traveller's itinerary, "white trader" precedes "black trader" who is succeeded by "bush native" or "collector" in the deep interior. Even though racial differences are signalled in the adjectival distinction between white and black trader, the position of the agent in the chain of trade distinguishes the black trader from the "bush native." Likewise, objects that move from the interior to the trader are referred to as "trade *stuff*" rather than trade *goods* and the people who trade in them are referred to as "collectors" rather than "traders." In contrast, the objects emanating from the Europeans at the coast, which are carried by the middleman and intended for "consumers" from the interior, are referred to as *goods* (311). In other words, the object as well as the producer and trader are understood and named in relation to locations in the chain of trade as well as space. The way in which coastal space, goods and whiteness group together and are opposed to interior space, "trade stuff," black skin colour "bush natives," and "collectors" suggests that there is an underlying spatial model similar to the diffusionist model described by Blaut: objects spread from a technologically superior space to a pre-capitalist periphery (Blaut 14) and this motion is answered by a "counterdiffusion of material wealth" (16) that consists of "collected" resources or "trade stuff."

In this discussion, as in the passage from *Travels in West Africa* quoted above, the middleman is an "interesting" agent because of his position between the spaces and bodies of people (Kingsley 310). As a mediator between the white traders and the so-called bush natives, the middleman is a figure whose being illustrates the notion that encounters between the people of the civilised coast with those of the interior are characterised by chaotic confusion. He is surrounded by the chaos that springs from the clash between the capitalist ways of exchange at the coast, manifested in the commodities he carries, and the non-capitalist ways of the inner space represented by his "costumers." The life of the middleman, though interesting to the traveller, is rendered miserable because he is stuck between the industrial coast and the interior. He is used to the "luxuries" of

the coast while he is confined to the black trader factory, which despite Kingsley's naming of it is not industrial and does not belong to the space of the authentic interior which capitalism and civilisation have not yet reached. The middlemen know "several things better" than life in the middle space, "being very sociable men, fully appreciative of the joys of a Coast town" (310). And yet they are exposed to the savagery of "the awful bush savages" (310). Kingsley tells the reader that, as a middleman you are exposed to:

[t]he way in which your customers, for the first month or so, [enjoy] themselves by trying to frighten you, the trader, out of your wits and goods, and into giving them fancy prices for things you [are] trading in, and for things of no earthly use to you, or any one else! The trader's existence during this period is marked by every unpleasantness save dulness [sic]; from that he is spared by the presence of a mob of noisy, dangerous, thieving savages all over his place all day [who] put some nastiness into his food as a trade charm; helping themselves to portable property at large; and making themselves at home to the extent of sitting on his dining-table. (311)

This passage is a caricature of the market metaphor in Victorian liberal parlance, in which economic transactions are imagined as being completed between the seller and the consumer at a neutral space where commodities change hands. The "thieving savages" "invade" the space of the trader's station. In accordance with the upside-down nature of the overlap between modernity and pre-modernity, and civilisation and savagery, the invasion of costumers is not a promise of profits to be made but a cause of economic ruin: "Woe betide the trader if he gives in to this, and tolerates the invasion," Kingsley writes, for "he will always have several big black gentlemen to share his meals" (311). The crowd of costumers who gather at the trading station does not necessarily contribute to the trader's accumulation of wealth, but may just as likely starve him, literally, by consuming his possessions.

The black trader station and the middleman link the industrial, capitalist and civilised centre and its manifestations on the coast with the deep interior, beyond the reach of modernity, where people light their fires without using matches and where the diffusion of European commodities does not reach. Its location in the outskirts of modernity makes the black trader station not only "exceedingly interesting" but the link between the

spheres of modernity and pre-modernity. The way in which trade functions, or does not function, in this space is in congruence with, if not an effect of, the way in which the narrative geography of *Travels in West Africa* is structured. While the black trader factory is obviously within the space of the diffusion of European commodities, the codes of conduct and unwritten contracts of capitalist modes of exchange are not recognised at the factory. The relation between buyer and seller is inverted: consumers ruin the trader. In a literal as well as metaphorical sense, the savages' arrival at the market is presented as an invasion of semi-modern space.

### **The Metonymical Object and Temporal Distance**

The presence and absence of European commodities does not only inscribe borders between spaces, but also creates a kind of temporal distance. The object inscribes its environment with certain temporal qualities so that the space where matches are not used, to reiterate the example from *Travels in West Africa*, is conveyed as primitive in relation to the space in which they are used and as temporally distant from the point of view of the coast or the colonial centre. The way in which space is inscribed with temporal qualities is an effect of a metonymical association between the object and the space in which it is made and used. A technically sophisticated commodity is not symbolic of the context in which it is produced, but is a metonymic element of that context – of industrial capitalism. Therefore, the place in which this commodity is found is more readily associated with civilisation, industrialisation and capitalism than the place where it is not found or not expected to be found.

Objects are, as Cameron's juxtaposition of "manufactured goods" and "gifts of nature" in the passage quoted at the beginning of the previous section suggests, associated with their context of production even when displaced in space. They are endowed with a "metonymic trace" or "a history of human touch," as Bill Brown writes in *A Sense of Things* (93) and therefore represent the context of origin as a quality in the object. In a theoretical discussion about the commodity in the foreword to *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai points out the metonymical association between the material object and the spatial and temporal context in which it is produced in the "purist" view of the commodity, which is "routinely attributed to Marx" (6). According to this view, commodities are produced

“principally for exchange” and the commodity form of the object emerges “by definition, in the institutional, psychological, and economic conditions of capitalism” (6).<sup>1</sup> Displaced in the interior of the African continent, the manufactured commodity then carries a “trace” of the material and immaterial conditions of the metropolis.

Carrying this trace, the manufactured commodity inscribes certain values in the narrative geography of the text. Objects that are understood as carrying a trace of the commodity form – that are associated with industrial capitalism, but travel into the African periphery – become material signs of European influence in the region. The most trivial commodity upsets the notion of a space that is referred to as untouched by modernity when commodities are understood as “special kinds of manufactured goods ... which are associated only with capitalist modes of production and are thus to be found only where capitalism has penetrated” (Appadurai 7). As a metonym of capitalism, the commodity allows for, and motivates, the separation of “the overglut of manufactured goods” of the European market (Cameron 479) from the “trade stuff” collected by “bush natives” (Kingsley 310). Seen from this perspective, Cameron’s “manufactured goods” are commodities insofar as they have been produced in the industrialised metropolis. The “trade stuff” is not perceived in terms of it consisting of commodities, however, because it is not industrially manufactured *within* capitalism.

The relation between object and space is central in a dialogue between Cameron and a chief, whose name is Kasongo, because the former uses objects to inform the latter about the place he comes from.

He made many inquiries as to my nationality and business, and I informed him that it was from my country that cloth and other articles used in trading in Africa were sent; and my object was to visit the people who purchased these things and to see their countries, so that I might be enabled to tell my sultan what they wanted, and increase the trade for the benefit of both sides. (278)

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<sup>1</sup> While Appadurai discusses this purist theory about the commodity form, he does it in order to suggest that there is a broader understanding of the commodity that is not limited to the capitalist markets of the West, but also includes contexts that are not capitalist in the traditional sense. He calls for a view of the commodity as a form that is not limited to modernity.

Goods that are “used” in trading here come to represent the material conditions of metropolitan Great Britain. The origin of the object entails qualities other than just having been produced within the borders of Great Britain, just like the traveller’s nationality signals certain qualities of character. The fact that Cameron and the articles of trade come from the same country does not only mean that he is British, but also that he comes from the modern sphere of the colonial world, with a level of technological development that is far superior to that of the place in which the two men are talking. When the objects are understood as referring not only to Great Britain as a place, but to the economy in which they are produced through industrial manufacturing processes, the intention to increase trade is given a wider meaning. The wider meaning of the increase in trade involves an increase in the diffusion of the qualities that are imprinted in the articles of trade. In other words, Cameron considers trade between the centre and the periphery as “the proper way” to civilise (472).

The function of material objects that are associated metonymically with the material conditions of the metropolis points toward an idea that has hitherto been implied but not addressed, namely time. Cameron’s juxtaposition of manufactured goods and the gifts of nature, as mentioned above, visualises European technological superiority in relation to the backwardness of the natural objects surrounding “the naked African.” This superiority in technical advancement takes a temporal form. The metonymical objects that Cameron mentions serve to separate Britain and Africa not only in terms of space but also in terms of time. This temporal separation relies on a certain conception, as Johannes Fabian terms it in *Time and the Other*, of time and space. Fabian notes that this conception includes the notion that “relationships between parts of the world (in the widest sense of both natural and sociocultural entities) can be understood as temporal relations. Dispersal in space reflects directly, which is not to say simply or in obvious ways, sequence in time” (11). Distance as a constituent part of the narrative geography of the text, including the centre/periphery model of the world, is expressed in temporal as well as spatial terms. Geography then, understood here as part of narrative, is occupied not only with a narrative of space – locations and distance between them – but also includes a narrative about time and the positions of different places and their inhabitants in “a hierarchy of progress toward ‘civilization’ as represented by Europe” (Blunt and Rose 15).

The way in which the “naked African” is distanced from Cameron, and the periphery from the metropolis, in the passage cited above takes the form of what Fabian has called the “denial of coevalness.” Fabian writes in *Time and the Other* that *denial of coevalness* is “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” (31). It is not only in anthropological writing, however, that time becomes a means of distancing “the West from its Other,” and the speaking European subject from the non-European other (147). This distancing is a denial, expressed in texts, of the other’s coexistence with the self in time and space, and thus a device that is commonly used in European colonial discourse on the (colonised) other (Mills *Discourse* 99). Fabian’s concept, when applied to travel texts, describes the process by which the grammatical third person or the other of the text is placed “in a different temporal order than that of the perceiving and speaking subject,” as Mary Louise Pratt writes in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (64).

Fabian explains the mechanisms of the denial of co-presence by referring to metaphors borrowed from the study of physics and applied to European anthropological thinking about non-Europeans. “Physical time,” Fabian writes, “may define the objective distance” in temporal terms between a subject’s “culture” and an object that is dug up in an archaeological excavation. Therefore, “[i]f an object can be located in 2000 B.C, or an event in 1865, they are definitely, irrevocably past” (28). Even though it is a temporal concept, physical time is “part of a system of ideas which include space, bodies and motion” (29). Time and space converge in the idea of time as a physical force or a movement that is subordinated to the laws of physics. This convergence exposes its potential as an ideological tool that is employed in texts in order to distance “bodies of people” from each other. Consequently, “in the hands of ideologues such a time concept is easily transformed into a kind of political physics” (29). Upon examination, physical time turns out to be less objective than the word *physics* implies.

After all, it is not difficult to transpose from physics to politics one of the most ancient rules which states that it is impossible for two bodies to occupy the same space at the same time. When in the course of colonial expansion a Western body of politic came to occupy, literally, the same space as an autochthonous body, several alternatives were conceived to deal with that violation of the rule. [...] [O]ne is to

pretend that space is being divided and allocated to separate bodies. [...] Most often the preferred strategy has been simply to manipulate the other variable – Time.

(29-30)

Manipulating time, then, is one way of negotiating the relations between what is perceived as separate bodies of people. In representations of “conquered populations” a different time is assigned to the conquered other, or a group of people that is conceived of as culturally and/or racially different to the speaking subject. More or less clearly defined groups of people are, “with the help of various devices of sequencing and distancing,” thought of as separated from each other by time (30). Another alternative, practiced by the rulers of South Africa at the time Fabian wrote *Time and the Other*, is to separate bodies of people by fragmenting space (30). The passage from *Across Africa* cited above does not motivate a theoretical separation of these two “alternatives” or strategies of distancing – distancing in terms of time and distancing in terms of space. Africa and “the naked African” are conceived of as distant from Great Britain both in terms of space and time.

Cameron-the-narrator’s call for increasing the export of manufactured goods from Great Britain to Africa distances “the naked African” from the European or the British in terms of time. This temporal distancing, or denial of coevalness, is inscribed in the African’s ignorance of the value of the things around him. Likewise, it is suggested in the deterministic belief expressed in the text that the diffusion of goods leads to transformation and progression when Cameron asks why steamers are not carrying “the overglut of manufactured goods to the naked African, and receiving from him in exchange those choicest gifts of nature by which he is surrounded, and of the value of which he is at present ignorant” (479). At face value, the rhetoric of the question takes the form of what Tim Youngs calls “belittling.” When analysing Cameron’s call for increased trade, Youngs writes in *Travellers in Africa* that “the Africans, having no knowledge of how much the West covets [the choicest gifts of nature] are belittled for possessing no sense of their worth. So significant cultural and economic force applies to the description of the Africans and their environment” (104). The belittling of the African other of course implies that the other is younger than Cameron and his countrymen and in extension, this age-metaphor

suggests that the naked African has not developed as far as the European has. In the passage from *Across Africa*, the African neither understands the economic value of the natural resources that surround him, nor does he know how to exploit their exchange value in the capitalist economy. In the belittlement of the African, then, industrial capitalism is juxtaposed to nature, with which the naked African is associated. These natural resources can only be converted into commodities if they are transported “from the past of their ‘backward’ locations to the present of an industrial, capitalist economy” as Fabian writes (*Time and the Other* 95).

In the call for the diffusion of manufactured goods lies the notion that the African might someday come to understand the economic value of the landscape around him. The word *present* at the end of the quotation from *Across Africa* gestures towards a future in which the African no longer is ignorant of basic economic ideas but has learned the value of objects around him. After all, Cameron’s rhetorical question asks why steamers are not shipping the excess production of the centre to Africa at the *present*. It is implied that the arrival of the steamers on the African coast will inaugurate a transformation of the African, as well as the landscapes that surround him. As an effect of the future trade between Great Britain and Africa, the African will become aware of the value of natural resources, while the African nature will be transposed to the present of the European market.

The implication that can be read into Cameron’s passage from *Across Africa* is that the ignorance that the African shows at the present is an effect of the failure of the British (so far) to load steamers with goods and sail for the African coast. In a possible future the agency of British traders and investors may serve to eradicate even “the cursed traffic in human flesh” by replacing it with “legitimate commerce” (482). The “tall black smokestacks” of steam boats, as Thomas Pakenham writes, is indeed a symbol of “the new Africa,” in which the slave trade has been abolished once and for all (Pakenham 18). Things would be different if the British public would “give their cordial assistance to those whose duty leads them to the as yet untrodden places of the world” and if British traders would “lend a helping hand” in the diffusion of industrially made commodities (480-481).

The question now before the civilized world is, Whether [sic] the slave-trade in Africa ... is permitted to continue? Every one worthy of the name of a man will say

No! Let us, then, hope that England, which has hitherto occupied the proud position of being foremost among the friends of the unfortunate slave, may still hold that place. Let those who seek to employ money now lying idle join together to open the trade of Africa. (480)

The slave trade is contrasted to the trade that “the civilized world” may and should offer the naked African. The calls for increased trade with Africa for the sake of the self-image of the civilised world and in order to rid Africa of the slave trade are distinct indications of the belief in diffusionist models of historical development; it is “[t]hose who seek to employ money” especially, who have the opportunity to once and for all “check the cursed traffic in human flesh” and thus make Africa “free and happy” by “opening up the proper lines of communication” (482). Thus, the trade that the centre can offer the periphery represents the historical stage and material conditions of modernity that by definition is incompatible with the slave trade to the extent that the latter is a “blot” on the former (470).

However, the duty of the centre to send to the periphery that which will make the slave trade obsolete does not mean that the periphery will necessarily share the power that comes from technological progress. In a passage in *Across Africa*, a chief, who is “inflated with pride,” tells Cameron-the-traveller that he would go to England had it not been for the obstacle of Lake Tanganyika. The chief says that the lake is in the way of his route and makes the endeavour too difficult. In Cameron’s response, the European traveller’s movement across the temporal and spatial gaps in the narrative geography becomes a sign of power and technical superiority.

I thought it possible his vanity might suffer a shock when I told him that the Tanganyika was nothing in comparison with the seas that lay between Africa and my home. But he merely remarked that he would defer his visit for the present, and directed me to tell my chief to pay him tribute, and to send me back with rifles, cannon (of which he had heard from the Portuguese), boats to navigate his rivers and people to teach him and his subjects the manner of using them.

I then informed this self-important chief that those who understood how to make the things he required were not likely people to pay him tribute, and that my chief was far greater than he, indeed, that he could have no idea of the magnitude of her power. (326)

Cameron-the-traveller says that the political power of the British monarch is so much greater than that of the chief and the evidence that proves this is the fact that it is Cameron who visits the chief and not the chief who visits Cameron. When puncturing the pride of the chief by pointing out that the distance between England and Africa is much wider than Lake Tanganyika he indicates not only that the spatial distance is greater than the chief thinks it is, but that the temporal distance is also greater. Modernity, in the form of technical sophistication and sophisticated industry, overrides the pre-modern political hierarchy to the extent that the worker in the metropolis is unlikely to recognise the chief as his superior. Furthermore, it is precisely this technical superiority of the centre that makes it possible for Cameron to visit the chief's village, whereas the chief cannot make the journey to the centre because of the lack of means to cross the great lake.

As indicated by Cameron-the-traveller's dialogue with the insignificant chief, the colonial traveller crosses borders between spaces that differ from each other in terms of time as well as space. The absence of certain objects or commodities indicates that the space that the traveller moves through belongs to a different stage in time. This displacement of the travelling subject creates potential logistical problems. One of the most popular British travel guides of the nineteenth century offers some solutions to this problem. Francis Galton's *The Art of Travel* (1872), a handbook for travellers in "savage countries," focuses on the difficulties experienced by travellers who exit the sphere where European commodities are found. The traveller in Galton's text is a man but is, like Kingsley, heading for the "districts" that matches "have not penetrated" (Kingsley 599). The absence of matches is taken as a defining feature of the space where the traveller is and it is up to the traveller to pack wisely or to adapt to the environment. Galton situates the hypothetical traveller in the space where matches are not to be found and writes that the traveller "should carry on his person the means of procuring a light" (172). The failure to pack the proper instruments for making fire means that "he" has to resort to a plethora of methods that belong to "the barbaric infancy of the human race" (176).

In every country without exception, where inquiry has been made, the method of obtaining fire by rubbing one stick against another, has been employed. In savage countries the method still remains in present use; in nearly all the more civilised

ones, it has been superseded within historic periods by flints and steels and the like, and within this present generation by Lucifer-matches. (176)

The necessity to adapt to the absence of certain “contrivances” and to less than contemporary methods may be read as a sign of the traveller’s entrance into distant spaces in the African interior as well as distant stages of material development. According to Galton, in order to be able to make a fire the traveller can either carry matches with him into spaces where they are not used and have not penetrated, or he can rub sticks, smash stones together or ram steel into stone. The descent into the past that adapting to these methods entails is emphasised by a brief look at Roman and Greek mythology in a section about “fire-sticks”: “In later Greek history Prometheus is accredited with the invention of fire-sticks,” and “[a]mong the Romans both Seneca and Pliny” mention them (176). The fire-stick method of obtaining fire, by which two sticks are rubbed together and eventually begin to burn, is deferred to the present of “wild countries” and to the dawn of European history. Therefore, either the traveller brings the necessary technical solutions into that space which is defined by the absence of such objects, or he can adapt to the absence of matches and thus also to the material conditions of the past.

### **Transformations of Objects in Pre-modern Space**

In narratives about exploration journeys into the African continent, the travelling subject crosses the frontier of modernity (or civilisation). As has been shown, the narrative geography of the travel accounts that have been analysed above tend to be structured around the notion of a sphere in which European commodities are part of the environment. This notion gives rise to an outside, or in another perspective, an interior that belongs to a different stage of material development or a different time. The interior of the continent, or the outside of modernity, is denied coevalness with the colonial metropolis as well as the travelling subject. This organisation of space in the narrative makes the passage between the two spaces or spheres a passage into an order of things in which any commodity can become a wonder or a novelty.

Moving into what is constructed in the narrative geography of the text as the space beyond industrial modernity, travellers' possessions become central elements in the narrative through their transformations into magical things and into wonders. Fire-arms, clocks and compasses are transformed through the eyes of the other. The differences in the ways in which subjects relate to objects become not only markers of differences between spaces or regions, but also of the travelling subject's location in space. In "Buttons and Souls" Youngs draws on Nicholas Thomas's *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*, in which Thomas discusses the instability of objects in borderland environments. Tomas writes that the "circulation of objects, especially across the edge of societies, civilizations, and trading regimes, is not merely a physical process but is also a movement and displacement of competing conceptions of things" (Thomas 123). The movement of competing conceptions marks the object's displacement in space. It has been shown above that "societies, civilizations, and trading regimes" tend to be conceived as vaguely defined spaces within the narrative geographies of travel texts. As location in space is associated with a certain moment in a history of material development, the ways in which the natives that the travelling subject comes across react to certain objects create a sense of closeness or remoteness, both in time and space, and in relation to the space of industrial modernity.

The suspension of the object between commonplace commodity and "wonderful thing" in *Across Africa* marks the transition of the object and its owner into a spatial and temporal context that is different from that in which they are normally located (Cameron 81).<sup>2</sup> The following passage appears under the column title "A native's estimation of white men" and describes how a chief's father inspects Cameron's possessions. The man, who is a native of the place in which the scene takes place, makes his estimation of the British by looking at Cameron's "wonderful belongings." When inspected by the old man, the guns, watches and the compasses, which are metonymically associated with the metropolis, turn into what Fabian calls a "veritable museum" that is "displayed 'out of context,'" (*Out of our Minds* 105). To the chief's old father, Cameron's gadgets become signs of

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<sup>2</sup> See "contexts" chapter, page 79, for a discussion about how objects were portrayed as "wonderful" and as defying accurate description by visitors of the Great Exhibition, which McClintock and others have described as a monumental event in European modernity and commodity capitalism.

immortality and supernatural qualities instead of signs of physical power (guns), mobility (compasses) and the mechanisation of time (clocks).

Many visitors came to inspect our wonderful belongings – watches, guns, pistols, compasses, etc.; and one old man, who was the chief's uncle and adopted father, after staring for a long time in mute admiration, said, "Oh, these white men! They make all these wonderful things, and know how to use them! Surely men who know so much ought never to die; they must be clever enough to make a medicine to keep them always young and strong, so that they never die."

I believe the old gentleman had some idea that we were a few thousand years old, and had evolved guns, watches and all, out of our inner consciousness.

(81)

The clocks in Cameron's possessions come to accentuate the absurdity of the old man's mythological conceptions of time, as well as the abolition of such mythological conceptions of time in metropolitan Great Britain. Symbolic of the mechanisation, and rational conceptions of time as well as the standardisation of units of measuring (*Time and the Other* 29), the clocks contrast to the notion of immortality and the "idea" that Cameron is as old as the recorded history of Europe. Cameron-the-narrator believes that the impression that his possessions make on the old man makes the man aware of the temporal distance between the two men and between the places to which they belong. The temporal distance between the traveller and the old man is expressed as if conceived of by the latter, but only as a result of a misunderstanding and not because he understands the actual order of things. According to Cameron-the-narrator, the old man understands the temporal distance in terms of material development between interior Africa and industrial Great Britain to be a difference in age between white and black men.

The old man's inexperience with the kinds of things that he "inspects" and "stares" at suggests that even though he is old and socially prominent, he has not had the opportunity to see such things until now. He has not seen such things because he has never been close enough to them. The old man's wonder and admiration of Cameron's possessions point back to the traveller's endeavour to go where no white man has gone before; that is, to cross Africa by foot from east to west. Cameron-the-traveller precedes

Cameron-the-narrator's rhetorical question about the reason why steamers do not bring the excess production of the British market to Africa. Cameron-the-traveller already brings "manufactured goods" to the African, albeit not primarily for economic purposes. There is in fact no sense of purpose in the scene above. The clocks and guns and compasses seem to come out of the party's bags and chests, mill about in the camp and draw the attention of the visitors without this being the traveller's intention.

The transformation of the object in the travel accounts that are considered in this book involves the proliferation of words like *seeing*, *staring* and *inspecting* in scenes like the one from *Across Africa* quoted above. The preoccupation with wonderful European objects that is ascribed to the African other not only signals the distance between the traveller's present location and the civilised centre, but also tends to highlight the role of the travelling subject as a representative of metropolitan Great Britain with which the objects are metonymically connected. John Hanning Speke expresses the religiously tinted belief that any European in contact to the sons of "our brother Ham" has the responsibility to teach these African relatives what they do not know (xvii).<sup>3</sup> In the introduction to the *Journal*, the author writes that "whatever ... may be said against them ... should rather reflect on ourselves, who have been so much better favored, yet have neglected to teach them" (xvii). He is, however, hesitant to demonstrate the workings of the objects in his possession when encountering Africans who are portrayed as not having seen such objects before. When Speke meets "the king of Uganda," his possessions do the talking, rather than the traveller himself because of the language barrier that stands between them. However, the objects in his possession do not teach the king a great deal.

I now longed to open conversation, but knew not the language ... so the king and myself sat staring at one another for full an hour – I mute, but he pointing and remarking with those around him on the novelty of my guard and general appearance, and even requiring to see my hat lifted, the umbrella shut and opened, and the guards face about and show off their red cloaks – for such wonders had never been seen in Uganda. (285)

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<sup>3</sup> For the story of Noah's three sons – Shem, Ham and Japheth – and the expulsion of Ham, see Genesis 9:18 – 9:27.

The silence between Speke and the king indeed makes it, as Youngs writes in “Buttons and Souls,” “inevitable that the removal of objects from one cultural sphere to another [leads] to different and often contesting perceptions of them” (118). It is precisely this moment of removal from one sphere to another that is marked in Speke’s text by the transformation of the umbrella from a useful object into a wonder. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *Wonder* infers a relation between a subject and an object that is characterised by the latter’s evoking “astonishment” in the former (“wonder” def 1c). “Astonishment,” in turn, is a “mental ... excitement due to the sudden presentation of anything unlooked for” (def 4). The king and his subjects are natives of Uganda where such objects as the traveller keeps in his possession “have never been seen.” According to Speke, the Ugandans see the umbrella as an astonishing wonder. Seeing here becomes an event, and the event of seeing umbrellas has never happened in Uganda before the traveller arrives with his wonders. Therefore, Speke’s arrival in the village of the Ugandan king is an arrival to a place that is isolated from the metonymic objects that are diffused in other parts of the interior of Africa because of its remoteness from the centre of the colonial world map. Even the coats of Speke’s guards are reported as having incited wonder in the Ugandans, who therefore seem to be even more isolated. The cultural isolation indicated by the Ugandans’ astonishment in turn serves to make the very fact that Speke has made his way to this isolated region seem more impressive.

Unlike Speke, Cameron is willing to demonstrate his possessions. He is one of the European colonial travellers to East Africa who, when “asked to demonstrate the workings of their superior modern arms,” does so “with relish” (Fabian *Out of our Minds* 106). It is his willingness to show and explain the workings of his possessions that causes the transformation of Cameron’s rifle in his encounter with a local chief called Munga Māndi. In contrast to Speke’s umbrella, Cameron’s rifle is transformed into a wonder because, rather than in spite of, the fact that Māndi understands what it does and just how powerful it is. Thus, it is the properties of his rifle that are wonderful and not the rifle itself.

After a time he begged me to be allowed to see the effects of fire-arms, and I fired at a target, to give him an idea of the accuracy of the rifle, at which he was much

astonished. Unfortunately someone told him about the wonderfully destructive properties of the shell, and he would not be satisfied until I fired one into a tree, when the result so frightened him that he hastily left the camp, and nothing could persuade him to return. (346)

Because of its displacement in space — its removal from the space in which guns are used and therefore feared — the rifle incites no fear at first sight. Indeed it is with relish that Cameron demonstrates the properties of not only his guns but of fire-arms in general. At the centre of Cameron-the-narrator's description of Mandi's reactions to the wonderful properties of Cameron's guns is the idea that the chief overvalues the object. The chief's fear of the gun, rather than of Cameron who is handling the gun, falls into McCallum's definition of the Western understanding of African fetishism. "[W]hat was wrong with African fetish worship, in colonial eyes," McCallum writes "was the overvaluation of a thing, the failure to acknowledge that a thing [is] not the same as a person and should not be treated as if it has the same power as a person" (109). This notion of fetishism is not only "an epistemological reassurance of the superiority of Western thinking" but a means to reinforce "the binary split between the purportedly savage or primitive ... and the civilized West" (109). The ostensible difference in ways of seeing and understanding the object stresses the difference between the European traveller and the African chief, as well as between the space where guns are used and the space beyond it.

Mândi's reaction when he understands that Cameron's rifle has "wonderful" powers is quite different from the way in which people who carry guns themselves react to Cameron's rifles. The difference in reactions to his guns marks a boundary between pre-modern space and middle space in the narrative geography that the discourse of diffusion creates. The difference is shown when Cameron and his party encounter a small group of "Lovalé people" looking for ivory and bee wax (366). His guns are admired by these people, who come from a place where guns are widely used. Cameron says that the members of the group "were armed with guns, and, as was always the case with those possessing them, were far more curious with regard to mine than people who had never before seen any fire-arms" (366). Even though these people carry guns themselves, they mistake the length of the rifle for a sign of its power and accuracy.

My heavy rifle was examined with much admiration, but they did not consider it sufficiently long, their own weapons being lengthy Portuguese flint-locks; but when one of them consented to shoot at a tree distant about fifty yards, I followed with shell, putting the one from the second barrel into the hole made by that from the first. They were then quite satisfied as to the power and accuracy of my firearms. (366)

The phallic imagery of this passage emphasises the triumphant tone in the comparison of old flint-locks and Cameron's modern gun. Again, Cameron demonstrates the power and accuracy of his rifles to people that he comes across and registers the effect his demonstration has. However, these particular onlookers are familiar with guns and carry flint-locks themselves, and their reaction is not fear but satisfaction. The Lovalé people are like Kingsley's middleman who is caught between different spaces and therefore also different times. Once more, it is the other's relation to, and way of understanding, the object that is the focus or centre of the narrator's attention. The length of the gun is not understood as a sign that the Lovalé people associate with some cultural specific idea which the travelling subject does not understand or know anything about, but their preferences for "lengthy" rifles are rather implied to be an indication of the fact that they misinterpret the physical properties of the weapon. The relation between the members of the travelling group and the rifle then is not one in which human properties are projected onto the inanimate object, but a relation in which the subject does not fully comprehend the properties of the object. Rather than overvaluing the rifle the Lovalé people ascribe it with less power than the traveller can demonstrate that it has.

This scene is repeated in a passage about Cameron's "audience" with "King Kongo" when approaching the Atlantic coast. In this passage his "anxiety [is] to gain an audience with King Kongo, and also to settle upon a suitable present" (412). Again, people prefer flint-locks to modern rifles: "I had brought a rifle for him. But his people wisely preferred an old flint-lock carried by [a member of Cameron's crew called] Manoel" (412). The ironic remark about the king's people's preference for fire-arms emphasises the cultural difference between these people and the traveller himself. It is implied that the choice of flint-locks before rifles is unwise because, as Cameron demonstrates, the rifle is the superior gun.

Travel narratives about journeys of exploration and travels around or far beyond the borders of the modern world are not the only narratives in which similar scenes to those analysed above appear. One of the defining characteristics of these narratives is that certain places are conveyed as “not having received ... the slightest impulse of civilization” (Speke xvii) and that people who the traveller comes across are portrayed as largely unaffected by modernity and European trade. Scenes in which travellers’ possessions transform into “wonderful things” can be seen as logical effects of this conception of space and modernity.

In *A Woman’s Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907) Mary Hall claims to be “the first woman of any nationality to have accomplished the entire journey from the Cape to Cairo” (v). This accomplishment is a personal accomplishment rather than, like Cameron’s walk across Africa, a historical event through which the unknown is made known to “enterprising capitalists” (Cameron qtd. in Pakenham 12) and the entire “civilized world” (Cameron 480). Her journey through Africa is more modestly described than those of Cameron and Speke. However, Hall enters spaces and contexts in which her possessions turn into wonderful things, which indicates that her journey goes through regions beyond the sphere of European influence. While visiting the family of a chief that happens to be absent when she arrives at his village, she decides to give the family members some beads “so they could make themselves some new finery” (216). However, the lid of the box that she keeps the beads in turns into an astonishing object and her visit, she writes, gives the family “food for thought for many a month to come” (215). Hall explains that the beads:

happened to be in a small box with a glass lid. None of these people had ever seen glass before, which fact was first disclosed to me by the boy’s look of astonishment. He could not understand how he could see the beads, and yet not be able to touch them or get them out. Then I took the top off and he looked through it awestricken. When he recovered sufficiently from his amazement, he tore off to exhibit the curiosity to his village, and I feel quite sure that it will be handed down as an heirloom in the family for generations. (216)

Like Cameron’s watches, compasses and guns, the glass lid is not meant to impress the boy but simply “happens” to do so. Unlike Cameron’s gadgets,

on the other hand, the glass lid is not studied by an aged representative of the region, but a boy whose father is not at home (215). A further difference from the less modest exploration texts is that the fact that Hall's belief that the glass lid will be handed down in the family suggests that metropolitan modernity will not be brought to the region by travellers like herself. The primary point with the passage does not seem to be that glass lid will soon be followed by other similar objects that will eventually become commonplace features of the material environment. The situation that Hall describes does in other words not seem to be a defining moment in the modernisation of Africa. However, the impact of the glass lid is perhaps even greater than that of matches in Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* and Cameron's gadgets in *Across Africa*, because it will continue to be cherished and to strike awe in people for generations to come.

In contrast to Mandi who confuses man and object, and the Lovalé people who mistake the length of the barrel of the gun for a sign of its functional power, the boy does not misunderstand the properties in the object, but almost fails to see it at all. In contrast to Speke and Cameron's guns and other gadgets, the glass lid is transparent and can only be seen by being seen through. It is amazing and astonishing by being almost invisible. The moment of transformation, however, ultimately has the same function in *A Woman's Trek* as in Speke's *Journal* and Cameron's *Across Africa*. The moment of transformation marks the displacement of object and travelling subject in space and gesture towards the backwardness and spatial remoteness of the location that the traveller is travelling in.

A brief analysis of two related passages in Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* will conclude this discussion about objects and geographical writing. They are relevant because they indicate that the distribution of objects in space are instrumental in the construction of a narrative geography, precisely because they demonstrate that objects tend *not* to follow predictable patterns when they travel across cultural borders and between societies. Kingsley-the-traveller learns that familiar objects can sometimes appear in unfamiliar environments and destabilise dichotomous geographical conceptions based on what is familiar and what is not. Kingsley describes how she is approached by a chief who tries to persuade her to buy a set of cooking-pots, which she refuses to buy (272). He then asks her to wait while he fetches a parcel containing something he believes she will be more interested in. When he returns, Kingsley is eager to see what it is he has to

offer her. Waiting for the chief to unwrap the object she wishes, Kingsley-the-narrator tells the reader, it would be “some rare and valuable article,” hopefully “connected with Fetish worship” (272). However, to Kingsley’s “disgust and rage” the parcel contains “an old shilling razor” (272). She is not only disappointed to find that the parcel did not contain an ethnologically interesting article. She is disgusted and outraged because the way in which the chief holds the razor out to her and the price he asks for it suggest that she is in “such urgent need of the thing” that she is “at his mercy regarding the price” (272).

However, Kingsley is not only affronted by the implications that she (jokingly, perhaps) reads into the chief’s offer. In a similar passage, she is frustrated to learn that the lake that has been pointed out to her as a good spot to catch fish only contains a species of mud-fish she hates (399). As if she would have written her book right then and there by the shore of the lake, she exclaims:

But there! it’s Africa all over; presenting one with familiar objects when one least requires them, like the razor in the heart of Gorilla-land; and unfamiliar, such as elephants and buffaloes when you are out for a quiet stroll armed with a butterfly net, to say nothing of snakes in one’s bed and scorpions in one’s boots and sponge. One’s view of life gets quite distorted; I don’t believe I should be in the least surprised to see a herd of hippo stroll on to the line out of one of the railway tunnels of Notting Hill Gate Station. West Africa is undoubtedly bad for one’s mind. (399)

In “Buttons and Souls,” Tim Youngs uses this passage to show how “one’s identity [is] given meaning partly through one’s relationship to [goods]” and that “the discovery of the familiar where it is unexpected and unwelcome” may consequently “threaten one’s sense of self” (119). He continues by stating that the juxtaposition of “the domestic and wild, the commercial and the natural,” in this passage “is a way of managing the potential estrangement caused by the recognition that the social structures one has taken for granted are actually highly artificial” (119). However, Kingsley’s juxtaposition of the natural and commercial implies that it is not only her conception of social structures that is destabilised by the unexpected encounter with the familiar. The passage can also be read as a recognition of the arbitrariness of the way space is conceptualised in her text. She

transposes the natural and wild into an epitomic modern locale, the Notting Hill Gate tube station, and imagines an absurd situation in which symbols of the colonial periphery invade the modern metropolis.

The absurdity of this imagined situation is juxtaposed to the moment of the modern commodity's sudden appearance in "the heart Gorilla-land." Kingsley's discovery of the razor in a place where it is not expected may seem to contradict the argument in this chapter – that the distribution of certain kinds of objects is a basis for the separation of two distinct spaces in the narrative geography of colonial travel accounts. However, the frustration that is expressed in the text reveals the constructedness of the dichotomous narrative geography of the Kingsley's travel narrative. The frustration that Kingsley expresses when objects do not behave as they are expected to, when they turn up in the wrong regions of the West Africa that she describes, makes the conception of space that she bases her geographical writing on suddenly conspicuous in its artificiality. This indicates that objects really are instrumental in the way that space is conceived in Kingsley's and other travellers' travel accounts.

## **Conclusion**

The argument in this chapter has been that objects that are associated with the metropolis tend to inscribe borders and shifts that define different spaces in the narrative geographies of the travel accounts that have been studied. The way in which European commodities are said to be diffused throughout the space that the traveller moves through gives rise to the notion of a space that these objects have not yet reached. This notion of a space that is unaffected by the diffusion of European commodities tends to be conveyed as belonging to a different time – a time that is associated with a distant stage in the history of material development and economic progress. Therefore the moment that the travellers' own possessions turn into wonderful things in the eyes of the people that they meet indicates the traveller's passage into the space beyond the reach of the diffusion of European commodities.

The functions of commodities and trivial things, in the narrative geography of the texts that have been analysed throughout this chapter show how objects serve to situate the travel narrative in space. The diffusion of objects and the movements of trade, which are not to be equated with actual

economic processes in the histories of actual regions, become significant for the way in which the travelling subject's movement and location in space are narrated. This is to say that material signs of difference, and more specifically the diffusion of commodities, can be read not only as detailed economic and ethnological information. They also have functions in the basic narrative about the journey and the travelling subject's movement through space, and in a specific sense, time.

These conclusions about the object's function in separations of two time-spaces will like the concept of narrative geography be used in the following chapters, in which other aspects of the object's function in the travel narrative are discussed. The following chapter, for example, will build on these initial observations about how the object comes to define and separate a modern capitalist sphere and a pre-modern, pre-capitalist sphere.

# **Objects in Trade: Ambivalence and the Dissemination of Capitalist Modernity**

The forcing system, so often essayed with so-called savages, merely puts a veneer of spurious civilization; in the majority of cases the subject having, in addition to the vices of his native state, acquired those belonging to the lowest dregs of civilization.

Verney Lovett Cameron, *Across Africa*

This chapter analyses instances of contradiction and ambivalence that arise from the modes in which the expansion of markets and the intensification of trade. The exchange of commodity objects are advocated and represented in the primary texts. Trade between the centre and periphery is overtly and covertly ascribed with the power to bring about Africa's and the African's ascent from a state of savagery to civilisation, to introduce industrial production, to open up the continent and create a network of roads and steamship lines that facilitate transport between regions, to replace the slave trade with legitimate trade, to substitute war with prosperous peace and to exchange superstition with Christianity and reason. It is implied that the expansion of trade relations and the dissemination of a certain (and not easily defined) economic ethic anticipate a universalising movement that will extend the sphere of capitalism and the dissemination of British commodities throughout the African periphery.

However, as trade is associated with progress and the extension of the historical present of the metropolis, the expected effects of the circulation of certain commodities ultimately threaten to destabilise constructions of temporal difference, as well as the structure of the narrative geography that is described in the previous chapter. The universalising power of trade contradicts the denial of coevalness in other parts of the texts. Therefore, the promotion of trade as a means to civilise and modernise

Africa and the African tends to be accompanied by descriptions of trade situations in which the avid promotion of trade is contradicted. This contradiction may be compared with Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry.<sup>1</sup> Like mimicry, trade has a destabilising effect on the construction of difference in the texts because it threatens to reduce difference by closing the gap between the self and the other.

As a consequence of this threat to the construction of difference, the otherness of the other is often accentuated in situations in which the traveller barter with locals and traders – an activity that he or she is normally forced to do at some point. Economic irrationality is therefore often projected onto these people with whom the traveller trades. The kind of psychological characteristics that are ascribed to the other coincide with those that Rita Felski has pointed out as commonly associated with modernity's "feminization of Western society, as evidenced in the passive, hedonistic and decentred nature of modern subjectivity" (4-5). As was pointed out in the introductory chapter, Felski states that while modernity has commonly been associated with dynamic activity, speed, progress, rationality and the accumulation of value, traits that have traditionally been associated with masculinity, this is only one side of the modern condition.

To Felski modernity, especially in its economic manifestation, also entails such traditionally feminised psychological phenomena as irrational desire and "the lures of mass culture and consumer society" and its "inauthentic pleasures and pseudo-happiness" (5). Therefore, "'masculine' rationalisation and 'feminine' pleasure are simply two sides of a single coin, the seamless logic of domination that constitutes modern subjectivity through processes of subjugation" (5-6). The fact that the African is described as expressing an irrational desire for commodities and pleasure does not mean that this stereotypical other is ascribed a modern subjectivity, but can rather be read as a projection of anxieties about the threat of the feminisation of the modern subject onto the stereotype of the irrational primitive. While masculine rationality is seen in the discursive formation of modernity as counterbalancing feminine irrationality and defencelessness to the pseudo-erotic rhetoric of commodity capitalism, pre-modern man is described as lacking this control over irrational impulses. The modernity to which black, African trader is invited through trade with commodities from

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 40-42 for a discussion mimicry in Bhabha's theory about colonial discourse.

the metropolis is, in other words, the irrational and impulsive, “feminine” side of modernity.

### **Ambivalence and the promotion of trade**

One of several motivations for the expansion of British commercial interests in Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century was the argument that legitimate commerce had the potential to facilitate the abolition of the slave trade simply by substituting one commodity (slaves) for other commodities (ivory, cloth, beads). A further motivation was the pressing need for British commercial efforts in order to keep up with other European nations that were involved in the pre-colonial exploitation of, and subsequent colonial competition for, African resources. The future of regions and peoples that travellers come across and narrators portray is often described in economic terms: The landscape is commonly discussed as a repository of natural resources – a warehouse full of commodities awaiting the arrival of European capital.

Read against a background of nineteenth century travel texts’ relations to pre-colonial and colonial political discourses, the promotion of trade and commerce may to some extent be seen as a continuation of David Livingstone’s theory about the trinity of “Commerce, Christianity, Civilization.” In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Livingstone’s three Cs, which were based on a firm belief in the power of free trade to civilise and reform the primitive, was proffered and practised by many other Christian missionaries (Comaroff 166-167). To Livingstone, commerce was the key to the actual and definite abolition of the slave trade as well as a vehicle for the dissemination of Christianity and the simultaneous eradication of other systems of belief in Africa before the Scramble. While many instances of Christian missionary politics are condemned by narrators such as Ewart Grogan and Mary Kingsley, their narratives promote the dissemination of the components of the concept of civilisation through commerce and trade between the European metropolis and its periphery.

In Livingstone’s writing, trade between Europe and Africa was ascribed not only the potential to change Africa materially while boosting the British economy, but also the potential of changing Africa in an immaterial way. As other British travellers after him, he believed that European traders’ commercial activities would facilitate the dissemination of Christianity and

what he called civilisation. He wrote that missionaries and traders “are mutually dependent, and each aids in the work of the other” (48). Above all, “legitimate” commerce is in Livingstone’s writing endowed with the capacity to make the slave trade an unprofitable business. Livingstone and the English MP and social reformer Thomas Foxwell Buxton thought that the European-made commodity would push the slave-commodity out of the market (Nkomazana 47). In *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1858) Livingstone argues that “if the slave-market were supplied with articles of European manufacture by legitimate commerce, the trade in slaves would become impossible” (106). Livingstone, who was celebrated and widely read in Great Britain, became not only a central figure in the narratives of Protestant missionary endeavours in Africa, but also a key figure in the fetishisation of the commodity in narratives about the development of the African periphery.

In most of the texts analysed in this book, trade is an ideologically charged theme both on the macro-level of the narrators’ discourses on European projects in Africa as well as the micro-level of travellers’ transactions. In his *Journal*, Speke-the-traveller informs chiefs and kings about the importance of free trade and peaceful commercial relations with neighbouring regions as well as with European traders. *Across Africa* ends with a rhetorically grandiloquent chapter on the current state of trade and commerce and an appeal for the expansion of British commercial activities in Africa. In *Travels in West Africa*, trade competes with fish and “fetish” for the traveller’s and, especially, the narrator’s attention. Kingsley’s book has an appendix devoted to “Trade and Labour in West Africa,” in which the present state of European commercial projects in the region and potential areas of commerce are described. British economic activities in Africa are conceived not only as profitable business opportunities and as important for the development of West African regions, but also as a “commercial war” against France and Germany that can only be won through the application of the principles of free trade in British imperial relations (674). Furthermore, the colonial economy and the areas that this economy may expand into are described at length in Ewart Grogan’s *From the Cape to Cairo: The First Traverse from of Africa from South to North*. Like Kingsley, Grogan has many ideas about how to further boost profits and increase levels of import and export to and from the British colonies.

In these texts, discussions about trade involve conflicting sentiments that are often played out between a macro- and a micro-level in the narrative. These levels often, but not always, coincide with the different functions of the narrator and traveller. On a macro-level the expansion of European trade in Africa represents development and a move away from savagery to civilisation. This idea is often conceived by the narrator of the text and takes the form of statements and claims that are directed towards the reader of the text rather than, for example, toward a certain person who the traveller encounters. On a micro-level, commercial encounters between people who represent European economic interests and African traders are often described in less utopian terms. The ideological belief in the modernising effects of trade worries the boundaries of difference that separate the traveller from his or her other, destabilises the gap between the civilised European metropolis and the uncivilised African periphery and disturbs the relation between capitalism and pre-capitalist modes of exchange. Tim Youngs has commented on this tendency in *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues 1850-1900* (1994) where he analyses texts by Stanley, Cameron, Speke as well as other British explorers. Youngs writes that these texts “promote commerce and at the same time reveal unease about the signs and effects of the meeting of cultures” and “this discomfort is often focused on the role of commodities as they are freed from the realm of one culture and enter another” (97). Through the close reading of his primary texts he shows how British African travellers express contradictory attitudes towards how Africans relate to commodities and things, and especially objects that belong to the travellers themselves.

On the micro level of the *Journal*, Speke promotes trade when encountering local authorities. On the macro level, Speke-the-narrator adheres to Livingstone’s theories and advocates the expansion of the British market in order to rid Africa of the slave trade. Consequently, the taxation of travelling traders and other obstacles to free trade are presented as the cause of unrest and misery in certain regions. An example of how tax is portrayed as the cause of economic distress is when Speke-the-traveller confers with a man called Manña Séra, who Speke learns has been removed from his position as chief over his late father’s village by Arab merchants (93). This episode involves both the traveller’s promotion of free trade in his encounter with Séra as well as the narrator’s ideological discussion about British-African trade on a more general level. Séra, whose father Speke met a few

years earlier, tells Speke he is at war with the Arab traders and asks the British traveller to speak for him to the Arabs at Kazé. In a sub-clause that can be read either as uttered by the traveller in conversation with Séra or as Speke-the-narrator's comment directed to the reader, Speke emphasises the importance of free-trade. "I told Manña Séra I felt very much for him, and I would do my best if he would follow me to Kazé;" Speke writes "but I knew that nothing could ever be done unless he returned to the free-trade principles of his father" (93). Séra tells Speke that he has never taken a single tax from Arab traders, and thus makes himself agreeable from the point of view of Speke-the-traveller/narrator's calls for free trade in the region (93). Speke assures Séra that he will do what he can "to restore the ruined trade of his country" and observes that, "as the trade that went out of his country came to ours, and all imports were productions of our country also, this war [between Séra and the Arab traders] injured us as well as himself" (94). Séra's respect for the principle of free trade and the economic interconnectedness of his country and the British market makes Speke-the-traveller sympathise with Séra's situation. On the macro-level, however, this episode does not read as an account of an individual chief's thoughts on free trade, but reads more as a story about the dissemination of capitalist modes of exchange in pre-colonial Africa.

While free trade and commercial interconnectedness are presented as transforming powers that will bring Africa into the modern world, the ambivalence that surrounds this anticipated transformation creates a certain dissonance between the macro-level discourses on trade and the micro-level of day to day travel. This ambivalence takes the form of contradictions in the descriptions of the traveller's commercial interaction with people. The British traveller's other is often constructed as being ignorant of the kind of value that commodities are endowed with in capitalist modes of exchange, and/or as a vulgarly dishonest trader who is aware of the value or lack of value in things. These contradictory images of the African other come together in an episode in which Speke is offered to buy a music-box. In this passage, it is suggested that the owner of the music-box misunderstands value in two different and contradicting ways. The music box is defective and therefore has neither proper exchange value nor proper use-value in the most commonplace sense of the term. At the same time, what could be interpreted as the seller's ignorance of value could also be interpreted as an attempt to make a profit by selling an object that is worth little or nothing.

One of the Wamarima brought a large music-box into my tent, asking me to become the purchaser of it, and assuring me it would prove a most valuable investment. When, however, it had been set going, and had played a few bars of a waltz to the time of a funeral march, the music suddenly terminated in a permanent finale, the spindle of the fly-wheel having broken. (94)

The description of the breakdown of the music-box has less to do with the object itself than it has to do with the Wamarima's credibility as a trader. The last part of the first sentence ("and assuring me it would prove a most valuable investment") may be understood as constructing the seller of the music-box as a dishonest trader who attempts to sell the object for more than it is worth. However, it may also be understood as implying that the Wamarima is honest but lacks a basic understanding of value. Likewise, the Wamarima's assurance that the non-commodity would be "a most valuable investment" can be interpreted either as a badly conceived lie, or an honest belief that is based on a misconception of exchange value and an inadequate comprehension of technology.

The ambiguity in the account about the music-box may be understood as indicative of the ambivalence that is inherent in discourse about commerce and British-African trade. The passage can be interpreted as an account of the Wamarima people's ignorance of the basics of economic exchange, or as an account of how they relate to technology. However, the passage also suggests that the Wamarimas have adapted to capitalist modes of exchange and to this relatively sophisticated technology. This would suggest that the owner of the music-box is dishonest rather than ignorant because it means that the person who attempts to sell the music box is aware that the machine is in a bad condition and therefore worthless.

The contradiction between ignorance and dishonesty is not restricted to accounts of proper trading situations. This contradiction appears in accounts about local authorities' imposition of taxes on travellers and traders who wish to cross borders between areas that belong to different chiefs or kings. Speke-the-narrator describes a situation in which a road between the sea and the interior was opened for ivory-merchants. "Avarice" and the prospects of making a profit from taxation, however, have made neighbouring chiefs "overreach themselves with exorbitant taxes" to such an extent that the road is once more shut for travellers and traders (60). Speke-the-narrator states that "this foolish disruption having at first only lasted for

a while, the road was again opened and again closed, for the merchants wanted an easy passage, and the native chiefs desired cloths" (60). The merchants, who by the nature of their occupation might be expected to also "desire" valuable commodities, are described as being more modest than the chiefs in that they only want to be able to travel freely. Consequently, the chiefs are portrayed not only as foolish but also greedy, and their desire for cloth is what ultimately ruins their prospects of acquiring this commodity.

Had they only sense to see, and patience to wait, the whole trade of the interior would inevitably pass through their country ... and instead of being poor in cloths, they would be rich and well dressed as their neighbours. But the curse of Noah sticks to these his grandchildren by Ham, and no remedy that has yet been found will relieve them. They require a government like ours in India; and without it, the slave-trade will wipe them off the face of the earth. (60)

As with the instance of the Wamarima and the music-box, the chiefs are portrayed as being ignorant of the proper ways of exchange at the same time as they are all too aware of the profits that are to be made by imposing taxation on passing merchants. Consequently, colonialism is presented as a substitute for the absent masculine rationality that Felski, through Adorno and Horkheimer, sees as the epitome of prototypical modern (masculine) subjectivity, and which checks the impulses of feminine irrationality. Colonialism is also seen as a prerequisite for trade, and trade is, in turn, conceived not only as a prerequisite for the development of the region, but as necessary to keep the "grandchildren by Ham" from leaving the stage of history altogether. While the chiefs' taxation of merchants indicates that they are aware of the profits that are to be made, the greed that it is also an indication of takes the form of a lack of "sense." As a result of the chiefs' simultaneous greed and lack of economic sense, the imposition of colonial rule is implied to be necessary in order for commerce to flourish.

In Speke-the-traveller's discussions with local authorities, reported through Speke-the-narrator, aspects of modernity are commodified and presented as accessible to Africa and the African other through trade with the British. Visiting the court of King Rūmanika of Uganda in Karague, Speke is asked for a "charm" that will guarantee the king's victory in a war

against his brother who plans to take over the throne.<sup>2</sup> Speke-the-narrator tells the reader that “charms, of course, we had none” (207). The king then promises that he will not kill his brother should he be able to take him prisoner, “but merely ... gouge his eyes out” (207). Speke’s advice to the king contrasts to this image of violence.

I then recommended, as the best advice I could give him for the time being, to take some strong measures against ... the system of taxation carried on in Usūli. These would have the effect of bringing men with superior power into the country, for it was only through the power of knowledge that good government could be obtained. Sūwarora at present stopped eight tenths of the ivory-merchants who might be inclined to trade here from coming into the country, by the foolish system of excessive taxation he had established. (207)

Again, good and rational “government” is prescribed as a means of controlling the irrational disposition of the African other, though the propensity for violence can hardly be seen as an element that is associated with modernity’s alleged feminising effects on subjectivity. However contradictory that it may at first seem, trade is not necessarily an amalgam that brings peace between neighbours in this context. Speke-the-traveller rather uses the prospect of trade to pit Rūmanika against neighbouring authorities. The kind of “superior knowledge” that ivory-traders would bring into the country if they were not stopped at the border due to “excessive taxation” is not elaborated on. Nor is it clear just how good government would prevent war between neighbouring groups of people or prevent a rival heir from trying to kill the king. However, in the light of the account of Rūmanika’s concerns about his renegade brother and the impending war, Speke-the-traveller’s recommendation reads as an assurance that a king who has access to superior knowledge is less likely to lose a war than someone who does not have access to this knowledge. Speke-the-traveller says that if the king would give him “one or two of his children” he would see to it that they would be “instructed in England” and thus, presumably, return to

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<sup>2</sup> Rūmanika is the spelling used in Speke’s *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, while in *Across Africa* it is spelled *Rumanika*.

Uganda with more of the “superior knowledge” alluded to previously as well as a schooling in masculine rationality (207).

Difference is emphasised in the conversation between Speke and Rūmanika when Speke compares the commodity of “superior knowledge” with material commodities, which are implied to belong to the baser levels of human existence. In the paragraph that follows on from this quotation, Speke tells Rūmanika that trade is of little interest to the British, who rather travel the world “to admire the beauties of creation” (207). Trade and commerce are no longer seen in a favourable light but are related to as being beneath human dignity. Speke replaces an industrial and imperial, class-based society with an image of a society in which the pursuit of profit has been substituted for the admiration of the beauty of the world. King Rūmanika expresses:

his utter amazement that we should spend so much property in traveling, he wished to know what we did it for; when men had such means they would surely sit down and enjoy it. “Oh no,” was the reply; “we have had our fill of the luxuries of life, eating, sleeping and drinking have no charms for us now; we are above trade, therefore require no profits, and seek for enjoyment the run of the world.” (207)

The superiority of the British is consolidated through the claim that the British are above trade. Speke-the-traveller’s claim that the British are above trade suggests an inherent contradiction in the conception of modernity that is prevalent in the text: If trade brings with it the power of knowledge as well as economic wealth, this knowledge and material wealth elevates people to a position from which consumption, which appeals to irrational desire, seems to belong to a more primitive state of man. Youngs points out that what Speke’s text says about the British being “above trade” is directed to the readers (if not to the historical Rūmanika) of the *Journal to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. Youngs is of course right, but it leads him into a discussion about how Speke wished to be seen by his readers (not as a trader), and away from the latent ambivalence in the discourse of the expansion of capitalist markets in Africa, which is the focus in this chapter.

The ambivalence in Speke’s text stems from the fact that it supports the promotion of trade on the idea that capitalist modes of exchange may be

adopted by anyone who possesses something that may be traded for something else. To this is added the conviction that anyone or any group of people who chooses (or who are forced) to adopt these modes of exchange will rapidly ascend to a more civilised state. A further important aspect of this sudden contempt for trade may be the universalising power that is accredited not only to trade as a kind of communication, but also to the commodity form. The alleged universalising powers of trade may be seen as an extension of the universalising power of the commodity form. Commodity capitalism is a system of exchange where a certain amount of one commodity, say a certain kind of fabric, is exchangeable for a certain amount of a different kind of commodity, say elephant tusks (ivory) or palm oil. Therefore, as Dipesh Chakrabarty writes in *Provincializing Europe*, while the “commodity form does not negate difference,” it “holds it in suspension so that we can exchange things as different from one another as beds and houses” (51). That is, no matter how different a commodity is from another, the commodity is by definition exchangeable for any other commodity as long as their values are equivalent.

However, this belief in the universalising power of commodities, combined with the belief that the trade in goods accelerates history and makes the pre-modern catch up with the modern, generates the need for a new kind of difference through which the separation of the two is retained. Consequently, Speke-the-traveller portrays the British as people who reluctantly engage in trade in order to help their fellow man, while they themselves are above it. Speke tells Rūmanika about the positive effects of reducing taxes on travellers and traders and assures him that the British are generally not interested in commerce for their own benefit. He then says to the king that what led him to the king’s land was to see the king, “and at the same time to open another road to the north, whereby the best manufactures of Europe would find their way to Karangué” (207). This seemingly altruistic motivation for travelling widens rather than narrows the historical gulf between Speke and his countrymen on the one hand and Rūmanika and his subjects on the other. Ultimately, then, the acquisition of material wealth in the form of commodities for consumption is, according to Speke, of less interest to the British than is the ultimate, unalienable object of consumption – “the world,” which affords them the “enjoyment” they seek (208).

In *Through the Dark Continent*, Stanley is considerably more hesitant when discussing trade than Speke is in the *Journal*. Stanley calls for

the investment of European capital, but describes the effects of commercial enterprises as having an effect on Africa rather than Africans — of Africa as a space rather than Africans as subjects in history. The African continent is described on one single page as “fertile,” “flourishing,” as “yielding abundantly” and “thriving luxuriantly,” but also as “untouched” and “undeveloped” (42). The same page contains a catalogue of resources and plants that can be turned into commodities. However, while Africa offers a wealth of objects that can be commodified it at the same time puts obstacles between its riches and “the capitalist.” In order for this agent to exploit the fertile land, Africa’s tendency to make things difficult for the European traveller as well as capitalist must be overcome. Stanley-the-narrator contends, that the “energetic man of capital” must overcome the obstacles by means of the perhaps most momentous among material embodiments of modernity — the modern transport system. He adds that “the capitalist must find means of carriage, otherwise he will never conquer African difficulties” (42). The building of a transport system will not only benefit the capitalist but also Africa, as the abstract manifestation of Europe’s other.

Stanley tells the reader that “a tramway is the one thing that is needed for Africa. All other benefits that can be conferred by contact with civilization will follow in the wake of this tramway, which will be an iron bond, never to be again broken, between Africa and the more favoured countries” (42-43). The “iron bond” between Africa and civilisation is not only a metaphor for kin- and friendship, which is also a metaphor for the relation between these two poles, but also describes the dialectical interlocking of coloniser and colonised. However, the iron bond between Africa and civilisation does not only anticipate the governance imposed on African regions and groups of people by European powers in the wake of the 1884-1885 Berlin conference, but also suggests that the building of the tramway will bind civilisation to Africa as firmly as it binds Africa to civilisation. As in Speke’s *Journal*, the effects of the establishment of capitalist interests in Africa are approached with a certain unease in Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent*. The choice of metaphor, the iron bond, evokes irreversibility and can even be associated with bondage and act as a metaphor for slavery.

In Ewart Grogan’s *From the Cape to Cairo*, trade with the locals is a nuisance. The British East Africa that Grogan travels through more than a decade after the Berlin Conference is, in contrast to the regions described in

the Nile explorers' texts, a place where British commercial interests are firmly established. Therefore, what Grogan writes about commerce is first and foremost focused on the economic profit produced through British capital's investments in British colonies. Grogan-the-narrator has many opinions concerning how the British "possessions" in eastern Africa should be governed and how profits could be boosted. While the texts of the Nile explorers who travel in Africa before 1884 discuss how and why the African is to be taught the principles of free trade, *From the Cape to Cairo* focuses on different people's understanding of the concept of property. Theft and dishonesty in trade are condemned by the narrator, who sees these traits as characteristic of the native as he calls the African other, as opposed to the European in Africa. Grogan-the-traveller, on the other hand, punishes people he meets for stealing things or for buying or selling goods in what he considers to be a deceitful way.

In contrast to the narrator's thoughts on colonial infrastructure and economy, in a narrative about the traveller's toilsome journey, trade is reduced to a logistical problem that is made worse by the dishonest nature of locals and traders. Grogan-the-traveller rarely trades with the local merchants himself, but has his men carry a store of food for himself and his British co-traveller, Arthur "Harry" Sharp. Grogan has his carriers buy their own food from local traders and peasants, but decides that all the transactions should be carried out in his presence because he suspects that his carriers cheat the locals and steal their goods.

The difficulty of preventing our Manyema ruffians from swindling the natives was almost insuperable. After the Ngenzi fracas, I discovered that they were making capital out of our action to extort things from the natives; so I insisted that for a time every transaction should be performed before me. If a carrier wished to buy a bunch of bananas from a native, he brought the native with the bananas to my tent and they bargained, and the price was paid in my presence. (121)

The solution to the problem of the Manyemas' deceitfulness suggests that this passage may be read as an analogy in which the Manyema and the natives represent East Africa at large and the traveller stands in for the colonial government. The mind-set of the Manyemas necessitates an

instance of control in order to protect the easily cheated African from the calculating and dishonest African. The fact that the relation between the two kinds of African is called a “problem” evokes the trope of the white man’s burden, and motivates the white man’s firm instruction of the black man.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Grogan-the-traveller, like the colonial government, takes on the role of a panoptic eye that “for a time” polices the colonised in order to protect them from themselves.

Grogan’s instruction of his carriers to adhere to the proper economic manners is, like his behaviour towards non-Europeans in general, always on the verge of erupting into violence. When he captures an alleged thief he hands him over to a chief who has the thief beheaded. Grogan-the-narrator states that this “fortunate capture put an end to the thieving question” (127). Just before this episode, two of his Manyema carriers are caught stealing. Grogan has them beaten, establishes a market where people may sell their goods under his and Sharp’s supervision, and forces all the Manyema carriers to carry water as a “fatigue-duty” (122). Grogan tells the reader that these were necessary measures at the time in order to teach the men not to steal, because it is “easier to stop a donkey from scratching than a Manyema from stealing” (122). However, after having had the carriers punished, he finds that some of them have packed up their belongings and left camp and he chases after them to bring them back. The way in which this pursuit is narrated bears a remarkable resemblance to the lengthy sub-narratives about the traveller’s big game hunting excursion.

I took my rifle and dashed off in pursuit, accompanied by my two Watonga, while Sharp, revolver in one hand and rifle in the other, threatened to shoot the first man who moved. Rushing over a rise I saw the ringleader, one of our worst villains, and the originator of the idea [to leave camp], leading about two hundred yards away; I fired at him, just as he turned the corner of the hill, fully intending to kill him. (122)

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<sup>3</sup> “The White Man’s Burden” is an 1899 poem by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936). Warning against the costs that come with the “white man’s” duty to civilize peoples around the world, the poem’s title has come to be used as a term for the kind of sentiments that are expressed in the second stanza: “Take up the White Man’s burden / In patience to abide, / To veil the threat of terror / And check the show of pride; / By open speech and simple, / An hundred times made plain / To seek another’s profit, / And work another’s gain.” The term the “white man’s burden” thus names the belief, often expressed in colonial literature, that the colonisation of regions in the periphery and the forceful civilisation of coloured peoples form a burden that is assigned to the white “race.”

The detailed description of events that happen within a short stretch of time (“rushing over a rise”, “just as he turned the corner”) amplifies the sense of urgency and excitement and is a method used frequently in descriptions of how the traveller hunts zebras and elephants. The estimation of distances and the traveller’s position in relation to the game/“ringleader” are likewise often used in the descriptions of the traveller’s big game hunting. However, in this case he does not manage to shoot the man, but misses his head and hits his hat instead. When they all have returned back to camp Grogan says to his carriers that he “removed [the Manyema’s] hat to show with what ease [he] could have killed him if he wished to do so” (122).<sup>4</sup> He also explains that if the Manyema continue to steal from the locals they will soon be unable to buy food because it will make the locals reluctant to come to camp to sell their goods.

Grogan’s violent instruction of his carriers in the proper respect for property contradicts his own reactions to situations when local groups of people are not willing to sell him food. Having blamed the Manyema for having scared the locals into refusing to sell their bananas and other foodstuff to the camp, he tells a member of the local population that if they do not do sell their goods at camp Grogan and his group will take what they need by force, which they eventually do (123). From the point of view of the present discussion the major contradiction in Grogan’s text is not the fact that he punishes his carriers for stealing and cheating while he thieves from the local peasants and merchants, but in his brutal instructions to carriers and other people concerning proper economic behaviour and respect for property, while Grogan-the-narrator tells the reader that the native is helplessly impervious to the basic rudiments of economic exchange. When discussing colonial economy, he states that “the ordinary laws of supply and demand do not hold with the African native” (59). He then goes on to explain that the working African other does not really benefit from higher prices on labour, but fails to explain why this is the case.

Grogan shares the belief that the African other is incapable of understanding the most elementary principles of capitalist exchange with Mary Kingsley, who is at times also pessimistic about the prospects of inviting the African to modernity through trade and commerce. According to the appendix on “Trade and Labour in West Africa” in Kingsley’s *Travels in*

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<sup>4</sup> It is described on more than one occasion in the narrative how Grogan shoots and kills people (149-150, 157).

*West Africa*, trade between Europeans and people in the interior would not only do the latter good, but is absolutely necessary. According to Kingsley-the-narrator, if “white control advances” and “trade with the interior is not expanded, the condition of the West African will be a very wretched one, far worse than it was before the slave-trade was suppressed” (678). On the other hand, she is not always positive to the West African’s consumption of commodities that originate from the industrialised metropolis. Discussing the West African’s ability to adapt to Eurocolonial economy and trade, she writes that “I have always admired men for their ... unceasing struggle for the beyond – the something else, but not until I had to deal with Krumen did I realise the vastness to which this ... characteristic of theirs could attain” (651). She thinks that these people, who are without “pockets and the manifold, want-creating culture of our modern European civilization,” should be less inclined to desire material objects. She subsequently learns that they, contrary to what she says one might think, desire these things more than anyone and she sees this as a problem. Invoking the Faustus myth, which Felski through Marshall Berman describes as an allegorical master narrative of masculine modernity (1-2), she states that “the Kruman yearns after, and duns for, as many things for his body as the lamented Faustus for his soul” (651). If Faust’s desire for knowledge is read as a metaphor for the cult of reason in Enlightenment modernity and as an instantiation of the association of masculinity with thought and a consequent association of femininity with the body, Kingsley’s bantering comment about the Kruman reads as another example of how anxieties about the feminine side of modernity are projected onto the African other.

While Kingsley-the-traveller oscillates between feminine and masculine roles (see for example Lindgren 115, Pratt 213, McEwan 30, 40), in her relation to her “boys,” she stands in for the controlling, rational masculine subject. When travelling with a “gang enough experienced to fill a hat,” she decides to emphatically forbid them to buy things (652). “I can’t say that it was an immediate success” Kingsley-the-narrator tells the reader (652). “During this period we came across a trader’s lonely store wherein he had a consignment of red parasols. After these appalling objects the souls of my Krumen hungered with a great desire. ‘NO,’ said I, in my severest tone, and after buying other things we passed on” (652). Judging from Kingsley’s description of them, Kingsley-the-traveller stands for the restraining impulse that the Krumen seem to lack. The Krumen’s uncontrolled desire is

accentuated by the fact that what they desire is a rather trivial, and effeminate, commodity. It later turns out that the Krumen, despite Kingsley's emphatic "NO," have managed to buy parasols, which fall to pieces as soon as they are used (653). In contrast to what is suggested elsewhere, Kingsley implies that the "want-creating culture of [the] modern European civilization" is not something that should be exported from the modern metropolis to Africa. The reason why Africa should not be introduced to this aspect of civilisation is because of the psychological disposition of the West African rather than the nature of modern capitalism.

### **Mimicry and Modernisation**

A sign of the transformative powers of trade is what may be seen as a kind of mimicry in traders who work as middlemen between European economic agents and other groups of people. These traders carry signs of the kind of development that trade is commonly associated with, such as European-made clothes (as opposed to nakedness) and proficiency in European languages (or pidgin languages based partly on a European language). However, these signs are combined with signs that refer back to that savage state from which the African trader is described as having been partly, but not completely, removed.

While parts of Bhabha's theory of mimicry may be used to describe particular attitudes that are voiced in the texts concerning the middleman's adoption of certain prescribed characteristics and values, the effect of this mimicry on him is described by Kingsley and Cameron as a kind of hybridity. The fact that the systems of difference that are fundamental to colonial discourse are potentially destabilised by the other's development toward civilisation makes this hybridity quite different from the space of emancipation that it is in the theory of thinkers like Homi Bhabha. In the foreword to one edition of the English translation of Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures*, anthropologist Renato Rosaldo points out that the term *hybridity* has two "conceptual polarities" (xv). On the one hand, hybridity implies a middle ground between two "zones of purity," an even mix of two distinct kinds (xv), while on the other, and in relation to cultural phenomena, hybridity may be seen as designating not only the exception of the occasional union of otherwise distinct cultures, but "the ongoing condition for all human cultures" (xv). The former interpretation of hybridity is the one that

best describes how identities and conditions are portrayed in the present selection of colonial travel narratives. The fact that hybridity tends to be described in terms of a mix between two distinct phenomena in the primary text can be seen as an effect of the fact that conceptual dichotomies such as civilisation and savagery, black and white, European and African are prevalent in these texts.

The ways in which middlemen and non-European traders are described infers that their mimicking is a paradoxical combination of incompatible temporalities. The paradoxical in their mimicry is primarily described through their appearance, including the clothes they wear and the objects they keep about them, but also in the way in which they speak. Their appearances, as described by Kingsley and Cameron, form an impure combination of “discrete structures and practices, previously existing in separate form” (Canclini xxv). These discrete structures are associated either with metropolitan modernity or the pre-modernity of the periphery. The reason that they are conceived as separate is not because of a pre-existing ontological difference between them, but because they, as has been argued at length elsewhere in this book are separated in the narrative. Therefore, while modernity and pre-modernity are not pure points of origin or even self-contained, easily definable structures, they are made to seem like such in the text, and especially in relation to the mimicry and hybridity of traders that appear in Kingsley’s and Cameron’s texts.

The description of a trader who appears in Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa* illustrates the ambivalence in descriptions of the African’s adaptation to the modes of exchange that the text advocates. His name is Prince Makanga and, like the “black trader,” who was discussed in the previous chapter, he symbolises the transforming power that trade and commerce are endowed with in Kingsley’s text. He is portrayed as having picked up the habits of carrying foreign clothes and handing out business cards from European firms that he has worked for (341). These habits could be seen as signs of the impact his involvement in trade has had on Makanga. However, these signs are contradicted by other signs that are rather associated with pre-modernity and savagery. This makes Makanga’s hybridity seem absurd. Ultimately, the sense of absurdity surrounding Makanga’s position between the modernity of the centre and its opposite is achieved through an employment of the categories of place and race (or race’s visual manifestation in skin colour).

When Kingsley meets Makanga, he is standing on the riverbank outside a village in which her travelling companion and guide Obanjo lives when not trading along the river. She is sitting in a boat watching people herd goats when she is addressed by “a well-modulated[,] evidently educated voice” that turns out to belong to Makanga (340). His appearance is that of “an Englishman who had from some misfortune gone black all over and lost his trousers and been compelled to replace them with a highly ornamental table-cloth. The rest of his wardrobe was in exquisite condition, with the usual white jean coat, white shirt and collar, very neat tie, and felt hat affected by white gentlemen out here” (340). Kingsley-the-narrator’s description of Makanga’s appearance may be read as a reversal, for comic effect, of the way things actually are: Black is white, African is British, a loin cloth is a tablecloth. Makanga’s mimicking of the dress code and manners of the British gentleman, while displaying equally emphatic signs associated with the European gentleman’s other, is not presented as an entirely positive movement towards civilisation. Instead, the combination of a white gentleman’s garments and the loin cloth ultimately accentuates the obscenity that Kingsley sees in Makanga’s mimicry. The fact that his gentlemanliness is at first only constituted by his appearance and the clothes that he wears suggests that these qualities are only superficial and belong to the garments themselves and not to Makanga. The magical transformation of white skin to black skin does not seem to primarily refer to a deceptive likeness between Makanga and the figure of the English gentleman, but rather serves to stress the difference between black and white, and between African and English. Even though there is a certain superficial likeness, the idea of transformation suggests that M’Pongwe men turn into English gentlemen as little as English gentlemen turn into M’Pongwe men.

The dialogue between the two travellers enhances the element of absurdity in the contrast between Makanga’s exaggerated, and effeminate, appearance and the fact that he stands, half naked, outside a village in the backwaters of Gabon. When they meet, Makanga is smoking a cigar and offers one to Kingsley.

“Oh, no thank you,” I replied.

“Many ladies do now,” he said, and asked me whether I “preferred Liverpool, London or Paris.”

I said, "Paris; but there were nice things in both the other cities."

"Indeed that is so," he said; "they have got many very decent works of art in the St. George's Hall." (340)

Physical displacement serves as a metaphor for the implied absurdity of Makanga's appearance. His awareness of the current trends of (presumably British) ladies and his appreciation of London, Paris and St. George's Hall in Liverpool are implied to be out of place because of the fact that he is standing on a riverbank in Gabon and not in the entrance hall of a European art museum. Nor is his transformation from M'pongwe trader to cosmopolitan gentleman complete. He is, as Bhabha writes, "not quite" a gentleman (127). Arrested half way, Makanga's transformation has made him a caricature of both a M'Pongwe man and a European gentleman. His appearance is, in Bhabha's words, "the effect of a flawed colonial mimeses, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English" (125). This creates an image of Makanga as neither one nor the other (Bhabha 181), just as the black trader's (spatial, temporal and cultural) position between the "bush natives" of the interior and the Europeans on the coast ultimately excludes him from both communities (310).

However, Makanga's resemblance to a gentleman implies that the gap between the black trader and white gentleman is in Makanga's case not as wide as usual because of his involvement in the business of European trading firms in Gabon. Kingsley-the-traveller subsequently learns from her guide Obanjo that Makanga is in fact a M'pongwe trader who has traded upriver for European firms and had the opportunity to travel to Europe (341). Kingsley says that even though she thinks Makanga has "a fine polish without the obvious conceit usually found in men who have been home," she is ready to agree with her guide Obanjo, who "evidently thinks" that Makanga has been spoilt by travelling to Europe (341). In Kingsley's eyes, Makanga has become "too much of a lavender-kid-glove gentleman," and yet the colour of his skin, the fact that he does not have any trousers and that he lives in the interior of Gabon are in disharmony with the word *gentleman* in Kingsley's text.

While mimicry and hybridity destabilise the temporal difference between the African and European, the anthropological discussion in the appendix "Trade and Labour in West Africa" accentuates a definite

difference that by its nature resists the effects of trade and commerce. While Makanga's mimicry is a sign of the capacity of trade to reduce difference and (at least partly) civilise the African, Kingsley-the-narrator claims in the appendix that "not only the African, but all coloured races, [are] inferior – inferior in kind, not in degree – to the white races" (669). She contends that, while the African trader may adopt aspects of civilisation, she does not think that "the white race will ever drag the black up to their own particular summit in the mountain range of civilization" (680). Even though the distance between the British and African may be reduced by the transforming powers of trade, the race argument situates skin colour as the ultimate sign of the unbridgeable gap between the British and Africans like Makanga.

Obanjo, Kingsley's travel companion and guide, also carries symbols of both civilisation and its opposite category. When Kingsley-the-narrator introduces Obanjo, she tells the reader that "[h]is name was Obanjo, but he liked it pronounced Captain Johnson, and his profession was a bush and river trader on his own account" (334). Many aspects of Obanjo/Captain's person are double, like his name. He is theatrical, Kingsley says, but his dramatic manners hide "a very different sort of man" (335). As with Makanga, the garments that make up Obanjo/Captain Johnson's clothing are the ultimate signs of his position between the civilisation of the centre and the savagery of the periphery.

Captain Johnson's attire calls for especial comment and admiration. However disconnected the two sides of his character might be, his clothes bore the impress of both of his natures to perfection. He wore, when first we met, a huge sombrero hat, a spotless singlet and a suit of clean well-got-up dungaree, and an uncommonly picturesque, powerful figure he cut in them, with his finely moulded, well-knit form and good-looking face, full of expression always... . The eyes were the eyes of Obanjo, the rest of his face the property of Captain Johnson. (335)

What seems to be the most salient difference between the two sides of the trader is the fact that while the European-like, civilised Captain Johnson is composed of a combination of material objects (hat, singlet, suit), his African alias is primarily associated with the body. This suggests that his modernised and civilised persona (Captain Johnson) is an effect of his theatrical ways

(the clothes he wears and his facial expressions). While he can adopt certain symbols of modernity and civilisation, he still belongs, bodily and racially, to the savage sphere. As the trader's hybrid status is not explicitly described as a case of cultural impurity, the civilised side of Kingsley's travel companion ultimately consists of little more than an artificial surface that partly obscures the part of him that Kingsley implies is the true Obanjo.

In Cameron's *Across Africa*, as in *Travels in West Africa*, the effects that trade has on Africa and the African are inscribed in a black trader whose two alternative names, Alvez or Kendélé, are indicative of his hybrid, in-between status. Cameron-the-narrator explains that Alvez is his Portuguese name and Kendélé is what he is called by "the natives" (299). According to Cameron, he has been a travelling trader for twenty years — ever since he left his birth place in Angola (300). Cameron meets Alvez/Kendélé east of Lake Tanganyika, after having met the Zanzibari trader Tippu-Tib. The portrait of the hybrid trader is permeated by contradictions and paradoxical relations that arise from the ostensible incongruity of what he really is and what he mimics. Like Makanga, who appears to Kingsley as a white man who has been transformed by magic, the colour of Alvez/Kendélé's skin confuses the British traveller when they first meet.

I had almost taken it for granted, from the manner in which he came, ... that he was a white man who might possibly give me some information. Great was my disappointment, however, when an old and ugly negro turned out of the hammock. Certainly he was dressed in European fashion, and spoke Portuguese; but no further civilization could he boast of, notwithstanding his repeated asseverations that he was thoroughly civilized, and the same as an Englishman or any other white man. (299)

As in the case of Prince Makanga in Kingsley's text, European dress and language are placed in quasi-contradictory opposition to skin colour. Even though the colour of Alvez/Kendélé's skin is presented as a biological shibboleth that excludes him from being European, his otherness in relation to the Englishman is, paradoxically, reinforced by his "asseverations" that he is "as an Englishman." Alvez/ Kendélé's claim to be a civilised man is disqualified in Cameron's narrative because the trader's skin colour is considered to form concrete evidence that he is not "as" a white man. This

very claim, while using the same logic, is shown to contradict itself in the account of how the trader attempts to assure Cameron of his honesty. Cameron writes that “[o]ne point that he especially insisted was that he never lied, his word being as good as his bond; and, indeed, that he was altogether the most honest man on the face of the earth” (299-300). Alvez/Kendélé’s claim that he never lies turns into a kind of inverted pseudomenon paradox, or liar’s paradox (which is usually formulated as inherently contradictory statements such as “I always lie” or “I never speak the truth”). The above statement about lying is taken by Cameron-the-narrator as a confirmation that he is lying when he says that he is not.

Alvez’s hybrid status puts him in a particularly ambiguous relation to the narrator’s discussion about trade. Alvez does, after all, display some of the signs that are commonly associated with civilisation. Even though Cameron-the-narrator portrays him as superficially civilised yet fundamentally non-civilised, he calls Alvez/Kendélé a “Portuguese trader,” but puts Angola down as his place of birth. He also refers to the trader as “Alvez” rather than “Kendélé,” which makes him seem Portuguese rather than African. The fact that Cameron and Alvez share some of the superficial signs of civilisation, such as the clothes they wear, turns Alvez’s desire for certain objects that Cameron has into a symbolic movement towards a position that is even closer to the British traveller.

Therefore, when Alvez demands to be paid in advance for helping Cameron and his carriers to reach the coast, Cameron is reluctant to give him the objects he asks for (325). As Cameron’s group of carriers are too few to be safe in the region, they are allowed to join Alvez’s caravan to the Atlantic coast (300). Once there, it is “agreed,” though it seems Cameron has few options, the latter will make the trader “a present proportionate to the value of his services” (300-301). Because Alvez and his caravan do not intend to set out for the coast for several weeks, Cameron decides to travel around in the “neighbourhood” while Alvez concludes his business in the region (301). When they meet again, Alvez approaches Cameron and asks for “small things” besides the rifle that he has already been promised at the start of their mutual journey to the coast. Alvez wants the rifle to be handed to him before they set out “in order to prove the existence of the agreement” between the two travellers (325). Cameron-the-narrator reasons that “he might be induced to settle [his business with chief Kasongo, which detains the caravan], and start away without further delay when he saw I was

inclined to treat him generously” and therefore gives Alvez the gun (325). This transaction is not described as a transaction, but as a kind of transmission of ideas from Cameron to Alvez; Cameron only resorts to give him the promised gun in order to “show” Alvez that he is eager to start towards the coast and finish his journey. While the two travellers come to an “agreement” about travelling together, Cameron “allows” rather than pays Alvez the price for this previously settled “service.”

The substitution of the semantic field of economic transaction for that of generosity serves to cut off what Stanley calls an economic “bond” between Cameron-the-traveller and Alvez/Kendélé. Cameron-the-narrator’s substitution of the vocabulary of economic transaction for that of gift-giving and generosity may be read as an attempt to counteract the movement that makes the two travellers less different from each other. However, this separating movement is contradicted by the fact that, as Nicholas Thomas writes, following Marcel Mauss, that “the exchange relation of a commodity is a relationship between things, a relation of price or equivalence” whereas “the exchange relation of gifts, by contrast, is one between people” (14). Consequently, what seems to be a differentialising manoeuvre when viewed from within a paradigm of commodity exchange is the exact opposite to differentialising when viewed from a different perspective.

Alvez’s mimicry places him between the colonised in Angola and their Portuguese colonisers and as a middleman between people in the interior of Africa and others on the coast. The hybridity that is a result of this mimicry also places him, in the capacity of trader, at the overlap of the transformative powers of trade and the economies of “superstition” in which things are purchased and sacrificed rather than purchased and consumed. Cameron-the-narrator explains that “Alvez, though nominally a Christian, appeared to be a firm believer in divination and incantation, and had engaged a fetich-man [sic] at Bihé to do this service for the whole journey at the same rate of pay as a porter, with additional perquisites and fees” (338). The use of terms like “service,” “rate of pay,” “perquisites” and “fee,” and the fact that they refer to a transaction within the symbolic economy of superstition rather than trade proper serves to make Alvez’s devotion to Christianity and his simultaneous “superstition” seem absurd and ridiculous.

As they all carry signs that are associated with the present of the colonial centre, Makanga, Obanjo/Captain Johnson and Alvez/Kéndélé represent the effects of the power to transform the African other that trade

and commerce are endowed with in Kingsley's and Cameron's texts. The hybrid status of these traders does not take the form of an instance of the principle by which all societies and cultures, regardless of definition, change and transform. The traders' hybridity is rather conveyed as a combination or clash of contradicting elements – the modernity or civilisation of the metropolitan merchant and the pre-modernity or savagery of the “bush savage,” as Kingsley writes (310). Ultimately, the elements that these men are implied to have acquired through their involvement in trade and commerce, which partly take the form of material objects, are overridden by the visual fact of their skin colour.

### **Projection of Psychological Effects of Capitalism.**

The people that the traveller encounters and trades with, whether for supplies or to establish bonds with local authorities, are often described as dishonest, greedy, cheap and as being childishly fascinated with material objects. In other words, they are ascribed negative personal qualities that are normally associated with forms of subjectivity in capitalist economies. On the other hand, the traveller, who embodies rationality and what Speke calls “superior knowledge,” is portrayed as a benevolent force that mitigates these negative psychological effects of capitalism when trading or conversing with people. The projection of the psychological effects of capitalism onto certain people ultimately demonstrates how the text is permeated not only by ambivalence regarding the effects of trade and commerce in colonial settings, but also aspects of British middle class anxieties about capitalism itself.

One such anxiety, which is allowed a large amount of space and attention in the texts, is the fact that the implicit rules of exchange can be violated at any time. Even though trade is generally advocated and the expansion of the British market into the African continent is promoted as formative of Africa's future, observations about people's propensity for dishonesty and greed are concomitant with trade as a trope. In Cameron's *Across Africa* Africans are portrayed as all too well versed in the “art” of bending the implicit rules of exchange. They are not described as being ignorant of the rules of honest trade, but as being aware of how quality and quantity may be manipulated in order to increase the exchange value of the commodities they offer.

The art of cheating is very well understood by the native fish-mongers; for in the centre of some of the baskets I found earth, stones, broken pottery, and gourds, so stowed as to make up the proper weight and bulk. Indeed, as far as my experience goes, the noble savage is not one whit behind his civilized brethren in adulterating food and giving short measure, the only difference being in the clumsiness of his method. (375-376)

The ironic use of the concept of “the noble savage” suggests that the people it refers to are neither noble, because they do not hesitate to cheat travellers, nor exactly “savages” because they “understand” how to cheat. In terms of the psychological effects of capitalism, both the difference and the likeness between pre-modern and modern are emphasised in Cameron’s claim that cheating is a common trait among the former as well as the latter. Whereas cheating is described by Cameron as an art that is shared by the “native fish-monger” and “civilized brethren” merchants alike, it is especially noteworthy when practiced by the former because it is seen as a vice that comes with capitalist modes of exchange. Therefore, the way in which dishonesty is projected onto the so-called fish-mongers is a way of describing the establishment of trade and commerce in the region. Even though natives are described as less-skilled cheaters than metropolitan merchants, the fact that they know how to cheat is a sign that they have adopted the ways and the mentality of dishonest merchants elsewhere.

As has been mentioned, the explorers — Speke, Cameron and Stanley — are forced to pay taxes when they cross the borders between different political districts. These taxes are called *mhungo* (or *mhongo*), and are the source of much annoyance both from an ideological and a more economic and logistical perspective. The local authorities’ awareness of their opportunity to make a profit by not allowing travellers to pass without paying taxes can be read as one of the many obstacles that together with the traveller’s determination make out a basic dialectic structure in the travel narrative. However, instances in which there is an implication that the same authorities tend to come out as the loser in negotiations with British travellers, belong to the stories about the traveller’s determination to overcome obstacles and problems along the way. As an example of a recurring topic of discussion in the texts, *mhungo* is accompanied by statements about the greed of chiefs and kings, but also about these authorities’ inability for economic calculation. The projection of such

characteristics as greed onto chiefs and kings, and the claim that these people are unable to understand the basics of economic thought, contradict each other in many ways.

Mhungo taxation often takes the form of a formal exchange of gifts between travellers and local authorities. Speke-the-traveller disagrees with this custom and therefore rewards King Rūmanika of Uganada for not asking for presents. Even though the rifle that he has was intended as a gift to a king Mtesa, Speke gives Rūmanika the rifle simply because Rūmanika has “set his heart” on it (216). Speke feels “inclined to be generous with this exceptional man” because Rūmanika, unlike some “begging scoundrels” who Speke accuses of wanting to “rob” him, does not ask him for the rifle (216). There are at least two related contradictions in the traveller’s decision to give the gun to Rūmanika. The first contradiction is the act of giving away something because the recipient has not previously asked for it. The act of begging may be understood as a negation of the idea of exchange-value that is elemental in capitalist modes of exchange, and therefore not compatible with the promotion of this mode of exchange elsewhere in the text. However, Speke-the-traveller’s gift to Rūmanika is also, like any gift, a negation of exchange-value. Speke’s decision to give the rifle to the king may be understood as implying that the traveller rewards Rūmanika for not begging for presents. However, from the point of view of the discourse of the dissemination of trade and capitalist modes of exchange, Speke’s generosity makes little sense because it is an instance of precisely that which it is aimed at discouraging — the negation of exchange-value.

The projection of greed and descriptions of irrational economic calculation not only serve to reinforce difference. While the eradication of the “vexations of paying mhongo[-tax],” as Cameron calls it (77), is central in discussions about the expansion of the British market and the dissemination of civilisation and modernity, mhungo tax is also an important element in the narrative about travel itself. In a sense, the mhungo-tax is a logistical obstacle that the traveller has to overcome through negotiation, by refusing to pay tax altogether (as Grogan does, 117) or by revealing the gains that are to be made by authorities who allow free trade to flourish. In Stanley’s, Cameron’s and Speke’s texts the traveller’s mobility is dependent on the value of objects. The same commodities that travellers use as currency when paying for their passage through certain regions are also often used as payment when carriers are hired, and when food is bought from locals – in

the exploration texts as well as in the texts by the later travellers. Should the stores of goods such as cloth and beads run out, the journey would come to an end, because the traveller would not be able to pay his or her carriers or pay chiefs and kings for safe passage through their lands. So just like natural boundaries like lakes and rivers entail possibilities for narratives about perilous canoe rides and encounters with dangerous animals, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, mhungo tax entails certain possibilities for narratives about negotiations with agitated chiefs, their deceitfulness and travellers' necessary dishonesty. However, though mhungo tax becomes yet another obstacle for the determined traveller to overcome, it is also an obstacle to African exploration and ethnographical and geographical production of knowledge. For example, complaining about the rate of mhungo tax in a certain region Stanley asks what "prospects" his expedition has for geographical exploration "under such circumstances" (1: 478). Mhungo tax threatens to compromise the exploration project that his expedition partly is. The economic relations between the travellers' caravans and the locals are therefore presented as crucial aspects of the narrative about the journey as both personal and scientific project.

When Stanley's caravan enters Usui west of Lake Victoria Nyanza, food supplies are expensive due to a famine, and the rate of mhungo is high. Stanley complains that "in four days, we were compelled to disburse two bales [of cloth] out of thirty-two, all that was left of the immense store we had departed with from Zanzibar" (1: 479). The high prices for rations and the greed that Stanley accuses the local authorities of make it difficult for Stanley to make ends meet and threaten to stop the expedition.

Under such circumstances, what prospect of exploration had we, were we to continue our journey through Uhha, that land which in 1871 had consumed at the rate of two bales of cloth per deim? Twenty days of such experience in Uhha would reduce us to beggary. Its "esurient" Mutwarés and rapacious Mkamas and other extortionate people can only be quieted with cloth and beads disbursed with a princely hand. (479)

The very concrete relation between mobility and economic value is obvious in these sentences. However, between these elements stands the African

other and counterpart in the traveller's economic relations. Stanley-the-traveller is forced to pay his way through the continent, and the "rapacious" kings and chiefs are not only condemned in terms of their undignified vices(479). These traits form obstacles that the traveller can only overcome by abandoning his sense of the value of the goods by distributing them with generosity. What is of specific importance in the present context is that this surrender, while contradicting the promotion of trade elsewhere in the text, serves to reinforce the European traveller's superiority in relation to the kings, chiefs and princes who demand gifts. As in *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, the concrete problem that is posed by the other's desire for certain commodities and objects is solved through a contradictory and temporary surrender of property, both on a psychological and an economic level.

The above quotation is an example of two related ways in which colonial discourse turns back upon itself via the basic laws of economy. On a macro-level, trade is associated with development in *Through the Dark Continent*. However, it is implied that the negative psychological effects of capitalism that are projected onto the "'esurient' Mutwarés and rapacious Mkamas" may "reduce" the traveller himself to the equally undignified economic behaviour of beggary. The most basic laws of economy channel the abject vices of greed and beggary from the Mutwarés and Mkamas to the traveller himself. These phenomena can be read as instances of a dilemma that is central to colonial discourse. Contact between Europe and its others exposes Europeans and Europe to the risk of becoming contaminated by vices that are projected onto the other, but any strict avoidance of contact between self and other negates the economic incentive of the colonial project altogether.

As in Stanley's text, mhungo-tax and the way it is dealt with by a certain chief's "chancellor of the exchequer, chief of the customs, or whatever the title of official deputed to arrange mhungo may be" takes the form of an economic obstacle on the traveller's path in *Across Africa* (87). Cameron's party is detained while the "official" is otherwise occupied repairing a building. After having finished his "architectural labours," Cameron-the-narrator says that "he celebrated the event by a debauch of pombé, and remained in a drunken state for three days" (88). Eventually, the traveller and the man in charge of collecting mhungo are to settle the transaction and Cameron is asked to pay the "extravagant" price of one hundred doti to be

allowed to pass (88). However, his counterpart in the negotiations spots a pair of “worthless blue goggles” among Cameron’s possessions. The “chancellor” sees them as a priceless object, and settles for less than half of the original sum and the goggles (88). Once more, the mutually contradictory traits of greed, irrational desire and the inability to estimate the value of commodities are projected onto the same person. In contrast to other instances of the ambivalence that characterises descriptions of the expansion of colonial trade, what is portrayed as the tax collector’s inability to estimate the value of the goggles are to the traveller’s advantage. His wish to get hold of the “worthless” goggles solves Cameron’s problem and allows his caravan to continue past the border that they have been waiting to cross.

A further example of ambivalence in discussions about trade and consumption is the contradictions that arise from the African other’s fetishist overvaluation of objects. The role of fetishist overvaluation in colonial texts is suggested in the vocabulary that is used in the definition of *fetish* in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). *Fetish(es)* is defined in the OED as “objects used by the Negroes of the Guinea coast and the neighbouring regions as amulets or means of enchantment, or regarded by them with superstitious dread” (1a). In extension, *fetish* refers to “an inanimate object worshipped by primitive peoples on account of its supposed inherent magical powers, or as being animated by a spirit” (1b). Words like “enchantment,” “superstitious,” “worship” and “magical power” are characteristic not only of European colonial literature about colonised peoples and the colonial periphery, but also of the Enlightenment’s others within Europe. As such words imply, fetishism is above all a conceptual device with which rational and irrational thought are distinguished from each other in colonial discourse.

However, while fetishism has traditionally been associated with the pre-modern world, the concept of fetishism is derived from the contexts of intense contact between what has traditionally been understood as pre-modern and modern value systems. Fetishism was originally used to name phenomena in regions along the West African coast where Portuguese and African traders exchanged objects across “radically different social systems” (Pietz 6). While originally referring to contexts of contact between Europe and its periphery, rather than to practises and beliefs in societies outside of Europe, fetishism has also fundamentally informed theories about modernity and capitalism. Fetishism is a key concept in European

Enlightenment critique of manifestations of irrationality because of its ability to describe subject-object relations in, as well as “outside,” European modernity and capitalism. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is that Marx took “flight into the misty realm of religion” and the “superstition” that Europeans thought they saw among “primitive peoples,” in order to find a metaphor for one of the fundamental elements of European industrial capitalism (Marx 165). However, fetishism in Marxist theory is not just a simple analogy, but describes a phenomenon that shares its basic structure with the kind of (“superstitious”) fetishism that the word describes in European literature about non-European societies. The way in which this metaphor is used in *Capital* is understandable precisely because fetishism within and outside capitalism involves the components of subject-object relations, value (in a wide sense) and (in extension) social relations. Thus, as Anne McClintock writes in *Imperial Leather*, fetishism is neither original to “industrial capitalism nor to pre-colonial economies, but was from the outset the embodiment and record of an incongruous and violent encounter” of what in colonial discourse takes the form of a pre-modern and a modern sphere (231).

The overlap between the traditional definition of *fetish* and Marx’s concept of fetishism is indicative of the contradictions that arise from descriptions of certain subject-object relations. As with greed, others’ overvaluation of objects is often condemned as an expression of the irrationality of the other, but can also be read as a negative psychological effect of capitalist modes of exchange, as in the case of the official who takes to Cameron’s blue goggles. In *Capital* Marx used fetishism to explain how value appears (falsely) to be inherent in the commodity in capitalist economy rather than deriving from labour and the specific constellation of social relations in the economic base of society. Like the fetish was thought to be worshipped in West Africa for its “inherent magical powers,” in capitalism subjects understand the commodity as being endowed with properties (value) that are actually external to it, according to Marx. However, the concept of fetishism supposes that objects have neither magical powers, nor an inherent value, but that magical powers and values are projected onto them through a kind of epistemological overvaluation.

The case of Cameron’s blue goggles is an example of how the African other is ascribed a fetishist relation to objects that is not exclusively of the pre-modern kind. As pointed out above, the “chancellor of the exchequer”

upsets Cameron by demanding an “extravagant” amount of value in mhungo-tax at the same time as his fancy for the goggles implies that he is unable to estimate the value of things (88). Cameron-the-narrator says that this is generally the case “with uncivilized men[,] when something catches their eye; they must have it” (88). The “uncivilized” man’s greed and simultaneous inability to estimate value may be read as a kind of desire for, and overvaluation of the object. According to Cameron, the description of the official’s wish to possess the goggles suggests that he sees something in them that is not there. Cameron takes advantage of the official’s overvaluation of the object and uses it against what the narrator sees as the impropriety of exacting mhungo-tax from travellers and traders. However, the man’s desire for the goggles is not essentially different from the kind of “hedonistic desire” that to Rita Felski, among others, is an essential part of modern consumerism (61).

In *Travels in West Africa*, *fetish* refers to more than specific ways in which subjects relate to objects. Ulrike Brisson writes that Kingsley’s use of the concept of fetishism “includes almost all social customs,” such as eating habits, rituals, taboos and adornments (331). However, subject-object relations, and especially the way in which people understand and handle commodities that emanate from European industry, are given considerable attention in *Travels in West Africa*. A story about a chief who has bought a Dutch clock from a (presumably English) man serves to emphasise not only the chief’s overvaluation of the clock, but also the fetishist belief that European commodities may accelerate time in Africa. Kingsley-the-traveller says that she picked up the story from a certain Mr. Harris who brought a number of clocks with hanging weights to a region in West Africa (503). The weights of one of these clocks, Kingsley’s story goes, has been mended and the clock sold to the chief, who, after a couple of days, returns with it to Mr. Harris. The chief complains to Mr. Harris that when he looks at the clock it is not today but tomorrow. The reason for this, Kingsley writes, is that one of the weights in the clock was made too heavy when the clock was mended. When Mr. Harris has altered the weight a second time the chief is no longer “hurried onward to his grave at such a rattling pace” (504). This joking remark implies that the chief overvalues the clock by confusing the material signifier (the time given by the clock) for the signified (the passing of time). As a result of this misapprehension of the relation between signifier and

signified, the chief transfers to the clock the “magic power” to alter time, according to Kingsley, and fails to see that it only refers symbolically to time.

While Kingsley-the-narrator suggests that the chief takes the signifier (clock) and signified (time) for cause and effect, she repeats this fetishist belief herself, which is shown particularly in the narrator’s portraits of her co-traveller Makanga and Obanjo/Captain Johnson. Kingsley associates the clothes that they wear with civilisation and modernity. However, these signifiers also substitute cause, which is suggested by the fact that the gentlemanliness of Obanjo/Captain Johnson is partly an effect of the “spotless singlet” and the “suit of clean well-got-up dungaree” that he is wearing (335) and that Makanga’s gentlemanliness is a result of his wearing the “white shirt and collar” and “very neat tie” that are normally “affected by white gentlemen” (340).

The belief that the clock speeds up time mirrors the overvaluation of the commodity’s role in the civilising project. Both the belief that the clock speeds up time and the belief that the dissemination of British commodities in the African periphery speeds up time or produces modernity/civilisation may be described through Louise Kaplan’s first definition of fetishist strategy in *Cultures of Fetishism*. She writes that fetishism “enables a human being to transform something ... with its own enigmatic and immaterial essence into something that is material and tangibly real, a form of being that makes the something ... controllable” (5). The chief’s fetishist belief and Livingstone’s theory that commerce expands civilisation, a version of which is advocated in *Travels in West Africa*, are based on this kind of fetishist “strategy” (Kaplan 5). Time is transformed into a clock, as the historical present of the metropolis is transformed into trade and its material manifestation in the British-manufactured commodity. While the chief is said to believe that the clock somehow accelerates time, the text accredits certain objects with the power of pushing African regions and groups of people towards the present of the colonial metropolis, as has been argued at length above.

## Conclusion

The different aspects of ambivalence and contradiction that arise between the promotion of trade and the universalising developments that trade is associated with have been analysed in this chapter. One instance of this ambivalence is observable in descriptions of the figure of the middleman,

who is posited (figuratively and literally) between European economic agents and the economic order that they represent, and groups of people that are described as being outside or on the margin of this order of exchange. The close readings of the middlemen and the black traders in Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* and Cameron's *Across Africa* show how portraits of these semi-civilised men give rise to paradoxical contradictions and seemingly irresolvable ambivalence.

The contradictions that arise between the macro-level on which the narrators (and sometimes travellers) call for the expansion of British markets for the benefit of the African other, ultimately lead to a projection of what is described as the negative psychological aspects of capitalism. These aspects and traits are commonly associated with the feminine side of modernity, as described by Rita Felski in *The Gender of Modernity*. These qualities reinforce difference between irrational pre-modern man and rational modern man. However, the projection of greed, dishonesty and irrationality onto certain specific persons and the generic figure of the African other also involve a universalising rather than differentialising movement. This is because the projected qualities are presented as the effects of the modes of exchange that are associated with the historical present of the metropolis rather than that of the African periphery.

# **Objects in Ethnography: Temporal and Spatial Distance between Ethnographical Subjects and Objects**

[D]espite all conquest of distances the nearness of things remains absent.  
Martin Heidegger, "The Thing" [Das Ding]

The distance between subject and object, a presupposition of abstraction,  
is grounded in the distance from the thing itself which the master achieved  
through the mastered.

Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

This chapter will focus on temporal differentiation in ethnographical portraits in which objects are made to represent groups of people. The chapter's point of departure is the fact that spatial, cultural and temporal differences are fundamental elements of travel literature – that difference is a prerequisite for travel narratives' stories about travellers' encounters with other cultures and journeys into regions that are strange and unfamiliar to the traveller. This function of difference and otherness in travel literature serves to foreground travellers' inability to understand and communicate with people that they meet and to interpret what they see and hear. Therefore, the basic spatial elements of the narrative about the traveller's journey from a home to an elsewhere make travel literature a genre in which epistemological problems both destabilise and generate narratives.

The very fact that colonial travel literature is a genre that is essentially dedicated to the description of the otherness that is encountered on foreign coasts turns such phenomena as misperceptions and linguistic confusion into defining criteria for the genre, just like dark dungeons and ruins are defining criteria for the gothic romance. Consequently, literature about journeys into the colonial periphery shares a preoccupation with

colonial literature and colonial discourse in general, namely the epistemological instability that is the effect of cultural difference. The travelling subject's inability to comprehend, interpret and understand the objects and people that it comes across is in other words not so much a weakness in the travel narrative as an essential feature.

The focus in this chapter is on a specific kind of temporal differentiation. This differentiation and separation of time-spaces is an effect of the way in which subjects relate to objects in descriptions of certain artefacts, such as sculptures and adornments, in ethnographical writing. This kind of description of material objects presupposes that the subject and object occupy the same space at the same time — that there is a certain closeness between the object of description and the subject who describes it. However, difference and otherness are what motivates such ethnographical accounts in the first place, and require a certain epistemological distance between subject and object. In the simultaneous need for closeness and distance, two grammatical time-spaces are created. One is the then-and-there of the travellers' encounters and experiences in the periphery, and the other is a grammatical now-and-here that can be understood as representing the spatiotemporal sphere of metropolitan modernity. This latter time-space is the point from which narratives are told by a subject who is immersed in the authoritative discourse in which modern anthropological knowledge about the pre-modern periphery is produced.

In this chapter ethnography is understood as a certain kind of writing, in accordance with the treatment of the word *geography* in chapter one. Just like the *-graphie* ('writing') in the word *geography* was stressed in the introduction to chapter one, "Objects in Geography," the term *ethnography* is to be understood as referring to textual representations of groups of people from a position of more or less radical cultural difference.

<sup>1</sup> In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt observes that what she calls "ethnographical portraits" function as "standard apparatuses of travel writing," that produce "non-European subjects for the domestic audience" (63). One advantage of this understanding of ethnographical writing is that it makes it possible to shift the focus from uncomplimentary representations of

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<sup>1</sup> See Joan Pau Rubiés's chapter "Travel Writing and Ethnography" in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge University Press, 2002) for a comprehensive introduction to the historical relation between ethnography and travel writing. See also Johannes Fabian (*Time and the Other* 87).

historical persons to literary and even grammatical aspects of ethnographical description. It makes it possible to study the rhetorical mechanisms of colonial literature without referring directly to historical authors, restrained by the ideological and discursive parameters of their times, and their relations to other subjects.

The epistemological instability in ethnographical portraits in colonial travel accounts (including descriptions of material objects) may be read as a certain kind of colonial ambivalence. The relation between the subject and object of ethnographical description tends to be constructed as a relation in which otherness and radical difference take the form of incomprehensibility and linguistic and symbolic unintelligibility. However, as Homi Bhabha has pointed out, “the question of representation of difference is therefore always also a problem of authority” (128). Ethnographical portraits contain authoritative statements about people and objects that are, paradoxically, conveyed as incomprehensible, transcendent and radically other to the travelling subject. Therefore, while otherness is amplified to such an extent that the other remains transcendent and incomprehensible in descriptions of encounters with people and their possessions, these encounters are precisely what imbues the narrator of the text with the authority needed to articulate “knowledge” about the African other.

This ambivalence may be seen as a specific form of the ambivalence Homi K. Bhabha theorises in “Of Mimicry and Man.”<sup>2</sup> Bhabha writes that colonial discourse is profoundly troubled by ambivalence. He discusses this ambivalence in relation to the idea of mimicry, which is the desire in colonial discourse for an other that is, as Bhabha writes, “*almost the same, but not quite*” (122). The drive to reform and transform the colonised in colonial discourse produces an other that is imagined to be influenced by the modernity that the coloniser represents to the extent that s/he is similar, yet other. Bhabha refers to this as a “partial presence” and writes that “by ‘partial’ I mean both ‘incomplete’ and ‘virtual’. It is as if the very emergence of ‘the colonial’ is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the authoritative discourse itself” (123). In order for Bhabha’s discussion of ambivalence to be useful in this context,

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<sup>2</sup> For a fuller account of Bhabha’s discussion of discourse and ambivalence, the reader is advised to return to the section about colonial discourse in the introduction chapter, where the theory Bhabha lays out in “Of Mimicry and Man” is discussed in some detail.

what Bhabha calls “partial presence” will be read as a spatial concept akin to the metaphorical meanings of the words “nearness” and “closeness” that have already been used and will be used in this chapter. In other words, this partial presence or closeness is a spatial metaphor that represents a certain epistemological relation between what Bhabha calls “the other” and “the same.” What is borrowed from Bhabha in order to shed light on the present discussion, then, is not so much the concept of mimicry in its full complexity, but the theoretical approach to the relation between what is imagined to be two different positions (to continue the spatial metaphor). In this chapter, the metaphorical as well as literal distance between the travelling subject on the one hand and the objects that are described on the other hand will be seen as the travelling subject’s partial presence or distance to people who are indirectly described through descriptions of objects.

The ambivalence that characterises the relation between the describing subject and the people who are described is so fundamental that it becomes part of the grammar of the travel narrative. Travellers’ relations to certain people and material objects are usually narrated in the past tense, as if belonging to the past and as events in a certain remote location – a grammatical then-and-there. Conversely, authoritative statements that are articulated in relation to descriptions of material objects tend to be made in the present tense as if from a here-and-now that is distant from the then-and-there of encounters and observations. These two positions coincide with the two narratological functions of traveller and narrator. The traveller is normally positioned within the then-and-there of muddy paths and hostile locals, while the narrator speaks from a comfortable and presumably dry study room in the metropolitan now-and-here.

The theoretical separation of the subject into the roles of traveller and narrator makes the chain of focalisation that structure ethnographical writing and visual description more easily discernible than it would be if the subject was to be understood as a historical person. Focalisation is understood in accordance with Mieke Bal’s use of the term in *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985). Bal writes that focalisation “is the relationship between the ‘vision,’ the agent that sees, and that which is seen. [...] A says that B sees what C is doing” (eds. Onega and Landa 118).<sup>3</sup> In this context, A corresponds to the narrator, B to the traveller

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<sup>3</sup> The page number refers to the anthology *Narratology: An Introduction*, which contains an extract from Bal’s *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*

and C to the people and things that the traveller observes. The narrator of ethnographical description focalises the traveller, who in turn focalises, or views, the object. In the examples of ethnographical description that are discussed throughout this chapter, the traveller/B and the thing/C are often described by the narrator/A as positioned widely apart, spatially as well as epistemologically. However, ethnographical portraits do not only involve descriptions of people and objects, but also include more abstract knowledge, if *knowledge* is taken to refer to authoritative statements about the African other. Such knowledge is formulated by the narrator rather than the traveller; that is, from the speaking subject (A), rather than the seeing subject (B), and therefore also from the now-and-here rather than from the then-and-there. Consequently, it is in the relation between A/narrator and B/traveller that a contradiction arises between explaining things about the other and yet emphasise the other's transcendental otherness (or the distance between the self and the other).

The different positions that the narrator and traveller take up in relation to the object and the other are also reflected in the material object/thing. Ambivalence makes the material object/thing undergo "a double visual fixation, both as perceptual image and as illustration of a kind of knowledge," (Fabian *Time and the Other* 121). The split between narrator and traveller corresponds in many ways to the distinction that Bill Brown, among others, makes between the object and the thing ("Thing Theory" 5). The object-form is the form that material items take when seen in relation to subjects and are thus inseparable from a psychological or epistemological context. To Brown, it is possible for us to "look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture — above all, what they disclose about *us*)" (4). This idea obviously rests on the assumption that objects that people keep around themselves in their everyday life structure the way they live and interact, and that objects shape the cognitive structures that condition people's conceptualisations of the world and themselves.

The thing, however, is not a window to history and society, but the form that the object takes when standing outside the subject-object relation. According to Brown, thingness may be glimpsed in the object when it breaks down and stops working (Brown 4). "Thingness" in Brown's theory of objects and things, then, involves a level of unfamiliarity — a disruption of the normal in the moment "when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy" (4). Likewise, in a discussion of the concept of thingness,

Heidegger writes that, as a vessel, an ordinary jug “is something self-sustained, something that stands on its own. This standing on its own characterizes the jug as something that is self-supporting, or independent. As the self-supporting independence of something independent, the jug [or *thing*] differs from the object” (164). The thing stands on its own, beside or apart from the subject. The object is forever fixed in a relation to the subject. In this chapter, thingness represents the way in which items are seen by the traveller in the African then-and-there – as other and epistemologically transcendent – while objectness represents the material object in its relation to the narrator, who uses objects in the here-and-now to describe the cultures and societies with which these objects are associated.

### **Spatial and Temporal Distance in Ethnographical Portraits**

In the subject-object relation that is the basis of ethnographical description, the subject (the traveller) tends to distance himself or herself from the object of description (the African other or actual objects). This relation is highly relevant when the object that is studied is an actual object, rather than a group of people. In ethnographical portraits, material objects are given the status of metonymical signifiers that speak of the culture of which they are a part. Such objects then become highly symbolical, standing in for the people with whom it is associated.

As will be shown, the distance between traveller and object is often spatial, but there is also a temporal dimension in the subject’s relation to the object of description. The narrator discusses, for example, the function of certain objects in certain ceremonial contexts from a now-and-here that separates him or her from the time and place in which the object is situated. Johannes Fabian argues in *Time and the Other* that temporal distance is required for subjective observations to become knowledge and facts. On the one hand, the ethnographer or traveller must personally observe the people or communities that are described, but on the other hand, “temporal distance might be a sort of minimal condition for accepting any kind of observation as a fact” (Fabian 88). Although Fabian discusses academic ethnography, his observation is applicable also to travel literature. Ethnographical observations must become part of what he calls the

ethnographer's, or in this case the travel writer's, "autobiographic past," and then be recounted, reviewed and reconstructed to attain the status of knowledge. The ethnographer's relation to what Fabian calls the "object" of ethnography, the person or persons that are described, is therefore "inevitably" temporal (88).

The distance between subject and object is maintained through a shift in the chain of focalisation between narrator, traveller and object in such ethnographical description of objects. The traveller recedes into the background, while the narrator focalises and describes the object more or less directly, rather than via the travelling subject. Therefore, the travelling subject is only partially present since the narrator's voice is what dominates in ethnographical description. The traveller's relation to the object; that is, his or her spatial position in relation to it and what s/he does when encountering it, are obscured by the description of the object. In this way, the subject's experience, or the actual encounter with what is described, is potentially erasable. In *Time and the Other* Johannes Fabian analyses a passage from *The Savage Mind* (*La Pensée sauvage*, 1962) where Claude Lévi-Strauss describes how "the American Indian" follows a trail "by means of imperceptible clues" (qtd. in Fabian 91). Clues can hardly be *imperceptible*, Fabian points out. The word imperceptible, he argues, "functions as an index revealing (or hiding) the fact that not one but two subjects inhabit the semantic space of the statement" (91). One is the person who follows the scarcely perceptible clues, and the other is the ethnographer, who lacks the ability to detect the clues. Fabian writes that "such slight-of-hand camouflages the second subject *in order to* mark the observation as fact" (91).

The tendency to hide the subject is common also in travel writing. An example is when Stanley discusses the chief Mwana Ngoy in *Through the Dark Continent*. Stanley-the-narrator, positioned it seems in a metropolitan study room, tells the reader that "I fancy I can see him now strutting about his village with his sceptral staff, an amplitude of bark cloth about him, which when measured gives exactly twenty-four square yards" (2: 80). In Stanley's imagination, he sees the chief walk alone through the village. However, the fact that the bark cloth that the chief has wrapped himself in is described as "exactly" twenty-four square yards in size is hardly something that the narrator only imagines. The reference to the size of the cloth suggests the presence of Stanley-the-traveller in Mwana Ngoy's village. Just

like the word *imperceptible* suggests the presence of the ethnographer in the passage from *The Savage Mind*, the exact size of the chief's cloth suggests the presence of someone who finds it motivated to measure the chief's possessions. Stanley is consequently inscribed or re-inscribed into the scene that he imagines or remembers.

The fact that the actual encounter can be omitted or erased does not mean that travellers' handling of unfamiliar objects and local material culture is erased from the text by discursive constraints. What it does mean is that the relation between subject and object is tainted by the destabilising effects of ambivalence in descriptions of material objects/things. This ambivalence emanates from the contradictory need for, on the one hand, otherness and distance that are constructed between traveller and object/other, and on the other, the authority with which ethnographic narratives are presented.

It is normally implied in ethnographical descriptions that they are articulated by a subject who has a certain level of insight into the groups of people that are described and who speaks about them with the authority that comes from having "been there." The reader will remember that Mary Kingsley, for example, points out that when she has "been away in districts" where matches "have not penetrated," she has observed that people seldom need to light fires, since they never let their fires go out (599).<sup>4</sup> Travellers' "being away" or being *there* is, in short, what allows narrators to represent and talk about spatially and culturally remote objects and groups of people. Therefore, the object must be presented as hermeneutically understood by the narrating subject who represents groups of people through descriptions of objects. Consequently, while objects that are associated with certain people may contribute to a sense of radical cultural difference when they are encountered by the traveller, descriptions of the same objects tend to involve the authoritative articulation of knowledge about the customs and nature of these people.

In descriptions of objects in *Travels in West Africa*, Kingsley-the-traveller often fades into the background. Kingsley visits a Fang village and enters a previously vacated building where she is to spend the night. Inside the hut she sees a "beautiful ornament" hanging from a stick in the ceiling. Kingsley-the-traveller fades into the background when Kingsley-the-narrator

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<sup>4</sup> This passage was discussed in chapter one, "Objects in Geography."

describes the object, but remains present through the perspective from which the object is viewed.

[O]n [the stick] hung some few fetish charms, and a beautiful ornament of wild cat and leopard tails, tied on to a square piece of leopard skin, in the centre of which was a little mirror, and round the mirror were sewn dozens of common shirt buttons. In among the tails hung three little brass bells and a brass rattle; these bells and rattles are not only “for dandy,” but serve to scare away snakes when the ornament is worn in the forest. A fine strip of silky-haired, young gorilla skin made the band to sling the ornament from the shoulder when worn. (250)

In the first clauses of the description the object is situated in the spatial and temporal context from which it is viewed by the traveller. The first sentence implies that the traveller is positioned below the object that is hanging from the ceiling. The detail with which the individual object/thing is described is indicative of the presence of the traveller. The so-called ornament is also initially described as an individual item rather than as a generalised class of objects. In the first sentence then, the object is described via the eyes of the traveller.

The elevated position of the ornament distances the object from the subject who views it. Kingsley-the-traveller does not, for example, take it down to examine it, which would suggest that the ornament is inspected thoroughly and closely. While Kingsley-the-traveller actually collects objects (as will be discussed below), the passage about the hanging ornament is an example of the way in which travellers are often described as being only partially present in relation to things/objects that are presented in the text as ethnographically significant.

Commenting on this constellation of subject and object in canonised Western philosophy, Stephen Mulhall writes that “a world that one does not inhabit is a world in which one is not essentially implicated and by which one is not essentially constrained; it is no accident that this spectator model attributes to the human perspective on the world the freedom and transcendence traditionally attributed to that of God” (39-40). The spatial separation of subject and object in Western philosophy suggests a *sub specie aeternitatis*-perspective, in which the empirical world is studied from the perspective of the eternal — a position outside of time and space. The

tendency of the archetypal modern subject to view the material world from a distance is deeply rooted in the history of modern European philosophy. In their theorisations of the subject's perception of the material world (or the object), René Descartes depicts himself looking at a ball of wax that lies in front of the fire in his room, whereas David Hume portrays himself as a bystander at a game of billiards, and Immanuel Kant watches a ship glide down a river (Mulhall 39). However, in the present context it is more practical to understand this perspective as the now-and-here of learned observation, the premiered perspective of modern anthropology and archaeology. Seen from this perspective, the object attains the status of a sign that allows the learned subject in the metropolis to draw conclusions about the temporally and spatially distant cultural context from which the object emanates. This is exactly what Kingsley-the-narrator does when she describes the function of the object that hangs from the ceiling.

The ornamental object that Kingsley only provides a partial description of functions as a window to the minds of the hut's residents, but this window only allows a glimpse of life in the Fang village. The visual description of the object makes it transparent insofar as words like "sewn" and "tied" indicate that the "beautiful ornament was created by one or more agents. However, the end of the second sentence, "these bells and rattles are not only 'for dandy,' but serve to scare away snakes when the ornament is worn in the forest" (250), does not seem to be a piece of knowledge based on what Kingsley-the-traveller can see of the object. These clauses turn away from the perspective of the travelling subject as well as the individual object and take the form of a statement about the people who normally live in the hut rather than a description of subjective, visual experience. The claim that the bells and rattle "serve to scare away snakes" when the object is worn is presented as if it was based on Kingsley-the-narrator's general knowledge about the Fang and not as information that was deduced by Kingsley-the-traveller when looking at the tails, buttons and bells. While the visual description of the object emanates from a specific temporal and spatial context (the evening Kingsley spends in the hut) and from subjective experience, the spatial and temporal references in Kingsley-the-traveller's claim about the function of the object refer to its use rather than to the situation in which it is encountered by the subject. The temporal and spatial references ("when the ornament is worn in the forest"), then, belong to the ethnographic portrait that the narrator articulates in relation to, rather than

about, the specific ornament that Kingsley finds in the hut. The movement between the visual perspective of Kingsley-the-traveller and Kingsley-the-narrator's ethnographic narrative, between thing and object, entails a shift from a specific context to (quasi-)scientific generalisation, from the traveller's presence in the then-and-there to the narrator's now-and-here.

### *Authority and Temporal Distance*

The contradiction between detailed ethnographical descriptions and the construction of temporal difference and epistemological distance is inseparable from the question of the narrator's authority and voice. While the traveller is often left out of descriptions of objects, as has been pointed out above, the narrator often speaks with considerable authority about the groups of people that are described. The problem of authority is intimately related to identity construction and such categories as gender, social background and level of formal education. However, authority is also established through rhetoric, prose styles and other formal features.

Authority is of course established in different ways in different texts. In Constance Larymore's *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* (1907), Larymore travels with her husband, a colonial administrator and judge, who is referred to simply as "the Resident" or "my husband" (2). Larymore-the-traveller's role as a colonial administrator's wife rather than a pioneering solo traveller, like Mary Kingsley and Mary Hall, allows the narrator to claim to be "sorely handicapped by very limited scientific knowledge" and yet offer her "little book to the public" (vii). The role that the traveller adopts in the text opens up for discourses and prose styles that differ from the empirical and scientific production of knowledge about the places and people she comes across. Instead, the claims to expertise that are made in the text concern domestic and practical everyday life. The last third or so of *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* consists of a section called "Household Hints" (193), which includes instructions on how to set up and maintain a household in Nigeria, including how to grow a garden and what to wear (291). The "hints" are presented as "the outcome of *actual* experience, and not generalized from hearsay" (viii). Its different chapters are aimed at British men and women who are "permanently settled at headquarters," but also to the more mobile "Political Officer and his wife" (195). It is thus largely through practical hints that are based on experience that the authority of the text is acquired, rather

than through claims referring to ostensibly objective scientific knowledge about places and people.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that the text does not aspire to the scientific, as many travel texts about colonial Africa to some extent do, affects the form of the visual descriptions in the text. The travelling subject experiences the otherness of the environments she enters into while trying “always to keep [her] eyes and ears open” (vii). In the chapters about the actual journey through Nigeria, sites are “discovered” by Larymore-the-traveller as if by chance or lucky coincidences. As it is established at the very beginning of the text that “no Englishwoman” has gone where Larymore-the-traveller means to go (2), she is eager “to absorb, to miss nothing” of the spectacle before her (74). She observes the landscape and the people who are colonised by the colonial power that her husband works for and draws sketches and takes photographs of scenery and non-white bodies “untouched by civilization” (116). Cheryl McEwan has argued that Larymore is unusual, if not unique, among her fellow British women who wrote about their travels in West Africa because she “tended to adopt what [Mary Louise] Pratt has called the ‘monarch-of-all-I-survey’ position in her landscape descriptions” (McEwan 68). The “monarch-of-all-I-survey” position consists of a number of literary conventions that all have to do with visual description, or “verbal painting” (Pratt 204), and involves the subject’s positioning in relation to the material environment. Ultimately, the travelling subject’s role as the eye in visual descriptions results in “the *mastery* predicated between the seer and the seen” (Pratt 204). In other words, even though she does not view the landscape from the perspective of a learned, scientific observer, Larymore-the-traveller is empowered by her position in relation to the landscape in visual descriptions in the text.

However, the position as the monarch of that which she views also indicates that the subject is located outside and apart from the described panorama. The theorisation of the monarch-of-all-I-survey position shows how the central figure and traveller becomes detached from the physical environment, including objects. Larymore-the-traveller *views* rather than *sees* the things around her. The difference between *to see* and *to view* is crucial, as Noel Elizabeth Currie writes in *Constructing Colonial Discourse*, in that *to view* implies a certain distance between subject and object. In

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<sup>5</sup> For discussions about authority and voice in travel texts written by female travel writers, see for example Pratt (29), McEwan (65-90), Mills (83), Brisson (326-340).

landscape appreciation *viewing* locates the subject outside the landscape, which is seen as a screen and not a place or space in which the viewer is positioned (Currie 96). Like the panoramic environment that the traveller passes through, the material thing in the traveller's vision is kept at a comfortable distance, like the ornament that is described in Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*. In extreme cases the thing is, as it were, outside the space in which the viewer is positioned.

However, the narrating subject tends to add meaning to the otherness experienced by the travelling subject. Larymore-the-narrator bridges the interpretive gap between the travelling subject and object by representing the object as a metonymy that offers a window to the other – a clue to the otherness of the cultures and societies that the traveller lacks (a satisfactory amount of) knowledge about. The distance between the traveller and object may be illustrated through descriptions of a “carved wooden object” and some orchids in the first chapter of *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria*. The wooden object that Larymore comes across in a “Ju-ju house” is juxtaposed to some orchids that are described in the following paragraph. The description of the carved object and the building it is in belongs to a section about the travelling party's visit to the village Ekiurin. The orchids are found after the travellers leave the village, but the text provides no indication of just how far outside the village the orchids grow. A single line separates the description of the wooden image and the orchids: “And so on to Aiede – the country alternating between grass-land and forest” (18). While the flowers are primarily described for the natural beauty that the traveller sees in them, the wooden object is “hideous.”

The shrine consisted of a dark, empty room, swept very clean, the walls were roughly coloured red, and on one was drawn an unshapely, meaningless figure, executed, apparently, in white chalk. In the verandah, another reddened wall was decorated with similar designs, and in a prominent place was the sacrificial stone, black and roughly carved. In a niche in the wall stood a carved wooden figure, some eighteen inches high, hideous and blackened with exposure and nasty gory smears, caused, however, by nothing less innocent than the blood of an occasional fowl. (18)

Larymore-the-traveller is only partially present in this passage, and she is only discernible through the narrator's description of the room. The

travelling subject is only there as a set of eyes registering the dark colours, the incomprehensibility of the symbols and the perceived hideousness of the dark wooden artefact in the niche in the wall. The passage includes no direct references to Larymore's bodily presence in the hut or on the veranda and does not describe her spatial relation to the things that are described. The figure's muteness to Larymore-the-traveller contrasts with Larymore-the-narrator's description of it. The description of the "hideous" thing creates meaning whereas the subject only views the "hideous" object and the "meaningless" doodles on the wall from a distance. The invisible — thought, ritual, belief — is made visible through the narrator, but to a large extent remains invisible to the traveller.

The narrator's description shows a certain amount of what Mary Louise Pratt, when analysing Richard Francis Burton's "discovery rhetoric," has called *density of meaning*. Density is achieved through modifying words in visual description (*Imperial Eyes* 204) — in the case of the carved figure: "hideous," "blackened," "wooden," "nasty," and "gory." Whereas the adjectives *hideous* and *nasty* indicate a certain subjective experience, the modifiers *blackened* (by exposure) and *gory*, as well as the context in which the figure is described, make the figure speak about the people who made it and use it in ritual practice. The density of meaning in the description, then, construes the object as metonymic — as a material part of a cultural whole, which includes rituals and beliefs. On the other hand, there are no hints in the text that Larymore-the-traveller makes any effort to interpret or investigate the relation between object and rituals and beliefs, or that she attempts to understand the function of the object in the bloody rituals it has been designed for.

Even though they are visually very different from each other and located in different taxonomical branches, one being crafted and the other a plant, the descriptions of the wooden object and the orchids focus on their features in a similar way. Size and colour are commented on while the forms of the objects are not (except for the size of the wooden object). The fact that the descriptions focus on the same kind of features (colour and size) makes the objects mutually comparable despite them being described with very different qualifiers and receiving very different aesthetic judgements. The orchids are three feet tall "precious trophies," "varying in hue from palest mauve to deepest purple," and "most wonderfully striped, spotted and

splashed with contrasting colours” (18), as if they were designed and painted by nature or God.

The fact that the orchids and the wooden object are described in similar ways is a distinct indication of their fundamental likeness and their fundamental difference. They are material objects that justify description and they do so by being conspicuous in the environments in which they are observed by the travelling subject. What is important in this context is that the wooden object and the orchids represent different aspects of the region that the subject travels through. As it is crafted and used in sacrificial rituals, the wooden object represents local immaterial culture transformed into a crafted object, while the flowers are representative of the colourful landscape. The orchids do not represent human thought, but the description of them as spotted and splashed with colour suggests the agency of a divine creator.

The status of the wooden figure is twofold and moves between the two poles that Brown sets up in his theory about objects and things. While the narrator’s description of the object suggests that it is used in rituals involving blood and sacrifice, the figure remains distant to the travelling subject, because it is presented in the text as a fetish figure used in ritual. The object remains a mere physical thing to the travelling subject — alien and enigmatic — but like the “unshapely, meaningless figure” drawn in chalk on the wall, it remains conspicuous in its otherness and muteness to Larymore-the-traveller. The otherness of the darkened, blood-smeared figure is expressed in Larymore-the-traveller’s (non-)relation to it, while its description situates the object in a context where it becomes, as Brown perceives it, a “window” to history, society and culture (“Thing Theory” 4). It is classified as a handmade (“carved”) “figure,” which means it has been made by someone in a specific, but to the traveller as well as the narrator, unknown context. It remains a “thing” in the eyes of the traveller insofar as its otherness and transcendent symbolic values reduce it to a series of physical features (height, colour, texture). The different epistemological relations between the carved figure and the narrator on the one hand, and the figure and traveller on the other, allow the wooden item to be simultaneously mute and speaking, opaque and transparent, thing and object.

The interaction and distance that characterises the relation between subject (traveller, ethnographer) and object (carved wooden figures, the

other) tends to be continuously negotiated in ethnographical portraits. On the level of the narrator's description, then, the "carved wooden figure" has a pedagogical and ethnographical function in the text. The simultaneity of the representation of the object and the subjective, sensory (in this case visual) experience of the thing makes the description of it an ethnographical narrative about the inhabitants of the village at the same time as it conveys the other as being transcendent and ungraspable to Larymore-the-traveller.

In the introduction to *Time and the Other* (1983) Johannes Fabian addresses the construction of, and knowledge about, the unfamiliar. To Fabian, accounts about the other rest on the subject's "personal, prolonged interaction" with the groups of people that are understood as culturally different from the observing I/eye. "But then," Fabian writes "we pronounce upon the knowledge gained from such research a discourse which construes the Other in terms of distance, spatial and temporal" (xi). A similar difficulty concerning the relation between the subject and object of study/other is voiced by Kingsley-the-narrator, who reflects upon the study of the "African mind" in *Travels in West Africa* (430). The dichotomous construction of the narrative geography of her texts is discernible when, after having discussed the conditions for studying fetish "in places on the coast where there is, or has been, much missionary influence," Kingsley states that "in the bush – where the people have been little, or not at all, in contact with European ideas – in some ways the investigation is easier; yet another set of difficulties confronts you. The difficulty that seems to occur most easily is the difficulty of language" (431). To Kingsley, cultural difference and spatial distance from the spheres of civilisation and modernity facilitates ethnographical description. As has been discussed in chapter one, the traveller's crossing of invisible (linguistic in this case) boundaries imbues the text with authority.

Yet, the very fact that the traveller is far away from the civilised coast undermines her abilities to communicate and investigate. Furthermore, the traveller's current distance from civilisation tends to coincide with distance in terms of difference between the traveller and the other who the traveller encounters. Johannes Fabian sees this spatial and epistemological relation between subject and object as a fundamental characteristic of anthropological writing (*Time and the Other* xi). The discrepancies between the symbolic and linguistic economies of the observing subject and its other broaden the distance between them. Therefore, paradoxically, it is through

the investigating subject's distanced position in relation to the thing/object in the text that authoritative statements can be produced.

As has been pointed out above, the ambivalence between epistemological distance and closeness that Fabian locates at the heart of European ethnographical writing, repeats the structure of Brown's object/thing dialectic. The "distance" that Fabian describes (*Time and the Other* xi) corresponds to the distance between the subject and object that allows for the "thingness" of objects to become discernible ("Thing Theory" 4). Conversely, the object form of things assumes a certain epistemological as well as physical closeness between subject and object. The use of the object as a metonym that gestures towards a certain culture or group of people requires that the object can be studied closely and interpreted by someone. Consequently, the narratological, grammatical and epistemological terms that have been used so far seem to group together into the conceptual chains of traveller/past tense/otherness/thing and narrator/present tense/authority/object.

A passage from Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* may serve to show how these concepts and narratological functions group together. Kingsley's text contains five chapters in which "the Voyager attempts cautiously to approach the subject of Fetish" (429). The "fetish" chapters differ from the following and preceding chapters in that the former are organised around "the African form of thought," and digress from the linear structure of the narrative about the traveller's journey. The shift of focus from the journey as narrative to discourse on "African thought" removes the travelling subject, and consequently the subject's experiences, from the focus of attention. The transparency and fading of the travelling subject in the ethnographical portraits in the "Fetish" chapters in *Travels in West Africa* can be seen in a discussion about charms. Kingsley-the-narrator says that when making a charm:

[y]ou call in the medicine man, the "oganga," as he is commonly called in Congo Francais tribes. After a variety of ceremonies and processes, the spirit is induced to localise itself in some object subject to the will of the possessor. The things most frequently used are antelopes' horns, the large snail-shells, and large nutshells, according to Doctor Nassau. Among the Fan I found the most frequent charm-case was in the shape of a little sausage, made very neatly of pineapple fibre ... the outside coloured red to flatter and please [the spirit]... (446)

Kingsley-the-traveller's experiences are described in the past tense in the last sentence, but the narrator describes and explains cultural customs from a timeless present that is removed from the spaces where the I learned that charm-cases are often shaped like sausages. The statements about charms and the way that they are produced in West Africa are presented as comparable to the knowledge ascribed to Doctor Nassau, whose authority is both consulted and contested throughout *Travels in West Africa*. Instead of experiences that Kingsley-the-traveller has made among the Fang (as the Fang are called in the text), the statements about these people take the form of an ethnographical portrait. The representation of the Fang is not expressed in terms of the subjective, sensory experiences of a traveller who studies through seeing, hearing and feeling as in other parts of the text, where the focus lies on the joys and difficulties of journeys in West Africa. The shift from the traveller's subjective perspective to the bodiless narrating voice grants the object a metonymical status in the text while simultaneously shortening the distance between (narrating) subject and object. When the "sausage" shaped "charm-case" is perceived as an object with an inherent potential of telling a story about the Fang, it loses much of its otherness and becomes an odd item that pertains to a familiar kind of objects that Kingsley-the-narrator, like Doctor Nassau, is especially suited to discuss because she has been "collecting information" on fetish "since 1883" (429).

As with Larymore's *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria*, the traveller's gendered identity may be seen as a key element in the ambivalence surrounding ethnographical statements, on the one hand, and textual construction of subjective experiences on the other. The use of the pronoun *you* in the passage quoted above creates dissonance between the seriousness of the ethnographic perspective and the humorous tone in the text. The *you* is suggestive of a universal referent – *you* may refer to anyone, including the narrator, the Fang, the traveller and the reader – while the ethnographic perspective demands a very particular, well-defined object of study (the other) as the referent of the pronoun. The *you*, then, playfully suggests that any subject is interchangeable with, as Fabian writes, "the savage, the primitive, the Other" (1). Kingsley-the-narrator might be interpreted as saying that when a charm is to be made, "you [reader or traveller, but in the end actually the African other] call in the medicine man" (446). At the same time as the pronoun receives an absurdly wide horizon of referents, which playfully positions traveller, reader, narrator and the other as equally viable

referents, the distinct separation of the studying subject from the studied other is the most fundamental pretext of representational (ethnographic) writing.

In “Fish and Fetish: Mary Kingsley’s Studies of Fetish in West Africa” Ulrike Brisson points out that the ironic, bantering tone in Kingsley’s text undermines “the simultaneous seriousness” of its ethnographical element (338).<sup>6</sup> According to Brisson, Kingsley-the-narrator’s humour and irony is part of a strategic negotiation of Kingsley-the-person’s “reputation in British society, where gender really matters,” something that challenges her own claims to scientific knowledge (328). However, Kingsley-the-narrator normally speaks with authority when she discusses customs and other cultural phenomena. In the preface to *Travels in West Africa* she states that “if you go [to West Africa] you will find things as I have said” (ix). Through its frankness and introductory function in relation to the rest of the text, this claim to objectivity and authority is never altogether cancelled out by subsequent sarcasms, banter and irony. The ironic and bantering tone in the text can, however, be read as a sign of ambivalence in the relation to the other and the material object/thing.

Unlike the passages in Kingsley’s and Larymore’s texts mentioned above, the following passage from Verney Lovett Cameron’s *Across Africa* is articulated by a narrator who refers to the traveller’s observations of an object in terms of quasi-scientific investigation and quantification. Even though no exact numbers are specified or certain knowledge produced, the traveller relates to the object by making a metaphorical diagnosis of its effect on the “native” body, and almost suggests that the object relates to the person who wears it almost as if it were a disfigured limb:

Two ornaments which I had hitherto rarely seen now became common. One, the sambo, consisting of a quantity of small circles of elephant’s hair or hide, neatly bound round with very fine wire, was worn on the legs. Natives of high degree frequently wore such a mass of this as to give them the appearance of being afflicted

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<sup>6</sup> In “Fish and Fetish” Ulrike Brisson discusses the implications of Victorian conceptions of gender on Mary Kingsley’s authority as traveller, public persona and ethnographic author. Brisson’s study of the social and textual construction of authority and identity in texts of and about Mary Kingsley in general, and *Travels in West Africa* in particular, may complement the present discussion because the concepts of identity and ‘historical’ person will not be applied here. For further reading on Mary Kingsley’s authority as author and as geographer, see Alison Blunt (1994).

with elephantiasis; and though I had no means to ascertain the exact number on each leg; I may safely affirm that in some instances three hundred would be under rather than over the mark. (153)

To Cameron-the-narrator, the native's body serves as a background to the object. The ornamental object is seen as a medical affliction or a disfigurement of the natives' bodies. Conversely, even though the traveller lacks the, supposedly material, "means to ascertain" and quantify, the travelling subject's investigation of the object points towards "scientific" observation. Cameron-the-narrator may lack the material means of producing certain statements, but is unlike Larymore-the-traveller not presented as being handicapped by a lack of scientific proficiency (Larymore vii).

The quoted passage begins with a spatial reference to the travelling subject's movement and position within the narrative geography of the text. Cameron-the-traveller has reached a point where certain ornamental objects "become common" features of his visual environment. The account of the sambo is situated in a certain spatiotemporal context. However, unlike the "ornamental object" and "carved wooden figure" in *Travels in West Africa* and *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria*, the spatial context takes the form of a vaguely delineated region rather than a specific building or space. Therefore, there is a large distance between Larymore-the-traveller and the thing (the so-called carved wooden figure in the "Ju-ju house"), but Cameron-the-traveller, in contrast to Larymore, *almost* conducts a scientific observation of the object that is described. When Cameron-the-narrator discusses the "small circles of elephant's hair" that are worn by the "natives" of the region, he refers to a relatively broad cultural context. As ethnography, then, his account is more authoritative than Larymore's description of the wooden figure, which is more of a description of radical otherness. The wide scope of Cameron-the-narrator's ethnographical narrative and the almost-scientific observations of Cameron-the-traveller may indicate a gender-based difference in relation to, for example, Larymore-the-narrator's more ambivalent and less authoritative ethnographic narrative.

However, in *A Woman's Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907) Mary Hall describes ornaments that in many respects resemble the above quotation from *Across Africa*. Hall travels "alone," which means that she

does not travel together with a white man but is carried in a *machila* (or a hammock) by a group of hired carriers. On her journey from Portuguese East Africa to Egypt she comes across people who wear items that are similar to the sambo described in *Across Africa*.

Here the type of people and their ornaments differed widely from the tribes I had seen recently. [...] Round their loins the women wear masses of fine wicker cords, held together by a broad band of beads at the back. Their anklets are made either in the same way or else of brass and copper, worn in such numbers that walking is almost impossible, and gives them all the appearance of suffering from elephantiasis [sic]. (175)

As in Cameron's text, the description of the ornaments signals a shift in the narrative geography of the text because a new kind of object becomes a common sight. Like the *sambo*, the "masses" of ornaments make the bodies on which they are worn seem disfigured and ridden by disease. However, while the two descriptions of ornaments are similar, they differ in a crucial respect. Hall's description does not emphasise her own subjective observation of the objects and the people that wear them in the same way as Cameron does. Cameron-the-narrator can "safely affirm" that some people wear more than three hundred circles of elephant's hair, while Hall-the-narrator does not present an approximate number. This difference can, like the differences between Cameron's, Kingsley's and Larymore's descriptions discussed above, be understood as a gender as well as genre related difference. Hall's *A Woman's Trek* was published thirty years after *Across Africa* and has a female travelling subject. Hall-the-traveller's journey from Portuguese East Africa to Egypt is presented in the preface as a personal accomplishment, and an account that "may be of some interest to many who ... are unable to go so far afield" (v). It is, as Helen Carr writes about the stage of travel writing that spans from 1900 to the First World War, less didactic than the kind of literature that Cameron's text belongs to, and more subjective (75). While her text is obviously similar to the exploration literature of the 1870s and 1880s, Hall-the-narrator takes a more subjective approach towards the objects she describes than Cameron-the-narrator does.

There is also a relation between the gender of the traveller/narrator and the general scope of the travel narrative, including claims on scientific accuracy or authority (McEwan 4) and the political importance of the journey. Colonial exploration literature, predominantly written by male travel writers, is characterised by confident (quasi-)scientific discourse and scientific parlance to a greater extent than such travel accounts that Helen Carr describes as less didactic and more subjective. The subject-object/thing relation is affected by different narrative conditions that are associated with travellers' gender and class identities as well as the specific places in which the traveller moves.

However, the distance between traveller and the observed thing/object tends to vary in different parts of the same text and in relation to the same travelling subject. Therefore, while there are effects on each of the respective narratives, the construction of Larymore-the-traveller's femininity and Cameron-the-narrator's (male) authority ultimately serves to show how the relation between object/thing on the one hand and traveller or narrator on the other may take different forms. Even though the subject-object relation takes different forms in different texts, in relation to different identity constructions and at different points along the same journey, this subject-object relation tends to bring ethnographic authority and otherness to the fore in the vast majority of cases. What is of primary importance here is that insofar as the travelling subject is separated from the narrating subject – Larymore-the-traveller, for example, from Larymore-the-narrator – it is also possible to observe a traveller who distances herself or himself from the thing, while the narrator maintains an authoritative ethnographic narrative about the other.

### **Appropriation of Objects and the Here-and-Now**

As has been shown, the relation between the subject (narrator and traveller) and the object/thing is a site where otherness and ethnographic authority are negotiated. The travelling subject's bodily relation to the object/thing and the narrator's approach to it can be studied in passages in which objects/things are described and explained. Narrators tend to explain and describe the functions of objects while the same functions and meanings remain ungraspable by the traveller. The fact that the traveller tends to fade into the background in descriptions of objects can be seen as an effect of the

ambivalence between on the one hand authority, knowledge and interpretation and on the other hand the transcendental otherness of the object of study. This spatial gap between traveller and object is, however, considerably narrowed as soon as things are appropriated by the traveller/narrator. As soon an object is described as a personal possession, it is no longer spatially or epistemologically distant from the subject. Simultaneously, the two narratological functions of traveller and narrator collapse and become analytically indistinguishable from each other.

One way to understand this tendency is through the object/thing. An item that is purchased, appropriated or collected can hardly be seen as a thing, but is by definition an object. When Mary Hall buys an earring from a person she meets she does not see it as an object lesson in radical otherness but simply as an earring, which is interesting and worthwhile bartering for (349-350). As with Hall's approach to the earring, stories about consumption and the ethnographical collection of material objects tend to shorten the distance between seer and seen: When the object is added to the traveller's possessions it moves, epistemologically as well as spatially, away from the unfamiliar because it is no longer other in the sense that it belongs in a context of which the travelling subject is only an observer. Theoretically, this movement may be understood as a definite move towards object status and away from thingness – to its new owner, the earring appears as the object in a subject-object relation and not as a distant thing. The object stands in a closer relation to the subject when it is accessible or belongs to the subject who describes it.

When objects come into the narrator's possession, they enter a grammatical here-and-now in which the object is described and investigated. This here-and-now differs largely from the then-and-there of colonial travel. The object is not a conspicuous thing in a foreign and unfamiliar environment now, but an object that may be studied or cherished in the narrator's present. Fabian discusses a similar phenomenon when he writes that the commodification of ethnography requires a "temporal passage of data (the goods) from their historical context in societies considered primitive to the present of Western science" (*Time and the Other* 96). What is specific to the traveller's experiences of things/objects and situations in the then-and-there becomes general, abstract and archetypical in the narrator's statements that are articulated from the now-and-here of modernity. The object is, in short, incorporated into the now-and-here of

ethnographical narratives and statements. In “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” Abdul JanMohamed writes that if the European:

assumes that the Other is irredeemably different, then he [sic] would have little incentive to adopt the viewpoint of that alterity: he would again tend to turn to the security of his own cultural perspective. Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his culture (19).

In the colonial discourse that is prevalent in the travel narratives discussed here, little of this bracketing and negation is carried out. Instead, the narrator assumes the temporal perspective of the here-and-now and describes objects and people associated with the then-and-there, which are normally described in the past tense, in the present tense as if they do not belong to what Fabian calls the subject’s “autobiographic past” but the present of European ethnology. Statements made in the present tense from this here-and-now can in other words be understood as being articulated from within metropolitan modernity.<sup>7</sup> Such statements are uttered from within such Enlightenment edifices as comparative anthropology and cultural geography.

Appropriated objects that emanate from the sphere beyond modernity and civilisation are not, of course, completely cut off from their contexts of provenance. Like souvenirs or postcards, such appropriated objects contain an exotic element but are described with a high degree of familiarity. As familiar but exotic objects they embody narratives about the margins of modernity. The idea that narratives about the colonial periphery are embodied in familiar objects is used by Kingsley-the-narrator when she discusses elephant hunting among the Fang, whose “minds” and customs are described in various sections of *Travels in West Africa*. She writes that “many a wild story the handles of your table knives could tell you” (325),

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<sup>7</sup> As will be pointed out in the following chapter, however, the texts include many instances where travellers’ diaries and notebooks are quoted, thus creating an impression of directness — as if the traveller (rather than the narrator) speaks directly to the reader. This form of direct address is also associated with authority and truth, but is primarily used in discussions about specific situations rather than more broad topics.

much like the objects at the 1886 Colonial Exhibition which impressed “many useful lessons” on the visitor (Mackenzie 1).

However, cutlery handles made of ivory do not actually tell stories, which is why Kingsley feels obliged to “speak briefly on the most important article with which the Fan deals, namely ivory” (325). Ivory-handled cutlery proves less of a “useful lesson” than a rhetorical reference point in the account of the methods that are used by Fang hunters when “collecting” this “article” (325). Kingsley-the-narrator’s reference to table knives establishes a relation between dinner parties in London and “unsportsmanlike” elephant hunts (326) and even murder (325) in Gabon. The knives become a window to the periphery and the beginning of a trade chain which ends at a dinner table in the English metropolis. Paradoxically, they become a window precisely *because* of their thingness. The “wild stories” lie hidden in the material of the handle and are evoked only in rare moments when focus is directed towards the table knife and the material it is made of. The ivory-handled table knife, then, is a familiar object that emanates from an unfamiliar context, and Kingsley-the-narrator offers an insight into the table knife’s exotic past. Kingsley-the-narrator’s evocation of table knives brings the concept of appropriation to the fore because it shows how the unfamiliar is made familiar when the object is incorporated among someone’s possessions. However, the stories are hidden in the handle of the table knives that dinner guests generally use rather than interpret, and look past rather than at. The stories are silenced by the everydayness of the relation between the table knife and the subject who uses it. However extraordinary their histories may be, objects lose much of their otherness when they are taken out of the context of unfamiliarity and brought into the space of the familiar and domestic.

The narrowing of the distance between subject and object that occurs when objects are appropriated becomes obvious in Larymore’s description of a certain stool. She has received the stool, along with a few other “curios,” as a gift from her husband (133). The object was stolen from a Nigerian village, which an “expedition” that her husband is a part of sets out to attack as retribution for acts of insurgency (127). Larymore writes that it used to be:

the chief's own stool, and consists of a solid block of mahogany, black and polished from long use. The base is solid, and the seat is upheld by roughly carved kneeling figures, while the centre portion is a pillar, having four doors which actually open and shut, turning in clever little sockets, and revealing recesses inside, the whole thing being, as I have said, one solid block of wood, without a join or addition anywhere. (133)

In contrast to other objects described in *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria*, such as the so-called "carved wooden figure," Larymore's stool is described in the present tense. In this particular case, the shift from the past to the present tense does not signal a shift from the particular then-and-there that is inhabited by Larymore-the-traveller to the ethnographic discourse of the narrator, but a change of hands from the chief to Larymore. The past tense, then, refers to the time when the chair belonged to the chief, while the present tense refers to the stool when it is in Larymore's possession. By not referring to a specific place and a specific moment, the subjective impressions that are described in the section about the stool make it impossible to separate Larymore-the-traveller from Larymore-the-narrator. The narrator and traveller collapse into one another as the grammar that serves to separate the then-and-there of the travelling subject's experiences and the here-and-now of the narrator's descriptions become one and the same. The epistemological and spatial distance between subject and object ceases to be discernible in the narrator's focalisation of the object.

The cutting of those little doors is a great delight to me, and I have never seen among the many stools I have collected, another at all like it; indeed, the servants were so impressed with the odd arrangement that nothing could induce them to open the doors, suspecting Ju-ju, and they greatly disapproved of my doing so! (133)

The way the doors are crafted "is" a delight to Larymore in the grammatical here-and-now, rather than during her time in Nigeria. When she adores the chair, she is neither the traveller in Nigeria, nor the bodiless narrator of the story about her years in Africa, but an author writing about the delightful chair in the present tense. Unlike the "carved wooden figure," the stool does not occupy a place in a certain spatiotemporal context that is constructed as

unfamiliar to the traveller, but is an item in a personal collection. Larymore is in fact closer to the stool, physically as well as epistemologically, than the Nigerian servants are (or used to be during her stay there). The description of the stool does not place an emphasis on the otherness of the specific cultural context in which it was produced, but focuses on the difference in the ways Larymore-the-traveller and her servants (used to) relate to the object. When the servants are addressed the text slips back into the past tense and the then-and-there of Larymore's experiences in Nigeria, only now it is not Larymore-the-traveller who distances herself from the object but the servants. The servants' refusal to touch the doors depicts them as being more distant from the object than Larymore, who considers the stool to be "a great delight."

The concrete and spatial distance between the servants and the stool signals a kind of epistemological distance, insofar as the servants' fear of "Ju-ju" is an expression of a "deviant form of knowledge" (McCallum 109). The servants' fear of the stool suggests that they believe it to have the power to harm them or its present owner. The difference between the servants and the British traveller is epistemological in the sense that it is a difference in the ways that subjects understand material objects. As E. L. McCallum notes in *Object Lessons: How to do Things with Fetishism*, this epistemological difference is consonant with the kind of fetishism that consists of an irrational confusion of subjects and objects (109). According to McCallum, an "illusory boundary between European self and colonized other" is created by the kind of fetishism which refers to what is seen as an irrational confusion between material objects and faculties pertaining to subjectivity (McCallum 109). The epistemological distance between Larymore and the stool is in other words replaced by another epistemological distance. That epistemological difference is not between Larymore and the stool or between her and her servants, but between her servants and the stool.

The boundary between Larymore as both traveller and narrator and the servants is illusory; especially because the narrator's description of the object also contains a streak of fetishist rhetoric. The ingenuity of the stool's construction is not ascribed to the person who made it, but only hinted at in words like "cutting," "arrangement" and "carved." In the description of the stool it seems as if it is the stool itself that reveals its internal recesses when its doors are turned in their "clever little sockets" and not a built-in function. Therefore, the kind of fetishism that permeates the description of the stool

has the effect of confusing the producer's mental and physical abilities with the product of his or her labour. This fetishism also involves a hint of the fetishist confusion that Marx describes in *Capital* and which consists of a general neglect of the "physiological fact" that the commodity is a result of "the expenditure of human brain, nerves, muscles, &c" (103).

The craftsman is further obscured through the definition of the stool as a curiosity. Nicholas Thomas lists the attitude in the subject's relation to the object and the attributes that the subject sees in the object as the two meanings of *curiosity* or *curios* in eighteenth century travel narratives (*Entangled Objects* 127). As it is defined as a curiosity, the object is presented as remarkable and fascinating in itself and in its existence in the present tense, rather than because of the skill of the craftsman or because of its origin in the pre-modern then-and-there. The stool's status as a curiosity is motivated by the narrator's attitude towards the stool, as well as the attributes of the object itself.

In *Travels in West Africa*, a similar substitution of thought for design is prevalent in a description of sacrificial knives. Kingsley writes that sacrifices of fowls and goats among the Fang "are made with a very peculiar-shaped knife, a fine specimen of which I secured by the kindness of Captain Davies; it is shaped like the head of a hornbill and is quite unlike the knives in common use among the tribes" (454). These knives have "long, leaf-shaped blades sharpened along both edges" (454). Like Larymore's stool, the sacrificial knife used by the Fang is "peculiar" and "superior" to other similar knives (454). As a "fine specimen" the knife is, unlike Larymore's stool, not a curiosity but an object that has been "selected or regarded as typical of its class; a part or piece of something taken as representative of the whole" (OED, *specimen*). The word *specimen* implies that the knife may be studied as an especially good example of Fang iron craft and material culture. As such, Kingsley's knife is valuable not only for its peculiarity or the personal value that it has for its present owner, but precisely because of what it lets Kingsley deduce about the cultural context from which it was appropriated. The word *secure* is suggestive of the value of the knife as an interpretable object, which would have been lost had the knife not been brought, in the spatial as well as epistemological sense, in front of the narrator. Interpretation and reflection belong to the here-and-now in which the knife is described, but not the then-and-there.

In the here-and-now from which the knife is described, the traveller and narrator fuse into one subject, as in Larymore's account of the stool. In *Travels in West Africa*, and especially in the chapters that are dedicated to what Kingsley calls "fetish," whole sections of narrative are told from what Johannes Fabian, in *Time and the Other*, calls the ethnographical present. This term refers to "the practice of giving accounts of other cultures and societies in the present tense" (80). By naming a conscious act, the expression "giving account" indicates the presence of a narrator who produces statements about cultures and societies and not just the factual presence of certain grammatical elements in the text. Unlike in many other passages where the ethnographic present is used in generalised statements about groups of people, in the passage about the Fang and their knives it is implied that the described object is present before the narrator. The bodiless narrator therefore becomes indistinguishable from the travelling subject. The difference between the passage quoted above and other passages that are narrated in the present tense is that in this passage, the object serves as a connection between the traveller's journey and the narrator's description of the Fang.

The here-and-now in which the knife is studied by the narrator/experiencing subject is also the here-and-now of intertextual dialogue. Kingsley-the-narrator, now also the subject who physically and visually studies the object, cites other textual sources and refers to already published ethnographical literature. She refutes these sources on the basis of her physical experience of the object she has secured.

Du Chaillu figures one in his book, calling it a tomahawk. Other people besides him speak of it and call it a throwing knife. I believe it is entirely used for sacrificing. I do not believe you could throw it, as its curve and heavy weight at the back bring it round when you attempt to. [...] I have never seen any knife like it except in an illustration to Junker's *Reiser im Afrika* (1891, vol. iii. P. 122), where one is figured among the knives of the Mungabatu. (454)

Different forms of the present tense are used in this passage from one of the five chapters on "fetish." There is the present tense referring to Du Chaillu and his authoritative book, the present tense referring to the now-and-here

in which Kingsley attempts to throw the knife in order to figure out how it is intended to be used, and finally the ethnographic present in the description of the use of sacrificial knives among the Fang. The first kind of present is the present of intertextual debate and the present in which Kingsley-the-ethnographer articulates “beliefs” about the Fang and their use of knives: the now-and-here of ethnographical discourse on Africa. The ethnographical present in the statements about the use of knives among the Fang places these people in a now-and-there, but this time and place is conveyed as a rather distant moment in a universal history of material development. It is in the now-and-there that the sacrifice of goats and fowls is not a thing of the past, but so much of a contemporary reality that it justifies investigation, interpretation and literary representation. Therefore, Kingsley-the-ethnographer’s engagement in intertextual dialogue and experiments with the knife in her possession may, metaphorically, be conceived as a kind of archaeological research and debate. She discusses and investigates the way the knife is used in its original context from within the here-and-now of authoritative ethnographical discourse. What makes this investigation feasible is simply the (metaphorical or concrete) presence of the object, which, in contrast to the Fang, can and has been brought into the now-and-here.

Kingsley’s and Larymore’s descriptions of the objects in their possession show that there is little left of the epistemological distance that permeates the relation between subject and object on the level of the traveller. Kingsley-the-narrator/experiencing subject throws knives in the here-and-now as a means of understanding and representing life among the Fang, and Larymore cherishes her stool as a wonderfully crafted curiosity that sits in a corner of her home. Thus, at least in Kingsley’s text, the shift from the traveller’s then-and-there to the now-and-here entails a more authoritative approach to objects and groups of people.

In Mary Hall’s *A Woman’s Trek* the narrator avoids the moment of amalgamation of traveller and narrator when she describes a “head-dress” (350) as if the description was made from the perspective of the travelling subject in a certain time and place. Later, there is a description of how Hall-the-traveller bought the object from the person who wore the head-dress. The description of the object is so detailed that it suggests that the object is available to the narrator in the here-and-now of the ethnographical narrative rather than a visual impression of a more or less remote object. Having

turned into a “little creek about three in the afternoon” the traveller is met with the following sight.

The natives that came down to meet us were a most interesting set. They were a fine, tall, well-built race, with their scalps shaved, except for a little circular clump about 4 inches in diameter on the top, in the middle of which a disc was fastened, holding a pointed piece of hippo ivory about the size of a finger. In front of this was a little conical erection, 2 inches wide at the base and 3 inches high. It looked something like a candle extinguisher and was made of felted human hair ornamented with circlets of hair. (349)

The object is close to, and almost part of, the “native’s” body. The focus in the description of the people that meet Hall and her crew moves from features of the racialised body to the hair and then on to the headdress without signifying the shift from the anonymous body to the material object. The fact that the object is described as attached to the natives’ bodies situates it in the then-and-there of the travelling subject — at three o’clock in the afternoon by the side of the creek branching out from the Nile. However, the description of the features of the object suggests that the narrator, who is situated in the here-and-now of ethnographical discourse, has more direct access to it than through the travelling subject. The description provides the measurements of the object as if they were estimated by the traveller when met by the “interesting set” coming down to the creek to meet her and her carriers. Only after the object has been minutely described does the narrator reveal that it was purchased from one of the persons in the group.

## Conclusion

This chapter has investigated instances of ethnographical writing in which objects are described, and has discussed the effects of the simultaneous need to establish authority and emphasise cultural difference in such descriptions. The travelling subject, who is the experiencing subject at the heart of the narrative, and who is seen from outside, as it were, tends to take up a position that is more or less epistemologically distant from the thing. This distancing is why it is justified to refer to artefacts, in line with Brown, as

*things* rather than *objects*, if the thing is defined as a material something that does not allow the travelling subject any insight into the sphere of the other.

However, the narrator describes objects which, in contrast to the thing, represent the other's beliefs and ideas. The narrator often speaks from a now-and-here that is both where and when the narrator experiences, investigates and represents material objects that are said to have been appropriated by the travelling subject in the then-and-there of colonial travel. This now-and-here is grammatically encoded into the narrative and can be seen as corresponding to metropolitan modernity because it is the grammatical present from which authoritative anthropological or ethnological statements about people that are described in the past tense are made. It is from the perspective of the present and from "within" the discourses of metropolitan layman anthropology that the narrator's statements about the other are made. The subject-object relations that have been studied in this chapter are in other words structured according to a fundamental conceptual separation of a modern now-and-here and a pre-modern then-and-there.

When appropriated objects are described, they are described as if they are in front of the narrator. This entails that the narrator no longer is a bodiless voice, but takes the form of a subject that occupies a certain spatial and epistemological position in relation to an object. Passages where appropriated objects are described are often characterised by a high level of detailed description and also in the change of tense from the normal past tense, which describes the experiences of the travelling subject, to the present tense. This tendency serves to collapse the travelling subject, who normally is the subject who receives sensory impressions, and the narrator, who is the source of more or less authoritative ethnographical representations. In moments when the travelling subject and the narrator merge together the separation of the pre-modern then-and-there and the modern now-and-here becomes destabilised, but this destabilisation at the same time enables the establishment of an authoritative voice in descriptions of the spatially, temporally and culturally distant object of study.

# The Signifying Object: The Materiality and Immateriality of the Book

These are the spells by which to reassume  
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

P. B. Shelley, *Promethius Unbound*

This chapter will investigate the dichotomous and politically and ideologically charged relation between materiality and immateriality. Unlike the previous chapters, this chapter will focus on one specific object — the book. There are many objects in colonial travel literature that are closely associated with the colonial project, but the book stands out in several ways. The book functions as an instrument in the civilising mission, as well as a symbol of ideas associated with civilisation. As Isabel Hofmeyr writes in *The Portable Bunyan*, the book functioned as “the white man’s fetish” in the civilizing mission (17), because it was seen as having the magical power to compel its readers “to particular forms of action in the world” (72). Books like *The Pilgrim’s Progress* were given to prospective converts, who in the preface of a certain edition of Bunyan’s allegorical classic were encouraged to pray that they “may profit by whatever is good in this book” (qtd. in Hofmyer 72). It is also through the book form that the travel narrative assumes the form of a commodity that is sold and consumed in the colonial metropolis. In other words, the book is simultaneously an instrument, a symbol and a commodity. As such, the book is an object in which immateriality and metaphysics (text, ideas, narrative and description) converge with the material (paper, the commodity form, the civilising mission). Thus, the book as a material object associates immateriality with materiality, literature with

the commodity form and the European metropolis with the African periphery.

The book has a symbolical function in colonial literature as well as a practical function in the actual material acquisition and administration of colonies. As Homi K. Bhabha among others has pointed out, the book was an instrument with which colonised cultures were “rewritten,” or controlled and restructured by colonial authorities (see “Signs Taken for Wonders”). From the early stages of interior exploration, to the Eurocolonial appropriation of land after the Berlin West Africa Conference, and through to anthropological studies of Europe’s others in the early twentieth century, the book stands out as *the* instrument for the production and circulation of knowledge about people and places under colonial rule.

At the same time, the codex, epitomised by the Bible, is a material object that tends to be presented in colonial texts as a symbol of the Christian gospel, but also Enlightenment and the ideals of reason and rationality. As a material embodiment of these (immaterial) ideals and ideological edifices, and as a tool in the coloniser’s toolbox, the book becomes highly symbolical when entering the remote regions of the narrative geography. Books that appear in the periphery can be and, as will be shown shortly, have been understood as being metonymically and symbolically related to the now-and-here of metropolitan modernity. As Bhabha has shown, as a symbol the book marks the presence of certain values associated with Christianity and Enlightenment ideals in the spaces where it is encountered or expected to be encountered, and the absence of such values outside of these spaces (Bhabha 145).

Traveller’s journeys through the periphery can be seen as a version of the moment when the book enters what Bhabha calls the “wild and wordless wastes” (Bhabha 145), because the journey is a stage in a literary, creative process. As will be shown in the first part of this chapter, the travel narrative describes its own production process. During the process in which the traveller’s experiences are translated into the narrator’s descriptions, the periphery is made available to the metropolitan reader who consumes it in the form of a text/book. In other words, the book allows for experiences and imagination to be transformed into an object and a commodity that can thus be consumed by readers in the modern metropolis. In the second part of the chapter, the function of the book in this commodification process will be exemplified by the commodification of stories and fantasies about the pre-

modern other in descriptions of the black body. The description of the black body will be seen as a process of commodification because this commodification process makes the image of the black body available for consumption on the metropolitan book market. Therefore, whereas the book — as a material symbol of the tenets of Enlightenment modernity — has a tendency to be destroyed as it enters the periphery, the book itself turns elements of this periphery into a text that is materialised in the book-commodity.

The main argument in this chapter is that the association of the book with both materiality and immateriality can be seen as an instantiation of colonial ambivalence. As has already been implied, the book, as a material manifestation of European literature, takes the form of an object that can create other objects. Through the book, then, experiences and sights are attributed with a certain kind of materiality. However, if the of the book embodies modernity's incarnation as text, immaterial ideas associated with the modern here-and-now become material and thus destructible. Ideas and imagination become exposed to external forces by being embodied by the book. Passages that describe how books are destroyed can be read as instantiations of the colonial ambivalence that springs from the contradiction between the wish to metaphorically extend the now-and-here of the metropolis to the periphery (in this case through the book) and the need for a then-and-there to which metropolitan modernity can be contrasted.

So, by embodying ideas and values, the book functions both as a symbol that separates modernity from pre-modernity and as a tool in the commodification of the then-and-there within travel literature. However, precisely because the book has the power to make the immaterial material, it becomes vulnerable to the forces of the pre-modern then-and-there that it contrast to and which it serves to commodify. Like the propagation of trade, which has been discussed in a previous chapter, the symbolical investment in the book is riddled with colonial ambivalence and contradictions.

### **The Journey as Production Process**

Colonial travel writing, as the term suggests, transposes the institution of European literature onto spaces that are conceived in this literature as void of letters, text, writing. It moves geographical and anthropological writing, as

well as literature in a more aesthetic sense, into the colonial periphery. Travellers are described as eager observers who go out of their way to experience and describe exotic otherness for the benefit of their metropolitan readers. They write by the light of paraffin lamps and in torrential storms and thus, seemingly, produce the travel narrative in the then-and-there of travel. Consequentially, the journey takes the form of a production process as much as a personal, scientific or political project.

As part of a literary process, the journey is a process by which literature arrives in the periphery and by which the periphery is made available to the metropolis in the form of literature. Bhabha calls the mythical moment when the book enters colonial space a “moment of originality,” because it is conceived as the periphery’s first encounter with literature and because literature and the book are ascribed transcendental values associated with modernity and reason (145, 146).

<sup>1</sup> In “Signs Taken for Wonders,” Bhabha reads Towson’s or Towser’s *Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship* found by Joseph Conrad’s protagonist Marlow at a riverbank in the African interior as a sign of the presence of the coloniser in the “heart of darkness” (149). In other words, the material book marks the presence of the coloniser and the colonisers’ values and ideas in colonial space. For example, the instructional book on navigation that Marlow finds by the river marks the presence of Europeans in the region on a very concrete level.

The myth of the moment of the emergence of the book in the colonial periphery is inherent in the very history of European travel literature. Travel literature after the Age of Enlightenment consolidated its position on the literary market in a historical context that was dominated by the “planetary consciousness” that characterised the upsurge of scientific and interior exploration (Pratt 15). Enlightenment and post-enlightenment travel writing was a genre that seemed (at least) to be produced outside the conventional spaces of European literary production. Such travel literature was written by travellers, explorers and scientists rather than professional writers and/or armchair geographers or ethnologists. Of course, this does

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<sup>1</sup>In this use, *myth* is intended to denote an imagined story about provenance. Consequently, the mythical moment of the book’s emergence is to be understood as referring to an imagined moment in which the book first enters the periphery. *Myth*, in other words, is meant to stress the fact that the idea that the book entering a certain space from outside and doing this in a certain moment presupposes a Eurocentric understanding of the book in which it is seen as a specifically European invention. The Eurocentric conception of book history will be discussed further below.

not mean that travel writers actually wrote their books in the light of camp fires or while gliding down rivers in canoes, but detailed description and exact observations made nineteenth and to some extent eighteenth century travel writing take the form of a kind of literature that was produced through close observation and the careful recording of impressions and data. In other words, part of the writing process, and therefore literature itself, was transposed into remote corners of the world — into the then-and-there.

The journey itself, the toilsome trudging through forests and across plains, can in other words be seen a phase in the making of the travel account. In extension, this means that a certain dynamic relation between materiality and immateriality is inscribed into travel literature as a genre. As the journey itself is presented as anticipating the moment when it is turned into a narrative, with a beginning, middle and end, and a certain dynamic progression between them, the journey enters a metonymic relationship with the book that it is eventually printed in. Travel narratives, including fictional travel narratives like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, typically include the story of their own production, partly because the journey is part of the production process and partly because the text itself often describes the traveller's literary production. Comments on how notes are written in the light of camp fires or in pouring rain serve to remind the reader that the journey, like the procedures through which paper is made and books are bound, is a stage in the production of the travel book. Thus, the immaterial text anticipates its own transformation into a commodity and the moment when it materialises as a book.

The advent of planetary consciousness entailed an increased concern with empirical observation and taxonomical classification. The premiered form of expression was what Pratt calls the "rhetoric of presence," through which emphasis is placed on the traveller's presence in the landscape. Accordingly, texts that deploy this rhetorical style focus on the subject's hierarchical as well as spatial relation to the landscape in general and to "discovered" topographies in particular (Pratt 205). One effect of this rhetoric of presence is that the act of writing becomes pivotal in the narrative itself, and especially when the traveller writes down observations and thoughts in places that are remote from the libraries and study rooms of the metropolis, which can be seen as symbolical spaces of the modern now-and-here. Literature that draws on the rhetoric of presence both displaces European literature by moving it into the pre-modern periphery, and

dramatises this displacement. Furthermore, this dramatised displacement serves to conceal the actual gap between the time of travel and the moment when the travel account is composed. Johannes Fabian refers to this time gap when he points out many travel writers' need for a certain "distance" to events that they describe in their travel accounts — a distance that is "required to make writers of travellers" (*Out of our Minds* 245).

In colonial travel accounts, citations of unedited or roughly edited passages from notebooks and diaries imply that portions of the text have been produced in the pre-modern space outside the metropolitan sphere, with which geography and ethnography and literature in general are associated. Mary Kingsley, for example, apologises for quoting extracts from her diary, but gives several reasons for doing so: "there are things to be said for the diary form, particularly when it is kept in a little known and wild region," she says, "for the reader get therein notice of things that, although unimportant in themselves, yet go to make up the conditions of life under which men and things exist" (100). To Kingsley, the diary form serves to produce the same kind of "reality effect" as objects do in the realist novel, according to Roland Barthes.<sup>2</sup> What this form also, and perhaps more clearly, gives the reader is a sense of the amount of work invested in the writing of the text. When Kingsley provides an example of what she describes as a particularly badly written page from one of her notebooks, it is not so much the conditions under which local people live that come to the fore, but rather the traveller's adventurous daily life. "Awful turn up with crocodile about ten – Paraffin good for over-oiled boots – evil spirits crawl on the ground, hence high lintel – Odeaka cheese is made thus: " (100). This set of notes captures a large part of the spectrum of observations and experiences that the traveller makes in the periphery. Such observations and experiences are normally translated into a narrative told by the narrator of the text, whose authority is based on the fact that the traveller has "been there."

Cameron quotes from his notebook in order to show that he is not exaggerating when he describes how one night the torrential rain increases to a roar and makes sleeping impossible. "The following note in my journal was evidently entered on one of these occasions," he writes, invoking the diary as a more trustworthy source than himself (152). The evidence consists of the note: "Thunder and lightning; lying awake listening to the rain. If the

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<sup>2</sup> See page 84 for a discussion about the reality effect.

blessed old Tanganyika gets all this, it *must* burst out somewhere” (152). There is little in these sentences that imbue them with the status as evidence of the truth value of Cameron-the-narrator’s claims. However, they do create a sense of immediacy by being written in the present tense, and thereby position the narrator in a there-and-now outside the here-and-now from which the narrative is usually told.

Similarly, Stanley-the-narrator refers to one of his notebooks to create an aura of truth and authenticity. Quoting from his notes about a particularly dangerous episode of his journey, he tells the reader that “[t]he above, faithfully transcribed from my note-book, convey, more truly than any amount of after-written descriptions, the full sense of the miserable scenes we endured during that fatal month of June 1877” (422). Again, what is quoted is hardly evidence in itself, but is given the status as evidence because it places the narrator closer to the events that are described. At the same time, Stanley’s quoted words gesture towards a time and place in which his book did not yet exist, but in which it was being written in the form of scribbled notes.

Another way in which the text refers back to writing and calls attention to the fact that the journey is a production process is the way in which writing is described in terms of work and labour. The process of writing travel accounts is often described in the same texts as the “manufacturing from the raw material of experiences a shaped and ordered product,” as Tim Youngs writes about Stanley’s work on *In Darkest Africa: Or the Quest, Rescue, and Retreat of Emin Governor of Equatoria* (1893) (*Travellers in Africa* 144). To Mary Kingsley too, writing is labour, and especially so in combination with travel. She uses the present tense when she describes how she writes in the most uncomfortable places and situations. In one of the two chapters about her “Ascent of the Great Peak of Cameroons” she tells the reader that “I write by the light of an insect-haunted lantern, sitting on the bed, which is tucked in among the trees some twenty yards away from the boys’ fire” (572). The lack of the comforts of a study room makes writing take the form of labourious work. The traveller, reclining on a portable bed in a grove of trees, lacks sufficient light, warmth and sleep, but is determinedly working on the product that the reader holds in his or her hands.

At other times it is the “African mind” (403) that makes writing a labourious effort for Kingsley. Writing in the seclusion of her cabin aboard a

steam ship sailing up the Ogouué River, she is disturbed by her “companions” (128). They come, one by one, to the adjacent compartment to ask the watchman to wake them up at a specific time in the morning. Kingsley overhears her companions as they say to the watchman:

“You sabe six o’clock? When them long arm catch them place, and them short arm catch them place, you call me in the morning time.” Exit from saloon – silence – then: “You sabe five o’clock? When them long arm catch them place, and them short arm catch them place, you call me in the morning time.” Exit – silence – then “You sabe half past five o’clock? When them long arm –” (128)

Kingsley quotes her fellow passengers in what she calls “trade English” and adds stage directions for comic effect, which serves to underline her irritation with her noisy co-travellers. The source of irritation is not so much the fact that the walls of the cabin do not block out the voices in the adjacent room, as the voices themselves and the mindset of the people that the voices belong to. The African others impose themselves on the writer’s concentration and by doing so become part of the meta-narrative about writing.

Constance Larymore also refers to the drudgery of travel as a necessary element in the writing of a travel account. In her text, she describes the writing process that has led up to the finished manuscript. Even though the preface points out that the bulk of Larymore’s work has been carried out after her time in Nigeria, it also lets the reader know that her accounts are based on notes and journal entries, rather than from memory (vii). She quotes an anonymous “wise man’s” words to qualify her decision to publish her book. “But the best way of travelling is to ride on a horse through country where there are no railways, and no roads, and where, accordingly, the people are rooted and untroubled in mind, and do as little work as they can. Such travelling, it is not to be questioned, makes the best books” (vii). To Larymore, discomfort is what makes good travel literature. Therefore, Larymore, who travelled over three thousand miles on horseback, but also stayed in one place for long periods of time during her stay in Nigeria, bases her modest claims as a travel writer on the fact that she has endured the toil that travel in Nigeria entails.

Writing is also wearisome to Larymore, as the preface implies. The manuscript has been “corrected, and corrected again” as time has made Larymore aware of her “mistakes and failures” (viii). The experience of travelling outside the comparatively comfortable networks of modern steam-driven modes of transport, together with the labour that has gone into writing the “little book” that the author offers to the reader are the two major components of the literary process (vii). Paradoxically, to Larymore-the-narrator, writing is facilitated by the little obstacles and hardships that the traveller encounters throughout the journey because these offer material to the text. However, Larymore informs the reader about how Nigerian travel may be turned into an “ideal existence” (271). As the instructions in the chapter on “Camp Life” show, packing is described as a “problem” that can be overcome (11). Mosquitoes give the traveller a “bad time” (12), but they can be kept out if a mosquito net is used (203). Roads are “monotonous and wearisome” (51), but more often than not lead to “joyful sights” and “magnificent views” (13, 15). Her travel narrative, as well as the instructive second part of the book that contains information on how to best prepare oneself for the African climate, grows out of the dynamic of problems and solutions.

In summary, the journey is an event that is translated into a text by the author and into a commodity by the publisher. The journey is also an instantiation of the mythical moment when the book enters the periphery. Therefore, the journey is referred to, and can be seen as a stage in the making of the travel account because the travel text at times refers back to the writing process through which it was produced. Another way in which the journey takes the form of a production process in which experiences are turned into a material commodity, is through the quoting of notebooks and diaries – an act that serves to place part of the writing process in the periphery. As was shown in the previous chapter, “Objects in Ethnography,” the travel account speaks both from a then-and-there, located within the periphery, and from the here-and-now of the metropolitan centre. It therefore brings British and European literature into the narrative geography of the Africa that is described in the travel account because it is partly written as if from within the periphery, or the then-and-there.

## **The Book and the Commodification of the Black Body**

In this section, the travel account will to some extent be studied from without — as a text that is intended as a cultural commodity containing certain tropes and themes that can be seen as more or less desirable from a reader perspective. This means that the immaterial text will be studied in relation to the commodity that this text ultimately is. When the travel account is studied from without, it can be seen as composed of two major elements — narrative and description. This pair, which has traditionally been understood as comprised of two oppositional kinds of text, is obviously somewhat unsophisticated in comparison to contemporary narratological theories and theoretical categories.<sup>3</sup> However, the distinction between narrative and description makes it possible to discuss the content of the travel account from a market perspective; that is, as constituent parts of a commodity.

A point of departure in this section, then, is that the narrative about the journey and descriptions of things and people encountered during the journey are translated through literary production into a travel account, which eventually assumes the form of a commodity, the book. This travel narrative is, at one point, marketed towards metropolitan readers who consume it in both senses of the word: they buy it and they read it. Therefore, descriptions of exotic otherness that are manifested in Edenic landscapes, elaborate hairstyles and body ornaments can be studied not only in terms of their function in colonial discourse and imperial ideology, but also as elements in a commodity.

What will be discussed here is the, often semi-naked, black body, whose local variations are described, examined and compared in colonial travel accounts. The black body is made an object of study and discussed in laymen's terms from anthropological and biological perspectives, but it is also aesthetically evaluated from a subjective point of view by the narrator and approached by the traveller with fascination as well as repulsion. The translation of the black body into literature can be partly seen as a strategy through which the otherness of the exotic African body — as an image of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Cynthia Wall's *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* for a comprehensive discussion of description and its relation to narrative in the history of British and early European literature. Wall disagrees with Gerard Genette's claim that the opposition between description and narrative was not in "active existence" prior to the nineteenth century (qtd in Wall 25). She traces the distinction of description and narrative back to the Platonic rejection of description as imitation (25).

Victorian colonial imagination — is made material in the sense that it can now be consumed and not only imagined. In this aspect, the description of the black body is similar to pornographic writing, which alludes to sexual fantasies, but transforms them into marketable commodities (pornographic books). While this comparison may not hold to scrutiny on a more detailed and theoretical level, it serves to show how imagination about what is both a psychological projection and a body is commodified through literary description. The travel account's promises of detailed accounts of cultural as well as biological otherness can be understood as part of the appeal of the individual text (and the genre) to a reading public.

However, the theoretical distinction between narrative and description in travel accounts points to the fact that this genre not only appealed to a broad late Victorian public looking to read about imperial adventures and compatriots' achievements abroad, but also to armchair geographers and anthropologists. Even though travel writing was an important source of inspiration for writers of imperial adventure fiction, Victorian anthropology was to a large extent also dependent on ethnographical portraits in travel literature.<sup>4</sup> George W. Stocking writes in his widely quoted *Victorian Anthropology* that "such ethnographical material as were to be found here and there in [travel] accounts provided the basis for the theoretical arguments both of ethnologists and of the social evolutionary writers who succeeded them" (79). Furthermore, in 1874 the British Anthropological Institute found itself wanting in detailed accounts about "uncivilized" people and drew up a form called *Notes and Queries on Anthropology, for Use of Travellers and Residents in Uncivilized Lands*, which was given to travellers, who were asked to fill it in during their journeys abroad and to hand it in to the institute after their return (258). While the Anthropological Institute's use of this form does not say much about the importance of actual travel accounts to armchair anthropologists in the modern metropolis, it does demonstrate how British anthropologists envisioned a division of labour between travellers, who were expected to make observations in the field, and those experts who remained at home to analyse them (259). In other words, traveller's observations and descriptions

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Rosamund Dalziel "The Curious Case of Sir Everard im Thurn and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Exploration and the Imperial Adventure Novel, *The Lost World*" in which Dalziel shows how the accounts of Everard im Thurn's successful ascent of Mt. Roraima in the border region of British Guiana served as inspiration when Arthur Conan Doyle wrote his 1912 novel *The Lost World*.

were seen as a kind of raw material that it was the anthropologist's job to interpret and transform into science.

It may be argued that the anthropologist's primary interest in the travel account lies in the description of people and cultures rather than in stories about canoe rides at Lake Tanganyika at night. It would, however, be unwise to jump to the conclusion that the opposite is true – that the appeal of the travel account to the common reader lies primarily in the narrative about the journey, rather than the descriptions of people and places. An advertisement in *The Times* for the fifth edition of Verney Cameron's *Across Africa* emphasises the quality of the "genuine story of dangerous and difficult exploration" (*Times*, May 9 1877).<sup>5</sup> However, it is also claimed that Cameron's travel account will remain "the text book for the geography and anthropology of South tropical Africa" for years to come. The story about the traveller's trials and tribulations in the African interior and the accuracy and vividness of its geographical and ethnographical descriptions seem to be equally useful in selling Cameron's travel account on the British book market. The advertisement implies that Cameron's book should appeal to a diverse audience that consists of geographers and anthropologists as well as people looking to pass some time reading exciting adventure stories. However, the advertisement can also be read as implying that anyone who buys Cameron's book, regardless if he or she is an armchair anthropologist or an avid leisure reader, can expect both a compelling narrative and detailed accounts of exotic otherness.

While travel writers often write about the black body in semi-scientific terms, such descriptions often primarily serve to add to the level of exoticism in accounts of inaccessible places and cultures. A passage in John Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* may be used as an example of how anthropological approaches are secondary to the exoticism, and in this particular case also the comic effect of descriptions of the black body.<sup>6</sup> Speke takes an interest in the female bodies he observes during a visit to King Rũmanika's court in Karague, Uganda. He explains that it is a local custom that these women are put on a diet of milk so that they become extremely obese (229). Speke's interest in these bodies is ostensibly anthropological. The passage in which these women are described is not only

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<sup>5</sup> A review in *The British Quarterly Review* is quoted in the advertisement.

<sup>6</sup> The reader will remember that Speke's travel companion, Grant, complained to the publisher that Speke's *Journal* contained too many "indecent" passages. See page 68 above.

an episode in the general travel narrative, but tends towards the descriptive and includes detailed observations about the women's diet and the results of it, such as the exact dimensions of a certain woman's body. However, when Speke describes how he measures a certain woman's body, the black body becomes an object of bantering and ironic sexual references rather than serious anthropological observation. In this passage, then, the black body is objectified because it is made an object of anthropological examination and because it is used to achieve a touch of comic relief in his account of troublesome carriers, cruel despots and wearisome marches. While at Rūmanika's court, Speke calls for one of Rūmanika's sisters-in-law so that he can examine her body.

I was desirous to obtain a good view of her, and actually to measure her, and induced her for giving me facilities for doing so by offering in return to show her a bit of my naked legs and arms. The bait took as I wished it, and after getting her to sidle and wiggle into the middle of the hut, I did as I promised, and took her dimensions, as noted below. (229)

The passage is dominated by a combination of sardonic sexual references and the British traveller's disgust with the "wonder of obesity" (229). Having managed to get the woman into the hut, and having shown her his "naked legs and arms," he has a hard time measuring her height because she cannot stand up without fainting. Inside the hut with Speke and the king's sister-in-law is "a lass of sixteen" who sits "stark-naked" on the floor of the hut watching him struggling with the woman's body. "I got up a bit of flirtation with missy" Speke-the-narrator tells the reader, tongue-in-cheek, "and induced her to rise and shake hands with me" (229). She had "lovely" features, he says, "but her body was round as a ball."

Even though the fact that the traveller touches the women and promises to show them parts of his own body may seem somewhat bold in the context of a widely read mid-Victorian travel account, the less than decent references to nakedness and flirtation are counterbalanced by Speke-the-narrator's obvious disgust with the obese bodies. While drawing on anthropological prose by presenting the dimensions of the woman's arms, thighs, chest and calves in one of the book's few footnotes, the passage about

the obese women can hardly be read as a serious attempt to make a contribution to British anthropology. Ultimately, this passage from Speke's *Journal* can be read both as an anecdotal part of the general travel narrative, in which the black body is portrayed as a fascinating but disgusting object, and as a piece of ethnography that makes the black body an object of knowledge.

To see detailed descriptions of the black body as elements in a commodity, as parts of a product intended for consumption, suggests that these descriptions are understood or conceptualised as objects. The conceptualisation of descriptions as objects has a long history and is far from a novel idea in Anglophone literary studies. As Cynthia Wall points out in *The Prose of Things* (2006), descriptive passages were discussed in terms of objects already in the early Renaissance (26). Wall states that certain kinds of rhetoric are discussed in terms of "garnishing," "shapes" and "figures" in the sixteenth century, and shows how "the language of object imagery for description seems to increase in the seventeenth century" (26). Furthermore, the reification of text is precisely what happens when texts are commodified and transformed into books that can be consumed. It may not be a coincidence that, as Wall's examples show, the appearance of the object-metaphor for "pieces" of descriptive literature roughly coincides with the first stages of secularisation and the rise of British capitalism. The proliferation of texts that were not marketed and read as religious texts, together with the increasing commodification of immaterial things in general and literature in particular may serve as an explanation of why the explosion of object imagery for description increased rapidly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Therefore, seen from a materialist perspective, what may at first seem like a rather trivial use of metaphor can instead be seen as an effect of the commodification of literature under the first stages and, in extension, the pinnacle of British industrial capitalism.

It is reasonable to assume that Speke's, Cameron's, Stanley's and Kingsley's texts had an impact on metropolitan studies of Sub-Saharan peoples and cultures — the Nile and Congo explorers' texts because of the fact that they described places and people that had not previously been described by British writers, and Kingsley's because of the text's thoroughness in describing what Kingsley calls West African fetish practices. The fact that such descriptions also appear in Grogan's, Larymore's and Hall's travel accounts is a further argument in support of the claim that

anthropological description may be seen as elements in the commodity marketed to a wide reading public as much as serious contributions to anthropology. As has been pointed out several times throughout this book, these texts do not describe uncharted territories, but colonies, and their authors do not claim to present actual, valuable contributions to the study of culture and the biological variations of mankind. However, they do describe people, customs and cultural matter in some detail.

Constance Larymore describes how “fine” African soldiers ride past her and her husband when they visit Hadejia. This passage may serve as an example of how descriptions of people and things are central to the genre of colonial travel writing even when they are not formulated as anthropological observations. The sight before Larymore appeals to her aesthetically rather than anthropologically and the description turns on the metaphor of art. To Larymore, the sight is a “spectacle of truly barbaric African splendour” (100). She states that the soldiers are “splendidly turned out” and sit “rigid and motionless” like “living statues” (99, 100), and adds, while reminiscing that “[i]t seemed to take one back centuries in the world’s civilization, and, with a grasp, came the realization that we had stepped into a world where time had stood still, and the ages passed over without leaving a mark” (100). The soldiers are described in terms of them being beautiful renderings of exotic bodies, as if they were modelled for the sole purpose of being appreciated by traveller and reader. However, it is what the metaphorical sculptures represent rather than their aesthetic expression that constitutes their exotic element. Ultimately, it is of course Larymore’s aesthetic appreciation and description of the soldiers’ bodies that turn them into statues. Consequently, Larymore’s description corresponds metaphorically to the sculptor’s work and the soldiers are the exotic object that the sculptor reproduces in his/her artwork.

The metaphor of art indicates that the function of description in Larymore’s text is to create an aesthetic effect rather than to produce anthropological knowledge about groups of people. There may be several reasons for this tendency. The fact that Larymore does not claim to offer her readers anthropological knowledge about the soldiers can be seen, in relation to late Victorian constructions of gender roles, as a way of avoiding assertions of authority that may be understood by her readers as unbecoming of a British lady traveller. The priority of aesthetic over anthropological observation in Larymore’s text can perhaps be seen as

related to the fact that Larymore, as Cheryl McEwan writes, belonged to the group of women travellers who were “restricted to an essentially ‘feminine’ sphere” (40). Another plausible reason why bodies are not primarily described as objects of knowledge, but as aesthetic objects, is that it in turn makes the text more aesthetically appealing to its intended readers. The description of the black body as an aesthetic object can then be seen as characteristic of the text-commodity itself, rather than an effect of the constraints on the author’s public identity. Her text is obviously aimed towards a readership that consists predominantly of British women, which her handy tips on home making and how picnics are best organised show. In the light of this fact, the aesthetic approach may be explained as an aesthetic choice in the writing process. Indecent nakedness is a scarce thing in *A Resident’s Wife in Nigeria*, whereas colourful clothes and beautiful facial features are common.

A tendency that accompanies the objectification of the black body in Larymore’s text is that people are described as unwilling to be photographed or have their portraits drawn. Therefore, whereas the black body is commodified through description, it has a tendency to slip out of the traveller’s panoptic field of vision. Larymore tells the reader that while her husband tries to explain the significance of Coronation Day to a group of people in a Nigerian village, she has the opportunity to “[while] away the time by making a sketch of the old Chief, and [take] some photographs” (23). To her disappointment she finds her “guests most fidgety folks to get into a group – at the critical moment some one [sic] was sure to get up and stroll away, or lean across to make a remark to his neighbour!” (23). Regardless whether this passage and other like it are read as a reports of historical events or as semi-fiction, they serve to illustrate the discursively mediated anxiety about the relation between the travelling subject and the object of description.

Kingsley’s and the explorers’ contributions to Victorian anthropology are of two different kinds. One is visual description, which is based on empirical experience, and the other is the formulation of abstract knowledge about peoples and cultures. In other words, accounts about the African other are composed of the traveller’s subjective perceptions and contact with the object of study and the narrator’s authoritative formulation of knowledge about it. Therefore, the objectification of the black body combines the traveller’s closeness to the body with the narrator’s removed

position in relation to it. Whereas people wear clothes and are approached as aesthetic objects in Larymore's text, the texts of the explorers are often preoccupied with nakedness. If Larymore's tactful description of colours and body poses can be read in the light of the parameters of what she could discuss as a woman writer, the more candid descriptions of writers like Speke and Cameron can also be discussed in terms of gender. One effect of the different possibilities that are available to male and female writers in relation to the description of bodies and nakedness is that while Larymore regards the object she describes from some distance, as a "spectacle" (Larymore 100), a writer like Cameron does not mind approaching the semi-naked body to study it closely.

In a passage in *Across Africa*, Cameron describes the black female body in terms of concrete presence and abstract absence — as an object that the traveller studies and as an object of knowledge. The body is described from the point of view of the traveller, who looks at individual bodies, as well as from the narrator's quasi-anthropological point of view through which these bodies are seen as instantiations of an archetypal black body. The reader is told that Watuta women "wear a small skin apron, and dispose another skin behind, in a manner more fanciful than decorous; for while covering the upper part of their legs, it leaves another portion of their body fully exposed. These stern-aprons are cut so as to turn down a flap — occasionally decorated with beads — to allow of a full and open rear view" (202). The black female body is described as spatially distant and inaccessible, at the same time as it reveals the naked body to the Victorian reader. However, the female body is only present through substitution — through the clothes that are described as "allowing" one to view it. While the Watuta women are described as a number of anonymous bodies that are clothed in similar ways, the passage also contains references to the traveller's position in relation to individual bodies. References to perspective and sight suggest that the traveller is positioned in relation to the female bodies so as to get a "full and open rear view" of them. The contradiction in the fact that the body is described as both present and absent can be understood as being caused by the fact that it is described both from the traveller's perspective, in terms of subjective experience, as well as in the narrator's terms, as an abstract object of knowledge.

These double perspectives may in turn be read as an effect of the processes by which the black body is commodified and consumed: The chain

of focalisation – from traveller to narrator to reader – corresponds to the stages in the process through which the body is commodified. The traveller views (or imagines) individual bodies, which the narrator collapses into one body and describes to the intended reader, to whom the body is at the same time present in an abstract sense, as an object of description, and spatially absent. This chain of focalisation and transformation can be seen as a textual conduit between the then-and-there of naked primitivism and the here-and-now of the modern metropolis and Victorian discretion. It has the same function in the metropolis as the apron has in the periphery – to expose the black body. Whereas this chain of focalisation can also be found in Larymore's text, Cameron's text commodifies the black female body in a way that does not seem to be an option to Larymore. While the black body is clothed and described as a piece of art in *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria*, it is undressed by the male gaze in Cameron's *Across Africa* and at the same time made into an object of knowledge.

While Cameron's descriptions of the Watuta women may seem indiscrete when read in comparison with Larymore's text, Stanley goes even further than Cameron. In Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent*, black bodies, including the bodies of teenage boys, are often described as part of the traveller's scenic environment.<sup>7</sup> These bodies are at times described as a part of the landscape, and they serve to exoticise certain places that the traveller visits. In the Zanzibar evening, for example, "the beach is crowded with the naked forms of workmen and boys from the 'go-downs,' preparing to bathe and wash the dust of copal and hides of their bodies in the surf" (1: 37). This sentence is from a passage that describes how boatmen unload cargo while ships sail sluggishly by and Arab merchants chat with each other on the piers. The black body is an exotic detail that serves to set the scene in this description of Zanzibar. To Stanley, the naked body is itself part of the African landscape. While commenting on a group of people to whom "immodesty is a crime" Stanley remembers that he is "still in Africa, and only yesterday, as it were, [he] saw naked men and naked women" (1: 202). To Stanley, "the human figures in the landscape," as he calls them, are as fascinating as the landscape itself (202). Because of this affinity between the

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<sup>7</sup>Worth mentioning here is Stanley's adventure novel *Kalulu: Prince, King and Slave* (1873), which tells the story of two boys – an Arab boy called Selim and a black African boy whose name is Kalulu. Kalulu is portrayed as "a perfect youthful Apollo" whose "grace" and "manly beauty" are commented on throughout the text (137). For further information about this, see Nicklas Hällén (2010).

landscape and the body, the reader who purchases Stanley's book about Africa buys a book that is also essentially about the black African body. The black body is in other words an element in the commodity that Stanley's book ultimately is.

However, at other times the black body is observed and described as an object of interest in itself. Stanley describes the body not only in visual terms, but also in terms of how it feels when touched. He tells the reader that the women and male chiefs in king Mtesa of Uganda's court "are nearly all of a bronze or nearly dark reddish brown, with peculiar smooth, soft skins, rendered still more tender and velvety to the touch by their habit of shampooing with butter" (197). Like Cameron, Stanley is simultaneously present, through the reference to touch, and absent because it is not described how Stanley-the-traveller touches their skin or how he is positioned in relation to them. Even though Stanley rather bluntly lets the reader know that he has had occasion to touch and feel the skin of the members of Mtesa's court, this passage reads as a detailed description of anonymous bodies, rather than as a typically Victorian circumlocution of the taboo of sexual contact between the traveller and people of other races. Mtesa's court is not described as a place of promiscuity and unabashed nakedness and it is pointed out that in the region "even the poorest peasants frown and sneer at absolute nudity" (410). Therefore, the subtle erotic element in the description of the velvety skin does not emphasise Stanley's presence at Mtesa's court, but makes the body available to the imagination of the implied reader. The traveller's function is to be the hand that feels the skin so that the narrator can be the mouth that tells the reader about how the skin feels when touched.

As a character in his own text, Stanley maintains some distance to the black body. The distance from which the black body is described and from which knowledge about it is articulated has some similarities with the theoretical metaphor of the panoptic penal institution. The panopticon is an architectural edifice in which an individual (a prisoner, student, worker) is positioned in such a way that he or she can be observed by a supervisor who the individual in turn cannot see. According to Foucault, the visual element and the distance between the person who observes and studies the prisoner effectively makes the latter an "object of information" (*Discipline and Punish* 200). What is of relevance is the fact that, as Timothy Mitchell points out in *Colonising Egypt*, this panoptic objectifying vision is essentially a colonial

phenomenon. He writes that Foucault's focus on France and northern Europe has tended to obscure the colonial origin of the disciplinary power of the panoptic gaze (35). He writes that "the panopticon, the model institution whose geometric order and generalized surveillance serve as a motif for [disciplinary power], was a colonial invention" (35). The panopticon "was devised on Europe's colonial frontier with the Ottoman empire," and built primarily in places like colonial India, rather than in northern Europe (35). Consequently, the panopticon is not merely a metaphor for the objectification of subjects under disciplinary power, but a concrete example of the objectifying mechanisms inherent in colonial discourse and politics.

Representing the relation between the subject and object, the observer and observed and the coloniser and colonised, the panopticon essentially describes an epistemological relation in the sense that it symbolises the relation between an object and a subject and formulates knowledge (or "information") about this object. In connection with a discussion of the panopticon, Roxanne Lynn Doty writes that "Many of the encounters between the North and the South have been occasions for the North to gather 'facts,' define and monitor situations and problems, and subsequently enact policies deriving from those 'facts' and definitions. Surveillance renders subjects knowable, visible objects of disciplinary power" (11). Both the facts and the policies that Doty mentions can be understood as emanating from colonial discourse.<sup>8</sup> As has been pointed out, the travel account has a role in this gathering and dissemination of anthropological "facts." However, in contrast to other kinds of texts that are used in the gathering and production of information, such as reports and documents circulated within colonial administrations the travel account is also a commodity. Therefore, the objectification of the African and the transformation of the black body into an object of description, knowledge and/or aesthetic appreciation form a process through which the body is commodified and offered for consumption on the metropolitan market, and a process through which the black body is subjected to the vision of colonial disciplinary power.

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<sup>8</sup> *Discourse* is used here in the Bhabhian sense to refer to colonial authorities' production of knowledge about, but also strategies for governing, the colonised, rather than only as a name for the production of narratives about colonised groups of people. The commodification of the black body thus involves, for example, the effects of European literature about Africans and Indians, as well as the effects of the politics of Eurocolonial domination over colonised people and of the so-called colonial encounter.

The objectification of the black body, of which Cameron's description of Watuta women may serve as an example, is not only related to the effect of certain literary conventions that are common in other kinds of literature, but also the history of Eurocolonialism, including the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, it would be less than accurate, or tasteful, to equate the kind of literary commodification discussed in this chapter with the dehumanisation of the black body in the Euro-American slave trade. It is nonetheless important that descriptions of the black body in the travel book are read in the light of the history of European colonialism in Africa and the Americas. While writers like Cameron and Speke justify the colonial appropriation of land through arguments that include the necessity to eradicate the slave trade in the Sub-Saharan interior, they also describe the black body in terms of objects. On a strictly literary level, this tendency can be understood as a return to the conceptual objectification of the black body in the history of colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The objectification of the black body in the dialectics of power in the relation between the colonisers and colonised was one of the primary topics of discussion in anti-colonial theory in the 1950s. The theorisation of the objectification of the black colonised subject has become epitomised by the *negritude* poet and intellectual Aimé Césaire's famous equation: "colonization = 'thingification'" (42). Frantz Fanon also addresses the objectification of the black body in relation to the white person in *Black Skin, White Masks* (first published in 1952). He writes that the black man under the white man's gaze is "overdetermined from without" and "the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of [him] but of [his] own appearance" (116). Fanon argues that by being referred to as "a negro" by a white child in the street or by a white stranger as a "dirty nigger," the black man or woman becomes "an object in the midst of other objects" (109).

Reading Fanon's discussion about objectification, Homi Bhabha points out that characteristics of the black body become an "ineradicable sign of *negative difference* in colonial discourses" (108). What Fanon calls the fact of blackness in colonial and postcolonial settings becomes an undeniable sign of racial otherness that determines how black and white subjects relate to each other on a psychological and political level. However, while Fanon and Césaire theorise an actual, lived political reality, the focus here is on commodification through literature and on the rhetorical, literary description of the black body in terms of an object. This tendency to

commodify the black body is a specific type of the objectification and thingification that Fanon and Césaire describe. Seen in relation to the economic history of the British Empire and attempts to destroy the African slave trade, the commodification of the black body in British travel literature can be understood as the uncanny return of what Freud, through Shelling, refers to as “that which ought to have remained ... secret and hidden” (qtd in Bhabha 14-15).<sup>9</sup> In other words, the commodification of the black body can be understood as a return of the black body-commodity into colonial literature and the metropolitan book market.

A tendency that may be seen as a symptom of the internal complexities of a discourse that is firmly grounded in colonial history is the economy of metaphors through which the African is described in terms of an actual material object. For example, in Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa*, the traveller’s employed carriers and guides are named after their possessions. “One of them,” she tells the reader, “is a gentlemanly-looking man, who wears a grey shirt,” while another “is distinguished by wearing a singlet” (232). She. Kingsley tells the reader that she “will refer to them by their characteristic points” because their names are so similar (232). Consequently, the man with the grey shirt is “Gray Shirt,” and the man who wears a singlet is, simply, “Singlet” (264). Therefore, as Kingsley’s hired carriers enter her story, they are given the status of object-like subjects who Kingsley does not “much care” for at first, but eventually finds “pleasant companions” (232).

A further example of this rhetorical transformation of subjects into objects can be found in a passage of Constance Larymore’s *A Resident’s Wife in Nigeria* in which Larymore follows her puppy into a village hut. She finds herself face to face with a Nigerian albino woman, who is described as “a loathsome object” (20). She is “an albino negress, with-snow white hair, skin of a horrible bleached colour, and a terrible pair of red eyes” (20). Besides the fact that she is referred to as an object, the woman’s body is described as if it is a manufactured product that has been bleached and equipped with a pair of eyes. The description of the woman is similar to Larymore’s description of the wooden image discussed in the previous chapter. The descriptions of the albino woman and the ugly and blackened wooden image are on the same page in Larymore’s book. Just like the figure that was

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<sup>9</sup> In his essay “The Uncanny,” Sigmund Freud quotes Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) and it is this quote that Bhabha in turn cites. The ellipsis is Freud’s.

described by Larymore as being blackened by exposure and smears of blood, making it “hideous,” the woman seems to have been bleached, making her “loathsome” and disgusting. Larymore-the-narrator tells the reader that the woman may have seen her, a white woman, as “a possible rival, about to set up in line of her business” (20). Even though this statement is most readily interpreted as a humorous remark, the objectification of the woman also reads as a contradiction of the visual similarity between the two women standing face to face – especially in relation to the priority of visuality in the text, which can be exemplified by Larymore’s habit of sketching and photographing (22, 23, 27, 103, 198) and the vivid and detailed descriptions of colourful scenes (23, 27, 43, 100, 120). The rhetorical move from human body to material object in Larymore’s text can be read as a symptom of the transformation from visual perception to textual commodity. Just as the body is inscribed into a marketable commodity through description, the albino woman is rhetorically turned into an object-like body.

As in Larymore’s text, in Mary Hall’s *A Woman’s Trek from the Cape to Cairo* sight is the preferred sense. The preference for sight and visuality at times has the effect that things appear to be something they are not. For example, Hall writes that the skin of the Masai “is of a deep brown tint, and they are not overburdened with fat, but seem to be a mass of bone, muscle, and sinew, which conveys the idea of their being as hard as nails” (291). Photography is a well-used metaphor in descriptions of Hall’s appreciation of natural scenes as well as her examinations of people that she comes across. She views scenes that she wishes she could “fix” permanently on her mind “as one fixes a negative on glass” (119). This metaphor makes people, or rather bodies, become static and motionless in Hall’s descriptions. An example of this is when she describes a “typical specimen” of a Masai warrior who, before being asked to assume “the most terrifying attitudes” for her amusement, is described in a way that makes him seem object-like and fixed in time.

He wore a huge erection of ostrich feathers, rather like a busby, except that it encased the whole head, only the face being exposed. He carried a long oval shield, large enough to shelter the entire body, made of buffalo or rhinoceros hide, ornamented with the most fantastic design. For arms, he had a short sword and knobkerrie fastened to a leather belt, and in his hand he held a long spear. (292)

Hall-the-narrator discusses “the head” and “the body” rather than his head and his body. The use of the definite article instead of a pronoun in references to the warrior’s body is consonant with the fact that the Masai warrior is observed as a “specimen” rather than as an individual. The way in which the clothes and weapons are described in relation to the body contributes to the photography-like visual description of the man: his body is, from where Hall observes him, almost entirely covered by the shield, but his head is “exposed” to the eye/I. Furthermore, he does not *carry* or *own* a spear, but is caught by the traveller’s camera-like gaze in a brief moment when he stands before her holding the spear. The fact that he is portrayed holding a spear enhances this static appearance because it freezes the momentariness of the situation into the timelessness of a static picture.

A passage in Ewart S. Grogan’s *From the Cape to Cairo* describes a similar analogy for the commodification of the black body. The passage describes a group of people whom Grogan finds “graceful,” which is a mode of description that is rare in the text. Grogan refers to these people as the “Watusi,” which may correspond to the Batutsi tribe of Rwanda. Among them he has “noticed many faces that, bleached and set in a white collar, would have been conspicuous for character in a London drawing-room” (119). As in the above example from *A Resident’s Wife in Nigeria*, this objectification of the Batutsi face takes place at the same time as the similarity between the white and black body is recognised in the text. The objectification of the black body, a practice which is historically associated with the slave trade, acts as a metaphor for the civilising of the black body. The fact that Grogan-the-narrator mentions bleaching reads as a metaphor for the domestication of the savage other, but makes this project seem bizarre and unnatural. To bring the black African into the metropolis requires that he or she is turned into an object that can then be manipulated in order to fit into the metropolitan commodity spectacle. Grogan implies that to civilise is to domesticate, and to domesticate the black body is to turn it into an object.

To sum up, when the colonial travel account is studied from without – as a textual and a material commodity – it is an object that turns European imagination of the African other into commodities for consumption. The travel accounts that have been studied here share a number of related but different modes of description, metaphors and rhetorical devices that all serve to objectify the black body. This objectification is ultimately also a

process in which the black body is made available for consumption in the form of literary descriptions on the metropolitan book market. Instances in which the black body is described in terms of a material object or pictures can be read as a symptom of this commodification of the black body.

### **The Book in the Narrative Geography**

The book does not only emerge in the colonial periphery in the form of travellers' diaries, but also follows the traveller into "the wordless wastes" in the narrative geography as an item among the traveller's possessions (Bhabha 145). As will be shown, in the wordless wastes books become targets of the savage's rage and are sacrificed for the sake of the civilising mission. Because the book is a material object that consists of sheets of paper placed between two covers, and a symbol for the ideological tenets of Christianity and the Enlightenment, its tendency to be destroyed when entering the colonial periphery reveals the ambivalence in colonial discourse: the ambivalence between the need for reform, for the civilising of the savage other, and the threat of the erasure of difference.

As was shown in chapter two, "Objects in Trade," commerce and trade are ascribed the power to bind the European and the African together with an iron bond, and therefore have the potential to destabilise the perceived difference between them. The destruction of books, which happens repeatedly in this selection of travel accounts, can be seen as a symptom of this profound ambivalence. The book's journey, like the traveller's, is conceived as a displacement of thought from the modern metropolis to places where its confrontation with otherness creates moments of crisis and confusion. With the obvious exception of the Bible, the travelling book is most frequently not referred to as a specific text with a specific content, but as an object that is inscribed with symbolic value because of its relation to discourse and the diffusion of knowledge.

The moment of the book's emergence is a politically and theoretically problematic object of study. The idea of a moment when the book enters or emerges in places where colonial political relations have been established suggests, by logical extension, that the book has been absent in that space up until that moment. This idea carries with it a covert Eurocentric view of book history because it presumes that the book was invented in one place at one time and that it only later reaches other places

through diffusion. In *Book History through Postcolonial Eyes: Rewriting the Script*, Robert Fraser points out that Bhabha's attempt to join book history with "fashionable theories of colonial interaction" is "embarrassed" by non-universal histories about the provenances of the book (21). As Fraser shows, the emergence of script, print and the book has not happened only once, but several times in several places. Consequently, there is no universal history of the book. However, it is not only European historiography that inevitably becomes deconstructed when attention is paid to non-Eurocentric book history. If the focus is moved in these historiographies from the idea of provenance to the book as material object, it becomes apparent that anyone who wants to pin-point the moment when the book appears in a certain place must first define what a book is (39). The idea of that moment of "originality and authority" is dependent both on the idea of the authenticity of its originality and on the definition of the object. Therefore, when the concept of the moment of the book's emergence in colonial space is used here, it is to be understood not as a historical moment, but as a mythological event that plays certain roles in colonial discourse and ideology.<sup>10</sup>

As was mentioned above, Bhabha discusses the mythical moment of the book's arrival to the wordless spaces of the colonial periphery in relation to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The presence or rather inscription of the book into the colonial geography of Conrad's novella, like the presence of Europeans, brings with it a multitude of contradictions. In Conrad's story, these contradictions converge in the exceedingly enigmatic figure of Kurtz, whose unstable psyche accommodates the brutality of the instrumental rationality of the colonising power as well as the savage excesses normally ascribed to the African other. As the book (and through it also rationality, logic, Christianity), like Kurtz, enters a space that is characterised by its previous absence (and irrationality, superstition, savagery), representations of the moment of its arrival are characterised by disharmony and distortion. Bhabha refers to the moment of the emergence of the book in the wordless wastes in terms of "a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation" (146). In other words, it is a moment when ideas that are closely associated with

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10 This is also the point that Fraser seems to miss in his reading of Bhabha's "Signs Taken for Wonders". Bhabha who discusses symbolically pivotal scenes in colonial literature rather than actual historical moments in which the book first enters a certain space. For example, the space that Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship enters in Conrad's novella can hardly be read as anything other than a fictional space, even if this space is modelled on the Congo region.

the modern here-and-now appear in the pre-modern then-and-there in the form of a book.

The inconsistencies and ambiguities concerning the materiality/immateriality of the book/text can be understood as instances of such displacements, distortions and dislocations in this mythical moment. The distortions and dislocations take the form of a whole range of irregularities and ambiguities in travel writing itself, but can also be read as being projected onto the book as an object in the text that often gets lost, burnt or otherwise ruined when it enters the periphery. Like many other kinds of objects, the book leaves what is seen as its normal symbolic environment when it enters what are described as the uncivilised regions of the narrative geography. Having entered these spaces the book no longer communicates its content properly, is used in the wrong ways or is destroyed altogether. If the book is seen as a symbol for reason and the production and propagation of "learned" discourse, the moment it enters savage space and is distorted or misused the book becomes symbolic of the effect that non-reason has on reason, pre-modernity has on enlightenment modernity and non-civilisation has on civilisation.

In Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent*, the symbolical matter of the book is not only exposed to disruptions and distortions when it enters the darkness of Africa, but it is also burned to cinders as Stanley attempts to save his carriers who are about to perish in the water of Lake Tanganyika. Bad weather blows in as Stanley and his carriers are travelling by canoe at night, but subsides after several hours. They have not reached their destination when darkness sets in, but continue to paddle. "We could not see one another," Stanley writes, "though we could hear the measured, rhythmic beat and splash of oar and paddle, but no voices. Now and then I flashed a waxlight over the dark waste as a beacon to the thoughtless and unwearied" (1: 260). The canoes are too heavily loaded with beads and grain and one after another the canoes begin to take in water and sink. Panic spreads among the members of Stanley's crew, and in order to get sufficient light to rescue men and property Stanley is forced to set fire to the book he has been reading earlier the same day and hold it up over the surface of the water (260). The values associated with the book are symbolically destroyed as the book and its owner, and in extension, its reader, enter the savage space of the colonial periphery. The following extracts from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* can be used to explain what happens when the book enters the

wordless wastes. Fanon writes that the “settler” “paints” the black man as a character that “represents the negation of values,” including the values and ideas that the book embodies (32). Fanon explains that the coloniser sees the black man as a “corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality” (32). However, the destruction of the material symbol of enlightenment and reason lends itself to a reading of the book as not only a symbolical object in the white man’s relation to the black man, but also as a sacrificial object. Embodying the otherwise immaterial “ideological correlatives” of Enlightenment modernity (Bhabha 150), Stanley trades the book for his carriers’ lives.

However, as a continuation of the book’s role in the discourses of civilisation and Enlightenment, the burning book may be read as another kind of beacon to “the thoughtless” lighting up the African darkness. The burning book scene may also be read both as the moment in which the African darkness consumes and destroys the tenets of the European Enlightenment and as a moment in which the African “darkness” is illuminated. The passage dramatises both the presence of the ideological institutions of European post-Enlightenment thought and the transformation of the same in the moment that it is displaced in the periphery of the narrative geography of the text.

Later, Stanley’s books are once more exposed to the threat of destruction. Stanley has noted that he has been watched by some people while writing in a notebook. They suddenly run away and after a while he hears war cries and is approached by a group of people who accuse him of bringing misfortune to their lands by writing on paper (2: 385). Stanley walks off to his tent, his brain “busy in devising some plan to foil this superstitious madness” (386). In his tent he “[comes] across a volume of Shakespeare (Chandos edition),” which he brings back and makes the locals believe is his notebook. They ask him to immediately burn it. Stanley then tells the reader that he walked with the agitated locals “to the nearest fire. I breathed a regretful farewell to my genial companion, which during many weary hours of night had assisted to relieve my mind when oppressed by almost intolerable woes, and then consigned the innocent Shakespeare to the flames, heaping the brush-fuel over it with ceremonious care” (386). As in the passage describing how Stanley is forced to burn his book to light up the night when saving his drowning carriers, the volume of Shakespeare that is

thrown into the flames is not simply destroyed, but sacrificed. In contrast to the passage about the night at the Tanganyika, this book is not sacrificed to save the lives of his carriers, but to save the notebook containing his own writing, which is evidently considered to be of a greater value than the Shakespeare volume. Had his notebook been destroyed, his text might never have been written and the reader would never have read the passage about the sacrifice of the Shakespeare volume. The element of sacrifice is made more dramatic by the metonymical slide from literary work to author, which animates the object so that what is burned is “the innocent Shakespeare” rather than a book containing his plays.

In *Shakespearian Negotiations* (1988) Stephen Greenblatt uses the passage from Stanley’s text to make a number of points that are of relevance in the present discussion. The first point is that the volume of Shakespearian plays is at once “central and expendable” in Stanley’s story (163). It is “Shakespeare” as an idea that Stanley finds in his tent that is charged with sentimental value instead of the individual copy of the book. Greenblatt points out that the copy that he “comes across” in his tent may be a companion in the wordless periphery, but because it is at the same time a symbolic object and a simple commodity, innumerable new copies will be available to him when safely back in London or New York (163). On the one hand, then, there is the physical object, the book, and on the other “Shakespeare” – the peerless epitome of English literature. As Stanley’s story obviously tells us, if it were not for Shakespeare, his notes would have been destroyed and *Through the Dark Continent* would either not have been written, or not have been as comprehensive as it is. In other words, the sacrifice of Shakespeare is a moment of exchange, where the Shakespeare volume, the book, is the price that has to be paid for saving the contents of his notebook, and in extension his *Through the Dark Continent*.

However, Greenblatt also points out that the entry in Stanley’s notebook in which the episode is described does not mention the burning of the Shakespeare volume, which leads Greenblatt to suspect that the episode never actually occurred (163). If this event is fictional, it is even more symbolically significant because it may then be assumed that the use of Shakespeare, rather than some other title that would be more useful to an explorer like Stanley, is a deliberate choice that is intended to have the greatest possible symbolical effect. Greenblatt points out that to Stanley, and presumably most of his contemporaries, Shakespeare’s narratives have

“become a book, and the book in turn [has] become a genial companion, a talisman of civility” (163). He observes that it is possible “to see in Stanley the actual fetishism of the book: the attribution of power and value and companionship to the dead letter” (198 n44). Greenblatt uses Stanley’s name to refer to Stanley-the-traveller, as well as to Stanley’s text and to some extent to the story about him, much like Stanley uses Shakespeare’s name to refer to a book. To “see in Stanley the fetishism of the book” is to see in the story about Stanley or in Stanley’s story how the Shakespeare volume is ascribed certain values and the status of a co-traveller. Even though this use of Stanley’s name may be seen as an unconscious metaphor, Greenblatt also skilfully invents an abstract category to go with this combination of the real person, the text and the story about Stanley. This category encompasses both the material object and the abstract, immaterial values associated with Shakespeare. He concludes that “Shakespeare” is indispensable to Stanley “in two ways – as a consolation in the long painful trials of empire and as a deceptive token of exchange” (198 n44). In this sentence, “Shakespeare” refers both to the book that Stanley reads “during many weary hours of night” (Stanley 2: 386) and the symbolic values that the idea of Shakespeare is so obviously charged with (for both Stanley and Greenblatt). By this use of the name *Shakespeare*, the continual oscillation between the material object and the immaterial text in Stanley’s writing is once more accentuated.

Besides being symbolically sacrificed by the white man in order to save another piece of literature or to save the black man, the book also becomes a means of separating the civilised African from the uncivilised. A scene that is in one respect similar to the passage about the burning of Stanley’s book at Lake Tanganyika is described in Verney Lovett Cameron’s *Across Africa*. Cameron’s caravan is forced to join forces with Kasongo and Alvez, who have been introduced elsewhere in this book, in order to make it through a region of what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cameron and his carriers have been waiting near the village of Totéla near Kasongo’s own village (331). Cameron meets Kasongo in Totéla and the caravans are detained for some time while a house that Alvez has promised to build is erected (330). Just before the two caravans finally leave, a fire breaks out in camp. One of Cameron’s hired carriers has “smoked himself stupid with bhang,” or cannabis, and has lit a fire inside his grass hut (335). The hut begins to burn and the fire quickly spreads throughout camp. It soon reaches Cameron’s tent and threatens to destroy all his books and journals.

Even though Cameron's books are saved from the flames, it is not Cameron himself who saves these symbolic objects, and this fact makes the symbolic level of the scene even more obvious than the scenes in Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent*. They are saved by one of Cameron's African "servants," Jumah, who has run off to his own hut to salvage his gun, but returns to Cameron's tent to help clear it out and save his employer's precious possessions from the flames.

The books were bundled into my blankets, and although the tent had ignited before we were all out, its contents were saved. The tent itself was burned, but my precious journals, books, and instruments were rescued, thanks to the presence of mind of Jumah, Hamees Ferhan, and one or two others. When we were clearing out the tent I asked Jumah if his kit was safe. He replied: '*Potelea mbali; ponya mabooka*' (let it be d-d; save the books). (336)

The rapid destruction of material value in this dramatic scene makes it clear how the symbolic value of some objects ultimately exceeds the use-value of other objects. The books are "precious," though they have less instrumental value than the tent that is destroyed in the fire, and which seems to be of little concern to Cameron. It is implied in the quoted passage that this priority of value is precisely what Jumah has understood, which is why he is held in high esteem by Cameron-the-narrator. As Tim Youngs has pointed out, Jumah is rewarded for his "selfless recognition of value" with the inclusion of his picture on the page where the conflagration is described (Youngs *Travellers in Africa* 100), while the man who accidentally sets his hut on fire remains anonymous (Cameron 335).

Youngs also mentions that Jumah's conception of value (or in extension, it might be added, his loyalty to Cameron) is contrasted to the headman Bombay's "selfishness and to the ignorance of those blacks who have yet to learn the worth of European culture" (Youngs 100). Bombay, who has been hired on the basis of his previous employment by John Speke, proves a disappointment to Cameron. After the fire has been put out, Bombay shows up "with a piteous story about having his rifle and pistols burnt" (Cameron 336). In addition to valuing the guns higher than the books, Cameron says, "[t]he old sinner only looked after his own kit, and really did nothing himself, but actually appropriated men to his service who

should have been assisting at rescuing [Cameron's] tent and its contents" (336). However, Jumah gains the narrator's approval for his loyalty. Cameron's favourable opinion of him may be seen as a reward for Jumah's appropriation of Cameron's conception of symbolic value. This is the kind of symbolic value that is destroyed when Stanley, in the darkness, is forced to burn his book as a beacon to his carriers.

While Bombay's economic priorities undoubtedly function as a contrast to the fact that Jumah sees it as more important to save Cameron's books than his own "kit," the passage about the fire in the camp also contrasts to an account of another fire. Chief Kasongo's looting in the region is described by Cameron-the-narrator in some detail. Kasongo soon gets bored and sets out on "plundering expeditions" in the region (332). Cameron is very annoyed at having to travel alongside Kasongo, who he dislikes for being arrogant and ruthless towards people in the region and tells the reader that "no village is secure from destruction under Kasongo's rule" (334). He describes how Kasongo forces a chief, who has previously presented himself to Kasongo and paid "the customary tributes," to set fire to his own village after which the chief is murdered by Kasongo's men (334). This dramatic account serves as a frame around the story about Jumah's heroic rescue of Cameron's symbolically charged books. Kasongo is portrayed as ruthless and treacherous, which is one of the points that Cameron makes to further emphasise his reluctance to travel with the chief. The fire may be read metaphorically as representing a destructive force that starts with a spark and quickly grows into a conflagration. In this sense the destructive force (the fire) emanates from Kasongo, who is described as "a demon" (334). In comparison with the satanic Kasongo, Jumah seems like a guardian of the symbolic value invested in Cameron's "precious" journals and books.

Ultimately, Cameron is nearly forced to discard his precious books, just like Stanley is forced to burn his. In his desperation at the end of his journey – starving and fearing that he will be left to his fate by his injured and starving carriers – Cameron has to make a decision. He needs to reach the west coast as soon as possible to procure food for himself and his crew. The expedition has reached an area where the value of the trade goods that they carry will not buy them sufficient food because the local market is flooded with goods from the west. In order to travel light and fast, Cameron throws away "tent, boat, bed and everything but instruments, journals and books" (421). Again it is the objects that are least useful for the task at hand

that are valued the highest and the objects that are there to fill a practical need are thrown away.

The values that the book takes on depend to some extent on what kind of narrative geography the book enters. As has been pointed out in a previous chapter, the Africa that Hall, Larymore, Grogan describe contrasts with the Africa of the time before the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-1885 in terms of the relatively “developed” areas of the narrative geography where Eurocolonial interests are present. In the Africa of the texts published after the Berlin conference and during the subsequent Scramble for Africa, the areas where Europeans are established contrast with the areas where Euro-colonial interests are not readily visible, and they do this in a more complex way than in the literature of the Nile explorers. In these latter accounts, the traveller travels through narrative geographies that are less intricately interspersed with pockets of modernity, such as the railroads, steamships, fortresses and coffee plantations of, for example, East Africa as depicted in Ewart Grogan's *From the Cape to Cairo*.

The narrative geography of Grogan's text is a grid of civilised and uncivilised regions. His text is as occupied with the description of economic monopolies on certain commodities, the building of telegraph lines and how coffee plantations may increase their yield as it is with describing the uncivilised African and “hitherto unexplored tract[s] of country” (6). Leaving one of these tracts, Grogan finds comfort in English books when he arrives at a British fort in the Uganda Protectorate. From the quantity of crucifixes and the amount of Amerikani fabric being used as a trade commodity in the area, Grogan-the-narrator concludes that the end of the journey is near (182). Grogan is, however, closer to the point that marks the end of the first half of his journey than he is to Cairo. What he is nearing are areas that are settled by Europeans. When arriving at the fort, Grogan finds that “English newspapers and books were most welcome, after having been separated from them for six months: our own literature consisting of Shakespeare, Whitaker, and Keats” (183). This literature is one of the many watersheds that separate the English traveller and his compatriots from the colonised people around them.

The books by canonised British authors mark Grogan's return to civilisation, but the carriers' arrival at a civilised place: while Grogan takes pleasure in reading Keats and Shakespeare during the time that his crew stays at a missionary station, his carriers become “troublesome, as they

[have] nothing to do" (183). Latent in this scene is the dichotomous relation between the mental disposition associated with the reading of canonised literature and the drunkenness and disorderliness of the bored carriers. Having arrived at the missionary station, they get drunk on *pombé* and go off to steal milk from a Sudanese officer, and are severely punished for doing this by their employer.

In areas that are marked by the material manifestations of modernity and civilisation, however, the book is as firmly established as the Euro-colonial authorities are. When narrating a visit to a British Anglican mission station in the British Central Africa Protectorate at the shore of Lake Malawi, Grogan rejoices in the fact that the missionaries are in possession of a printing press. "The natives" of the area have been introduced to the art of printing thanks to the ardour of the British missionaries.

Dr. Roberts and Mrs. Laws treated me with the greatest hospitality; he took me round the mission and showed me the results of their four years' work since the founding of the station. [...] There is a large printing-machine which the natives work under the superintendence of Mr. Thompson. Here books and magazines and much work of great merit are produced. The process of stereotyping and picture-reproducing on zinc are thoroughly understood by the skilled natives. (63)

The printing press leads Grogan-the-narrator to the topic of (as he calls them) the natives' capacity to, as Grogan has it, "understand" the procedures of printing. The term "natives" may be read as suggesting that the people who operate the press are natives of the surrounding region that, as the very presence of the printing press indicates, has been relatively civilised through the efforts of missionaries and colonial authorities. The fact that the natives have learned to operate the printing press is not so much accredited to themselves as it is conceived to be an effect of the missionaries' endeavour to set it up in the protectorate. Consequently, Grogan tells the reader that the methods that make the missionaries successful in what they do are not so much to do with instruction as "ability, whole-hearted earnestness, and hard work" (63). The successful dissemination of the values of civilisation that are embodied by the printing press are ultimately ascribed to the work ethic of

the missionaries rather than to the adaptability and receptivity of the natives they instruct.

The printing press has a double significance in Grogan's travel narrative: the fact that it works properly and is operated by "skilled" workers is an effect of the successful establishment of British interests in the region. The press has been brought to the region by Europeans and the missionaries have taught the natives to operate it. However, the press also marks the establishment of civilisation in the previously uncivilised region. The fact that it is there codes the area as more civilised than other areas where no printing presses or books by canonised British authors are to be found. The presence of the printing press at the missionary station, then, is made possible by the establishment of the British protectorate and at the same time symbolises this event.

One function of Grogan's text in the context in which it was published is to review aspects of colonial endeavours that are already set in motion. Even though Grogan-the-narrator is critical of how things are run in British and non-British areas under Eurocolonial control, the fact that he is reviewing British involvement in Africa places some pressure on his assessment of the missionary station. As he is travelling through a British protectorate governed by an official colonial administration, the narrator makes sufficient room for spaces in the narrative geography of the text where books are made rather than destroyed, as in Stanley's text. Thus, as the British and Africans are interlocked in the dialectics of coloniser and colonised in the protectorate, the native African is portrayed as the receiver of European instruction concerning the materiality of the book. The native, then, becomes "skilled" in making books in their forms as material objects.

In the pre-colonial Africa of the explorers, the book at times becomes symbolically significant in discourse about the absence of values that the book is normally associated with. The emergence of the material book in the periphery often serves to accentuate the prior absence of concepts associated with civilisation and modernity, including certain conceptions about epistemology, as the following example will show. In *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* Speke has the habit of showing a couple of books with pictures of birds and animals to dignitaries and authorities that he meets. The pictures are more often than not admired by kings and chiefs, some of whom want to buy or try to steal them. The books, when handled by these men of authority, become Stanley-the-

narrator's rhetorical tool for entering into discussions about kings' and chiefs' misconception of images and the objects they portray. The pictures allow him to describe how a young chief confuses signifier and signified as he asks "for the picture-books [and examines] the birds with intense delight – even trying to insert under their feathers his long royal finger-nails" (130 - 131). According to Speke, the king that the traveller meets later on in the narrative thinks that the birds pictured in the book have been caught and stamped onto the page (461). The king's and the chief's misconception of the material properties of Speke's book serve to emphasise not only the absence of similar kinds of books in the area, but also the values that books in general are associated with, such as the idea of objective knowledge and reason.

In Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*, the book also comes to emphasise the absence of the values that it is associated with. Kingsley-the-narrator directs critique against aspects of the European presence in West Africa. The text is not favourably inclined towards the Christian missionaries at work in the region that she travels through, and this aversion to missionary projects comes to the fore in the moment in which the book is discovered. Kingsley-the-narrator discusses the black African missionary man as a stereotypical character and states that he generally "has no resource in him" (558). In a passage where the grammatical structure makes the narrator and traveller merge, she thinks "worse of the effects of missionary-teaching than usual" as she prepares to go to sleep, which is not easy without a pillow.

The missionary men have cleared their paraphernalia right out. Now you can do without a good many things, but not without a pillow, so hunt round to find something to make one with; find the Bible in English, the Bible in German, and two hymn-books, and a candle-stick. These seem all the small things in the room – no, there is a parcel behind the books – mission teachers' Sunday trousers – make delightful arrangement of books bound round with trousers and the whole affair wrapped in one of my towels. Never saw till now the advantage of Africans having trousers. Civilization has its points after all. (558)

Throughout this passage, some of the symbolic matter embodied by the Bible seems to be projected onto the trousers. The fact that both the Bible and the trousers are wrapped in the bundle allows the sentence about Africans

having trousers to be read as implying that Kingsley has never until this point in time seen the advantage of Africans reading the Bible. The term *civilisation* may then be understood as involving a certain degree of Biblical schooling, and the last sentence may be read as saying that the “Biblical schooling of Africans has its points after all.” As it travels across different regions of the narrative geography of the text, the book attains the function of a symbolical object that marks either the level of civilisation in the environments it enters, or the absence of civilisation. The Bible is also affected by this environment, however, and is thus at the same time a symbolical object and an object that is autonomous of the values it symbolises because it is misused or even destroyed when appearing outside of modernity and civilisation. However, as the scene of sacrifice in Stanley’s travel narrative clearly shows, the symbolic object has a tendency to revert into its own materiality when it confronts the otherness of the peripheral regions of the narrative geography.

## **Conclusion.**

This chapter has analysed materiality and immateriality in relation to the book as a signifying and symbolical object. The main argument has been that the destruction, or rather the apparent destructibility of the book, can be read as an expression of profound ambivalence between the colonial project’s aim to extend the now-and-here of the metropolis and the simultaneous need for a then-and-there. The analysis was divided into three parts and in each of these parts one aspect of this argument was discussed.

In the first part of the chapter, travellers’ writing in the wordless wastes of the narrative geography was described as a variation of the moment in which the book arrives in the uncivilised periphery. It was argued that references to how the traveller writes in diaries and notebooks, and quotations from such books, allows the journey to be seen as a stage of the production process that results in the travel book.

In the second part of this chapter it was discussed how the black body is transformed into a commodity in this creation process. The arrival of literature in the African periphery allows for the idea of the black body to become a element in a text/book-commodity. The black body is to some extent made an object of knowledge, and to some extent into an object of description for the sheer sake of description. Consequently, the

objectification and commodification of the black body can be seen as an example of the fact that the signifying object, the book, cannot only embody immaterial ideas but also create objects

The recurring scene of the destruction of the book can be seen as a manifestation of the kind of colonial ambivalence that Bhabha describes, and which has been discussed in previous chapters. This ambivalence is a result of the contradiction between a wish to reform the other and a wish to maintain the other's difference and otherness. An instrument, symbol and material object, the book represents civilisation and reform, and therefore also the replacement of sameness instead of difference. As a material symbol, as a container of ideas, it is sacrificed or otherwise destroyed when it appears in spaces that are associated with the opposite of these ideas – with savagery and superstition. The destruction of the book reaffirms the construction of difference and otherness in the travel narrative. This moment is, however, often described in terms of sacrifice and loss. Stanley, for example, goes as far as to describe the destruction of his collection of Shakespeare plays as the sacrificing of a “companion” (2: 386).

The book can be understood as an object that creates objects, turns ideas and sights into commodities and embodies immaterial ideas. At the same time, this is exactly why the book is often destroyed. Therefore, if the book is understood as an instrument in the colonial project – in the objectification and commodification of the other – it can also be reinterpreted from a postcolonial perspective as a symbol of colonial ambivalence. The destruction and production that the book is part of and its oscillation between materiality and immateriality can be seen as an instantiation of the ambivalence between on the one hand, reform, authority and discipline, and on the other difference, otherness and the other's transcendence in colonial discourse.

## **PART III: CONCLUSION**



## Conclusion

In the selection of travel narratives that has been studied in the previous chapters, the world of material objects and things is deeply associated with economic and cultural elements in British industrial modernity. The main argument in this thesis has been that objects are instrumental in the construction and differentiation of two time-spaces — one that has been referred to, in line with Constance Larymore, as modernity and one that has been referred to as pre-modernity. These two ideas has been complemented in the previous chapters with the concepts of now-and-here and then-and-there, which are described in some detail below. In the four analysis chapters, different ways in which objects are involved in the construction of these spatio-temporal areas have been studied and discussed.

Chapter one, “Objects in geography,” showed how narratives about how objects travel through the periphery structure the way in which space is described in the text. Narratives about the diffusion of certain objects that are associated with technological progress and industrial production imply that the space that the traveller moves through is divided by an invisible, vaguely defined border between a modern and a pre-modern space. The key concept that was constructed and used in this chapter is what has been referred to as narrative geography. Part of the argument in this chapter was that the ways in which spaces are differentiated according to ideas related to modernity, civilisation and their opposing concepts are instrumental in the narrative — that the idea of a space beyond metropolitan modernity makes certain

narratives about travellers' entering, exiting and returning to modernity and pre-modernity possible. One aspect of this relation between geographical writing and the movement of objects is that certain objects associated with industrial modernity tend to be transformed into wonders and magical objects as they enter spaces that are described as being beyond modernity and the sphere of European (economic and political) influence in Africa.

In chapter two, "Objects in trade," the discussion about the idea of objects' and commodities' trajectories in space was continued. This chapter focused on trade and commerce and the transforming powers ascribed to economic exchange between travellers and locals, and between modern metropolis and pre-modern periphery. Trade is commonly attributed the power to modernise or bring Africa and the African other into the present of the modern metropolis. Another way to describe this transformation is to see it as an extension of the modern time-space into pre-modern "archaic" space. However, claims that are made on a macro-level about these transforming powers of trade are often contradicted in the narrator's descriptions of actual economic encounters between the traveller and the African other. The people that the traveller engages in trade with or pays *mhungo* taxes to are described as greedy, desirous and as taking a fetishist relation to material objects.

These characteristics or traits can, however, be seen as typical for what Rita Felski has described as the "feminine" side of modernity, which has traditionally been seen as irrational and driven by desire. The contradiction between the promotion of trade as an instrument for civilising and modernising Africa and the African and the effects of actual trade with the African can be seen as a symptom of the fact that the modernity to which Africa is to be introduced is "driven by the dual imperatives of instrumental reason and commodity fetishism" (Felski 5). The contradiction between the wish to modernise the African other and African regions through trade and the descriptions of actual trade situations was also discussed in relation to Homi K. Bhabha's concept of ambivalence and ultimately shows how the texts maintain the separation of the pre-modern and modern which it is claimed that trade and commerce have the power to unite.

While the object was studied in its economic aspect in these two chapters, the third analysis chapter, “Objects in Ethnography,” dealt with the symbolic level of objects. It showed how descriptions of objects associated with the African other tend to be characterised by the precedence of the voice of the bodiless narrator over the travelling subject who is normally at the centre of the narrative. When the narrator’s voice causes the traveller to fade into the background, a certain distance is placed between the modern subject and the objects that are described. This distance can be seen as standing in for the perceived difference between the subject and the actual object of ethnographical portraits, namely the African other, since the object is metonymically associated with this African other. Epistemological distance between subject and material objects is in other words an extension of the perceived cultural and racial difference between what is often referred to as self and other in postcolonial theory. Ultimately, the distance between the subject and the material object (and in extension, the other) takes the form of the separation of two time-spaces — a modern now-and-here of the present in the metropolis, and the pre-modern then-and-there encountered and experienced by the British traveller in Africa. Furthermore, it is from within the now-and-here that authoritative statements about the pre-modern periphery are made. The metropolitan now-and-here can therefore be compared to “the centres of learning and power” that Johannes Fabian claims that the modern traveller travels away from (*Time and the Other* 6).

The fourth chapter, “The Signifying Object,” continued to focus on the separation of the modern now-and-here from which the text describes the periphery, and the pre-modern then-and-there that the travelling subject visits by analysing the book as a specifically symbolic and signifying object. This chapter showed how the book is used as a symbol for metropolitan modernity in which knowledge about the periphery is constructed. Because the now-and-here inscribed grammatically into the text as a centre of learning and a place from which the pre-modern then-and-there is described and discussed, as was shown in the previous chapter, the book can be seen as a metonymical symbol for the metropolitan now-and-here.

Furthermore, this chapter showed how the symbolical status of the book as a material object not only gives the book the status of a marker of the expansion of the modern now-and-here through Eurocolonial projects, but also that the materiality of the book exposes it to the threat of destruction as it enters remote regions in the narrative geography of the text. However, as was also shown in this final analysis chapter, the travel book/text is created by the translation of the traveller's experiences in the then-and-there of the pre-modern periphery and the narrator's description of these experiences in the now-and-here of the modern metropolis. The pre-modern then-and-there is made available to the metropolitan reader through this translation. The primary example of this commodification of the pre-modern was the black body, which is objectified and commodified and made available for consumption through the translation of experiences into text, and of the translation of events in the pre-modern periphery into authoritative literature intended for a metropolitan readership.

The spatiotemporal differentiation of the modern metropolis and the primitive, pre-modern periphery is riddled with the ambivalence and instability that characterise colonial discourse. The object, which is void of meaning and value in its form as a dead thing, is an unreliable basis for the spatiotemporal differentiation of metropolitan modernity and African pre-modernity. As was shown in chapter one, "Objects in Geography," objects appear where they are not expected to appear. In chapter two, the transformative powers ascribed to the movements of objects between one sphere and another are contradicted in descriptions of trade situations that destabilise the described economic relations between the metropolis and the colonial periphery. Likewise, the grammatical now-and-here and then-and-there, as well as the travelling subject and the narrating subject, are not stable. They are destabilised, for example, in instances where objects that have been brought from the periphery into the metaphorical or actual study-room in the metropolis are described. This shows how basic narratological elements are affected by the ambivalence and contradictions inherent in the colonial discourse that colonial travel literature is part of.

Moreover, as was shown in chapter four, “The Signifying Object,” the book as a material object embodying values associated with Enlightenment modernity exposes the abstract ideas of modernity and civilisation to the destructive force that is associated with pre-modernity and savagery. While the book’s emergence in colonial space symbolises the triumphant expansion of modernity into the pre-modern periphery, it also symbolises the idea of the corrosive and destructive effect that pre-modernity and primitivism are described as having on modernity and civilisation.

The findings that have been mentioned above, as well as the main and more detailed arguments that have been made throughout this book, are to be seen as primarily of relevance to British colonial travel literature, but can also be of relevance to other kinds of late Victorian literature about the colonial world. Each of the four chapters in the analysis part of the book deals with a major theme or phenomenon that can be seen as especially central in colonial travel writing — geographical writing, discussions and descriptions of colonial trade, ethnographical writing and the functions of the book in colonial travel literature. The findings regarding the separation of times and spaces should be understood as being relevant to studies of travel literature, and in extension to colonial literature, rather than to modernity studies and related academic fields of research.

In order to make this book more useful in studies of travel literature, a number of concepts that are primarily useful in the study of narratological and textual phenomena that are specific to travel narratives have been constructed throughout the previous chapters. Two of these concepts are what has been referred to above as the then-and-there and the now-and-here. These two concepts roughly correspond to modernity and pre-modernity, but refer to spatiotemporal ideas that are fundamental to how colonial travel writing functions on a narratological and textual level.

The now-and-here refers to a metaphorical as well as concrete space that is conceived as modern in relation to the colonial periphery; it is also the place with which such abstract but symbolically significant ideas as rationality, learning, literature and Christianity are associated.

The time-space that this concept refers to serves as the traveller's point of departure but is also, importantly, an environment to which the narrator turns when describing the experiences that the traveller has made in the then-and-there.

The now-and-here is a more abstract idea than the then-and-there, which corresponds to pre-modernity on a theoretical level, but to the space through which the reader follows the travelling subject on a concrete level. The then-and-there is the time and space in which the traveller observes, records, experiences and encounters the otherness of the African periphery. The then-and-there is what the travel narrative's use of the past tense refers to, and the space of pre-modernity and savagery that the colonial travel narrative describes to the metropolitan reader. Furthermore, if the now-and-here corresponds to a centre of learning and power, the then-and-there is its opposite in this sense too – it is, as Bhabha writes, a “wordless waste” (145). It is an object of study and description, and is ultimately commodified through the writing of the travel account. The relation between the then-and-there and the now-and-here are similar to the relation between the present and the past in that the past can be studied from the vantage point of the present, while the present can hardly be studied from the past. Likewise, the now-and-here functions as a grammatical topos from which the then-and-there is discussed, commented and described, while the pre-modern, *objectified* people that the travel narrative places in the then-and-there cannot, by definition, study the modern now-and-here from their position in the then-and-there.

Another concept that has been used to emphasise the main findings in the previous chapters is narrative geography. This concept was used to point out how the colonial travel narrative relies on difference in order to simulate the travelling subject's movement through space. Of course, differences can be expressed in different ways – racial, cultural and linguistic differences are especially prominent in the colonial travel narrative. The concept of narrative geography was used in order to show how the diffusionist idea of objects' distribution in space, which is very much connected with the propagation of trade and the idea that trade can

modernise and civilise Africa, is involved on the very basic level in writing about the travelling subject's journey through the African periphery.

In summary, this book is a study of a selection of travel narratives (and to some extent of a genre of literature), and a theoretical contribution to the study of colonial travel accounts. The focus has been on a selection of different but related ways in which the travel narrative, with its narratological particularities and genre-specific tropes, creates and maintains a separation between times and spaces, modernity and pre-modernity and the now-and-here and the then-and-there through material objects. This separation, which in itself is hardly a new idea, has been studied in some detail and in contextual relation to such typically Victorian and colonial phenomena as World exhibitions, anthropological/ethnological museums and Victorian commodity culture.

The separation of a modern time-space from a pre-modern time-space must in the context of British travel literature about Africa be understood in relation to the ideological and discursive edifices that served to rationalise the colonial project. As was pointed out in the introductory chapters, objects were used in museums and exhibitions to create narratives about the modern metropolitan world and its relations to the anachronistic space beyond its horizons. As this book has shown objects are endowed with a similar instrumentality and similar symbolic values in colonial travel literature, which in essence is a genre of literature that describes the modern metropolis's and the modern subject's relations to the anachronistic space of the pre-modern then-and-there. The conceptual separation that is a presupposition for such relations is also a pretext to the colonial Scramble for Africa that started in and went on throughout the period with which this study has been concerned. And what was the motive for the European colonisation of Africa, if not extraction of material values from a continent that, perhaps more than any other part of the world, appeared to metropolitan capitalists, scientists, and consumers of literature as an imaginative place submerged in the darkness of past ages?



## Sammanfattning

I denna bok studeras funktionen av materiella objekt i ett antal brittiska reseberättelser från 1860-talet fram till och med nittonhundratalets första årtionde och slutet av den koloniala kapplöpningen om Afrikanska kolonier. Objektens roll i berättandet om två tidsrumsliga storheter – det moderna Storbritannien och Europa å ena sidan och den Afrikanska periferin å den andra – undersöks i relation till vissa berättartekniker och teman som är typiska för den koloniala reseskildringen. I bokens fyra analyskapitel studeras objektens funktion i geografiskt och etnografiskt berättande, samt i diskussioner rörande kolonial handel och det mytomspunna ögonblick då litteraturen träder in i den koloniala periferin.

Studiens mål är att påvisa det materiellas funktion i berättandet om tidsmässig olikhet mellan centrum och periferi. Inledningsvis presenteras och diskuteras de olika visuella språk och materiella praktiker som växer fram kring materiella objekt i det viktorska samhället och det Brittiska imperiets centrum. Studiens tidsspann inbegriper årtionden då varukapitalismens produktion och konsumtion ökar dramatiskt, då världsutställningar drar stora skaror besökare och det antropologiska muséet växer fram som en samhällelig institution. I denna historiska, politiska och kulturella kontext ses föremål som representativa för kulturer och samhällsordningar i den koloniala världen. De samlas in och skickas till muséer och andra institutioner i städer som London och Manchester, medan varor producerade inom den brittiska industrin eller andra delar av det brittiska imperiet skeppas till Afrika där de byts mot elfenben, palmolja och gummi. Under denna tid blir objektet således centralt i berättelser om samtid och dåtid,

moderniteten och det som idén om moderniteten avgränsas mot, om Europa och dess relationer till den koloniserade världen. Objekt blir därför högst betydelsebärande i berättelser om brittiska resenärers möte med människor och platser som inom imperiets centrum ses som förmoderna och ociviliserade.

Studiens material utgörs av en bred och mångskiftande samling reseberättelser. Dessa texter är, i kronologisk ordning, John Hanning Spekes *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863), Verney Lovett Camerons *Across Africa* (1877), Henry Morton Stanleys *Through the Dark Continent* (1878, två volymer), Mary Henrietta Kingsleys *Travels in West Africa* (1897), Ewart Grogans *From the Cape to Cairo: The First Traverse of Africa from South to North* (1900), Mary Halls *A Womans Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907) och slutligen Constance Larymores *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria* (1908). Som dessa titlar antyder beskriver reseberättelserna resor i skilda delar av Sub-Sahariska Afrika. Vidare görs dessa resor av olika anledningar, av män och kvinnor med olika sociala bakgrunder och med olika nivå av formell bildning. Samtidigt som texterna skiljer sig från varandra på många vis hålls de också samman av den historiska kontext de alla beskriver likväl som av genrekonventioner, berättartekniker och återkommande diskussioner och teman. Samlingen av texter har satts samman för att uppnå en viss hanterbar bredd men också för att påvisa de litterära och historiska kopplingar som sammankopplar de olika texterna.

I det första av de kapitel som ägnas åt närläsningar av reseskildringarna som presenterats ovan studeras objektens funktion i geografiskt berättande. Geografi förstås inom ramen för detta och efterföljande kapitel som en sorts skrivande om rum och rumslighet, snarare än som ett ord för det faktiska rummets utbredning och variationer. Med andra ord studeras här objektets roll i berättande om rummet, avgränsade av rum och platser och det resande subjektets rörelser mellan dessa olika ställen. Huvudargumentet i kapitlet är att spridningen av varor och objekt som i texten associeras med den moderna världen ger upphov till etablerandet av en uppfattad gräns mellan en modern och en förmodern sfär. Denna avgränsning är en följd av att objekt förväntas sprida sig ut från Västeuropa och de europeiska

imperiernas etableringspunkter i afrikanska kustområden. Den gräns som skapas mellan det rum i vilka Europeiska varor förväntas finnas och det rum som uppfattas som tomt på sådana föremål är inte en faktisk gräns utan ett logiskt resultat av berättandet om spridningen av vissa varor och företeelser. Den är således imaginär snarare än materiell och dess dragning i rummet är diffus snarare än precis. Vidare omtalas denna imaginära gräns inte direkt i texterna, utan är ett resultat av berättandet om föremålens rörelser i rummet och i förlängningen berättandet om modernitetens och europeiska marknadens utbredning i Afrika. Var gränsen går antyds dock då resenären anländer till platser där för resenären vardagliga föremål plötsligt blir betraktade av främlingar som magiska eller fantastiska objekt. Denna förändring markerar att det resande subjektet har korsat gränsen mellan två regioner som karaktäriseras av närvaron av vissa objekt respektive frånvaron av desamma. Det första kapitlet skapar en utgångspunkt för efterföljande kapitel i och med att det beskriver objektets funktioner inom berättandet om rumslighet och resande.

I nästa kapitel diskuteras objekten i egenskap av varor som används i handel och betalning av tullar. Brittisk reselitteratur om Afrika från den andra halvan av artonhundratalet karaktäriseras till stor del av politiska och ekonomiska idéer som missionären och resenären David Livingstone uttryckte i sina skildringar. Bland dessa är Livingstones idéer om handelns betydelse för kristnandet och civiliserandet av Afrikanen framträdande. Bytandet av varor mellan Storbritannien och delar av Afrika framhålls av många resenärer som ett verktyg i kampen mot slavhandel, i civiliseringsprojektet och i det koloniala projektet i stort. Den industriellt framställda varan ses alltså som ett objekt som har förmågan att låta Afrikanen närma sig moderniteten eller förflytta moderniteten in i det som beskrivs som det förmoderna rummet.

Den potential som varan tillskrivs är dock inte oproblematiserad om den ses mot det komplex av dikotomier och uppdelningar, däribland särskiljandet av modernitet och förmodernitet, som kolonial reselitteratur i stor utsträckning bygger på. Förespråkandet av handel medför därför en viss ambivalens vad gäller den moderniserande effekt som handel associeras med. Denna ambivalens är ett även den

utmärkande för kolonial litteratur, vilket den indiska teoretikern Homi Bhabha har påvisat. Denna ambivalens visar sig i berättandet om konkreta transaktioner mellan resenären och personer han eller hon träffar på. I sådana situationer tillskrivs den andre vissa negativa egenskaper, så som girighet, opålitlighet och otyglat materiellt begär.

Dessa negativa egenskaper motsvarar dock sådana egenskaper och psykologiska företeelser som den Australienska genus- och modernitetsforskaren Rita Felski ser som modernitetens "feminina" sida. Felski menar att moderniteten ofta har associerats med egenskaper och företeelser som traditionellt associerats med maskulinitet, så som framåtskridande, rationalitet och tyglandet av naturkrafter likväl som mekaniska sådana. Samtidigt, menar Felski, är konsumtionssamhällets djupa irrationalitet och dess skapande av materiella begär lika centrala företeelser inom moderniteten. Felskis syn på moderniteten tillåter alltså att de negativa egenskaper som projiceras på ett Afrika som ses som förmodernt och i behov av modernisering redan är typiskt moderna egenskaper. Dock har dessa egenskaper setts som tärande på den moderna rationaliteten, förkastats eller helt förbisetts eftersom de associerats med den maskulina modernitetens andre — det vill säga, med kvinnan, med den Europeiska underklassen och med vilden i den koloniala periferin. I detta kapitel visas alltså att den ambivalens som karaktäriserar kolonial litteratur och diskurs leder till att de människor och de platser som ska reformeras med hjälp av handel beskrivs i negativa termer som redan är nära sammankopplade med berättelsen om den Europeiska moderniteten.

I analysdelens tredje kapitel diskuteras relationen mellan subjekt och objekt i etnografiskt berättande. Kapitlet undersöker hur den andre beskrivs som ogripbar ur ett kunskapsperspektiv samtidigt som Afrikanen görs till kunskapsobjekt och beskrivs med ett visst mått av auktoritet. Här används ett antal teoretiska begreppspar för att påvisa hur en uppdelning mellan ett "här-och-nu" och ett "där-och-då" skapas på en grammatisk nivå i texterna. I kapitlet görs en teoretisk åtskillnad dels mellan resenären och textens berättarsubjekt, dels mellan begreppet objekt och begreppet ting. Begreppet objekt benämner föremålet då det står i relation till ett subjekt, så som en hammare står i relation till den

som spikar upp en tavla eller en tavla till en betraktare. Tinget, å andra sidan, är ett föremål som befinner sig utanför objektens användningsområden och sociala eller kulturella sammanhang.

Genom närläsningar av beskrivningar av materiella objekt som i texten representerar grupper av människor undersöks förhållandet mellan textens berättarröst och det resande subjekt som utgör berättelsens centralpunkt. I många sådana beskrivningar dominerar den kroppslösa berättarrösten, medan det resande subjektet, som är personen som betraktar objekt på plats i Afrika, tillfälligtvis försvinner ur scenen som beskrivs. Förhållandet mellan resenär och berättare motsvaras också av förhållandet mellan grammatiskt preteritum och grammatiskt presens. I berättelser om resenärens förhållande till de föremål som beskrivs används vanligtvis preteritum, som signalerar dåtid. Detta ger upphov till ett grammatiskt tidsrum som i texten kallas där-och-då. Ett visst avstånd skapas därmed mellan resenär och föremål, varför föremålet i sig uppträder inför resenären som ett ting snarare än objekt. För berättaren, däremot, är föremålet betydelsebärande och låter sig användas som en metonymi för det andra. Genom objektet berättar textens berättarröst om kulturella företeelser som förpassas till det tidsrum i vilken resenären betraktar föremålet. I detta berättande om den andre ses föremål och människor i högre utsträckning inte som individuella föremål eller personer utan som arketypiska abstraktioner. Berättarrösten talar om dessa anonymiserade och generaliserade objekt och människor i presens, vilket ger upphov till ett tidsrum som benämns som här-och-nu.

Från detta här och nu talar berättaren med auktoritet om de människor och föremål som för resenären är kunskapsmässigt och rumsligt avlägsna. Detta tidsrum är alltså ett rum i vilket kunskap formuleras och den andre studeras. Genom denna koppling mellan här-och-nu perspektivet och produktionen av kunskap kan detta tidsrum ses som kopplat till idén om upplysningsmodernitet och dess kunskapsideal. Så genom upprättandet av två grammatiskt skilda tidsrum förhandlar texten mellan å ena sidan produktion av kunskap, auktoritet och berättarperspektivet och å andra sidan kulturell olikhet, epistemologiskt och rumsligt avstånd och resenärens främmandeskap inför tinget och den andre. Avslutningsvis visas det hur objekt som på något vis införskaffats

av resenären korsar barriären mellan resenärens där-och-då och berättarens här-och-nu. Då sådana objekt beskrivs tenderar resenär och berättarröst att gå in i varandra och bli ett, eftersom någon distinktion mellan resenärens kroppsliga förhållande till föremålet och berättarens formulerande av kunskap om det inte längre kan göras på basis av textens grammatik. Kapitlets huvudsakliga slutsats är alltså att det epistemologiska förhållandet mellan subjekt och objekt är grund för ännu ett slags uppdelande av tid och rum.

I det fjärde och avslutande kapitlet i bokens analysdel studeras ett specifikt objekt, boken. Kapitlet studerar förhållandet mellan materialitet och immaterialitet i relation till text och dess manifestation i boken som materiellt föremål. Boken studeras både som ett objekt som förekommer i reseberättelsen och som den materiella form som reseberättelsen tar. Kapitlets första del studerar hur reseberättelsen dramatiserar sitt eget tillblivande. Resan ses här som en del av den produktionsprocess som utmynnar i saluförandet och konsumerandet av boken som vara. Reseberättelser innehåller ofta citat från resenärens dagböcker och anteckningar som förs under resan. De tillkommer alltså åtminstone till synes i det tidsrum som resenären befinner sig i och skapar därför ett slags där-och-nu i vilket platser och företeelser (och i mindre utsträckning främmande grupper av människor) beskrivs i presens, som objekt och företeelser som befinner sig i ett visst rum samtidigt som resenären. Sådana citeringar betonar att resan i sig, och de upplevelser och betraktelser som det resande subjektet gör under färden, är en del i skapandet av en text som i slutskedet också är en vara. Genom resandet och skrivandet omvandlas alltså erfarenheter till en materiell vara.

Nästa del av detta kapitel bygger vidare på resans funktion som produktionsprocess. I denna del studeras hur den svarta kroppen formas till en sorts vara genom att skrivas in i reseskildringen. Medan föregående del visade hur erfarenheter och upplevelser blir till delar i den vara som reseboken är, tar denna del av kapitlet alltså fasta på hur idén om den andre inte bara har en framträdande roll i själva berättelsen utan också skrivs in i den materiella varan som är slutprodukten av den resan och det skrivande som reseberättelsen både beskriver och är ett resultat av.

Dessa två första delar beskriver alltså litteraturens och skrivandets funktion i skapandet av ett slags materialitet ut immaterialitet.

I den avslutande delen diskuteras istället hur boken görs till ett symboliskt föremål då den träder in i den del av den narrativa geografin som ses som förmodern och tidsmässigt avlägsen. I denna kontext representerar boken tankar och idéer som är nära sammankopplade med den västeuropeiska upplysningens ideal, det kristna evangeliet och med modernitetens kunskapsproduktion. Boken gör alltså immateriella idéer materiella genom att tjäna som en materiell symbol. I och med denna nya materialitet blir dessa idéer föremål för elementens och den Afrikanske andres påverkan. Böcker brinner upp och förgås på olika vis då de stiger in i ett förhållande till den förmodernitet som afrikanen och det afrikanska landskapet representerar. Boken påvisar alltså ännu en form av ambivalens som rör uppdelningen mellan förmodernitet och modernitet. Medan boken som en symbol för moderniteten ges förmågan att ge fantasier och erfarenheter formen av varor, det vill säga förmågan att översätta det immateriella till materialitet, är den också hela tiden utsatt för en destruktiv kraft som tillskrivs "vilden" och förmoderniteten.

De fyra analyskapitlens slutsatser skapar en bild av objektens funktion i den koloniala reselitteraturens genrespecifika berättelser och berättelsestrukturer. Objektets funktion i berättandet moderniteten och en för moderniteten tidsmässigt avlägsen del av världen har studerats i geografiskt och etnografiskt skrivande, i relation till dikotomin materialitet och immaterialitet och till idéer om den koloniala handelns verkningar på Afrika och den afrikanen. Objektet och materialitet har alltså flera skilda funktioner i särskiljandet av tidsrum i den koloniala reseberättelsen. Avhandlingens teoretiska angreppssätt i studerandet av objektets funktion i denna avhandling påvisar objektets mångsidighet i den koloniala diskursen. Det antar olika former — som vara, symbol, metonymi och så vidare — men är instrumentellt i det ideologiska och diskursiva konstruerandet av Afrika som tillhörande en förmodern och historiskt avlägsen tid som det resande subjektet kan uppleva i avlägsna delar av den Afrikanska kontinenten. Samtidigt är en av avhandlingens viktigaste slutsatser att objektets mångsidighet, dess oförutsebara rörelser i rummet och det faktum att det objektivt sett är ett ting och inte

en betydelsebärande symbol medför att det berättande om olikhet som delvis baserar sig på objektet ofta karaktäriseras av motsägelser och dubbeltydighet.

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