Narrative Paths

Mikkonen, Kai

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THE AMORPHOUS body of writing that is called “travel literature” has traditionally set up conflicting expectations of empirical objectivity and subjective experience. In other words, the travel account reveals not only the facts of some geographical place but also the personal significance of the travel experience. There is an inherent potential in travel writing to be thought of both in terms of a concrete spatial configuration and as happening to someone here and now, something that is unified in the traveller’s personal experience and recounting. Some of the tension between the demands for empirical observation and the requirement that the travelogue capture the reader’s attention through the personality of the writer’s voice or the marvels in the description may also be reflected in the deep formal ties that have existed between travel literature and the modern novel. One of the most prominent members of the Russian formalist school of literary theory, Roman Jakobson, argued in his influential essay “The Dominant” (1935) that travelogues, as a kind of transitional genre and one form of intimate literature, served an important function in the development of modern fiction: “In certain periods such genres are evaluated as extraliterary and extrapoetical, while in other periods they may fulfil an important literary function because they comprise those elements which are about to be emphasised by belles lettres, whereas the canonical...
forms are deprived of these elements” (Jakobson 1987, 45). Jakobson’s argument is based on the observation that the travelogue contributed in certain essential ways to the development of the Russian novel in the early nineteenth century. Among these contributions was, in particular, the intimate point of view of an individual who lives and travels in the contemporary world and makes subjective observations about that world.

Typically, travel writing conceptualizes space in terms of perpetual movement, while it organizes events and experiences around the temporal structure of the journey mediated through the traveller’s consciousness. The same basic structure is common in various forms of modern fiction, such as the adventure or the realist novel, which is structured around a journey plot. Much of the narrative potential of travel lies in the fact that we recognize in it temporal and spatial structures that call for narration. The different stages of travel—departure, voyage, and return—provide the narrative with basic temporal structures that make the reader expect certain things to happen.1 Furthermore, in the history of the modern novel, travel writing, and especially the accounts of travels to distant lands, has helped to shape the genre in terms of a credible foreign milieu and the description of foreign cultures.2

In his *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (1983), Percy G. Adams has demonstrated how such central characteristics and expectations of travel writing as realist décor, foreign settings, and minutely detailed description, were exported to fiction in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, thus making a central contribution to the origins of the modern novel. At this time, moreover, novels started mixing realist description with personal reflection in ways similar to travel literature (Adams 1983, 108–109; Chupeau 1977, 548; Bradburn 2011, 145–50).3 The description of foreign places and exotic forms of life in travel literature thus helped, on the one hand, to authenticate the

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1. In narrative and literary studies, it is a kind of commonplace to suggest, with Michel de Certeau, that “every story is a travel story—a spatial practice” (1984, 115). For instance, the chronotope of the road, and the metaphor of “the path of life” that it realizes, is a central feature in Mikhail Bakhtin’s history of novelistic plot patterns and is especially important for what Bakhtin calls the adventure novel of everyday life (1981, 120). On the uses of the travel metaphor in narrative theory, and the implications of the conceptual metaphor of NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL, see Mikkonen 2007a. On the same conceptual metaphor, see also Bradburn 2011.

2. We have to keep in mind, however, that perhaps the most prototypical form of travel writing is not a narrative in itself but a travel journal and, furthermore, that travel writing often prioritizes description instead of narration.

3. For Adams, both the literary travel story and the modern novel are based on an “imaginative reshaping of reality” (1983, 134), by which he means that the two genres are produced through “a conflict and an alliance between realism and romance,” or between truth claims and imagination (1983, 108–9).
emerging genre of the modern realist novel while, on the other hand, the dis-
tant and little known regions that were described in travel literature inspired
the novelists to create more credible fictional foreign worlds or invent new
worlds more freely (Adams 1983, 147). We can, for instance, think of Robinson
Crusoe (1719), in which Daniel Defoe used Alexander Selkirk’s true story and
other actual travel accounts as his source material; Tobias Smollett’s The Expe-
dition of Humphry Clinker (1771) where the author’s own travel experiences in
Scotland, France, and Italy provide much of the novel’s plot; or, as an exam-
ple of travel writing that is heavily indebted to the novel, Laurence Sterne’s
A Sentimental Journey (1768), famous for its episodic descriptions of places
and encounters on the road, based on the author’s travels through France
and Italy. Furthermore, Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels (1726, 1735), by parodying the
descriptions and reports issued by travellers, explores the similarity between
the travel story and the modern novel, both based on an “imaginative reshap-
ing of reality” (Adams 1983, 134).

When fiction and travel writing were collated and juxtaposed in eigh-
teenth-century European writing, their mutual influence revealed something
of the nature of the forces—such as the conflicting requirements of objectiv-
ity and subjectivity, truthfulness and personality, and the shared interest in
creating a sense of a world and telling a good story—that have given rise to
the continuous conversions and transformations discernible between the two
genres.

In the early twentieth-century context of French and English literatures,
which will be our focus in this study, travel writing and the novel again
exerted an influence on each other to an extent that deserves the attention of
historians of both the modern novel and travel writing. This book will inves-
tigate the interaction between travel writing, journal keeping, and fiction in
the works of a group of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century
European writers, who visited, travelled, or lived in sub-Saharan Africa. They
include the French writers Pierre Loti, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, André Gide,
Michel Leiris, and Georges Simenon, the Swiss writer Blaise Cendrars, and
four authors writing in English: Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene, Evelyn
Waugh, and Karen Blixen, also known in the English-speaking world by her
pseudonym Isak Dinesen. Besides the works of Loti and Conrad, and some
of the later works by Greene, Waugh, and Blixen, this book will concentrate

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4. Historically speaking, the category of a “literary travel narrative” has accommodated
many types of writing. Damrosch, for instance, has pointed out that a literary travel narrative
can be a poetic record of an actual voyage, a semifictional account loosely based on the author’s
direct experience, a fictionalization of other people’s travel books, or pure fiction disguised as
a real-life travelogue, such as Gulliver’s Travels (Damrosch 2009, 95–96).
on works that were published in the period between the First and the Second World War. The relationship between travel writing and fiction in this particular context has not received much serious critical attention to date. As we shall see in the course of this study, the interaction between travel writing, autobiographical narrative and journal keeping, and fiction (in particular the novel) raises a number of important questions about generic expectations and classification, referentiality, narrative authority and form, and modernist poetics, all questions that are relevant in terms of these authors’ entire oeuvres.

The cross-generic exchanges and borrowings in this body of work—sometimes explicitly acknowledged, sometimes not—make it relevant to ask what happens when the boundary between travel writing and fiction is crossed, perhaps even more so when the general distinction between fiction and non-fiction seems to remain intact. Drawing on the findings of this research, this question can be divided into two parts: First, does the cross-generic borrowing affect the distinctiveness of the text’s genre? Second, what happens to the autobiographical elements, or the expectation of truthfulness to a lived experience in a travel journal, when the text borrows some of its devices from fiction? Or what happens to the comfortable distinction between fact and fiction when a travel writer authenticates his observations by reference to fiction?

As to the first question, the evidence of this study and its early twentieth-century modernist corpus strongly suggest that the effect of cross-generic borrowing is minimal in terms of a given work’s general classification as either fiction or nonfiction. Once a travel narrative has been written, labeled, published, and read as nonfiction, and its referential nature has been established (i.e., it is based on some real-life journey), it remains in the general category of nonfiction regardless of any amount of borrowing of fictional techniques and conventions. As to the second part of the question, by contrast, the evidence of this study strongly suggests that there are myriad ways in which, on the one hand, fiction functions as an important frame in nonfiction travel writing and, on the other hand, nonfiction travel narrative plays an important role in fiction. The cross-generic borrowings from fiction in nonfiction highlight, for instance, how so much in modern travel and autobiographical writing falls outside the realm of what is verifiable, such as the author’s thoughts, emotions, memories, attitudes, and evaluations, or the meaning that

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5. In his application of possible-worlds semantics to literary studies, Lubomir Doležel has formulated the question of the interpenetration between fiction and history in a way that is relevant here: “what happens to the historical when it penetrates into fictional worlds and what happens to the fictional when it intrudes into historical worlds” (1999, 264).
the author gives to the events, places, and experiences of travel. As we shall see, fictional models and worlds serve as an important means for giving form to the traveller’s thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and meanings.

In order to be able to make more justified claims about the forms of interaction between travel writing and fiction in early twentieth-century European literatures, we need to proceed by way of the particular, focusing on individual texts and their manipulation of generic conventions and expectations. Before moving to detailed case studies, however, I would like to summarize some of the general findings of this study concerning the main modes of interpenetration between nonfiction travel writing and fiction at this time.

These dimensions of interpenetration include, first of all, the situation of enunciation, by which I mean the importance of the traveller’s (or a character’s) mediating mind. The research shows that the centrality of the traveller’s mediating consciousness, and the experiential frame of the journey, lends itself to comparison with typical devices of narrative fiction such as the use of the first-person narrative voice or the character’s internal point of view. In certain of these cases, travel writing may also appropriate narrative devices from fiction so as to portray ambiguity of voice and perspective, for instance to create an impression of a travelling persona or to project a hypothetical audience, one of whose number is the actual reader.

Second, the research shows the importance of description and direct observation in early twentieth-century travel writing and fiction set in Africa. The authors often also foreground the language of their description as a problem, in that way drawing the reader’s attention to the difficulty of closing the gap between the means of writing and the world described (i.e., how to relate to the foreign object of description).

Third, the research makes evident the ways in which knowledge of the mediation, which interpose between reality (the object of description, whenever it is not the traveller’s own mind) and description in every corner of sub-Saharan Africa, highlights the bookish memory of voyage, especially when a modern writer travels expressly in order to write about the travel experience. This knowledge of mediation, the circulation of cultural givens concerning sub-Saharan Africa, and the traveller’s sense of belatedness with regard to the places that he or she visits, is communicated equally in these writers’ fiction and nonfiction. The various citations and references to or interpretations of fiction that are embedded in their travel writing perform a great variety of important functions, from affirming the reality of one’s experience (possibly in contrast with the external reality) to undermining someone else’s impressions, to blotting out uncomfortable aspects of the travel experience (or even accentuating some aspects of it), to creating a sense of contiguity
between actual and fictional worlds. The emphasis on the bookish nature of the journey, which is also reflected in the frequent description of acts of reading during the journey, reveals in many of these examples the impact of earlier descriptions, either factual or fictional, that must be dealt with.

Fourth, the issue of “narrativisation,” that is, the question of how to give narrative form to the travel experience, emerges particularly strongly in Graham Greene’s travelogue and Karen Blixen’s African memoir, both as a thematic and compositional consideration. Greene examines, in his *Journey Without Maps* (1936), the difference between the shape of his experience and the shape of narrative. In Blixen’s African memoir, the form of her book reflects the central theme of how to find a narrative shape in one’s life. Specifically, the story “The Roads of Life” (1937) suggests that stories might reveal a pattern in life (or destiny) but that this pattern can only be expressed indirectly through suggestion. In Michel Leiris’s African travelogue (1934), likewise, the problem of how to turn the travel experience into a narrative, or how to analyze the self through writing and journal-keeping, is highly relevant. Leiris’s, as well as Gide’s and Greene’s, interest in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) may also be partly explained by way of Conrad’s focus on narrative order and shape in his novella, due to the text’s layered and self-conscious narrative structure. The scene of found books and “unreadable” signs in the jungle in *Heart of Darkness* also raises the question how to give narrative form to such signs of life. The crucial features of narrative form—a temporal sequencing of events, causal connection, and the experiential frame or experientiality—will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3. Beyond recognizing such traits as being characteristic of narratives, however, the concept of narrativisation emphasizes the act of reading and interpreting some text *qua* narrative, be it a fiction or nonfiction, literary or nonliterary narrative.

Fifth, and finally, my analysis of Loti’s and Conrad’s travel journals and African fictions highlights the importance of the notion of virtual genres. This notion involves a little-studied but essential problem of genre relations pertaining to all elements of fiction that designate that the text has potential relevance as nonfiction or, conversely, everything in nonfiction narratives that implies that the story could have been told, or the description could have been written, as fiction. The analyses show, more precisely, how certain narrative and rhetorical strategies in Loti’s and Conrad’s fictions raise the (speculative) question of the generic classification of these texts as fiction, and suggest that alternatives may be possible. A given text’s virtual but unrealized genre is, in

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6. “Narrativisation” is Monika Fludernik’s redefinition of Jonathan Culler’s strategy of naturalization: “the reading of texts as narrative, as constituting narrativity in the reading process” or the “act of imposing narrativity” to a text (Fludernik 1996, 20, 34).
these cases, emphasized by the way in which the travel journal is appropriated in fiction as a kind of laboratory for potential fictions. Equally, fiction may serve not only as an authority or a source of information for travel writing, but also as its potential and unrealized genre, and even a kind of conceptual model. Gide’s reading of *Heart of Darkness* as an accurate description of African reality; Leiris’s idea of a Conradian story in his travel journal; Blixen’s use of fictional stories in her memoir and description of fictional characters coming alive at her farm; Waugh’s depiction of Ethiopia as a unique space of potentiality and possible worlds; Greene’s literary portraits and caricatures in his travelogue; and Simenon’s ironic projection of a narrative audience all point to the potential in the genre of travel writing to be something else, that is, fiction. More precisely, what is involved in these cases, is the potential in fiction to reveal the experiential reality to the reader and, consequently, the potential in nonfiction travel writing and life writing to be as powerful as any fiction, for instance, in creating and evoking a sense of a personal voice, a private experience, or a foreign world, or fusing observations of the African realities with imagination.

**The Porous but Insistent Frontier between Fiction and Nonfiction**

Despite the many intergeneric borrowings, and boundary crossings in these works, it is important to note that these neither deny nor conflate the general distinction between nonfiction travel writing and fiction. They do not include any straightforward attempts at challenging this boundary. We might recall other more unusual examples of classification and more ambivalent cases on the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, for instance some more recent literary travel books that focus on storytelling and transform real-life experiences into (partly fictional) anecdotes, such as Elias Canetti’s *The Voices of Marrakesh* (1967), Bruce Chatwin’s *In Patagonia* (1977), or V. S. Naipaul’s *The Enigma of Arrival: A Novel in Five Sections* (1987).  

7. Alan Pryce-Jones’s *People in the South* (1932), which combines a travel book and a collection of fictional stories set in South America, might also offer more unusual difficulties of classification in this respect (see Fussell 1980, 176). In addition, we may think of partly fictional travel accounts from the eighteenth century that Charles Batten discusses (1978, 21–24, 56–81), although Batten also claims that any sophisticated eighteenth-century reader of such works (Tobias Smollett’s *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, for instance) could have intuited whether they were fiction or nonfiction (1978, 24); or literary hoaxes relating to Percy Adams’s category of a “travel lie.” As evidence of the latter, Adams has referred to cases of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel writing that led the (ordinary) reader to believe that the book was a true travel account despite the fictional or borrowed contents (1962, 1–18).
However, many of the examples included here do defy classification within the broad category of nonfiction, undermining for instance the distinction between an intimate journal and a travel book (Voyage au Congo, Waugh in Abyssinia), a collection of autobiographical poetry and a travel journal (Feuilles de route), a memoir and a travelogue (Journey Without Maps), ethnographic writing, travel journal and a self-analysis (L’Afrique fantôme), a journal and a notebook for fiction-writing (Loti’s Journal), or a memoir and a collection of colonial (fictional and nonfictional) stories (Out of Africa). A further complication in generic classification is that Greene’s published travelogue makes it clear that the text is the result of a writing process, where the original travel notes and journal are worked up into a narrative.

One reason for the relative stability of the distinction is that the relationship between fiction and nonfiction travel writing is never purely formal but is dependent on semantic and pragmatic oppositions and contextual criteria that have remained relatively constant at least since the eighteenth century. Suzanne Gearhart has argued, in reference to French Enlightenment classics such as Montesquieu and Diderot, that generic boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, in this case literature and historiography, can be porous but at the same time relatively stable. Her finding is consistent, in a general sense, with the types of generic interaction that concern us here. Gearhart argues, more precisely, that the relationship between literature and history in eighteenth-century France was one in which

the two terms are seen as formally similar because each borrows from the other and each refuses to acknowledge the borrowing. And yet for the same reasons that history and fiction are not sovereign, they never completely merge. (1984, 28)

In the early twentieth-century context of European literature, cross-generic borrowings and interpenetration between travel writing and fiction became particularly common and self-conscious whenever the authors travelled with the intention of writing about their travels. The sub-Saharan experience was for many of these writers also a means of finding material for fiction. In this way, then, their fictions were contiguous with their nonfiction writing.

However, when these writers’ travel writing and fiction refer to the same geographical places, and fiction and nonfiction seem to freely draw on each other’s descriptions and conventions, they still continue to project worlds with a different reality status and truth value. A partial explanation for this would

8. Speaking of Graham Greene, who hardly mentions his travel companion cousin Barbara in Journey Without Maps, Paul Fussell argues that “sometimes suppressions, or virtual sup-
be the semantic argument about the distinctiveness of fiction, namely, that in fiction references to existing realities are not bound to accuracy since nonfiction is referential and fiction is not. In fiction, furthermore, gaps in information are created by the very act of world-making, and they are determined and manipulated by the narrative act itself, in contrast to the epistemological and verifiable gaps in historical worlds (Doležel 1988, 490–491; Doležel 1999, 258; Harshaw 1984, 232). The omissions in travel writing may be checked, evaluated and perhaps filled, at least in principle, against what we know about reality from existing historical documents. The relative independence from referentiality in fiction, or the freedom to be inaccurate, does not imply, however, that fiction would not have any referential properties or that it is not worth investigating the relation between the fictional world and the actual world. In this study I will examine precisely this variety of distances between the actual world of travel writing, or other forms of autobiographical writing, and the fictional world that is created in a novel, a novella, or a short story.

Meanwhile, the contemporary pragmatic-contextual theories of fiction hold that a distinction between fictional and referential discourse cannot be made on the basis of semantic criteria or textual indices alone. Instead, these theories explain that this distinction is founded on our interpretation of the given text’s context, including for instance the purpose for which the work is written (i.e., typically the author’s intention), the generic operations of the work’s means of representation, the generic expectations of its truth value, and the reader’s knowledge of other relevant extratextual information.

With regard to nonfiction travel literature, for instance, the relation that a particular work has with other representations of the same geographical places and historical realities can be highly important in evaluating the accuracy of its descriptions. The travel writers often emphasize how their descriptions and experiences of a place are consistent with, complementary, or contrary to existing descriptions of the same travel destinations. In my case studies, the importance of generic expectations is also reflected in the reactions of certain

9. See, for instance, Cohn 1999, 15. Cohn defines what she calls the nonreferentiality of fiction as the principle according to which fiction can refer to the real world outside the text, "but it need not refer to it" (1999, 15). Furthermore, the nonreferentiality of fiction indicates that "references to the world outside the text are not bound to accuracy" and that fiction "does not refer exclusively to the real world outside the text" (ibid.).

10. For a genre perspective on the accessibility relations between actual world and textual actual world of fiction, see Ryan 1991, Chapter 2.
readers who questioned the facts reported in the travel books, or claimed that these writers’ fictions set in Africa were thinly disguised character assassinations (and, in this way, disguised forms of nonfiction). For instance, the setting and some of the characters and events in Simenon’s novel *Le Coup de lune* (1933) were in some readers’ minds so close to the reality in Libreville, in Gabon, that this resemblance led to a court case against the writer in 1934. The author’s lawyer, Maurice Garçon, successfully pleaded that the novelist had the right to draw from reality, and Simenon was acquitted. Likewise, Esme Barton’s response to Evelyn Waugh’s African novel *Black Mischief* (1932) has become well known. As Waugh sat in an Addis Ababa nightclub in 1935, Esme concluded their discussion by hurling champagne in his face (see Stannard 1986, 406). This was her protest against Waugh’s satirical representation in that novel of Sir Samson Courtenev, the head of the British Legation in Addis Ababa, a character modelled after Esme’s father Sir Sidney Barton. Sir Samson Courtenev’s daughter, moreover, was portrayed as the naive and promiscuous Prudence Courtenev. Graham Greene’s travel book *Journey Without Maps*, in turn, was withdrawn from bookstores at the end of 1937 on account of a libel case brought against the writer for his depiction of certain people in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The cause of the case is less significant than the principle it illustrates, namely that truthfulness in relation to actual places and people is usually expected of travel writing. Greene described in his travelogue a drunken party in Freetown, where he called one of the participants by the name of Pa Oakley, without apparently knowing that a certain Dr. P. D. Oakley was a real person, and was in fact head of the Sierra Leone Medical Service!

Such cases can be used to illustrate the importance of generic expectations and reaffirm a text’s generic boundaries. The alleged breaches against the veracity of the travelogue, and the hidden insults in the fictions, were intimately tied to generic expectations: a travelogue needs to appear trustworthy, specifically in the sense of being true to the writer’s experience in some actual place of travel, whereas a novelist has the freedom to manipulate real events, places, and people. By the latter I mean, more precisely, that a novel does not need to refer to reality, or if it does, it need not be accurate. Fiction may certainly have two intended audiences at the same time, for instance one audience reading the novel as fiction without any interest in relating the fiction to some actual historical reality or people, and another audience reading

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11. Enraged by what they thought was their portrayal in the novel, a group of French woodcutters in Libreville paid the travel fare for a hotelkeeper’s wife, who felt insulted by what she thought was her caricature in the novel, so that she could sue Simenon for libel in Paris.

12. As a result, the travel book remained out of print for almost a decade.
it as a satire that comments on real events, as an inside joke or a well-crafted insult aimed at real people. The potential for close ties with reality is there in Waugh’s and Simenon’s novels especially, and in particular for some of those novels’ contemporary audiences, but this does not seriously undermine these novels’ overall generic classification. With regard to the nonfiction travel narratives and journals that are investigated here, it is likely that, at the time of their publication, these works appealed specially to those readers who wished to learn more about the authors, aside from their better-known role as fiction writers. Loti and Gide also consciously used their journals and diaries to create a public image of themselves. This is an issue of the author’s performance and book marketing, however, not just of generic classification. Conrad’s brief African travel notes are an exception in this respect in that they were not meant to be published. As such, they did not have any intended audience except, perhaps, the writer himself.

Yet, while the distinction between fiction and nonfiction travel writing usually depends both on semantic and pragmatic criteria, and sometimes can be decided on pragmatic criteria alone, there are also certain textual and linguistic markers that may cue the reader to interpret a given text as fiction rather than as nonfiction. These textual features, such as the use of thought report (the narrator’s representation of a character’s thoughts) or free indirect discourse, where a character’s utterances or thoughts are presented within a narrator’s discourse, are never by themselves decisive in determining the text’s classification, but they can function as important markers, or to borrow Dorrit Cohn’s term, “signposts” of fictionality. Similarly, the “split” voice in many modern novels, where we can make a clear distinction between a fictional narrator-character and the real author, does not usually apply to nonfictional narratives.13 While in fiction the narrative voice and the narrative world are mutually constitutive, meaning that they create each other as they refer to each other (see Cohn 1999, 13), the reader’s inferences with regard to the “voice” and authorship of nonfiction travel writing are characteristically conditioned by the expectation of referentiality, that is, they are licensed by the assumption that the author bears truthful witness to the real world. The referential principle generally holds even if the writer-traveller’s main objective is to create the impression of an interesting travelling persona, or to instill

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13. Philippe Lejeune defines the autobiographical pact as the identity between the author, the narrator and the main character (1996, 15, 27–29). This influential definition is obviously not only a matter of detecting the right textual features (for instance, a fictional narrator or the lack thereof), but may be seen as a consequence of the pragmatic distinction between fiction and nonfiction (for instance, contextual information concerning a factual narrative tells us that the author and the narrator are the same person).
wonder in his tale, rather than to be accurate. With third-person travel literature, the default assumption is similar: the writer reports, in his own name, someone else’s actual experience as truthfully as possible.

For Dorrit Cohn, the signposts of fiction include three basic criteria:

1. An adherence to a bi-level story/discourse model that assumes emancipation from the enforcement of a referential data base;
2. The representation of inner lives: that is, the employment of narrative situations that open to inside views of the characters’ minds, the here and now of their lives; and the mind-reading experience, in which fiction can make the reader share in a character’s experience of time; and
3. An articulation of narrative voices that can be detached from their authorial origin (1999, viii, 110–31).

The first criterion, the distinction between the order of the events and the order of their presentation (or story vs. discourse), can be highly relevant in various nonfiction genres such as historiography and, as we will see, in travel writing. Nonfiction travel writing can employ any or all of the conventions of dramatic structure that manipulate this relation, including the dramatic and narrative importance of beginnings (see also Chapter 1), rising and falling action, acceleration, deceleration and ellipsis, climax and dénouement; travel books can create effects of suspense and surprise, or start in the middle, the beginning or the end of the action. Moreover, the fact that much travel literature is written after the actual journey is also often reflected by the travel writer openly acknowledging the difference between the time of the travel experience and the time of the writing (as in Elias Canetti’s carefully crafted *The Voices of Marrakesh*, published over a decade after the author’s visit in Morocco). Cohn accepts that the bi-level story/discourse model may be relevant in historiography (1999, 112), and specifies that the crucial distinction in this regard is that one has to postulate another level of narrative analysis for nonfictional narratives: the referential level.\(^{14}\) The third signpost (the “disjunctive theory”) requires the reader to perform a contextualizing evaluation of the text in regard to the responsibility of the narrative voice: to evaluate, in other words, what the narrating voice is responsible for and whether, in case of so-called covert narrators, there is any narrative voice to be

\(^{14}\) Cohn is basically only interested in narratological indices of fiction. However, she does take paratextual indices into consideration in regard to Hildesheimer’s fictional biography *Marbot* (1999, 92–95) and she evokes the question of (non)referentiality throughout *Distinction of Fiction*. See also Mikkonen 2006.
detected.” Besides the three signposts listed, Cohn also refers to the principle of nonreferentiality. This is the idea, already mentioned above, that fiction itself creates the world to which it refers by actually referring to it, that is, fiction crafts a self-enclosed universe ruled by formal patterns. For Cohn, a fictional text is essentially a literary nonreferential narrative: it can refer to the real world but need not do so; the referentiality of fiction does not have to be accurate or exclusive (1999, 15). The signposts, therefore, are not sufficient in themselves to determine the classification of any text as fiction or nonfiction. The communally affirmed principles of referentiality and verifiability help one to decide what features of the text do or do not have a referent in the actual world, or whether one is to concentrate on them and why.

Two further clarifications in regard to the instability of any textual “indices” or signposts of fiction are necessary here. First, none of these indices are exclusive in the sense that nonfiction could not borrow and appropriate them. Cohn also admits that all the narrative features listed above can be imitated and used by various kinds of nonfiction texts—such simulation just requires more from the viewer for successful classification. As I will argue throughout this study, the mind-reading experience is crucial in much modern travel writing: its main benefit can be to make the reader share in the writer’s experience of a foreign place and people. The question of split-narrative voice is another case in point. The concept of a travelling persona has been used to refer to the cases in travel writing where there is a clear difference between the travelling “I” of the travelogue and the author in real life (see Lidström 2005, 151). The difference between these two identities is not just based on the fact that travelogues differ from traditional autobiographies—for instance, in that they do not usually try to present the writer’s personality comprehensively—but because the modern travelogue is also often similar to modern autobiographies that reinvent the author as a certain kind of persona. In travel writing, the writer can present himself or herself in a certain role, that is, as a certain kind of traveller or a travelling persona. This distinction between a travelling persona and the author in real life becomes increasingly evident in travel writing of the early twentieth century, when authors travelled in order to write about the experience, and will be a relevant question with regard to Graham Greene’s and Evelyn Waugh’s African travelogues in particular.


16. I borrow the concept of “travelling persona” from Carina Lidström, who has used it in her study of Swedish travel writing 1667–1879 (2003, 233–34; 2005, 151–52). Lidström’s main types of travel persona include the adventurer, the scientific traveller, and the aesthete.

17. Blanton goes so far as to call the self-conscious mediating consciousness that monitors the journey, a “narrator” (2002, 4). While I agree that the impression of a mediating conscious-
Second, the function of such markers of fiction is profoundly conditioned by the readers’ expectation and understanding of a text’s genre: what may count as a signpost of fiction in one case may not apply in another case. For instance, the presentation of verbatim speech, shifts between external observation and an individual’s inner reflection, or the author’s (or the narrator’s) interruptions between narrative levels, which are common in modern novels, may also be used in modern travel writing.

The Traveller’s Mediating Mind

Much research agrees that in travel writing, characteristically, the journey events are monitored and organized by the traveller’s mediating consciousness, even when the travel account is written in the third person. The traversed spaces are unified in the traveller’s experience, impressions, and recounting, which is punctuated by episodes, names of places, and local descriptions. Modern travel writing typically involves, also when we are dealing with examples of pure description, the portrayal of human consciousness engaged in goal-oriented activity. This may also explain why vicarious experience, understood both in the sense of learning about a foreign place through someone else’s travel experience and learning about someone’s experience in that place, is such a crucial feature of this genre. The fact that travel writing may encourage further travel, or discourage people from travelling, is another proof of the close association between travel writing and travel experience. The ability to convey a sense of “what it’s like” or, more precisely, “what it’s like to be somewhere else,” is also comparable, in general terms, to the experience of reading fiction, that is, the way in which the writer and the reader imagine fictional experiences, lives, and worlds and, furthermore, may be able to imaginatively transport themselves into a fictional world. As has often been argued, one of the main features and attractions of reading fiction is to imagine what it is like to be someone else, that is, to think and feel like someone else, and to experience another world, place, and time through the imagination.
The traveller’s consciousness is central to the genre of travel writing and, unless we are talking about simple travel guides that compete with their stacks of information, the genre prefers, particularly when we come to the early twentieth century, a focalized perspective that reflects on the here and now of the travel experience, seeking to dramatize a particular engagement between a self and the world. For Odile Gannier, the personality of the modern author-traveller is “present, and in control” (2001, 51). Jean-Xavier Ridon argues similarly that “it is through the filter of a subjective experience that all travel stories develop” (2002, 15). For Gerard Cogez, likewise, modern travel writing is characterized by the consciousness of being “the only person to have this particular point of view on the world, the only one being able to record with objectivity the intimate repercussions of one’s contact with elsewhere and novelty” (2004, 152). Furthermore, the traveller, according to Louis Marin, unavoidably “anthropomorphizes the wanderings of the text,” by traversing a geographic and textual network that is thus raised “from anonymity” (1984, 42–43). In other words, the basis of a modern travel narrative is the reconfiguration of a sequence of places by the experiencing self and his or her consciousness. Travel journals and narratives project worlds in this way, in a tension between the immediacy of perception and meaningful consequence, each crafting a subjective universe according to which its propositions are read. The notion of narrative that I will employ throughout this study emphasizes the importance of the travel writer’s or the narrator’s experiential frame vis-à-vis the sequencing of events, times, or places (see also Chapter 3).

Much travel writing underscores the centrality of the writer-traveller’s mind, by making explicit the interdependence between the description of the world and the traveller’s necessarily subjective and limited perspective. Typically, the modern travel writer wishes to be both objective and authentic in his

Fludernik’s notion of experientiality (1996, 12–13, 28–30, 48–50), and David Herman’s application of the concept of qualia, by which the philosophers of mind refer to the sense of what it’s like for someone or something to have a particular experience, in connection with the reading of narratives (Herman 2009, 143–52).

20. Many other similar statements could be listed here. For Germaine Brée, similarly, the protagonist of a travel narrative moves as a focal point for actions and ideas, thus realizing narrative of the episodes of journey as an index of his digression (1968, 89). Furthermore, Pasquali has made the important point that the personalized point of view of travel writing is dependent on a double determination between the perspectives of the travel process and the order of a finalized text (1994, 112). See also the way in which Fussell (1980, 203) and Thompson (2011, 14–15) differentiate between the proper modern “travel book,” as a form of autobiographic narrative, and the guide book. However, Thompson asserts important reservations about Fussell’s definition of the travel book as a “sub-species of memoir,” especially with regard to texts published before 1800 (2011, 17–27). I would like to thank John Calton for his helpful comments in this section of the Introduction.
vision, somewhat like an ethnographer or a scientist who relies first and foremost on his direct observations, but he is also clearly, if not blatantly, personal in his observation, distinguished by his impressions, particular sensitivities, and the individuality of his perception. In the foreword to his travel book First Russia, Then Tibet (1933), entitled “The Traveller’s Confession,” Robert Byron gave voice to this paradox. He explains that “the traveller is a slave to his senses; his grasp of a fact can only be complete when reinforced by sensory evidence; he can know the world, in fact, only when he sees, hears, and smells it” (1933, iv). The emphasis on experience, evidence, and sensory perception, however, is not merely indicative of empiricist epistemological principles, even if it is clearly indebted to them. Byron’s empiricism also validates a personal voice and experience that is relatively independent of the principles of referentiality and reliability in description. In travel, Byron (or his travelling persona) acquires wholesome knowledge of the world, as opposed to modern specialized disciplines of knowledge. The knowledge that comes out of travelling necessitates, in addition, a distance from the kinds of travelers who are too close to a geographer’s, ethnographer’s, or zoologist’s vision. In his best-known travel book The Road to Oxiana (1937) Byron distinguishes himself sharply and ironically from these modern travellers, these over-grown prefects and pseudo-scientific bores despatched by congregations of extinguished officials to see if sand-dunes sing and snow is cold. Unlimited money, every kind of official influence support them; they penetrate the furthest recesses of the globe; and beyond ascertaining that sand-dunes do sing and snow is cold, what do they observe to enlarge the human mind? Nothing. (2007, 239)

And unlike the explorer, with whom the modern traveller and travel writer may share the excitement of the unpredictable and the unknown, Byron does not seek to explain away the strangeness of the experience or the place, or marginalize the pleasures of travel. At the same time, and characteristically of the modern travel writer, Byron likes to distinguish himself from the tourist, who represents the safety of pure cliché, or the mere recording of impressions. The three categories of the tourist, the traveller, and the explorer are, nevertheless, mutually dependent, as is revealed by the way in which Byron self-consciously defines himself in contrast to the other two. The attempt to

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21. Moreover, Byron’s emphasis on direct observation betrays a spiritual necessity to travel, the discovery, as he says, of “organic harmony between all matter and all activity” (1933, xiv) that broadens the mind.

distinguish oneself as a traveller, or as a unique type of tourist (even if this gesture entails a kind of contradiction in terms), is similar to some of my main examples of modern travel writers, such as Waugh, who self-consciously portrayed the available roles of travel in his travelogues.

The various conversations in direct discourse included in *The Road to Oxiana* reveal yet another kind of paradox in a way that a travel writer enunciates his situation. This is that the sense of immediacy and spontaneity that characterizes Byron’s dialogues with locals and fellow travellers, such as the one below, not only borrows from the conventions of fiction and theater, but may also be a product of pure invention:

But at one camp two men stopped us. “Where is your kibitka?” they asked.

“My what?”

“Your kibitka?”

“I don’t understand.”

With expressions of contempt and irritation, they pointed to their own felt-and-wattle huts: “Your kibitka—you must have a kibitka. Where is it?”

“In Inglistan.”

“Where is that?”

“In Hindostan.”

“Is that in Russia?”

“Yes.” (2007, 115)

Byron’s travel companion Christopher Sykes has explained that all the supposedly non-English conversations recorded in *The Road to Oxiana* were in fact invented. This is because, as Sykes claims, Byron was a “very poor linguist.”23 Yet why is it we can still read Byron’s travelogue as nonfiction and not be bothered about the veracity of the words, let alone their accuracy, or the reality of the scene? Is it that, even if the reader expects that travel writing is committed to the principles of truthfulness—at least in the sense of being true to one’s own travel experience—and verifiable documentation, he or she may equally expect that this genre may easily suspend this commitment, at least as far as it does not go beyond certain bounds of possibility?

Our willingness to accept such inventions, but still hold onto the principle of veracity and the category of nonfiction, raises an important epistemological question that characterizes the modern travel genre and its enunciative situation in general: the difference between the order and time of the travel and the order and time of writing. On the one hand, the reader may take the

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23. Cited by Fussell in his introduction to *The Road to Oxiana* (Byron 2007, 15).
author as a “witness” rather than as a writer whose writing transfers, with no loss of persuasive power, the force of experience, and the meanings related to the time and the place of travel. On the other hand, the reader must know that this is not quite possible since the act of travel writing comes after the experience, it is a representation that is mediated by the traveller’s mind after the event. In other words, travel writing is able to manipulate the relation between two kinds of temporality and causality: on the one hand, the chain of causes and effects that can be assumed to count for the traveller’s movements during the travel and, on the other hand, the sense of time and causal relations in the organisation of the text that motivate the writer to issue reports about some aspects of those movements, but not others. In fact, the distance between the time of the travel experience and that of writing, may in itself be of interest in reading travel literature. For instance, the reader may pretend to believe that the dialogues included in a travelogue took place as they are transcribed, or that they might have taken place, assuming thus that travel writing does not require perfect accuracy. It may be of interest to Byron’s readers, furthermore, to appreciate the way in which the invented dialogues make this experience more vivid, humorous, and at the same time more literary. Finally, the expectation that travel writing focuses on the marvellous and the unfamiliar through the traveller’s subjective mind, may invite the reader to relax the expectation of accuracy or at least make it somewhat difficult to estimate the accuracy of the description.

**The Reorientation of Description**

Another expectation that is traditionally associated with travel writing is the requirement of documentary description, at least since Sir Francis Bacon’s advice for travellers, in an essay “Of Travel” (1615), to adapt his empiricist principles, that is, to make careful observations about the world in a travel diary. “Let diaries, therefore, be brought in use,” he advised. From then on, “empirical” travelogues, with their emphasis on direct observation as the basis of knowledge, developed ways to attain descriptive specificity in details about places and people; and put forward a style of witnessing. At the same time, the modern novel, in particular in some of its realist forms, closely followed

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24. Accordingly, Jaś Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés have identified, in reference to Richard Burton’s pilgrimage to Mecca in 1853, the traveller’s “rhetorical claim of authority as a direct observer” as perhaps the “fundamental literary mechanism of legitimation in the genre of travel literature” (1999, 3). Batten (1978, 82–115) has a comprehensive discussion of the principles and aims of description in eighteenth-century English travel literature.
these developments. In effect, several of the presuppositions that Philippe Hamon detects in what he calls descriptive realism in the novel (1973, 422) are highly relevant in the tradition of travel writing, and conform with Francis Bacon’s advice. For example, both travel writing and the traditional realist novel presuppose that the world is rich in forms and details and, consequently, is worth describing. It may be further expected that the traveller’s description of the world, or the author’s/narrator’s portrayal of a fictional world, has a unique capacity to transmit information concerning this diversity. Evelyn Waugh claims in Remote People, in yet another formulation of this principle, that he is concerned in his book with firsthand impressions (2003, 320) and how, moreover, these impressions could challenge some commonly held misconceptions, for instance, concerning life in the English settlements in Kenya. The same expectation of detailed description based on firsthand impressions may also be one of the reasons why readers of travel literature are willing to “naturalize” inconsistencies and inaccuracies in travel writing, that is, to reconcile what appears to them to be inconsistencies in this genre and to continue to read the text as coherent and factual. For instance, while we suppose that Robert Byron invented his dialogues or that Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville often wrote from hearsay or imagination, we may still expect that their geographical descriptions, and in Byron’s case the depiction of his personal experience of places and people, reveal the way the world was seen at the time of writing.

The emphasis on direct observation is also apparent in my corpus in that many of these travelogues and reportages were written by authors who were working as journalists and had a keen investment in maintaining their credibility. In the 1930s, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, and Georges Simenon were employed by newspapers and weeklies to cover their travels in sub-Saharan colonial Africa. André Gide, likewise, published articles on the French Congo after his long journey there. The basic functions of description, as a means of identifying and pointing at something in the world, providing objective information—filtered through the traveller’s experience and evaluating mind—and communicating sense data that is based on the observation of a given reality, were essential to this endeavor. Voicing problems concerning the colonial government that were suppressed and obscured by the contemporary mainstream press, Gide’s African travel journal, and the writer’s campaign against the cruelty of French colonialism, had important political consequences. The first parts of Travels in the Congo were published in

25. For the concept of naturalization, see Culler 1975, 134–60.
26. The three functions of description are derived from Werner Wolf’s definition of the basic functions of the cognitive frame of the descriptive (2007, 12, 16–17).
France in the journal *La Nouvelle Revue Française* in the winter of 1926 and 1927, and the travel journal appeared as a book in June 1927, supplemented in October by the article “La détresse de notre Afrique Equatoriale” (The distress of our Equatorial Africa) in *La Revue de Paris*. These publications sparked off intense controversy, which soon spread to other parts of Europe, about the exploitation of African labor in the colonies. *Travels in the Congo* also served as documentation in a session of the Chamber of Deputies of France concerning large rubber concessions in the West African colonies, resulting in November 1927 in a promise from the minister of colonies, Léon Perrier, that such concessions would no longer be renewed (O’Brien 1953, 322; Putnam 1990, 157–59). Gide’s travel journal became an unlikely bestseller and was also well known in the English-speaking world through Dorothy Bussy’s translation in 1929. All in all, many of these writer-travellers, such as Greene, Gide, Simenon, Albert Londres (in his *Terre d’èbène*, 1929), the Italian Curzio Malaparte, and Michel Leiris, who took part in an ethnographic expedition in the early 1930s, were driven by a genuine impulse to see parts of Africa for themselves in order to counter predominant notions of Africa and the official truth about colonial rule there.

At the same time, many of these writers’ travels were motivated by the desire to find new authentic material for fiction. For instance, Greene explains in the introduction to his West African journals “Congo Journal” and “Convoy to West Africa” how his novels, such as those he set in West Africa, have always relied on notes as raw material for his novels: “for I have very little visual imagination and only a short memory” (1968, 7–8).
Travel notes and observations also inform, as we will see throughout this study, Loti’s, Simenon’s, Waugh’s, Gide’s, Conrad’s, and Céline’s fictions about Africa. In their divided interest of finding authentic material for both travel writing and fiction these writers had an earlier model in Henry M. Stanley who, after the success of his travel account *How I Found Livingstone in Central Africa* (1872) wrote the much less successful novel *My Kalulu, Prince, King, and Slave. A Story of Central Africa* (1873). It is not clear whether Stanley already had the idea of a fictional story during his journey, but in the Preface to the novel he underscored the close relation between the novel and the travel experience. While admitting that he had woven fiction with fact for the amusement of his readers—Stanley addressed the novel to adolescent male audience—he emphasized that the story was based on the knowledge he had acquired during his journey in search of Livingstone: “much of the book contains facts which I have witnessed myself, or which have come to my knowledge” (1890, vii). Furthermore, Stanley was careful to note that the fictional elements in his novel fell within the sphere of the possible (as opposed to the improbable).

Nevertheless, the expectation of the observer’s authority as a witness, and the authenticity of his or her account, involves a major paradox that characterizes much modern travel writing: the assumption that one can arrive at a fresh and objective version of reality—in the sense of an accurate description of some part of our world that, in principle, could be revisited—by way of the subjective experience. It is probably because of the very emphasis on subjective experience of an existing reality of a place, whether related in first-person or third-person narration, that travel writing has traditionally been accused of lies. As an old English proverb has it: “Old men and far travellers may lie by authority.” The traveller’s limitations in observation, the fallibility of his memory, false expectations, misunderstandings, deliberate fabrications and omissions have been the target of parodies at least since *Gulliver’s Travels*, perhaps the best-known satire on travel stories which lack credibility and probability. Greene, Leiris, and Gide, among many other writers of this era, made an attempt to turn the paradox of objective subjectivity into a point of interest in their travelogues, and their occasional discomfort with the conventions of description also points to the same paradox.

With regard to travel writers in the early twentieth century, the requirement of careful observation and description often translates as the expectation of the traveller’s receptivity and keen attention to diversity in the world and, moreover, an ability to convey a sense of this sensitivity and attentiveness.
to their readers. At the same time, description becomes a crucial problem in modern travel writing where the traveller’s way of travelling, even style, is foregrounded. The gap between writing (as representation of the world) and the inexhaustible reality under observation, is regularly acknowledged in this context, specifically with regard to the task of description. The French thinker of the exotic and the diverse, Victor Segalen, for example, noted in his posthumously published travel book *Équipée* (1929) that in description, which he defined as “the traveller’s principal argument,” the rhythm of the vision is often “in advance stereotyped in the phrases and cut up by indentations” (1983, 103).\(^31\) The problem of description for Segalen, but also for many other French writers including Leiris and Claude Lévi-Strauss,\(^32\) involves the intimate, but often ambiguous bond between the means of writing, imagination, and the presumed veracity of the traveller’s experience of reality. The dilemma is similar to some of the key problems confronted in the emerging field of ethnography at the time: how does the ethnographic text constitute the world and not just describe it? Can the writing rediscover the specificity, the heterogeneity and the spontaneity of experience? Can the distant or the foreign culture be rendered in familiar terms without at the same time contributing to its loss?

Among the strongest denunciations of description in modern European travel writing, we can quote several daily notes from Leiris’s travel diary *L’Afrique fantôme* that he kept during the Dakar-Djibouti ethnographic mission. In the entry for March 18, 1932, Leiris raised the question of description by referring to Gide’s *Voyage au Congo*, a travel book that Leiris appreciated for its criticism of the atrocities in colonized Africa, whilst at the same time denigrating descriptions of landscape:

> Mais toutes les descriptions, si brèves soient-elles, sont décidément bien vaines—on ne peut retracer un paysage, mais tout au plus le recréer; à condition, alors, de n’essayer aucunement de décrire. (1981, 248)

[^31]: The lead-in in *Équipée* is emblematic of the paradoxical situation of enunciation. At the end of this passage, Segalen writes that he has always believed the genre of travel and adventure story to be suspicious but that, nevertheless, *Équipée* belongs to this genre (“C’est pourtant un récit de ce genre, récit de voyage et d’aventures, que ce livre propose dans ses pages mesurées, mises bout à bout comme des étapes”; 1983, 11). In *Équipée*, Segalen dramatizes the collision between two fundamental tendencies of its poetry: the contact with the physical world on a sensory level and the poetic creation of a world through the imagination.

[^32]: The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss regarded his voyages as a confrontation with the heterogeneity of reality, and, consequently, with the limits of description. “Why,” asks Lévi-Strauss in the opening chapter to his *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), where he claims to hate travel writing, “should I give a detailed account of so many trivial circumstances and insignificant happenings?” (1973, 17).
But all descriptions, no matter how short, are definitely quite useless—one cannot recall a landscape, but at most recreate it; provided, then, that one does not try at all to describe it. (my translation)

It is paradoxical that the assertion of the vanity of description does not prevent Leiris from engaging in relatively conventional descriptions of sub-Saharan landscape and Africans elsewhere in his travel journal. However, the problem that Leiris raises here is common to many modern travel writers and does not just point to the problematic notion of transparency in description, but rather opens the question of the very motivation of description. This questioning involves, furthermore, the importance that Leiris gives to the notion of the particular, the concrete, and the confrontation with the unknown in one’s self:

Je décris peu. Je note des détails qu’il est loisible à chacun de déclarer déplacés ou futiles. J’en néglige d’autres, qu’on peut juger plus importants. Je n’ai pour ainsi dire rien fait, après coup, pour corriger ce qu’il y a là de trop individuel. Mais ce, afin de parvenir au maximum de vérité. Car rien n’est vrai que le concret. C’est en poussant à l’extrême le particulier que, bien souvent, on touche au général; en exhibant le coefficient personnel au grand jour qu’on permet le calcul de l’erreur; en portant la subjectivité à son comble qu’on atteint l’objectivité (1981, 264).

I describe little. I note down details that one could easily judge inappropriate or trivial. I neglect others that are perhaps more important. I have thus done nothing, in afterthought, to correct what is too individual. But this is in order to arrive at the maximum amount of truth. Because nothing is true other than the concrete. It is by taking the individual to the extreme that, very often, one arrives at the general; by exposing the personal coefficient to daylight one is able to calculate the error; by pushing subjectivity to its limit, one attains objectivity. (my translation)

Leiris finds that while Gide’s travel journal tries its best to convey a sense of reality in the Congo, at the same time the description represses the reality that it wishes to reveal. Contrary to this, Leiris proposes the principle of careful notation of his own internal mental processes that would render visible the most personal, intense, and precise experience of the everyday instead of the exotic object of description that must always remain distant to the observer. The demand for description, thus, is not abandoned but the attention is reoriented toward the traveller’s inner realm of experience.
The Africanist Field of Knowledge

A central feature of travel literature is that it inspires further travel, suggesting reasons why the reader might want to revisit the places depicted. This is reflected in the fact that travel books and guides are frequently the traveller’s favorite companions en route. The close connection between travel writing and the reasons for travel, and the act of travelling, is also observable in the writer’s need to reconcile his or her experiences with the authority of earlier accounts of the same places and routes. At the same time, the existing travel descriptions in the “library” of available references may constitute an obstacle to be overcome by the subsequent travelogue. Obviously also, by offering the reader a form of vicarious experience, travel writing may obviate the reader’s need to travel. Be that as it may, travel writing, and reading travel writing, are closely associated with actual travel—and if not with actual travel, then with potential travel. Much of the comical predicament in Evelyn Waugh’s interwar travel books, for instance, is built on the insight that in order to be able to tell about foreign places one has to pass through many interpretive filters, including earlier travel literature or fictions about the same places.

As we shall see, the circulation of cultural givens concerning sub-Saharan people and spaces is one of the major thematic areas of interpenetration across the fiction/nonfiction divide in this body of work. The study of Orientalist discourse that Edward Said developed is helpful in this respect in showing how the Orient has been “Orientalised” in various Western representations, in learned studies of Islamic culture and languages, travel writing, literature, and other texts, in ways that can be attributed to a closed system of knowledge (1978, 65–70). What is especially worth considering here is what Said has called strategic location and strategic formation, involving a given author’s relationship to the cultural material that he writes about, and the referential power of the textual field of knowledge to which his work contributes (1978, 20). More precisely, strategic location means that anyone “who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient, translated into his

33. In her *Le voyage, le monde et la bibliothèque* (1997), Christine Montalbetti has described the aporias of referentiality that are characteristic of travel writing, including those of description. These include the disparities between the means of writing and the (visual) structures of the world to be described; between language and the object of description (the inadequacy of the lexicon in regard to the foreign, the exotic, the other); and between the order of the text and the disorder of the world (the necessary order of a written composition versus the lack of configuration in the world). Still another question of referentiality that emerges in my examples, but one that is not posed by Montalbetti, is the problem of narrativisation, that is, how to give narrative form to the travel experience.
text” (1978, 20). This may involve the type of narrative voice that the writer adopts, and the kinds of images, themes, and motifs that circulate in his text. Strategic formation, in contrast, points to an intertextual formation and concerns the way in which groups and types of texts, and textual genres “acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large” (1978, 20).

The concept of “Africanism,” meaning something that is represented as characteristically African, but that may also refer to implicit, underlying assumptions about Africa, has been applied in postcolonial studies as a sort of modification of Said’s “Orientalism” to analyse the way in which certain images, themes, and motifs of Africa are employed within a discursive formation, as in European literary modernism. Christopher L. Miller has, for instance, claimed that Africanist texts have had a tendency toward polarized evaluations where “Africa” typically bears a double burden, that of representing “monstrousness and nobility, all imposed by a deeper condition of difference and instability (Pliny’s ‘newness’)” (1985, 5).

However, the Orientalist or Africanist approach does not readily lend itself to a literary analysis, which prefers to focus on genre-specific questions, pertaining for instance to claims for referentiality and probability, or intergeneric relations and distinctions. As many critics have pointed out, Said’s notion of the discursive construction of Orientalism is inflexible with regard to the individual features of texts and their genres on the one hand, and Western culture and its imperial ideology on the other. Said makes little substantive distinction between literary and nonliterary genres, or between fiction and nonfiction, and hardly pays any attention to the differences in the Western writers’ identity and agency in regard to their gender, language, religion, and other variables of cultural or social background. For this reason, the investigation of Africanism in European literature, ethnology, and anthro-
politics has often resulted in monolithic images of the Western mind or short listings of negative stereotyping in different discourses of knowledge.\(^\text{37}\)

As the question of genre and generic relations is of crucial importance to this study, our concern with “Africanism” must have a somewhat different emphasis from Said’s Orientalism. Specifically with regard to the modern novel, it makes sense to ask more precise questions about narrative authority in terms of literary genre and convention, for instance whether the writer’s strategic location is dependent on the kind of narrative voice that is adopted in a text.\(^\text{38}\) In my corpus, a narrative voice may refer to a strategic location that is different from the actual writer’s strategic location; it may also be at variance with the real author’s opinions. Polyphonic narration, such as narratorial irony with regard to the main characters in Waugh’s, Céline’s, and Simenon’s fiction that is set in Africa, typically, puts forward contradictory intentions of narrative authority for the reader’s evaluation, thus illustrating multiple potential strategic locations in relation to the kinds of images and themes that are associated with Africa, the Africans and the colonials. Therefore, the question of hypothetical audience, that is, the kind of audience for whom the author wrote the text, becomes relevant. Both fiction and nonfiction narratives imply a reader, who shares some basic knowledge and values with the author, even if he or she does not have to, or may not be able to agree with these expressions of knowledge and value (i.e., the reader participates in the authorial audience). In fiction, however, the ideal reader of narrative audience may be asked to pretend that the fictional world, and the various voices of that world, constitute a possible world in which he or she can participate by way of imagination (while knowing it to be a fiction).\(^\text{39}\) In nonfiction travel

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37. Perhaps the main problem with the notion of Orientalist discourse is that it appears as a kind of total intercultural translation that has no particular reference, even if it presumes to know its reference best—for, as Robert Young has pointed out, there is no object to which it corresponds. Neither is there any inner conflict in this totality, as Young also argues, but Orientalism is defined as a simple will to dominate, the only possible conflicts arising from the intervention of some outsider critic, a kind of romantic alienated being (Young 1990, 135).

38. Christopher Prendergast, specifically, has posed the question of literary genre in representing realities in other cultures:

To speak of empire in literary texts is not necessarily the same as speaking of empire as constructed by literary texts; the latter would require an analysis of the textuality of the text, its modes of functioning. This we are rarely given in either *Orientalism* or *Culture and Imperialism*. There is, for example, the important issue of literary genre, initially the category of genre itself. Said never discusses it. The manner in which the formal reality of a genre seeks to grasp and represent another culture demands a reflection on the constitution, and thus the constitutive power, of the genre in question. (Prendergast 2000, 95)

39. “Authorial audience” is Peter J. Rabinowitz’s notion of the hypothetical audience (or a reader role) in which actual readers may participate so as to understand the text as much as
writing, a double hypothetical audience is also possible, but it takes different forms. For instance, when a travelogue creates a sense of the writer's travelling persona, this technique may require that the reader knows the persona to be different from the writer's actual self in some way or another. This, again, suggests a double consciousness for reading the text, that is, the reader knows that the narrative is meant to be read as nonfiction but, at the same time, is aware that accuracy in the description of the travel destination may not be as important as creating a credible subjective truth about a place or an interesting travelling persona who filters the experience. Furthermore, instead of being invited to participate in a fictional world by way of imagination, the ideal reader of travel literature is asked to imagine some experience in and of the actual world as a possible one.

Moreover, in these travel books and reportages, the redefinition of the meaning of "Europe" or Western culture is an inseparable element of the various images and conceptions of the African. The encounter with African spaces and cultures suggested for many of these writers a means by which to investigate the limits of Western literature, identity, and ethnonational boundaries, including the criteria that maintained these boundaries. The dilemma that most of these writer-travellers faced was what they saw as the disconcerting modernity and mass culture of their home country. The interest in so-called primitivism or primitive mentality that many of them (but not all) share, where the idea of cultural and creative origin is found in the margins of civilization, or in the depths of one's mind as reflecting this supposedly different kind of mentality, becomes understandable in this context, as a rejection of modern civilization.

As has often been argued, the various modernist primitivisms maintained the traditional opposition between the civilized and the primitive—based on late nineteenth-century evolutionist ideas of the progress of human societies from the primitive to the modern—while at the same time various early twentieth-century avant-garde movements aimed to disempower and redesign these categories. In this reevaluation, both the primitive and Europe (or the "West") were subjected to sweeping generalizations. This meant, typically, and as happens in many of my examples, that African cultures and artifacts functioned as a convenient mirror for Europe and, thus, European society often emerged as a kind of false stereotype of the primitive. Therefore, by taking into consideration the Occidentalism of the European writers—the
way Europe or the West was perceived against the African exotic primitive (or other representatives of Africa)—as a necessary counterpart of its many Africanisms, and the modernist critique of modern civilization, we may be better placed to shed light on the complex dialectic through which European literature and travel writing has continuously constituted itself in opposition to the larger world.40 Most writers who are included in this study resort to the opposition between the primitive and the civilized in one way or another, even if their differences in the definition and evaluation of this dichotomy are also notable and worthy of our attention.

Even if in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Africa was no longer a terra incognita, the knowledge concerning its cultures, especially sub-Saharan and inland cultures, was blurred and fragmentary. We may presume that it was partly for this reason that Black Africa remained an intense locus of conflicting meanings, exhibiting alterity in European early twentieth-century travel writing and fiction. And this sense of alterity is, further, accentuated in my corpus in the often contradictory and uneasy confrontation with one's self-image—with the “internalised exotic” or the “primitive” self—that these works portray in the course of travel. Similarly, the notion of a different kind of psychology, a mentalité primitive, is prominent across interwar travel writing in sub-Saharan Africa. It is important to note, however, that this interest is not necessarily a result of actual readings of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's 1922 influential book of the same name (La mentalité primitive), or the French anthropologist's other theories, but can often be perceived as a kind of common “knowledge” concerning primitive man, prototypically the black African. Some versions of this notion were conceptually related but not directly indebted to any pseudo-anthropological theories. For instance, Karen Blixen's memoir Out of Africa creates a personal myth of African lifestyle (and perhaps something we could also refer to as a cognitive style), with her emphasis on the Africans' innate freedom, nobility, and heroism. As one of the best-known accounts of colonial life in sub-Saharan Africa in the early twentieth century, Out of Africa has also contributed to much more recent stereotypes and cultural givens about the Noble Savage.

In many of these texts, however, and in fictions that take on the same themes, the sense of exotic authenticity that is situated in, or projected onto,
Africa emerges as incompatible with modern historical consciousness and the colonial situation. Consequently, primitivism, or exoticism, is exposed as a myth. What results, then, from this loss of the great opposition, for instance in Greene’s and Leiris’s travelogues, is ambivalence between the search for an authentic experience, and disillusionment (or Weltschmerz). As to these writers’ more or less outspoken stances concerning colonialism, they also represent a variety of positions. Waugh rejected exoticism as a myth, but he was also a staunch supporter of imperialism and colonialist rule, particularly in Waugh in Abyssinia, while others, most notably Gide and Leiris, but also Blixen and Simenon in their different ways, became outspoken critics of colonialism, later supporting the anticolonialist movement.

Imaginary Projections of the African Zone

To generalize, the case studies that form the basis of this study suggest that there are three basic types of cultural givens or assumptions concerning sub-Saharan Africa in this body of work. These categories include, first, the notion of Africa as a place of wonder and renewed perception; second, the discourses of exhaustion and excess, which I have grouped together under the term hermeneutic pessimism; and, third, the imperial concept of Black Africa as a place without history. All three categories appear in various combinations and with different emphases in the individual works.

First of all, one common feature in my corpus is the notion of “Black Africa” as a kind of theatrical stage of wonderful projections. In its most extreme forms, this fantastic space of Africa has no real object to which it could correspond; little or no accuracy is, therefore, required. One prototype of such imaginary space is the lost but rediscovered civilized world, as in H. Rider Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines (1885) and She (1887) to which, for instance, Graham Greene refers in his African travelogue. Another model would be Pierre Loti’s semi-autobiographical novels set in various localities outside Europe, as in Polynesia, Turkey, Japan, and Senegal. In these novels, Loti used his travel journal as a catalyst and a kind of laboratory, thus exemplifying what Tzvetan Todorov has called the egocentric voyage, where the

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41. Edward Said’s observation that the Orient may function as an enclosed “stage” in the discipline of Orientalism is relevant here: “the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe” (Said 1978, 63).
foreign framework allows the traveller, as well as the novelist, to rediscover his taste for life (1993, 345). Loti’s work is seminal for the later French exoticist tradition, including writers like Gide, Céline, Leiris, and Simenon, not only as their predecessor in suggesting models for a literary description of a non-European milieu, but also as an outdated form of picturesque exoticism. A yet more radical version of imaginary Africa was perceived by Raymond Roussel, who depicted Black Africa, in *Impressions d’Afrique* (1910) and *Nouvelles Impressions d’Afrique* (1932), as a fictive pseudo-referent and a kind of immense museum of visual effects and fantastic machinery. Such a fantastic Africa, to which for instance Michel Leiris refers in his travel journal, does not have actual, psychosocial geography, but necessarily only exists for Europe and the Europeans, who appreciate the freedom of imagination to reinvent “Africa” as a man-made entity.

While the notion that Black Africa is a place of fantastic projections is not fully endorsed in my examples except, perhaps, for Loti and Céline, it still remains a powerful image in most of them. In her study *The Modernist Traveler* (2003), Kimberley Healey has underlined the potential in the French word *zone* to describe the heterogeneous and fluctuating nature of the spaces found in early twentieth-century travel writing, including for instance Henri Michaux’s works. Healey writes that the conception of space as a zone transforms geography into a “liminal, latent, and often an imaginary rather than real demarcated space” (2003, 2). Similarly, we can find many instances in early twentieth-century writers’ travelogues where the question of the African simulacrum becomes highly relevant, or where the traveller’s own phantasms and preconceived notions become the focus of the text, as for instance is the case with Leiris’s notion of the *phantomesque* Africa.

Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s novels, which draw widely on the writer’s personal experience, often seem to suggest that the real world is not just comparable to a fictional world, or vice versa, but that each may be assimilated into the other. The West Africa that Céline depicts in his writings regularly poses the question of the status of referential discourse by multiplying the worlds of reference—be they realistic, fantastic, picaresque, or pseudo-autobiographical worlds—and allowing them to constantly interpenetrate each another. Sometimes Céline also deliberately uses images of Africa to dramatize uncertainty about the degree of realism and reliability in his narration. However, the fantastic elements in Céline’s colonial West Africa have not prevented many authors of nonfiction from using Céline’s portrayal of Africa as a guarantor

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42. For Todorov, “Loti’s books are not deceptive, for they do not claim to be telling the truth about the country in question; all they propose to do is describe with sincerity the effect produced by the country on the narrator’s soul” (1993, 310).
of reality in their travel books. For instance, in the “Finale” to his travelogue *Africa Dances: A Book about West African Negroes* (1935), the British anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer notes that “Dr ‘L-F. Céline’ has so well described the atmosphere of a colonial boat in his *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* (1932) that it would be useless to improve on him, and otiose to repeat him” (2003, 282). The fantasy of fiction thus authenticates travel facts. In his African travelogue, Graham Greene similarly refers to Céline’s descriptions.

In Céline’s whole work, from the early play *L’Église* through *Journey to the End of the Night*, his anti-Semitic pamphlets and to his last pseudo-autobiographical novels, such as *Féerie pour une autre fois* (1952, *Fable for Another Time*), where there is also a short passage relating to nightlife in a Cameroonian forest, the West African “realities” and memories often reveal a probability which operates inside a larger artifice: an Africa that is at the same time real and imaginary, and an Africa that epitomizes the almost anarchist forces of nature. Even in Céline’s letters from Cameroon in 1916–17, the trope of Black Africa is associated with the power to conjure up exciting scenes, and the ability to fuse material reality closely with the metaphorical or possible world, and unreliable narration. Some of Céline’s first experiments in fiction, such as a story called “Des vagues,” which is loosely based on the events on the steamer that took him back to Europe, are also included in these letters.

**Hermeneutic Pessimism, or the Discourses of Exhaustion and “Fractal Travel”**

The image of sub-Saharan Africa in my corpus is often characterized by a sense of hermeneutic pessimism, resulting from an awareness of the semiotic uncertainties of description, that is, a recognition of the gap between representation and the objects to be represented. The basic forms of such discrepancy between the signs and the world are the discourse of exhaustion and excess, both involving an elusive object of description, that is, an African reality which is just too rich, heterogeneous, strange, and detailed or disturbingly monotonous. Both the discourse of exhaustion and excess suggest that the ways in which the world can be classified and described is potentially endless and, consequently, description will always remain wanting in details and to some extent arbitrary.

This discourse of exhaustion often coincides with the sense of belatedness: there are no illusions left of the exotic outside of Western civilization.43 Paul

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43. Ali Behdad argues that mid- and late nineteenth-century writer-travellers in the Orient were characterized by their sense of belatedness, since the “European colonial power structure
Fussell has articulated the discourse of exhaustion in the context of interwar travel writing in relation to the growing tourist industry and the resulting opposition between a traveller, a tourist, and an anti-tourist. A traveller, at this time, was someone who conceived travel to be like study or scientific research, whereas a tourist did not presume to know anything of the places he visits. An anti-tourist, in turn, was motivated by his class-conscious self-protection and vanity to think that he is like a traveller (even if he was much closer to a tourist) (Fussell 1980, 43–45). Accordingly, many twentieth-century travel writers, such as Robert Byron, defined “authentic” and individual forms of travel in contrast to mass tourism and its commercially determined circuits of travel.

Sometimes an inseparable counterpart of the discourse of exhaustion in these works is the description of the African experience in terms of excess, haunted by a proliferation of signs, images, and potential meanings that are more or less uncontrollable. Such an effect may result, for instance, from the sense of overwhelming richness in reality or, equally, from the estranging monotony and irregular structures of reality that highlight the difficulty in making sense of the experience. What Michael Cronin has called the fractal dimension of travel is insightful in this respect (2000, 17). The “fractal” vision in travel involves a heightened awareness of and sensitivity to the details and particulars of the places of travel, such as the complexity and history of cultures, the language of description and, potentially, the complexities in the traveller’s own identity that are revealed to him or her during the journey (2000, 18–19). The traveller’s experience of movement may, further, heighten such fractal visions of complex structures. My case studies will show how the open-endedness of travel, and misadventure, function as a means by which the writer-traveller can undermine habitual patterns of thought and behaviour.

and the rise of tourism had transformed the exotic referent into the familiar sign of Western hegemony” (1994, 13).

44 James Buzard has claimed that “anti-tourism” has been an element of modern tourism from the start, and that it has “offered an important, even exemplary way of regarding one’s own cultural experiences as authentic and unique, setting them against a backdrop of always assumed tourist vulgarity, repetition, and ignorance” (1993, 5).

45 Helen Carr has pointed out, in reference to Hilaire Belloc’s The Path to Rome (1902), the modern traveller’s desire not just to “put a distance between himself as traveller and the burgeoning droves of tourists,” but the need to describe the byway, not the famous sights (2002, 79). Evelyn Waugh blames Belloc’s travelogue for inventing a new kind of traveller, a type of antimodern pilgrim or a travel snob, who walks long distances in “shabby clothes,” avoiding trains and hotels and, furthermore, manages not only “to get paid to write travel books” but find “peculiar relish in discomfort” (2003, 37).
Postimperial Melancholy and Africa That Has No History

A disturbing aspect in some of these travelogues and fictions is the sometimes close relationship between the search for an authentic, mythological Africa and the imperialist concept that Africa has no history. The view that Africa is a “land of childhood” that is outside or beyond any proper history was first articulated by G. W. F. Hegel in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837) and established as knowledge during the era of colonialist expansion in Africa (from around the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference to the decolonization of Africa after the Second World War). The notion held that Africans were incapable of creating their own cultures, living in a nearly pure state of nature, and for this reason they could not have their own histories. The claim was further justified by presumed differences in race and mentality and, as in Hegel’s lectures, in reference to Africa’s supposed geographical isolation from the rest of the world—exempting Egypt and the Mediterranean coastline, a zone that Hegel called “European Africa”—and the lack of cross-cultural contacts. Hegel saw the supposed geographical and cultural isolation of sub-Saharan Africa reflected also in the Africans’ “primitive” religious practices and political systems.

In the light of this imperialist concept, the lack of reference to any explicit geographical and historical location in Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* (first published in serial form in 1899), a text which is evoked throughout my corpus, is profoundly ambivalent. Christopher L. Miller has pointed out how Conrad’s suppression of historical places in the novella, where “every detail points to Africa but ‘Africa’ alone is missing,” creates the ambiguous effect where the phrase “heart of darkness” can “never be wholly identified as either a repressed, encoded real referent or a fictive pseudo-referent, independent of the real world. *Heart of Darkness* is in fact deeply engaged in both projects at once” (1985, 175). With regard to most writers who are included

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46. Hegel writes in *The Philosophy of History* that

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitional phase of civilization; but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World’s History. (1956, 99)

47. However, *Heart of Darkness* also demystifies the great exotic other, Marlow’s boyhood fantasy of Africa as “the biggest, the most blank” space on the world map. Conrad’s novella
in this study, Conrad’s novella functions as a central reference and textual authority, whose impact cuts across languages, literatures, and the divide between fiction and nonfiction. André Gide, who also translated Conrad, read *Heart of Darkness* for the fourth time during his West African journey in 1925 and 1926. Greene and Leiris quote Conrad in their travelogues. In Simenon’s novel *45º à l’ombre*, the protagonist Donadieu concentrates on some unnamed Conrad novel, where the events take place on a cargo ship, while travelling back to Europe from Africa on an ocean liner, and so on.48

In this corpus, the ideal of (lost) exotic authenticity and nostalgia for absolute alterity sometimes belies the colonialist notion that Africa has no history of its own. Likewise, it is commonplace that some aspect of the Africans’ life or their environment, be it real or imaginary, comes to epitomize them as a whole. This may become obvious, for instance, in what Arjun Appadurai has referred to as the “metonymic freezing” of the locals as “natives” (1988, 36–37). This occurs in some passages in Gide’s African travel journal for instance, where the Africans in certain villages of the Congo are characterized by their supposed lack of individuality, distinction, and property. The same notion of non-distinction may be implied in descriptions of colonial imitation, as in Waugh’s ridicule of the Africans’ imitation of Western customs and dress in Addis Ababa, thus presupposing that the Ethiopians are unable to understand such customs and traditions. Equally, but with a very different emphasis, the same notion may be present in Blixen’s admiration for the Africans’ resistance to appropriation and forced imitation of Western civilisation, customs, and dress, thus presupposing that African nobility is beyond our (limited) notions of tradition and history. Still another strategy in description that relies on a similar preconceived notion is the emptying of African forest of everything human, as we will later see in relation to Conrad’s, Greene’s, and Céline’s descriptions of the African forest.

**Outline of This Book**

Part I, “Narrating and Describing West Africa,” opens with two chapters that investigate the way in which certain descriptive passages in travel writing and in fiction foreground the writer’s mental processes and trigger, further-

48. There is no evidence, however, of Evelyn Waugh having read *Heart of Darkness* (see Stannard 1986, 267).
more, the problem of the language of description. Chapter 1, “The Enchanted Arrival: Passage into West Africa in the Travel Writings of Blaise Cendrars, André Gide, and Graham Greene,” analyzes three scenes of arrival in sub-Saharan West Africa where the travel writer (Cendrars, Gide, and Greene) perceives the passage into Black Africa as a relocation to another world. Typically, the scene of arrival dramatizes the traveller's cross-cultural encounters with local people or his or her experience of radical contingency. In terms of narrative organization, the arrival scenes function as another beginning in the story beyond the traveller's initial departure from home, and a set of instabilities that call for narrative explanation. Chapter 2, “The Rhetoric of the Mad African Forest in Joseph Conrad, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, and Graham Greene,” investigates the description of African forests, which is a central shared topos across the fiction/nonfiction divide, focusing on Conrad’s African notebooks and fictions, Céline’s novel Journey to the End of the Night, and Greene’s travelogue Journey Without Maps. The comparison between these works will show how the discourses of excess and exhaustion, that is, that the African reality is too overwhelming for representation, may be intertwined within one description. Chapter 3, “Travel Narrative between Spatial Sequence and Open Consequence in Graham Greene’s Journey Without Maps” returns to Greene’s African travelogue, and his novels set in Africa, but from a different angle that those in Chapters 1 and 2, developing the idea of narrativisation and narrative consequence that will be important throughout this study. The question of narrativisation will emerge especially in relation to the ways in which Greene manipulates the relationship between sequence and consequence, or between the spatio-temporal order of the journey and the personal experience of travel in his travelogue.

Part II, “Travel Writing and the Novel,” consists of sustained close readings of travel writing and novels in three authors’ works. These readings will amplify the theoretical basis of the research and illustrate some of the main research findings. The analyses include André Gide’s travel journals Voyage au Congo and Le retour du Tchad (combined in the translation Travels in the Congo) and the novel Les Faux-Monnayeurs (The Counterfeiters); Evelyn Waugh’s travel books Remote People and Waugh in Abyssinia and his novels Black Mischief and Scoop; and, finally, Georges Simenon’s African reportages, along with his Le Coup de lune (Tropic Moon), 45º à l’ombre (Aboard the Aquitaine), and Le Blanc à lunettes (Talatala), three novels set in Africa. Chapter 4, “The Immediacy of Reading: André Gide’s Travel Fact and Travel Fictions,” analyses, on the one hand, the features in Gide’s major novel, The Counterfeiters, that evoke the themes of Africa and travel, including the Conradian trope of madness-inducing immersion in the “heart of darkness,” and the meta-
phor of “writing as a journey.” On the other hand, this chapter investigates the way in which Gide’s travel journal *Travels in the Congo* evokes the question of fiction-writing and the reading of fiction. Chapter 5, “The Incongruous Worlds of Evelyn Waugh’s Ethiopia,” discusses the interplay between Waugh’s travel writing and fiction especially in terms of the way in which fiction was a source of information, and even a kind of conceptual model for his East African travel books and reportages. It should be emphasized, however, that the objective of this investigation is not source-hunting in the authors’ nonfiction travel writing but the two-way interaction between the genres. Waugh’s writings about real and imaginary East African spaces reveal a symptomatic image of East Africa, common to all of his writings across the fiction/nonfiction divide, as a unique space of possible worlds and a source of endless comic or absurd juxtapositions of cultural incongruity. Chapter 6, “A Critique of the African Picturesque in Georges Simenon’s Travel Reportages and Novels,” discusses the ways in which Simenon’s novels probe the relation between real circumstances and misconceived notions of Africa, particularly with regard to the notion of picturesque exotic, and do it similarly to or differently from his travel articles and essays. The comparison between Simenon’s fiction and nonfiction requires that we carefully consider the narrative situation and voice in these novels, particularly pertaining to the changing distance between the narrator and the characters.

Part III, “Inventions of Life Narrative,” opens with a critical investigation of generic potentiality in narrative texts, based on some passages in Pierre Loti’s and Joseph Conrad’s African fictions that refer to travel writing. Chapter 7, “Virtual Genres in Pierre Loti’s and Joseph Conrad’s African Travel Diaries and Fiction,” expands the narratological notions of the disnarrated and narratorial counterfactual to encompass those generic frames that are evoked in these texts and that could have been adopted to depict the events, but that nevertheless remain unrealised projections. The two subsequent chapters in this section focus on the distinction between fiction and nonfiction in the context of autobiographical writing. Chapter 8, “Out of Europe: The African Palimpsest in Michel Leiris’s *L’Afrique fantôme*” demonstrates how Leiris’s travel journal anticipates his later experiments with autobiography and life writing. By listing his favorite literary (and other) images of Africa in his travel journal, Leiris dramatizes a loss of command of the exotic discourse and narrative authority, thus pointing to the cure of his exotic illusions, which the writer later associated with European egocentrism vis-à-vis other cultures. Chapter 9, “Africanist Paradoxes of Storytelling in Karen Blixen’s *Out of Africa*,” discusses the interrelation between Blixen’s notions of Africa, Africans and storytelling in *Out of Africa*. Despite the fact that *Out of Africa* is a
memoir and not a travel book, its inclusion in this study is justified in that Blixen explicitly takes issue with the fiction/nonfiction divide, and redefines the art of storytelling through her African experience in a way that is related to my other main examples.\(^{49}\) Blixen’s memoir, furthermore, raises the question of narrativisation and asks how fiction can contribute to autobiographical writing.

**The Choice of Examples**

It must be emphasized that the writers who are included in this study do not constitute a homogeneous group and that putting their works together in this way needs to be justified. The most important reasons for choosing these particular European writers are that they wrote both fiction and nonfiction (travel books or memoirs) that are set in sub-Saharan Africa and that their works have a number of themes, patterns, and techniques in common. Moreover, most of these works share the same Conradian intertext and many of these writers also refer to each other’s works (Greene employs Céline’s imagery; Leiris and Waugh refer to Gide’s travelogue; Gide translated Conrad and read Simenon’s African novels, and so on).

Despite these striking similarities, however, the differences are also significant. Karen Blixen was a settler in Kenya; she did not publish travel writing. Michel Leiris, by contrast, who belongs to the same generation as Simenon, Waugh, and Greene, is a case apart in the sense that he hardly published any fiction in his career after a short surrealistic period in the 1920s. Pierre Loti and Georges Simenon, in turn, may be identified as writers of popular fiction. André Gide, by contrast, clearly belongs to the high modernist generation, and his *The Counterfeiters* can be counted among the most important early twentieth-century experiments with the novel form. Louis-Ferdinand Céline is, without question, distinct from the other authors in that he did not write any actual travelogue, reportage, or memoir from Africa. His letters from Cameroon in 1916–17 do not allow us to make extended comparisons

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49. Blixen made four long trips back to Denmark during the years when she lived at her farm in Kenya, but does not describe the travelling as part of the African experience in her memoir, except for the story “Fellow-Travellers.” Blixen travelled or stayed temporarily in Denmark, between April 1915 and November 1916; August 1919 and November 1920; March 1925 and February 1926; and May and December 1929. The distinction between travel and emigrant/immigrant writing is further complicated by the fact that not all travel books focus on the act of travelling but on a period spent in a foreign place. Thompson (2011, 18) makes the simple but helpful observation that the journey can be given a very different degree of prominence in narratives that count as travel writing.
with the writer’s fiction either, even if they seek to undermine the fiction/nonfiction divide due to their invented and fictional elements. Céline’s post-World War II works, in particular, would pose an interesting challenge to any simple distinction between fiction and autobiography, but since these works include only a few short passages about his life in Africa they are not included here. The trajectory of Céline’s literary career is obviously also marked by the anti-Semitic pamphlets that he wrote in the late 1930s. In Waugh’s travel writings, colonialism is much less problematic for the author than in the other examples.

Nevertheless, reading fiction and nonfiction side by side in these authors’ works allows us to make relevant comparisons that suggest meaningful conclusions about the interplay and cross-fertilization between the respective genres. Blixen’s description of scenes of storytelling indicates that, at some more profound level of a person’s life story, the distinction between fictional and nonfictional sources of narrative loses its usefulness. Leiris’s African travelogue pursues the issue of fictionality, and the relation between memory and the reality of a place, in a way that directly relates to the other writers included here. The reading of Simenon’s travel writing together with his less known “exotic novels” or “romans du monde,” which are set in the places of his travel, makes apparent some of the subtle strategies by which this writer constructed his realist fiction. Gide’s African travelogue, in turn, marks a critical moment in the writer’s career that is perhaps not given the attention that it deserves. The description of acts of reading in Travels in the Congo, for instance, suggests a sense of continuity with many questions that Gide, or his mouthpieces in The Counterfeiters, had raised about the novel genre prior to the journey. Moreover, his African travelogue opened up a new phase in his career in terms of politically engaged writing. Céline’s novel Journey to the End of the Night, finally, since it exaggerates and thus undermines some common stereotypes of Black Africa, but also because his description of African colonial life acquired a certain authority in this time (similar to even if less influential than Heart of Darkness), allows us to investigate the distinction between factuality and fictionality that is at the core of this study.