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White Man's Country: The Image of Africa in the American Century

By

Aaron John Bady

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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in the

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Committee in charge:

Professor Bryan Wagner, Chair

Professor Donna Jones

Professor Scott Saul

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## Abstract

### White Men's Country: The Image of Africa in the American Century

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Berkeley

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It is often taken for granted that “the West’s image of Africa” is a dark and savage jungle, the “white man’s grave” which formed the backdrop for Joseph Conrad’s hyper-canonical *Heart of Darkness*. In the wake of decolonization and independence, African writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o provided alternate accounts of the continent, at a moment when doing so was rightly seen to be “The Empire Writes Back.” Yet in the years since then, “going beyond the clichés” has itself become a kind of cliché. In the last decade in particular, the global investment class has taken up the appeal to “Re-brand Africa” with a vengeance. Providing positive images of Africa is not necessarily a radical critique of empire’s enduring legacies, in other words; it can also be an effort to brand and market “Africa” as a product for capital speculation.

In *White Men’s Country: The Image of Africa in the American Century*, I describe how American literary investments in Africa grew, alongside the slow decline of European cultural imperialism. If European writers and artists worked to legitimize violent conquest by represent the continent as “darkest Africa,” the informal American empire of capital created an American counter-narrative, showing Africa to be a brilliant frontier of unbounded future possibility. When this self-consciously American tradition pictured “Africa,” I argue, they turned their gaze away from the equatorial rain forests of West and Central Africa that Joseph Conrad had made famous and instead focused on the Great Rift Valley of present day Kenya and Tanzania. There, they looked for and found a renewed vision of the closing American frontier, a “brightest Africa” of rebirth, redemption, and recovery.

My first chapter locates the beginning of this tradition in the United States’ emergence from the Civil War, and in Henry Morton Stanley’s world famous 1872 exploration narrative, *How I Found Livingstone*. Stanley was born a Welsh orphan—and in his later years, he returned to this identity as a British gentleman—but when he “found” Livingstone, he was pretending to be an American and his narrative pictures Africa by explicit analogy to the American Southwest. Stanley employs the same narratives and images he had used to describe General Hancock’s war on the plains Indians, when he first made his name as a journalist. By omitting the American chapter in Stanley’s career, historians have allowed the British author of *Through the Dark Continent* and *In Darkest Africa* to represent the entirety of the Anglo-American exploration tradition. In this chapter, by contrast, I recover how Stanley’s most famous and influential text

explored and exploited the fracture between British and American, asserting the imperial destiny of the rising American state as it symbolically rescued the ailing and elderly British.

In my second and third chapters, I show how Theodore Roosevelt invented himself, on the American frontier, and then repeated the gesture in Africa, popularizing (if not inventing) inventing the big game safari. Before his 1910 bestseller *African Game Trails*, the word “safari” had signified the dependence of European explorers on their Arab-African guides and interpreters, but Roosevelt introduced the word into global English by transforming the safari into a globally comprehensible practice of seeing, as well as popularizing the sense of Africa which it presumes: an “Africa” which is open and available to be seen and shot. By focusing on the tourist’s power to see and comprehend, he made the visibility of skin-color the epistemological dividing line between those who actively see and shoot and those who are passively seen and shot. And by adapting the frontier persona he had created in his “Western” memoirs—*Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, *Ranch Life and the Hunting-Trail*, and *The Wilderness Hunter*—he made Africa a site where Americans could still experience the pleasures of the now-closed Western frontier.

In the 1930’s, the safari tradition was divided between the campy fantasy of the *Tarzan* cinematic franchise—which sought to domesticate, rehabilitate, or render invisible the racialized violence of the Rooseveltian safari—and Ernest Hemingway’s nostalgic “realism,” which sought to mourn the impossibility of Roosevelt in the modern era. In my final chapter, I stage Tarzan against Hemingway as two sides of the same coin, the fantasy which could not find grounding in fact and the reality which had no room for romance. For both, the problem was the non-existence of what Roosevelt took to be his primary aesthetic problem: transforming racialized violence into paternalistic (and patriarchal) love.

## Acknowledgements

It is conventional to use this space to acknowledge those whose assistance, friendship, and love made the work of scholarship possible. In my case, such acknowledgement is necessary: this work would never have been done without the people around me, without the friends, colleagues, and family who I too often neglected in order to finish my dissertation. It has been my great good fortune to have so many people willing to put up with me; I aspire to be a better friend to them in the future, to be worthy of their friendship. And I list these names and express my humble gratitude because to remind myself, now, that friends and loved ones are not the means of doing one's scholarly work—of getting through the crisis of the moment—but are the end and outcome of the much more important work of being a human being.

This project began in Tanzania, when I first felt as Ernest Hemingway did, that “it always seemed stupid to be white in Africa.” Through the measured warmth of my hosts—who treated me simply as a person among people—I began to think about different ways to be a white person in Africa, or at least aspiring to try. To the students, parents, and teachers of Shinda Basic School, to Manasi, and to my fellow wazungu, Noel, Monica, and Anton, may your habari always be mzuri. To Pasion Kimaro, shikamoo one last time, mwalimu. At American University, Chuck Larson took me under his wing, told me I was going to be an Africanist, and made it come true. Dan, Drew, Rika, Angda, Antonio, Kim, Adam, Linzey, Sarah, Richard, David, Roberta, Keith, Jeff, and Marianne made Washington, DC a city I look back to with more fondness than I can sometimes bear to recall. At Berkeley and in Oakland, too many people made the Bay Area a home for me to name, but I'd like to thank Eric for buying the round, Ian, David, Namwali, and Oliver for their valiant efforts in the doomed campaign to get us all jobs, Sam for knowing what my dissertation was about before I did, Scott for making me rise to his expectations, Donna for talking with me about things much more interesting than my dissertation, Bryan, who always reminded me that there are more important things to be than a professor, and kept it all in perspective, and to Gautam, whose care, kindness, and sharp reading made this a dissertation that was worth finishing.

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## Introduction: Darkest Africa, Brightest Africa

From the vantage point of many in the West, Africa remains a continent of woe – a place stalked by ethnic conflict, corrupt dictatorships, religious strife, war and famine. But today, at last, the flawed mythology that treats Africa as a homogeneous disaster area is being challenged by investors, economists, fund managers, and academics.

—Charles Robertson, *The Fastest Billion*<sup>1</sup>

In 1975, when Chinua Achebe called Joseph Conrad a “bloody racist” and argued that “the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination” was the “dark continent” or the “darkest Africa” which was to be found in a novel like *Heart of Darkness*, his remarks were provocative, controversial, and productive.<sup>2</sup> Conrad has hardly been expunged from the canon, of course, hyperbolic comments from cultural conservatives notwithstanding. But Achebe’s polemic irrevocably changed the terms through which Conrad could be read; ever since, even Conrad’s defenders have had to account for the “Conrad” who Achebe had rendered visible, a “Conrad” who carried the burden and the guilt of the West’s ideological vision (or blindness) of Africa.

Of course, as a great many critics have pointed out, Achebe’s essay is a rather incomplete reading of Conrad’s novella. Achebe explicitly refuses to attend to the narrative mediation through which *Heart of Darkness* stages Africa’s illegibility, the layering of point of view and perspective by which the original of Conrad’s narrator’s Marlow’s Kurtz’s “The horror, the horror” is either made unavailable to the reader or staged through this deferral, a cumulative accretion of de-contextualization. Instead, Achebe presents the novella as a work of mimetic realism, and a rather naive reflection of Conrad’s unprocessed consciousness, interchangeable with Conrad’s Congo diary—and Marlow a thinly veiled stand-in for the author—and on the basis of this staging, condemns Conrad for his failure to portray Africa realistically. Yet by discounting the very narrative techniques for which the book was canonized and celebrated, the stage was set for Conrad’s defenders to rediscover the text’s ambivalence and ambiguity, using those qualities to make Conrad the exception that proved the more generally racist rule. As this reading goes—which we find in critics like Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Edward Said, for example—the West’s image of Africa might be racist, ignorant, and ideologically motivated, but Conrad himself was both conscious of this fact and critical of it.<sup>3</sup> This fact could even be what

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Robertson, *The Fastest Billion: The Story Behind Africa's Economic Revolution* (New York: Renaissance Capital Securities Limited, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's ‘Heart of Darkness,’” *Massachusetts Review*, 18, no. 4 (1977): 782-794. Especially after the essay was reprinted in the Norton Edition of *Heart of Darkness*, it has become a central part of Conrad criticism. For a useful contextualization of the context in which Achebe delivered his lecture—both the status of “Conrad” in Anglo-American criticism and the effect of Achebe's intervention—see Robert Hampson, “Joseph Conrad—Postcolonialism and Imperialism” *Euroamerica* 41, no. 1 (March 2011), 1-46.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 19-31, and Ngugi wa Thiong’o *Moving the Centre: the Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (London: James Currey, 1993), 5-6.

his novel was about: instead of a realistic depiction of Africa, the novel can be read as critiquing the very possibility of mimetic representation, presenting “Africa” as a function of its own ideological mystification. By placing the modernist artist in conflict with the realist fiction, Conrad can even become a secret sharer in the postcolonial project, with *Heart of Darkness* a “postcolonialist” text in its own right.

Both these readings presume the primary work of textual representation; if a critical text critiques a mimetic claim, then that claim remains primary: after Achebe, *Heart of Darkness* cannot represent the truth of human psychology, for example, nor portray the beast at the heart of humanity, or any of the other claims which had been made on its behalf in the 20th century. It must either sink or swim on the basis of whether it represents Africa or whether it critiques the possibility of doing so.

This debate is African literature’s primal scene: just as Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* was the foundational African novel of the 20th century, this critical framework sets the terms through which the function and use of African literature have been theorized, particularly in Western academe. By establishing that Conrad was not *really* writing about Africa, for example, and establishing the origin of his fiction in the blinding psychology of racism and ideology of empire, Achebe not only created a powerful sense of “Conrad” against which African writers like himself could define themselves, but Conrad’s failures of representation overdetermine the work of realist responses like *Things Fall Apart*. If Conrad had showed Africa as a primal negation and an absent humanity, in other words, Achebe’s work must be to affirm Africa’s human presence. “I would be quite satisfied,” Achebe has been many times quoted as saying:

if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them.<sup>4</sup>

This was not all that Achebe’s novels did, of course. But as a critical perspective—and one which has come to be institutionalized—it has described and circumscribed the work of African literature and culture in very specific terms, as the negation of the primal negation that *Heart of Darkness* represented. This is both a double negative and a kind of negative tautology: since Conrad describes Africa as an absolute negation, Achebe must negate Conrad by declaring Africa to be an absolute affirmation: if Conrad said Africa was *not*, then Achebe must argue it to *be*. But since what Africa *wasn’t* invariably turns out to be some variation on the “one long night of savagery” which Achebe describes in his essay and associates with Conrad, the field of what Africa is, just as invariably, turns out to be its inverse, pure (and therefore *blank*) affirmation.

For example, Achille Mbembe’s *On the Postcolony*—probably the most widely-read and contemporary effort at a generalist African theory of cultural politics—not only opens with an epigraph from *Heart of Darkness*, but uses it to ground the sweeping observation that “Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world.”<sup>5</sup> Given such a framing, can “Africa” be recovered as a useful concept? If alterity, negation, and difference have been its once and future meaning, one what epistemological foundation could it ever be used?

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<sup>4</sup> Chinua Achebe, “The Novelist as Teacher” (1965), in Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays, 1965–87* (London: Heinemann, 1988), 45.

<sup>5</sup> Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1.

The easy answer, of course, is that it cannot be, and academic discussions of “Africa”—in a variety of fields—tend either to compulsively disavow the term itself or to foreground their deconstructive disavowal of its possibility. In this way, as a structure of negation, “Africa” can frame the work of affirmation which is to be done, but it cannot, as such, be trusted to describe a real thing. “Africa” is always under suspicion. There is something almost ritualistic, in fact, in the way (especially non-African) scholars absolve themselves of the necessity to describe the African continent, declaring it to be such a vastly diverse landmass, inhabited by such a heterogeneous aggregation of populations, that any single representation or claim for or about “Africa” must fall short, fail as paradigm, or actively mis-describe its object.

Within anthropology, for example, as James Ferguson observes, a disciplinary commitment to local fieldwork produced an almost compulsive disavowal of the problem of Africa as such; as he paraphrases the manner in which Africanists talk about Africa:

Africa...is, after all, an enormous and diverse continent. Conditions are really very different from country to country, and from locality to locality. So, I don't know about ‘Africa,’ but let me tell you about where I worked.....<sup>6</sup>

The result for Anthropology, as Ferguson observes, is that by “[r]efusing the very category of ‘Africa’ as empirically problematic, anthropologists and other scholars devoted to particularity have thus allowed themselves to remain bystanders in the wider arena of discussions about ‘Africa.’”<sup>7</sup> But this problem is not confined to practical field work, with its hyper-attentiveness to local specificity. Africanist philosophy and critical theory has been at least as determined to place the assertion of an empirical “Africa” as fundamentally problematic. Observe, for example, how V.Y. Mudimbe describes what his *The Idea of Africa*—like his earlier *The Invention of Africa*—will be about, only by carefully naming what it will *not* be about:

*The Idea of Africa*, like *The Invention of Africa*, is not about the history of Africa's landscapes or her civilizations...*The Invention of Africa* was not a presentation of the history of African anthropology, nor even that of the colonial conversion of the continent. And *The Idea of Africa* is certainly not concerned with such perspectives. At any rate, it does not analyze what one could call African achievements.<sup>8</sup>

Every one of Mudimbe's sentences are phrased in the negative, positioning what he will actually study—the discursive production of “Africa” as an idea and invention—as the negation of the empirical Africa which he will invoke and gesture towards, precisely by not addressing it, but by negating its negation. Indeed, by framing even non-discursive elements of the continent in discursive terms (speaking of “what one could call African achievements,” for example, or framing the history, anthropology, and colonial conversion of the continent as simply “perspectives”), it becomes difficult to see the two as having anything to do with each other; Africa's objectivity and the subjectivity which observes it are radically distinct, and apparently for good reason.

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<sup>6</sup> James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ferguson (2006), 3.

<sup>8</sup> V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), xii.

How, then, can one talk about Africa? These examples represent common ways of deferring a very real problem—recourse to the local on the one hand and disavowal of the general, on the other—but they do not solve it. Indeed, rigorously asserting the discourse’s essentially non-empirical and ahistorical quality actually preserves and even privileges the underlying assertion that there *is* an empirical Africa, precisely by the discourse’s failure of mimetic realism: an idea and invention of “Africa” has taken the place of what might otherwise be understood to be “really” there, and for which phrases like “the history of Africa’s landscapes or her civilizations,” “the history of African anthropology,” “the colonial conversion of the continent,” and/or “African achievements” effectively stand in. But the result is that Mudimbe and Ferguson’s anthropologists alike must (apparently) have no ambitions to describe the historical and empirical Africa which is being misperceived and misrepresented; to the extent it even enters their disciplinary field of vision, it is only as a “discourse,” the ideological phantom haunting African studies. More to the point, by refraining from speaking about it—refusing to discursively represent it—the empirical Africa comes to be all the more firmly reinforced as the point of reference, the limit point at which the discourse fails as representation and the “real” intrudes. But as talk becomes the only thing one can reliably talk about, the referent can only be implied, necessarily so, but necessarily unspeakable.

To the extent that we understand “Africa” as being composed through its own negation, in other words, correcting the negative discourse becomes a central task of African studies work, to such an extent that “Africa” becomes only a very particular kind of problem, the difference between an “Africa” which is seen and see-able in the West—and which is known by the racist and objectionable othering which it facilitates—and the Africa which, stripped of its quotation marks, could be or is to be liberated from the myth of the dark continent, solvable by negating the original negation. But it never quite is, nor could be, and the gestural character of arguments like Mudimbe’s is characteristic of the entire category’s superscription by its terms. If the critique of Western discourse is meant to clear space for the eventual emergence of an Africanist alternative, however—as Mudimbe explicitly claims—then it also never quite emerges; indeed, it cannot, precisely as a function of its categorical mistrust of discourse. Far from deconstructing the negative and mystifying discourse which makes “Africa” into a singular, static figure for Manichaean darkness, that negative and mystifying discourse continues to be a primary subject of critical attention: it seems difficult to say anything about Africa except that whatever Africa is, it is not *that*.

I would suggest that this state of affairs is both overdetermined by and symptomatic of the manner in which “Conrad” has come to embody the West’s “image of Africa,” a fact which is, in turn, both overdetermined by and symptomatic of the hyper-canoncity of the model of culture that we find in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. I phrase my claim as capaciously as possible, here, not only to include the influence and centrality of the authors and texts themselves but also to gesture towards the broader cultural and political currents which they exemplified. Just as “Conrad” is taken to figure broader tendencies in “the West” more generally, the specific influence and importance of Achebe and his first novel also crystallized a broader, generational project of African world making. Achebe’s role in establishing Heinemann’s *African Writers Series*—for and through which *Things Fall Apart* became iconic—powerfully shaped the emergence of aesthetic categories like “African literature,” and the re-conceptualization of “African culture” which emerged out of the project of decolonization

in the 1960's.<sup>9</sup> But as generations of critics and theorists have contextualized African culture by reference to this mode of corrective critique, the idea of “Conrad” has become much more present than Conrad himself ever was, his novel flattened out into a few representative passages, rather than addressed in its ambivalent and contradictory complexity (even as, in “speaking back” to this oversimplified “Conrad,” Achebe himself becomes more of a critical gesture than an artist. This flattening is clearest, in fact, when critics essentially accept Achebe’s argument in its broadest terms—as a critique of a civilizational totality—yet excuse from the critique the actual object of Achebe’s ire; when the villain is a sense of “the West” to which almost no one owes their primary allegiance, after all, disavowing that identity is not only comparatively painless, but any and all identifying specificity serves to distance one from the problematic identity itself. Joseph Conrad can be asserted to be an expatriate Pole, for example, whose experience of Russian imperialism makes him an exceptional case.<sup>10</sup> When the charge is so general, and so vague, it applies to no individual in particular: we attack attitudes and beliefs that were “in the air,” critiquing discourses and mythologies whose cultural prominence and consequence might be undeniable, but whose actual location and material utility we do not describe. And by attributing these ideas to an entire “culture” or “civilization” (with those terms usually left undefined), we fail to attend to the particularities of where and why and how and to whom particular ideological employments of “Africa” were made and were made salient, instead presuming a finished and totalizing consensus ideology, held by everyone in general but also by no one in particular.

In this dissertation I will represent an aspect of Africa, mapping a geographical imaginary that has had real and consequential effects on and off the continent itself, and which—if it cannot be *completely* described, can be adequately sketched in its broader and more consequential contours. I will describe *Brightest* Africa, the speculative fiction which promises rebirth and rejuvenation, interest (both affective and financial), and serves as an object of desire for those who find themselves desiring Africa. I will argue that it is located in—or perhaps *focused* by—East Africa, or the particular understanding of East Africa which I will show to derive from the confluence of interests that made American white men find a new frontier of self-making in Africa, who looked for the “White Man’s Country” they understood the American past to have been, and found—in African futurity—the prospect of its return. Finally, I will argue that the game safari—and the Rift Valley savannah that it takes as its backdrop and makes as such—represent the most highly developed version of this Africa, its colonial form *par excellence*.

To observe that this African narrative—and its material realizations—are *colonialist* is so obviously true that pointing it out actually obscures more than it reveals. After all, what *isn’t* touched by colonialism in Africa? But the logic of negation only makes “colonialist” a useful adjective to apply if we beg the question of its opposite, the notion that there could be an Africa without colonialism, that if we strip away the “dark continent,” what will be left is not-dark. As a starting point, then, I would only begin by observing that since *Heart of Darkness* is neither the sum total of “the West’s” image of Africa, nor is it even usefully representative, critically

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<sup>9</sup> See Simon Gikandi, “Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture,” *Research in African Literature* 32, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>10</sup> Ngugi explains the attraction Conrad had for him, for instance, by noting “He was Polish, born in a country and a family that had known only the pleasures of domination and exile. He learned English relatively late in life...” Ngugi (1993), 5.

over-investing in a very small number of texts—often beginning and ending with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*—and begging the question of their/its prominence, exemplary status, and totalizing cultural centrality, often make it seem as if the comprehensive negation which Conrad made of the continent (and then, himself, negated) adequately describes something as conceptually amorphous as “the West’s image of Africa.” It does not.

If we do not beg this question, and instead place Conrad’s novel within the debate through which he made his text meaningful, we find that rather than the consensus he is taken to exemplify, his presence structures a broad field of disagreement. Instead of a centuries-long tradition of consistent and unanimous “dark” negation, the question of whether Africa is “dark” or “bright” has been and continues to be a continuous and consequentially *productive* argument, one which not only leads into but implies—and perhaps even overdetermines—contemporary assertions that Africa is or is not a “Heart of Darkness.” Like the distinction between “urban” and “rural,” “Bright” and “Dark” Africa do not always signify the same things, but they do consistently signify whatever it is they signify specifically through contrast with the other.<sup>11</sup> And just as the actual content of categories like “urban” and “rural” has dramatically changed over the course of centuries, the content of the categories “Bright” and “Dark” Africa change only by reference to the underlying categorical framework: the meaning of a “dark Africa” is always to be found in the Bright Africa which it is seen to repress. The same is true of the various “Bright Africas” we might name: they are explicitly articulated in opposition to some vision of the continent as *dark*, quite often Conrad’s.

If we see this binary as a dialectic, in other words, we render it *historical*. And re-historicizing Conrad’s novel back into the swirling dissensus that made it meaningful—a conversation which into which it intervenes, rather than encapsulates—makes it possible to think about late colonial cultural politics as something other than an overdetermined function of its own negation. And it was Achebe’s location and author function that not only made the publication of his essay such a transformative critical event, but determined the course of his influence, the particular way Conrad became *more*, not less, important to African studies’ self-conceptions. After all, while Achebe’s essay sprang from a well-established and broad cultural polemic—whose terms he more or less faithfully adopted—his singularity as author and authority were crucial to establishing Conrad’s singularity as rhetorical foil. After all, in writing his famous essay, Achebe took the argument about “the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination” from books like Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow’s *The Africa that Never Was*, Es’kia Mphahlele’s *The African Image*, and Philip Curtin’s *The Image of Africa in Western Culture*, a series of texts that had already quite firmly established “the West’s image of Africa” as a rhetorical touchstone. Achebe is not innovative, in this respect. But as the figure who defined in theory and practice the conditions and possibilities for what has consistently understood as the emergence of African literature—the condition of possibility for positive Africanist speech—Achebe’s singularity goes far beyond the merely literary: if he has declined the title of “father of African literature,” he is also the only African writer who is regularly

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<sup>11</sup> In this way, my analysis differs from that of Jeannette Eileen Jones, who positions “Brightest” and “Darkest” Africa as competing paradigms (“Although the Dark Continent construct never disappeared from the Western cultural and intellectual landscape, Brightest Africa posed a considerable challenge to that paradigm...”), rather than distinct modalities within a single paradigm. Jeannette Eileen Jones, *In Search of Brightest Africa: Reimagining the Dark Continent in American Culture, 1884-1936* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 3.

presented with the necessity of refusing the honor. And if Simon Gikandi's extravagant claim that Achebe "invented African culture" is intentionally hyperbolic (and it is), the hyperbole serves the function of spotlighting the epoch-marking importance of Achebe's first novel, the central text—and Achebe the central author—of the renaissance of African literature which occurred in the era of decolonization.<sup>12</sup>

In this sense, it seems clear that Achebe's essay achieved its landmark status less for its rather shallow argument about Conrad than for having realized and theorized in critical language—and instantiated in the figure of "Conrad"—what Achebe had already accomplished in his fiction. But while critics like Ngugi and Said are, undeniably, more faithful readers of Conrad, the point of Achebe's polemic was also his vigorous disinclination to be any kind of reader of Conrad at all, and we should attend to that point. Achebe is both not very interested in Conrad, and interested in being disinterested in him. As he was concerned with the conditions, necessities, problems, and possibility of African literature itself, "Conrad" came to serve a useful rhetorical function, but one for which a faithful reading of Conrad's actual oeuvre was, at most, a superfluous flourish. I would suggest, in fact, that Achebe's essay should be viewed as simply a first-person recapitulation of the final chapter of *Things Fall Apart*, in which Okonkwo's entire life story—and the novel which Achebe's readers have just finished reading—is abruptly and painfully diminished into nothing more than a tiny (and misunderstood) footnote within the District Commissioner's grand narrative of *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. And just as the author of *Things Fall Apart* is unconcerned with the District Commissioner's subjectivity, as such, the author of "An Image of Africa" is far less concerned with Conrad himself than with the experience of writing in the shadow of "Conrad," the predicament of being an African writer in a world in which Conrad's novel was classifiable as "African Literature." In both, the African writer has an interest in being uninterested in Conrad.

As Achebe has continued to define the author function of the "African writer," the specter of "Conrad" continues to define the epistemological limitations of the non-African Africanist, not only defining that subjectivity by its ideological and racial circumscription, but making its presence a continuing rhetorical necessity. Achebe's District Commissioner, after all, was necessary as a narrative function of his inability to see Okonkwo as he is. Achebe's "Conrad" represents the same overdetermined narrative function, the presence of what Hammond and Jablow call *The Africa That Never Was*, whose uniform consistency they typify by "the Africa of H. Rider Haggard and Joseph Conrad":

With a few exceptions, no matter how different in style, form, or content the books—and naturally the films based upon them—present the same fantasy of Africa. With remarkable consistency the fantasy is expressed through the same idioms and figures of speech... In book after book about Africa identical images appear expressing similar attitudes and concepts, often similarly phrased. Literary license allows each author to depict Africa in much the same way as every other author. Such conformity cannot be the result of chance. It clearly indicates a governing literary tradition.<sup>13</sup>

At best, this claim is a dramatic overstatement; at worst, "such conformity" cannot be

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<sup>12</sup> Gikandi, (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, *The Africa that Never Was: Four Centuries of British Writing about Africa* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), 4.

“the result of chance” because it does not exist at all. A critical over-investment in Achebe’s version of Conrad has made it difficult to see this fact, but the claim for “remarkable consistency”—especially of this particular trope—is as strained as the idea that a “tradition” is capable of “governing” what writers do and don’t write, and it must rely on such a small number of texts as to leave out most of what it claims to describe. Its archive may actually turn out to be a canon of one, in fact, and a rather fore-closed and diminished version of that novella: all of the West, it can turn out, has viewed Africa through the prism of Conrad’s narrator’s Marlow’s Kurtz’s “The horror, the horror.”

To state what should be obvious, however, Haggard’s Africa is a dramatically different place from the *Heart of Darkness* we are led to expect from it by readings like Jablow and Hammonds. The (Southern) Africa of *King Solomon’s Mines* is a site of frontier adventure, a source of revitalization, regeneration, and rebirth for its white protagonists, a “Brightest Africa”: if a figure like Gagool seems to represent a kind of dark alterity, it is only as a gendered other—something which Haggard’s *She* demonstrates more clearly—rather than a racial negation. Ignosi is a romantic savage, after all, separate but equal.<sup>14</sup> If Conrad’s Africa is the “white man’s grave,” whose wealth and seductions corrupt and destroy, Haggard’s Africa is precisely the opposite, a source of redemptive wealth, successful enterprise, and romantic adventure. Far from being “governed” by a totalizing tradition—as Jablow and Hammond argue—even two foundational texts like these disagree on the very basic question of what Africa represents. Conrad is concerned that white masculinity be seduced into a tryst with a grotesque and inhuman African darkness, but Haggard’s book appealed to a desire for a recovery of romance.<sup>15</sup>

This difference has largely gone un-observed by the critics and theorists who have taken Achebe’s Conrad to be symptomatic of something as amorphous as a “discourse.” Patrick Brantlinger’s “Victorians and Africans: the Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent,” for example, is one of the most widely cited, quoted, and reprinted essays on the Western “image of Africa”—a trope that Brantlinger clearly takes from Achebe but translates into a post-structuralist idiom for Anglo-American academia—and he predictably begins the essay by invoking Conrad. As the essay begins: “Marlow is right: Africa grew dark as Victorian explorers, missionaries, and scientists flooded it with light, because the light was reflected through an imperialist ideology that urged the abolition of savage customs in the name of civilization.”

The curious manner in which Conrad becomes both exemplar and theorist—both demonstrating the myth and deconstructing it himself—is a general tendency; as Christopher

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<sup>14</sup> Laura Chrisman’s critique of Anne McClintock is exemplary: as she observes, McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* is typical of a critical tradition which sees imperial culture as a totalizing negation, and misreads *King Solomon’s Mine* as if gender and race are simply dual modalities of negation. Laura Chrisman “Gendering imperialism: Anne McClintock and H. Rider Haggard” in *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism* (Manchester UP, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> As a contemporary reviewer observed, “[*King Solomon’s Mines*] has a charm which is not in itself, but in the appeal it makes to a hungry desire or hope which is probably latent in all men, and certainly crops out in the minds of all civilized men,— the desire that the lust of wonder should be fully and, so to speak, honestly satiated: the hope that men will discover some day somewhere something that shall leave them sufficiently, or it may be permanently, astonished.” “Modern Marvels,” *The Spectator*, October 17, 1885.

Miller puts it, for example, *Heart of Darkness* is not only “the strongest of all Africanist texts” and “the master text [that] defines the condition of possibility of Africanist discourse,” but the book is so fundamental to his study of “Africanist Discourse in French” as to largely preclude any direct examination of the text itself, allowing him to write about the novel only in the most general terms:

*Heart of Darkness* is a seminal text within French and all European Africanist discourse not because of its immediate influence on living writers but for what it teaches us about how to read the figure of Africa: for the light it sheds—so to speak—on the discursive practice of European writers of whatever language.<sup>16</sup>

In each case, the novella itself seems to recede in favor of the general field of textuality that critics use it to define: making *Heart of Darkness* into a definitive master text for an “Africanist discourse” makes it as empty of content as Kurtz’s “Horror,” an almost purely negative abstraction. The “light” which Miller sees *Heart of Darkness* shedding is precisely not on Africa itself, but on the impossibility of shedding light on Africa which he takes the discourse of “Africa” to represent. What a book like Miller’s therefore teaches us about “the discursive practice of European writers of whatever language” can only be its essential impossibility: the truest thing (perhaps the only thing) that non-Africans could or can say about Africa was or is the negation of their own truth claims, leaving the space open for Africans to monopolize.

None of this should be taken to deny that “darkest Africa” has been and remains a potent and pernicious structure of thought; Conrad took his central metaphor from the later works of Henry Morton Stanley, whose *Through the Dark Continent* (1877) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890) first popularized those terms (as I will show in chapter one). These terms have also remained consistent as a vocabulary of alterity in the global consciousness of Africa, even into the 21st century. But Conrad’s novel represented a reading of—not a replication of—Stanley’s own “adjectival insistence” on Africa’s darkness, and even Stanley’s own turn to “darkest Africa” rhetoric represented a dramatic and innovative break in the tradition which he sought to place himself, as I will argue. To read such language as a merely symptomatic backdrop—and to frame that symptom by the difference between the real and the imaginary—is to overlook the ideological work it was doing, in a much more contested field than it has often been recognized as being, and a much more efficacious field of imagined communities than a simplistic notion of “myth” can allow.

For one thing, it was the idea that Africa was *bright* that made it necessary (or efficacious) to argue that Africa was *dark*. Conrad’s novel was in dialogue with Haggard, among others, and represented a modernist disillusionment with Haggard’s romantic Africa; *Heart of Darkness* is premised on reality’s failure to live up to Marlow’s boyhood fantasy of the “many blank spaces on the earth,” a desire whose nostalgic persistence sends him to the Congo in the first place, and which, in *A Personal Record*, Conrad claimed as his own boyhood fantasy.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> As he wrote, “It was in 1868, when nine years old or thereabouts, that while looking at a map of Africa of the time and putting my finger on the blank space then representing the unsolved mystery of that continent, I said to myself, with absolute assurance and an amazing audacity which are no longer in my character now: ‘When I grow up I shall go *there*.’ And of course I

Whether or not the memory is Conrad's own, it was a common fantasy; Abel Chapman, for example, attributed almost exactly the same sentiment to his generation's fantasies of *Southern Africa*:

South Africa when the world was young—that is, when we were young—represented to those who had inherited an adventurous spirit, and in whose breast a love of the wild was innate, something that approached the acme of terrestrial joys. Thereaway, our earlier lessons had taught that, co-existent with the humdrum monotony of a work-a-day world, there yet survived a vast continent still absolutely unknown and unsubdued by man, and across whose vacant space there sprawled, inscribed in burning letters on the map, that vocal word, 'Unexplored.'<sup>18</sup>

But while Abel Chapman might share part of Conrad's boyhood dream of an African blankness, he didn't go to Stanley's Congo to be disappointed. He went to British East Africa, where he would rebound easily from his disillusionment with South Africa's lost innocence and extol the virtues of the East African spaces which, for him, represent a place where the innocence of youth might again be rediscovered:

[S]uch spectacles of wild-life as fifty years ago adorned [South Africa's] veld and karoo, with all the glory of a pristine fauna every whit as rich, may yet be enjoyed elsewhere in that vast continent...the centre of attraction has shifted northwards, far northward—to the British territories that lie around the equator. There some of Nature's wildest scenes, practically unchanged since the days of creation, may yet be enjoyed...<sup>19</sup>

Chapman could make this discovery because he went to a part of the continent whose historical experience of imperial contact had taken and would take a different form than it had West, Central, or North Africa. If Conrad's Africa was the "white man's grave," after all, it was because a variety of diseases had, for decades, devastated the Europeans who sought to survive in the equatorial climate, often leaving survivors (like Conrad) permanently unhealthy.<sup>20</sup> But

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thought no more about it till after a quarter of a century or so an opportunity offered to go there—as if the sin of childish audacity were to be visited on my mature head. Yes. I did go there: *there* being the region of Stanley Falls, which in '68 was the blankest of blank spaces on the earth's figured surface." Joseph Conrad. *A Personal Record*. Ed. Zdzisław Najder and J.H. Stape. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Abel Chapman, *On Safari: Big-Game Hunting in British East Africa* (London, 1908), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Chapman (1903), 3.

<sup>20</sup> As Philip Curtin notes, "Based on information about civilians and military alike in Sierra Leone—some of these data going back to 1792—[Major Alexander Tulloch, who helped direct the first statistical survey of British troops overseas in 1840] concluded that the expected loss of foreign visitors would have been about a quarter of the group each year," and Tulloch's estimate would roughly describe the general colonial experience across much of West and Central Africa, during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "death rates had decreased everywhere, but the range of 6 to 24 deaths per 1000 per year still left tropical Africa as the most dangerous region in the world." Philip D. Curtin, "The End of the 'White Man's Grave'?" Nineteenth-Century Mortality in West Africa," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 21,

even after the discovery of quinine and new medical techniques made imperial conquest less dangerous, Europeans were never comfortable in the equatorial parts of Africa where they sought to exploit African labor and extract equatorial commodities; other than a handful of missionaries or eccentrics, Europeans never settled in these parts of the continent; they came to govern, not to stay. These parts of Africa were therefore declared to be “Black Men’s Country” and were subject to *colonialism*, not colonization: instead of planting new settlements of white men, they sought to build and exploit new and old economies of cash crop production, resting on a basis of African labor, and employing imperial techniques and practices that took the imperial governance of British India as their primary reference point. In South Africa, by contrast—where “Afrikaner” meant white African—or East Africa, where “Kenyan” was pronounced with a long “e” and first meant a white settler vision for the space that was otherwise known as British East Africa, Africa was not “dark.” It was bright, a site for the replenished vitality of the white race, whose fitness would be shown by their ability to live and reproduce themselves, as they had in settler colonies in North America and Australasia.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, while Achebe’s essay is usually read as a statement about “Africa” and “the West”—and on the basis of this abstraction, can easily become an ahistorical critical framework—it is worth noting that Achebe wrote and delivered that talk and essay in a very particular time and place: the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in the mid-1970’s. And while Conrad’s suppression of African voices served to crystallize his ire, his anger was more directly motivated by Conrad’s readers, as the various anecdotal illustrations in the essay demonstrate: the amused incredulity he faced when speaking about African literature to his students and colleagues, for example, or their assumption that Africans had “dialects” not languages, and that “history” was a category which did not apply to Africa at all. It was in response to these readers—the kind of readers who would easily believe that *Heart of Darkness* was realistic—that Achebe began to argue for a different sense of what Africa *really* was.

Because we no longer live in that world—and because Achebe’s successors do not inhabit his—what was a critical intervention then has become dogma. If “the West” and “Africa” represent simultaneous convivialities—the experience of being historically adjacent—then the contours of such discourse would be better described in terms of their historical temporality and dynamic, dialectical transformations than by assuming some kind of original determinism. To put it simply, one’s “image” of Africa has much less to do with where one is *from* than where

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No. 1 (Summer, 1990), 63, 67.

<sup>21</sup> The African spaces which were suitable for such settlement were limited, of course. As Claude Lützelshwab observes “In the Tropics, the establishment of European colonies in temperate agriculture required a combination of specific topographical, climatic and epidemiological conditions. To begin with, a significant part of the colony had to be situated above an altitude of 900-1,000 meters, next, it needed to be devoid of the Tsetse fly, a vector of fatal trypanomiasis, responsible for sleeping sickness in humans and nagana in cattle...In Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, Europeans for the most part therefore occupied the healthier highlands where they were able to engage in temperate agricultural practices. Overall, from a climatic and epidemiological perspective, the number of African territories in which Europeans were able to settle in significant numbers and engage in agricultural practices similar to those in their countries of origin remained fairly limited.” Claude Lützelshwab, “Settler Colonialism in Africa” in *Settler Economies in World History*, edited by Christopher Lloyd, Jacob Metzger, Richard Sutch (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2013), 147.

one is speaking. In this sense, while the achievement of Achebe's 1958 novel was undeniable—and his 1977 essay was just as undeniably necessary—those interventions were only meaningful by reference to the particular aesthetic, cultural, and political fields into which he was then intervening. When Achebe's first novel became a best-seller, it fundamentally re-structured the literary field by which "African writer" would become thinkable. In the same era as Edward Said's *Orientalism* marked and institutionalized a fundamental shift in how the non-West would be represented in the Western academy, too, Achebe's essay on Conrad structured the manner in which postcolonial literary studies would understand, categorize, and criticize African writers; in positioning himself in opposition to Conrad (or, elsewhere, to Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*), Achebe modeled a critical reading of African writers as speaking back to a Eurocentric consciousness that made Africa a blankness and a void.

As Achebe has become at least as commonly read and taught as Conrad, however, his intervention has been incorporated into the discursive field which it once critiqued. Like other era-defining texts—such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* or Ngũgĩ's *Decolonising the Mind*—what was once a very heterodox and radical critique of the conventional wisdom has been absorbed into it. When Achebe taught African literature at Amherst in the 1970's, after all, his students were surprised to learn that such a thing existed; today, when I begin my African literature survey course with *Things Fall Apart*, I can expect that half of the class will have already read it.

In this context, a reassessment of Achebe's argument is well overdue, both because of how the object of his polemic has changed over the last four decades and how the dilemma of African literature has changed accordingly. As Judith Butler has usefully put it, "Critique is always a critique of some instituted practice, discourse, episteme, institution, and it loses its character the moment in which it is abstracted from its operation and made to stand alone as a purely generalizable practice."<sup>22</sup> But since the 1970's, attacking "the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination" has become its own kind of cliché, and references to that fetish object have become not only become a reliable prelude to the inevitable call to go "beyond" the stereotypes and look for "other" images of the continent, but this call is no longer anything like the controversial polemic that it was when Achebe wrote his angry indictment.

When Bernardine Evaristo described her priorities as chair of the judging committee for the 2012 Caine Prize for African Fiction, for example, she wrote:

I'm looking for stories about Africa that enlarge our concept of the continent beyond the familiar images that dominate the media: War-torn Africa, Starving Africa, Corrupt Africa - in short: The Tragic Continent... What other aspects of this most heterogeneous of continents are being explored through the imaginations of writers?<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Judith Butler, "What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in *The Political*, ed. David Ingram (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Bernardine Evaristo, "Bernardine Evaristo, Chair of Judges 2012, writer and poet," April 23, 2012, <http://caineprize.blogspot.com/2012/04/bernardineevvaristo-chair-of-judges-2012.html>. The Caine Prize has often been criticized for favoring sensationalist writing along the lines of "Things Rotten in Nigeria," as Ikhide Ikheola characterized it. Ikhide Ikheola, "Email from America: The Writer: Identity and Purpose," *234Next.com* August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010. See also Pucherová, Dobrota "A Continent Learns to Tell Its Story at Last': Notes on the Caine Prize." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48.1 (2012): 1-13, and Lizzy Attree. "The Caine Prize

Yet if images of the “tragic continent” are familiar, the counter-narrative has become just as familiar. We need to reassess what it means to demand that we go beyond the “single story” of Africa, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie called it in her much circulated 2009 TED talk, when Adichie can deliver that argument to an audience whose response is delighted unanimity and enthusiastic agreement.<sup>24</sup> Adichie’s argument is as structured by her recollection of being patronized by her roommate at an American university as Achebe’s was by his dealings with the University of Amherst, of course; her statement that her “default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning, pity.” But just as this claim is overdetermined by her very self-conscious effort to carry on his legacy, it means something different to make this kind of claim as an insurgent challenge to a hyper-canonical novel than to make this claim *in support* of a hyper-canonical novel. And if the attitude they both observed remains—and the critique retains at least part of its force—Achebe’s entrance into the American university has been part of a broader sea change in the discursive field through which “Africa” is made meaningful. Adichie’s roommate came to college with a set of attitudes she inherited from her parents, after all, but the odds are much greater that she will graduate having learned a new story or two.

If nothing else, then, the viral popularity of Adichie’s TED talk—indeed, even its existence *as* a TED talk—demonstrates how different the rhetorical context has become in which these kinds of appeals can be uttered. An essay like Binyavanga Wainaina’s “How to Write About Africa,” for example, virtually defines an entire genre of interventions in American media, from Teju Cole’s “The White Savior Industrial Complex” (in *The Atlantic*) to the function of a blog like *Africa is a Country*, which has increasingly crystallized a coherent counter-argument to the position it ironically names.<sup>25</sup> If these are not quite mainstream critiques, they are far from marginal; criticizing the fact that Adichie’s roommate had a single story of Africa is about as scandalous as making fun of Sarah Palin for (supposedly) not knowing that Africa was a continent rather than a country. Which is to say: it is not scandalous at all. The conservative and crypto-racist approach to Africa—as site of disorder, violence, and despair—remains potent in some circles, but like Palin or George W. Bush (who once declared that “Africa is a nation that suffers from incredible disease”), such discourse is firmly identified with a far from hegemonic political ideology, the neoconservative coalition which has lost two presidential elections in a row, and to the son of a Kenyan.<sup>26</sup> That saying such a thing would constitute a political gaffe, in fact—and it is far from clear that Palin ever actually said any such thing—demonstrates the highly contested nature of such discourse, as well as the ideological

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and Contemporary African Writing.” *Research in African Literatures* 44, no. 2 (2013): 35-47.

<sup>24</sup> Chimamanda Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” TED Talk, July 2009, [http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html). As of July 2013, Adichie’s talk has received over 3 million views.

<sup>25</sup> Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write about Africa? Some Tips: Sunsets and Starvation Are Good,” *Granta* 92, “The View from Africa” (Winter 2005). Teju Cole “The White Savior Industrial Complex,” *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> See Richard Pérez-Peña, “A Senior Fellow at the Institute of Nonexistence,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 2008, and Frank Bruni, “Deep US-Europe Split Casts Long Shadow on Bush Tour,” *The New York Times*, June 15 2001.

usefulness of attributing such a belief to a political opponent.<sup>27</sup>

In one sense, the success of Achebe's intervention has simply rendered itself obsolete, and I do wish to tell a certain kind of progress narrative here: a space was opened for a certain kind of discourse about Africa and its relationship to the West, and Achebe was an important part of opening that space. But in other sense, the progress of historical time is more ambiguous. Achebe's bitter sarcasm at the expense of benevolently patronizing liberals (delighted to discover that Africa had history and culture) was a response to an era in which the West's best and brightest still hoped to enlighten Africans who were striving towards modernity. Today's world of NGO's and multinational corporations are more likely to preach local self-reliance and community solutions, and to position themselves as sharing ideas horizontally. Adichie's appeal is also that of USAID.

At the same time, the 1970's were also a particular historical moment for a particular mode of Afro-pessimism in the United States. Achebe had gone to Massachusetts to escape from the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war, the conflict which had permanently branded images of starving Biafran children onto the world's imagination of Africa, but the Biafran tragedy could be emblematic for the continent. All across Africa, the independence flame seemed to be turning to cold ash as Pan-Africanists like Nkrumah and Lumumba were being deposed or killed; military rule took the place of democratic self-governance in country after country; Apartheid South Africa was consolidating its position and turning Southern Africa into militarized chaos; and the economic gains of the 1960's were being eroded by corruption and the faltering world economy.

Achebe would not have denied this crisis as such, but just as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* spoke back to what he characterized as "raj revivalism," Achebe's literary and creative work sought to contest the use to which Africa's crisis was being put. For the reactionary and neo-imperialist political project that would culminate in neo-conservative governments on both sides of the Atlantic, it was uniquely possible and powerful in the 1970's and 1980's to argue that giving the natives their freedom had demonstrated that they were incapable of using it properly, that the tragedy of their permanent failure necessitated neo-colonial forms of political and economic authoritarianism. Just as the "failure" of reconstruction marked the beginning of a golden age of racist popular culture in the United States, the "failure" of decolonization would mark the beginning of a nostalgic renaissance in imperialist culture-work.

In such a context, in other words, asserting or perceiving Africa's "darkness" served a specific set of political functions: in rolling back liberation freedom dreams, bolstering cold war client-state authoritarianism, and naturalizing the imposition of structural adjustment programs, the "Washington consensus" needed Africa to be "dark," for it was by denying the validity of utopian and revolutionary challenges, as well as providing the pretense of political failure, it was possible to neutrally prescribe the evisceration of social welfare—and the denial of democracy—as technocratic necessity or unfortunate realpolitik.

Today, however, the cold war is over, the Washington consensus has fallen into

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<sup>27</sup> As reported, "An adviser cited by Fox News said the Alaska governor was confused about Africa's status and asked if 'South Africa was part of the country.'" Alex Spillius, "Sarah Palin thought Africa was a single country, aides claim," *The Telegraph*, Nov 6, 2008. Palin vigorously denied the allegation. "Newsnight's Interview with Sarah Palin," British Broadcasting Corporation, accessed July 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-12654239>.

disrepute, structural adjustment has been deemed a failure, and the figure of Nelson Mandela has arguably replaced the specter of Biafra and kwashiorkor as “the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination.” And one need not agree with the substance of Francis Fukuyama’s pronouncement on the “End of History” to observe that with the apparent general exhaustion of socialism as politics—and with the corruption or failure of leftist liberation movements on the continent itself—the political utility of Afro-pessimism has dramatically diminished. Structural adjustment programs are no longer desirable nor necessary (having failed in their promise while succeeding in their ambitions), nor is the reactionary “realism” which would deny Africans the right to demand self-determination.

In this context, books like Charlayne Hunter-Gault’s *New News Out of Africa: Uncovering Africa’s Renaissance* or *The Economist*’s December 3, 2011 cover article “Africa Rising: The Hopeful Continent” typify a broad narrative which has, since the late 1990’s, sought to re-brand Africa as a site of futurity, growth, and potential. In place of an African *Heart of Darkness*, it is as easy to anticipate the “brightest Africa” which is just on the horizon, especially after the election of a Kenyan nationalist’s son to the American presidency—indeed, the grandson of a Mau Mau detainee—a striking manifestation of the kind of change it can now seem possible to hope for. Whatever Obama and his politics may actually represent, in other words, it is undeniable that his presidency both stems from and has created a very different set of narrative possibilities for thinking about Africa’s relationship to the United States.

This is not a triumphalist claim, however; Barack Obama also demonstrates the extent to which hope and change can be perfectly consistent with the twinned agendas of finance capital and the American military-industrial complex. If George W. Bush pursued a familiarly neo-Victorian Africa policy, one which was defined by charity and a moralistic detachment, then President Obama’s administration has seen a significant expansion of AFRICOM and an uptick in military “partnerships” across the continent, with capital investment following the flag as reliably as it did in Conrad’s day. While the specter of the “failed state”—and the doctrine of “responsibility to protect”—serves to legitimize military intervention in places like Somalia, Libya, or Mali, the idea of capitalized and stable “anchor states” like Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa legitimizes the regional military partnerships based there.

In this context, “positive” images of Africa are decidedly not a critique of empire, and re-branding “Africa” as a site of capital speculation can actually represent its cutting edge: when Teresa Clarke stepped down as managing director of Goldman Sachs’ investment banking division, for example, it was no coincidence that she then launched the website Africa.com with the objective “to change the way the world sees Africa.” This agenda was not that much of a departure from her previous career; as “the online portal for the world’s engagement with Africa,” Africa.com has the same purpose as the talks Clarke gives on topics like “Rebranding Africa” (at the “African Leadership Network Gathering” in Addis Ababa, “a Davos-style event organized by and for leaders on the African continent”) or “Investment Opportunities in Africa” (at the 2010 Fortune, TIME, CNN Global Forum in Cape Town).

As people like Dambisa Moyo (another former Goldman Sachs executive) have become prominent voices within development studies, they mark a broad shift towards a kind of market-based Afro-optimism that has a direct investment, literally, in brightening Africa’s “image.” Explicitly seeking to supplant a “charity” model of engagement with neoliberal market solutions, these “thought-leaders” seek to replace the sentimental discourse which appealed to the conscience (through displays of pain and despair), with a much more optimistic emphasis on Africa’s futurity. But the language of economic boosterism is itself part of the mechanism that is

to bring about this bright future. To the extent that investment is seen to create growth, after all, Afro-optimism will be a self-fulfilling prophecy: if we believe in Africa's bright future enough to invest in it, our investment will create the growth that will bring that future into existence.

The result is that if Achebe was sailing against the current in the 1970's, successors like Adichie and Binyavanga have the wind in their sails. When founding *Kwani*? In 2003, for instance, Binyavanga was able to get the necessary funding to do so from the Ford Foundation, and African culture is no less vigorously promoted as a crass expression of American national interests as it was when CIA money found its way into the foundations that financially supported *Transition* or *Black Orpheus* magazine. This is not to draw conclusions about them—any more than Wole Soyinka was a cats-paw of the CIA because he wrote for *Transition*—but it does highlight the convergence between looking for “stories about Africa that enlarge our concept of the continent” and the financial and military interests that find it useful to see Africa (or parts of it) as “bright.”

The turn we are seeing today—from a neo-Victorian Afro-pessimism, characterized by private charity and public moralism, to a neoliberal Afro-optimism powered by finance capital and military partnerships—not only replicates the dynamic moment in which the “Scramble for Africa” was first empowered and energized by a short-lived post-Victorian surge of capital and imperial speculation, but there is an evocative cultural analogy to be drawn as well. Just as the commodities boom of the early 2000's has boosted growth rates across the African continent, the figure of “China” has come to play a version of the role that was first performed by Germany in the 1880's, the rising imperial power whose need for African commodities creates an abruptly renewed Western interest in markets that had long been considered too risky or too poor. But when an entrepreneurial-minded and militant American capitalist named Henry Morton Stanley first began to write about Africa, in the 1870's, he sought to displace a Victorian missionary tradition—which he used the figure of David Livingstone to typify—whose eternity-minded resignation got in the way of his brand of avaricious lust for laying up treasures on earth. But he also took aim at phlegmatic Afro-pessimists like Richard Burton, whose murky and dark image of Africa prevented the kind of capital investment that Stanley hoped to spearhead (and eventually did, as King Leopold's agent in the Congo).

In short, there is nothing new about an American journalist discovering that the “new news” from Africa is good, or in framing that novel discovery as the overthrow of received prejudice. When Stanley “found” the Dr. Livingstone, he is surprised to find that Africa is almost the diametric opposite of what Livingstone had called “the open sore of the world”; almost his very first experience of Africa is his discovery that Africa is not, as he puts it, “rife with cholera, fever, and nameless but dreadful diseases; populated by ignorant blacks, with great thick lips” which he represents himself as having been led to expect (rhetorically exclaiming, “[h]ow it had become thus distorted in my imagination I cannot conceive...”). Instead, not wholly unlike Teresa Clark, Stanley discovers Africa to be a brilliant panorama of untapped potentiality: as the Arab slave trade was pushed back, and as commerce began to liberate the energies of a trapped population, Stanley found himself at the verge of continent standing ready to explode into dynamic progress. Far from finding the “dark continent” he claims to have expected, in other words—the familiar image of a “War-torn Africa, Starving Africa, Corrupt Africa,” which writers like Livingstone and Richard Burton had shown—he finds an Africa of massive fertility and virtually unbounded human potential.

This analogy leads me to another. Stanley was not simply surprised at what he did *not* find; he also found himself specifically reminded, over and over again, of the American frontier,

and of Missouri in particular. Over and over again, Stanley notes a consistent parallel with the American southwest with which he was most familiar; where there are natural obstacles, he sees bridges, canals, and railroads springing up to cross them, and in one of his most revealing similes, he notes compares New York's central park to Kisumu. I begin with Stanley because he is literally the author who first popularized the range of "dark Africa" stereotypes; as I will show, that would, however, be a different Stanley: when he returned to Britain after having found Livingstone, he was discovered to be a Welshman by birth and was only an American by virtue of the fictional self he had penned into existence. When he stopped being an American, he also stopped writing about a bright African frontier of settler colonial futurity. It was the author of *In the Dark Continent* and *Through Darkest Africa*, a Briton, that Stanley would go on to serve as the most direct model for Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Stanley's brief period of optimism for Africa's bright future is the exception in his career that proves the rule. But he, himself, is not exceptional. When Theodore Roosevelt stepped down from the U.S. presidency in 1909, he took a ten month hunting trip in British East Africa and the bestselling book that he wrote about his trip, *African Game Trails*, narrates the same discovery, remarking over and over again his surprise at finding a frontier space that reminded him of home, rather than the dark jungle Africa he had been prepared to expect. And Roosevelt's discovery was as much a function of political and economic speculation as Stanley's; *African Game Trails* was a work of propaganda for the East African settler project, representing his and his settler hosts' hopes and expectations that the kind of colony they expected British East Africa to become would be the future of the white race. As I will show, Roosevelt took the side of the white settlers in Nairobi in their ongoing struggle with the imperial administration in London, arguing both explicitly and implicitly that East Africa was a "white man's country," and that, instead of a dark jungle to be feared and kept at bay with violence, Kenya was virgin soil, an open frontier, another American. At the same time, *African Game Trails* successfully established "the safari" as a means of re-establishing American masculinity after the closure of the Western frontier, a new territory where white men could still go to be hunters, explorers, and conquerors. The "brightness" he finds for Africa is not ideologically innocent, in other words; Africa is only as bright as the future it promises for the white race.

Roosevelt's hopes for a settler Kenya would also be disappointed, although he would not live to see it. But the ideological formation he set in motion would survive to animate both a century of safari tourism and the images and narratives associated with it. In the work of Ernest Hemingway, this link is particularly explicit: not only did Hemingway hire Roosevelt's guide for the safaris he wrote about in *Green Hills of Africa*, the posthumously published *Under Kilimanjaro*, and in short stories like "The Snows of Mount Kilimanjaro" and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," but these works are an extended meditations on and arguments with the figure of white masculinity that Roosevelt represented. But it's in Hollywood cinema that the Roosevelt's speculation has been most consistently maintained: in the first scene of 1932's *Tarzan the Ape-Man*—the film that would, by transforming the narrative, establish the franchise as Hollywood's most consistent money-makers for a half-century—Jane's first conversation with her father poses the question of whether Africa is actually the "awful hole" that everyone says it is. And in an American accent, Jane insists that her British father is wrong, and it is not:

James Parker: "[Harry Holt] hates Africa."

Jane Parker: "Hates Africa? I don't believe it."

James Parker: "Why not?"

Jane Parker: “He’s too strong and sturdy looking, like you.”

James Parker: “I don’t like Africa either”

Jane Parker: “I don’t believe that, either.”

Jane will turn out to be right; if she begins the movie with an apparently blind faith, the rest of the movie will confirm it and justify her desire to wash her hands of the civilization which the film seems to agree, with a kind of Rousseauvian distaste, to be the source and embodiment of all the discontents of modernity. In Tarzan’s Africa, predatory men from Europe and America come in search of ivory, gold, and power (and her), and so, in movie after movie, Tarzan breaks their guns and restores the natural equilibrium, so this new Adam and Eve can escape to live in peace and contentment among the animals. By a sharp and undeniable contrast with the Euro-American world she is fleeing, in other words, the Africa that Jane discovers will turn out to be a new Eden, primeval, unspoiled, and rich with emancipatory possibility for those who give themselves over to it.

These “images of Africa” are neither compatible with the kinds of claims which are conventionally made for the West’s dominant vision of the dark continent, nor are they isolated anomalies. On the contrary, Stanley finding Livingstone, the big game safari, and the generic conventions that flow out of the Tarzan franchise are three of the most potent and persistent narrative images that define how Africa can and can’t be seen and how it is possible to write about Africa. And yet, postcolonial theory has tended to take Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as not only paradigmatic but broadly and comprehensively representative of the entirety of Africanist discourse in the West. If Tarzan, Hemingway, Roosevelt, and Stanley are addressed, they are so comprehensively framed by the example of Conrad’s Africa that they become visible only to the (very limited) extent that they can be made to fit the model.

These texts are not identical, of course. Stanley is far more of a Henry Holt character than a Jane, while Roosevelt has none of Jane’s ambivalence. But while the first thing to say about this sequence is that it cannot be squared with the argument that a totalizing tradition or ideology of “darkest Africa” writing and thinking monopolizes the Western consciousness, the second is that its unifying thread—other American identification—is the effort both to render Africa “bright,” and to position the act of doing so as a transgression, and a vitalist one at that. Each is an experiential claim to be the exception that proves the rule, predictably startled to make the same predictably surprising discovery, which is that Africa is not like the “Africa” they had predicted they would find, an Africa which either adheres to a Conrad-shaped dark continent or actually is Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. In discovering individual exceptions, these texts also help to reinforce the rule’s more general applicability everywhere else. While these exceptions are not marginal, anomalous, or unimportant, in other words, they are *exceptionalist*. When taken as a group—especially if we include the many imitations they each spawned—what we find is actually a steady and carefully exceptionalist continuity, a single and very clear and self-referential tradition of Africanist writing and image-making in which a part of Africa turns out to be (to each writer’s surprise, in turn) an exception to the rule. But we find so many and so influential a set of variations on this theme that the fantasy of safari tourists, readers, and movie-goers for generations—Africa as a rich virgin soil, a site of futurity and possibility, and an emancipatory fantasy of escape from modernity—has to be understood as having a definite coherence, an historical consistency, and an ideological function specific to itself as a genre, however much that genre still derives from the “Dark Continent” tradition which it displaces. Each text can appear to be an individual anomaly when they are read in isolation, as their authors

intended them to be (and which helps explain a decided lack of enthusiasm among these writers for citing and acknowledging predecessors and contemporaries). But taken as a group, they are obviously an individualist tradition, a continuing and ongoing mode of imagining the continent as a singularity.

It would be easy to claim that this tradition is actually the 20th century's dominant image of the continent. If we think of "Tarzan" as a single, multi-authored narrative franchise, after all, it would be easy to argue it to be the most popular, most influential, most globally prolific, and longest running piece of American popular culture in the 20th century. Stanley made "Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?" into a household joke (one that *New Yorker* cartoons may keep alive forever), and though Roosevelt's account of Africa is tediously serious, that very tedium was a kind of implicit argument against the exoticized Africa of those (like Conrad) who preceded him, whose Africa was set apart from the rest of human history. Finally, the Tarzan films, collectively, make Africa a site of sexualized pleasure, both wholesome and recuperative, the rediscovery of masculine sexuality and potency that Roosevelt manifestly sought (and found) but was far too Victorian to explicitly describe, or at least not in the terms which Tarzan's nearly naked body quite nakedly spoke). Each may extract a different mode of positive affect from the otherwise quite negative tradition of Africa writing, but collectively they form a coherent and continuous argument that such a thing is possible, that Africa is not merely a site of absolute absence, existential otherness, or dark satanic temptation. Each of them makes Africa a place where white people can go.

I don't wish to claim that this tradition is "dominant," of course; my point is that if there is a dominant tradition, this one has as strong of a claim. But the begged question that a "dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination" could exist is the problem which prevents us from seeing the alternatives. And by asking that question—by thinking about what narratives are retroactively "dominated" out of existence—we can better reflect on the work done, even by a narrative like Conrad's. After all, if we do not take for granted that Joseph Conrad represents the totality of "the West's" vision of Africa, we are presented with the question of why a narrative like Mary Kingsley's 1897 *Travels in West Africa* is read (if it is) as marginal, eccentric, or exceptional. As an exceptional text, Kingsley's book is occasionally treated as an interesting dissent from the Conradian rule, a curiosity which—in critiquing or dissenting from what is taken to be the "dominant" vision of the continent—describes the particular way a particular class of writer or thinker managed to escape the ideological traps of her time. Yet it may not even be true to say that Conrad's book was more widely read and influential than Kingsley's at the time they were both competing in the same literary marketplace; if Conrad's reputation has grown dramatically since his death, Kingsley's book was an immediate bestseller and she lectured widely and broadly on her travels for many years. And if we observe that Kingsley belongs in any account of "the West's imagination of Africa," we must give up most of the generalizations which have been made about it: her Africa is many things, but it is never, at any point, anything like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

The point can and should be extended in almost every direction, from gender to nationality to class to political orientation, revealing the extent to which assertions of "The West's" ideological uniformity are the precondition for "Darkest Africa" a mythology. But what we actually find in the historical archive (or, rather, what we critics have generally not found) is that Africa has consistently been employed as a political football in arguments *about* the West's unity, precisely because it is, as a signifier, so distinctly transparent capable of being inflected by the very broad array of different ideological agendas. That writers like Conrad have, in writing

about “Africa,” also been writing about other things is obvious. But the range of other issues and positions they have used Africa to stage have also shaped and overdetermined the kind of backdrop which they have made Africa to be. And so while Achebe was surely right to object to Conrad’s “preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind,” it was precisely the particular kind of backdrop Conrad needed that necessitated making it a heart of darkness, just as (the equally preposterously and perversely arrogant) Izak Dineson employed Africa as props for her *Out of Africa* because she was telling a story about feminine independence, escape from modernity (and populist democracy), and the restoration of a natural hierarchy.

It has been easy to notice the gender politics in a text like Kingsley’s or Dineson’s, but a book like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is just as fundamentally inflected by its own masculine perspective: the set of tropes by which Africa is seen to be either virgin land or a dark temptress are unthinkable except through the specific mode of emplotment which makes the narrative perspective a masculine one. What Achebe called the “triumphant bestiality” which mocks “man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement” in Conrad’s novel, after all, turns out to be the fact that Kurtz succumbs to animal lust, abandoning the white purity of his intended for the dark temptation of his African lover. Taking into account Mary Kingsley’s (unsurprising) disinterest in such a narrative framework must force us to see how not only how partial and limited any single model of “the West’s image of Africa” must therefore be, but also the specific alternatives which it not only worked to ignore, but has continued to effectively silence. After Kingsley, for example, we must also take note of the long and remarkably deep and rich archive of “African farm narratives” written by women—perhaps beginning with Olive Schreiner—which are just as irreducible to a “Darkest Africa” tradition as is Kingsley’s was, and which that tradition is just as determined to avoid and deny. Conrad’s novel can only “represent” the West’s imagination of Africa by silencing a female explorer like Kingsley, a silencing which—as Conrad himself foregrounds—is structurally central to the book’s narrative fabric: after all, if Marlow describes imperialism as “men going at it blind — as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness,” that darkness was both created for women (as in Marlow’s final lie to the intended), it is categorically associated with women throughout (as he puts it, “[Women] live in a world of their own, and there has never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether”).<sup>28</sup>

I am less interested in Kingsley herself, however, than in what her general neglect (or reduction to exceptional status) demonstrates about the retrospective gaze through which we have composed “the” Africanist archive. Far from being formed by an ignorance of alternatives, I would argue that it is precisely a knowledge of the alternatives being negated and disavowed which makes the ideological work of a novel like *Heart of Darkness* necessary in the first place: it is precisely because Mary Kingsley exists and because she wrote things like “Africans had a culture of their own—not a perfect one, but one that could be worked up towards perfection, just as European culture could be worked up,” that Conrad’s novel had to work to un-think her, had to gender the very possibility of knowledge of Africa, and comprehensively negating the not-unheard of argument that African cultural practices had their own logic and reason. But Kingsley is worth remembering precisely because she was far from the only Africanist to make these kinds of suggestions; Richard Burton, after all, had co-founded the Anthropological Society of London in 1863 on the theory that humankind’s diversity was not the function of divergence from a singular norm—not a Manichaean opposition between Culture and its

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<sup>28</sup> Conrad (1902), 16.

absence—but, rather, that different races were in every way distinct from each other, suited to and a function of their particular historical developments. However bigoted the terms were through which this argument was enunciated, the consequence of this broad idea was that holding Africans to European standards was perverse at best, that even British culture might simply be particular to the conditions which had produced it, appropriate to its time and place (and, as Kingsley suggests, it, too, might someday be perfected). But unlike critics today, Joseph Conrad did read Richard Burton quite closely and carefully; whether he mentions him or not, it is precisely in contradiction to this line of thinking that Marlow must fight off the creeping suggestion that Africans were not as inhuman as he would have liked them to be.

None of this should be misconstrued as a “defense” of Conrad, Burton, or Kingsley. I am simply making an empirical point about the totality of imperialist writing about Africa, which is that its uniformity has been much exaggerated, and that this exaggeration has tended to blind us to powerful and consequential arguments over and expressed through imperial form, especially in texts which conduct this argument by omission and passive negation. In fact, the ideological necessity to produce and reproduce (so as to deny) the Manichaean oppositions of imperialism flattens out the internal diversity of these kinds of texts: the necessity to either condemn Conrad and Kingsley as imperialist (or defend them as critical of imperialism) produces readings of their work which are structurally blind to the most consequential arguments that they themselves would have seen themselves making.

Conrad’s primary argument was not, I would suggest, necessarily with Kingsley or Burton in particular, but rather with the broad categorical imaginary they represented, the broad claim that Africa was knowable, historical, potential, and human. Conrad therefore argued that Africa was dark—and that all humanity could see, reflected in the African, the existential damnation that characterized the human condition—as part of a dialogue with those who looked to Africa (or the primitive) and saw, instead, a Rousseauvian vision of what mankind would or could be when stripped of its civilization: the condition of possibility for the discovery of a new Eden. Kurtz’ first vision of the continent, after all, was a massively optimistic one, and it is this optimism which his experience disables and negates. Which is to say, Conrad’s text, and those like it, work to negate by omission the vision of the continent which might be called “Brightest Africa,” and which looked to Africa’s absence of European civilization and return to the origin of natural humanity not as a horrifying devolutions to bestial chaos but as either an undoing of all that made Culture an oppressive and destructive development or a recovery of the traditional culture which radical industrial modernity had destroyed. Whether or not these texts were “dominant,” whatever that would mean, this line of thinking wasn’t any more unthinkable or unthought than the particular kind of small-c culturalism which characterized writers like Kingsley and Burton. And to the extent that we have allowed Conrad to stand in for the totality of 19th century Africanist writing, we have lost the extent to which this perspective was not only thinkable but actually thought, as well as by whom it was thought, when, and why, and how the total conversation about Africa was shaped by the comparison between.

I began with a continuous opposition between “bright” and “dark” Africa because African studies has so often understood the condition of its own possibility through a very different opposition, that between objective empiricism and the racist, mythological (or merely ideological) fictions of Africa produced by colonialist and neocolonialist expertise. To the extent that “Africa” is understood as a purely repressive negation of the continent’s “real,” negating that negation not only continues but actually exacerbates the problem, since the force of the contrast between discourse and object establishes the terms of objectivity in the first place: the

version of Africa which can stand as a real thing—the concrete object which can be subjected to the expert analysis of an African studies paradigm—is only the intuitive flip side of the way its “representations” have become mere mythologies, ideologies, and discourse, positioned as ephemerality subject to repudiation, deconstruction, and disavowal. Yet this double negation is not simply a dead end: the negative of a negative is a positive, and it is true in this case as well. By the force of this very gesture, diversity and heterogeneity become “facts” related to Africa, while mere “discourse”—understood as imposing singular and repressive stories about the continent—gets positioned as the problem to be overcome. In this sense, books like Mudimbe’s only produce and preserve a sense of an Africa that is “real” by positing the homogenizing texts that mis-describe it (while Ferguson’s anthropologists do so by disavowing that ambition). For both, however, the “real” comes into existence only as a function of how it has been repressed and might even be said to be, itself, positively produced and described by the very repressive hypothesis itself.

In this sense, I want to observe that if Africa is the double negation of itself, the assertion of what “Africa” is not—what its negative discourse mis-describes—actually becomes the assertion of what it truly is, if only by negation. To return to Hammond and Jablow’s *The Africa That Never Was*, for example, observe how both the title and the theoretical argument produce a discursive negation in order to evoke that which is being repressed:

There are two Africas, different and incompatible: the Africa of anthropology and that of popular “literary” conception. Anthropology discerns an Africa infinitely varied, complex, and changing... In popular writing Africa is strangely homogeneous and static.<sup>29</sup>

Unquestionably, it is the former which is being privileged as true, against the never-was Africa, the Africa that always has been has always been to the extent that it is “varied, complex, and changing.” In this sense, while Ferguson argues that the anthropological re-investment in the local (at the expense of the continental) is a mode of opting out of the wider arena of discussions about Africa, here we see a claim for the empirical “Africa” being smuggled in through the back door: precisely in contesting the “strangely homogeneous and static” Africa which we find in “popular writing”—in which Africa is taken to be “a country”—the empirical reality of the locally particular and contextually faithful Africa is produced as its mirror image, and precisely to the extent that it does not match (and negates) the popular realm’s misrepresentations. For Hammond and Jablow, in other words, “infinitely varied, complex, and changing” is the one true thing which anthropologists can say about Africa, the truth against which popular conceptions are measured and found wanting. But rather than describing the condition of the impossibility of African studies—for if a thing is always changing and infinitely varied, what could one ever say about it that wouldn’t be immediately and categorically falsified?—this assertion of diversity and heterogeneity becomes the condition of its possibility: the one thing you can reliably say about Africa, it turns out, is its refusal to be singular and static enough to describe. Out of Africa, always something new.

In this sense, even to disavow any claim to representation is to make a claim to representation: “Africa” is that which cannot be described, and should not be. And as the “rainbow nation” of South Africa demonstrates—whose flag and constitution attempt to make “diversity” into the defining quality of the post-Apartheid state—the idea of “multiplicity” can

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<sup>29</sup> Hammond and Jablow, (1970), 14.

also function as a homogenizing story. The thing which the repressive story of Africa is seen to cover over and suppress is no less a representation of the continent, no less an “Africa” that comes into being by the attempt to describe what it is not. Even to argue that “Africa is not a country” is to correct the myth of its singularity with the myth of its diversity, far less to deny that Africa is a country than to assert that Africa is, instead, a “not country,” an assertion which is almost structurally identical to the assertion that “South Africa,” to pick the exemplary case, is a trans-national state, composed of many diversities and heterogeneities and even, perhaps, exceptional and singular in the manner in which combines them. It is worth noting, after all, the way terms like “diversity” or “heterogeneity” can so easily be referred to in the singular case: as indications of Africa’s descriptive surplus, they gesture towards an interpretive remainder which they posit as a constituent property of the object being evoked, the “Real” Africa. Africa, after all, can only have one “diversity” or “heterogeneity,” and as the more real aspect of the continent, that remainder becomes its defining quality. In this sense, to say that Africa is diverse and heterogeneous is to describe the thing’s reality by reference to the accounts of it that fail to describe it, to gesture towards the Africa identified precisely by being more diverse and heterogeneous than its identity, and all the more identifiable, as a result, as that singular thing. But since gesturing towards this diversity is almost never a prelude to actually describing its deep structure (but rather to deny the possibility of there being one), “diversity” becomes the very sign and proof of the Real, in distinction from (and distinguished by the failure of) the mere “myths” of Africa created by discourse, ideology, or race.

Denying Africa the right to be misrepresented denies it the right to be historical. As terms like “heterogeneity” and “diversity” become explicit signifiers of representational failure, they need not, themselves, be represented or explained, all the while they become the defining feature of this (implied) real Africa. An emphasis on Africa’s heterogeneity, diversity, and representational surplus tends to displace any discussion of that heterogeneity’s structure, that diversity’s organizing principles, or that dynamism’s trajectory.

In this sense, and in the same terms with which Michel Foucault begins *A History of Sexuality*, I wish to examine how the West’s discursive power over Africa has been construed not simply as a negative injunction, not simply the repressive command, but precisely by the positive commandment. I would suggest that we might question the extent to which African studies has been “a society which has been loudly castigating itself for its hypocrisy... which speaks verbosely of its own silence, takes great pains to relate in detail the things it does not say, denounces the powers it exercises, and promises to liberate itself from the very laws that have made it function.” In fact, let me go so far as to directly echo Foucault (with the alteration of the crucial word in question) and suggest that:

[T]here may be another reason that makes it so gratifying for us to define the relationship between [Africa] and power in terms of repression: something that one might call the speaker's benefit. If [Africa] is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 6-7.

Just as Foucault argued that speaking “sexuality” as a transgression—and an urgency to transgress—invoked a repressive discourse precisely in order to posit its opposite, the “coming freedom” which was implied by the disestablishment of the “established law” but never had to be concretely articulated, I would argue, in parallel, that Africa and sex have never been as unspeakable as Conrad and “we other Victorians” have claimed it to be. Instead, what we find in the archive is that just as Conrad was arguing against the voices that saw Africa as bright, see-able, speakable, and human, those voices continued to argue the point long after he was dead, in an almost unbroken line of continuity leading into the present.

Far from representing a fundamental rupture with our recent Victorian past, in other words, our “postcolonial” present represents its continuation, on the one hand by overestimating the totalizing function of the discourse which characterized the high water mark of imperialism, and on the other, forgetting how many predecessors have made the obvious point that Africa is not a country. And in doing so, we have tended to place outside of our view and analysis the particular people and motivations of those who have made this claim.

The writers I have named are all—as I will show—in various ways “American,” and this is not a coincidence, even if it’s also not a direct correlation; a novel like Hemingway’s 1935 *Green Hills of Africa* was part of a distinctly and very self-consciously American effort to revise and supplant the narrative of the continent that Conrad has come to represent and monopolize, a single textual (and audiovisual) project which not only continues to this day, but which began as early as the immediate aftermath of the American civil war. In this sense, while my argument is not reducible to overly simplistic notions of national character or base/superstructure determinations, an appreciation for the intersections between class ideology and geopolitical concerns is necessary if we are to understand why and how democratic-minded Americans have so persistently tended to imagine “Africa” so specifically differently than did the British imperial establishment (as well as why Britons who saw Africa as “bright” have tended, in turn, to align themselves with the United States). At the same time, these are also quite central figures in the American literary tradition itself; Hemingway’s claim for the importance of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to modern American writing occurs in *Green Hills of Africa*, and is an important part of the reason that book has the critical importance it now has, while Roosevelt was a frontier theorist well before Frederick Jackson Turner managed to corner the market. To put it simply, between the Civil War and the Civil Rights era, Americans in Africa have repeatedly and programmatically (and with their identity as such in mind) argued that Africa was not dark, but bright. And while European travelers tended abbreviate Africa to the forbidding jungle presence typified by the choking and claustrophobic Congolese rain forest, the American “Brightest Africa” generalizes in the reverse direction, making the continent a wide open field of spaces to be photographed and hunted, an open landscape for which the broad savannahs of East Africa are the ideal type. If this correlation is neither perfect nor exact, it is nevertheless too dramatic to be ignored; in fact, if we expect Conrad’s vision of the Dark Continent to characterize the totality of colonial visions of Africa, we will be surprised to observe how many of the most popular and influential media representations of Africa are Americans who not only describe East Africa in precisely the opposite terms, but present themselves as transgressing from the rule of Africa-as-negation.

Ever since the end of American slavery transformed the terms through which the United States would relate to Africa, American writers have been discovering and re-discovering that Africa was not nearly as “dark” as they had been led to believe, consistently using that discovery

as the basis of (largely self-serving) narratives about Africa's emergence from colonial or savage darkness. For this Americanist tradition, rejecting a "European" vision of Africa—and associating it with an outdated colonial racism—was a means of asserting the modernity of America itself, not only self-consciously connecting the American story of independence and self-determination to African struggles for political modernity but doing so as part of an ongoing rivalry with Britain: by quietly aligning the old worlds of Europe and Africa—feudal and bound by a traditionalism that colonialism sustained and perpetuated—it could be suggested that both were to be supplanted by modernity and self-determination, which the United States modeled and that Africa would emulate.

At the same time, the argument that Africa is "bright" does not displace the assertion of its darkness, but relies upon, implies, and reiterates it. It only makes sense to assert that Africa is "bright," after all, in the context of its presumed "darkness," and in this way, the criticism perpetuates its own object of critique. The reverse is also the case: even in *Heart of Darkness* itself, Kurtz's pessimism and Marlow's cynicism can only be acquired at the expense of the very optimistic vision of Africa which the novel places in the minds of women like Marlow's Aunt—a recognizable post-abolition Afro-optimism which continued to be associated with evangelical enthusiasm for liberal reform—and in the utopian schemes of the inexperienced Kurtz, whose original schemes for improvement are rejected, but still present.

It is not enough, therefore, to observe that the account of Africa's "single [dark] story" is inadequate, or simply to displace the narrative of Africa as dark with the narrative of its brightness: both terms, both narratives, are overdetermined by the same symbolic imaginary, two sides of the same coin and two answers to the same question.

There are two things to say about this tradition of "Brightest Africa" writing. First, it should force us to re-evaluate the extent to which "the West" can truly be said to have had a "dominant" view of Africa, or at least to nuance the problem beyond these rather simplistic and simplifying terms. Stanley finding Livingston, Roosevelt's popularization of the safari, and the Tarzan franchise are not only not marginal within the Western archive of Africanist discourse, but—along with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—they are arguably some of the most central and defining texts. Alongside the variety of "dark Africa" narratives, we find a coherent and enduring tradition of Africanist writing can be found to assert that Africa represents both the fundamental truth of humanity—a primitive origin which is primal and timeless, rather than bestial and savage—and sees the continent in strikingly positive, even utopian terms.

Both Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Izak Dineson took their titles from Pliny the Elder's "Out of Africa, always something new," but this optimistic sense of Africa's essential novelty are only two examples of a tendency that one can easily observe across the archive of late 19th and early 20th century Africanist writing; from the youthful adventure of Joseph Thompson's *Through Masailand* to Mary Kingsley's joyously Humboldtian *Travels in West Africa* to the nostalgic pastoralism of Elspeth Huxley's *The Flame Trees of Thika*, one could as easily describe a coherent literary tradition that defined Africa in terms of its bright and romantic promise of liberation or recovery of past traditions. Today, from the romance of films like Sidney Pollack's *Out of Africa* to the majestic nobility of *The Lion King*, in photographs and accounts of "unspoiled" Maasai or Nuba tribesman set against or embedded into vast savannah wilderness and wildlife, and through music like the irresistible kitsch of Toto's "Africa" to the dreams and wonder of Paul Simon's *Graceland*, Africa is hardly ever "dark" at all. One could as easily make the argument that this deep and broad picture of a multi-colored and brightly-lit Africa is actually the West's "dominant" image of the continent, a picture which—if problematic

in its own ways—is nevertheless a positively construed picture of familiarity and desire, and very different from what Achebe castigated Conrad (and “the West”) for being unable to avoid describing.

## Chapter 1: Remembering Stanley by Forgetting

“Marlow was not typical. . .to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.”<sup>1</sup>

—Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

“If a tree were to fall on an island where there were no human beings would there be any sound?

“No. Sound is the sensation excited in the ear when the air or other medium is set in motion.”<sup>2</sup>

—“Editor’s Table,” *The Chautauquan*

I would like to suggest that *why* we remember Henry Morton Stanley is a more interesting and useful question than the problem of who Henry Morton Stanley really was. For one thing, presuming him to have been only one thing blinds us to the extent to which he was, also, always, many things. Underneath the confident singularity of a term like “Anglo-American” is a problem of diaspora: having been born in Great Britain, named in the United States, and at home nowhere—except perhaps Africa, and not there either—his historical memory is as uprooted and circular as his life was. Both are always in motion, always in flux, and only singular and fixed when the historian pins him to the paper like a dead moth.

To the extent that “he” is anything, then, he is many things, the trace of many different and incompatible historiographic desires and the different forms of narrative through which he is given meaning in the present. The meaning of Stanley is not inside, “like a kernel,” but will be found in the haze that surrounds him, which his specter illuminates and makes visible; he is meaningful, in short, because of what his story has been used to do. A function of the “sensation excited in the ear,” his story gives the illusion of a singular perception—a singular figure—only by masking the multiplicity which the perceiving mind has to simplify, reduce, and render coherent before it can be apprehended and made visible.

In this chapter, therefore, I will privilege memory over history, terms which are “far from being synonymous,” as Pierre Nora puts it:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*. In *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1923), 48.

<sup>2</sup> “Editor’s Table,” *The Chautauquan*, 3, no. 9 (June 1883), 543.

or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic—responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again.<sup>3</sup>

“Stanley,” too, is in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, and susceptible to being periodically revived after periods of long dormancy. Nora’s terms are applicable to the memory of almost any “historical” figure, of course. But the distinction is particularly useful in understanding why Stanley has been such a persistent site of memory and contestation, and why there is such a large gap between the Stanley who historians recall, and the trace of his memory in phrases like “Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?” or “The Dark Continent” and “Darkest Africa.” These are phrases which he popularized, but from which his name has largely been removed, as author. As Claire Pettit observes, “Stanley” is a memory we remember without remembering why we remember it.<sup>4</sup>

To express the active multiplicity of his memory, therefore—rather than history’s retroactively static representation—I am more interested in the texts which have circulated about Stanley, and in the patterns of their circulation, than in answering questions about their origin, or their original context. These questions are not wholly distinct; a sense of the singular, “real” Stanley is a useful fiction, and helps to anchor the many perambulations and permutations taken by his textually-mediated forms, the fictive stability which casts his motion into sharp relief. History, itself, is a very useful fiction. But while the historical Stanley can be plotted across an empirical horizon of scientific historiography—determined by what made him whatever it is he therefore was—I am interested in a Stanley who does not make much sense, who is composed out of lived contradictions whose meaning we would lose if we would attempt to resolve or understand their necessity, pass moralistic judgment on them, or use them as a basis to make claims about history.

This Stanley is a palimpsest, and by a reconstruction of the process by which it has been erased, inscribed, and erased again, it can tell us something about how the relationship of “Africa” to white masculinity was problematized in Stanley’s time, illuminating the questions and anxieties and tensions and contradictions in Anglo-American society for which “Africa” became a useful and desirable point of reference or mediation. In the process, I will recover some of the forms by which Africa was made meaningful to Stanley and his contemporaries—specifically, the terms by which Africa was understood to be a bright frontier—which have not so much been *forgotten* as they have not been desirable to remember, for reasons which are just as interesting. And this, too, is a data point: why Stanley has been forgotten is as interesting as why he has been remembered.

The argument that gives this chapter its coherence does not exhaust Stanley of his meaning, of course; my “Stanley” is an interested reconstruction, and much has been left out.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux Mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–25.

<sup>4</sup> Claire Pettitt, “*Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?*” *Missionaries, Journalists, Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> If Stanley is a palimpsest, the Stanley who traveled to South Africa in his later years, for example, or the Stanley who wrote about West Africa in *Coomassie and Magdala* could easily

To be explicit, then, about the investment in Stanley around which this chapter coheres, I am interested in the ways his historical memory makes visible the kind of problem that “Anglo-American” posed for imperial whiteness in the late 19th century, and how this relationship was mediated by a changing image of Africa. Stanley published *How I Found Livingstone* in 1872, at a moment of crisis for the relationship which is mediated by that hyphen, a moment in which old solidities were passing away—but were still visible—while new forms of narrative identities were coming into view and becoming thinkable, if not yet solid. It was a moment in which what one “presumed” about what it meant to be American, British, or African was capable of being unsettled, when the sensations of the present made it possible to question the assumptions inherited from the past. It is this sense of unsettled possibilities, in fact, that the “American” Stanley makes sensible to us, but which ideology critique can make it difficult to perceive (if he is held to represent an “imperial mind,” for example). In 1872, far from overdetermining his identity, “American” represented the *underdetermination* of Stanley, his ability to become someone he was not (or who he had not originally been), and a whiteness which was defined by its lack of definition. After 1872, on the other hand, as he ceased to be “American” and came to terms with the imposed social fact that he was “Welsh” (or at least British), his identity became something fixed and unmovable, and his whiteness became something which could be both formally represented, and represented through unchanging form.

“Africa” was the fulcrum for this transformation. In the distinction I would draw between Stanley’s American identity—which was in flux, but identifiable by that flux—and a British identity which was identifiable more by the fact of its own sense of rigid consistency than much clarity about what it was consistent about, the hyphen in “Anglo-American” mediates the question of whether Africa is “bright” or “dark.” For the American Stanley, Africa was a site of possibility, underdetermined futurity, and open frontiers of speculation and desire. For the British Stanley, by contrast, Africa’s difference was monstrous, a grotesque deformation, and a site of degenerative, regressive atavism. But if these images of Africa derive, as I will argue, from the interests Stanley had in performing one or the other identity—which can be captured by a snapshot of Stanley in 1872, or in 1890—they were in flux in those moments as well, presuming their opposite even while denying its validity. In 1872, Africa’s brightness distinguished the way an American white man could see the continent from the dark vision of his predecessors. The same is true, in reverse, of Stanley’s *In Darkest Africa*, in 1890: in finding Africa to be “dark,” he found the absence of the dark Africa he had found when he was an American, when he found Livingstone.

More concretely, when Stanley was an American, in 1872, Africa was a frontier. This is not surprising; when Stanley went to Africa for the first time, he was fresh from working as a frontier journalist in “Indian Country,” filing reports on General Hancock and General Sherman’s campaigns against the Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and other plains Indians (which have been partially collected in *My Early Travels and Adventures in America*).<sup>6</sup> This was his

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have been included, and might have produced a more rich and complex parallax view of his trajectory. Henry Morton Stanley, *Through South Africa: being an account of his recent visit to Rhodesia, the Transvaal, Cape Colony and Natal*. (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1898), Henry Morton Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala: the story of two British campaigns in Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1891).

<sup>6</sup> Henry Morton Stanley, *My Early Travels and Adventures in America and Asia*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895). Volume 1 reprinted as *My Early Travels and Adventures in*

first and formative experience as a writer, a frontier mythologist who described how the coming of white men brought about the inevitable decline and retreat of the land's native inhabitants, how the brilliance of white futurity brightened a continent which had, previously, been "dark," and the alluring prospect which a virgin soil held out for the white men who could penetrate it. By 1890, by contrast, that frontier had closed: if Africa had held out brilliant possibilities when it was first made available to him, that future had disappeared by the time he came to inscribe it as "dark," becoming something more like a dangerous temptation and a seductive peril. By 1890, Africa had become a heart of darkness, fit only to be the subject of violent conquest.

In part one, I will describe "How Joseph Conrad Forgot Stanley," or how—as I will argue—Joseph Conrad produced the image of Africa he did, in his most famous novella, by appropriating and displacing the texts which make his possible, Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent*, *In Darkest Africa*, and *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State: a Story of Work and Exploration*. These books are more than simply "contexts" for Stanley, more than simply the kind of representations of Africa which were "in the air" for the figure of the Author to pluck and re-articulate. They represented a singular and coherent intervention into Africanist discourse, a sustained (and individual) argument that Africa was "dark," but if we attribute this vision to Joseph Conrad, we will find difficulty in appreciating the extent to which this vision was, for Stanley, a function of his repudiation of the American frontiersman he had been pretending to be and a mode of adopting a safely British imperial identity. In part two, "The Stanley that Joseph Conrad Forgot" I will bring these two Stanleys into closer conversation, demonstrating how historiographic disputes over his memory mediate the clash of distinct ideological investments in different forms and apprehensions of Africa. In part three, "The American Stanley," I will focus specifically on what Stanley saw in Africa and describe how epistemological failures could become funny, first, how humor mediated the gaps in identity he sought to project himself across, and second, how a focus on sensation—that he flags as specifically "American"—becomes an argument for experiencing Africa not through the (British) explorer's instrumental lens, but, rather, as a site of unmediated sensation, mediated only by the experience of a sensationalist American journalist like himself. Finally, in part four, "Public Sensations," I will describe how this distinction—between sensationalist journalism and empirical exploration—not only implies and construes different forms of the Anglo-American public sphere—splitting American from British not by origins, but by epistemology—but produces, in turn, the terms by which an American "Africa" could be distinguished from the Africa that was necessary for the British empire, the difference between an open Africa of sensations and futurity and the closed darkness of an Africa suited only to be conquered, disciplined, and excluded from public view.

### **I. How Joseph Conrad Forgot Stanley**

For a start, it can be difficult to remember Henry Morton Stanley, because Joseph Conrad is in the way. If books like Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890) are still available to us as texts, after all, the terms through which they were made meaningful when they were written can be obscured by the figure of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Because few readers will come to Stanley without having first read *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's novella structures how we will read Stanley and how we will understand the function

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*America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

and purpose of his writing.<sup>7</sup> In this way, before we have read him, we have already read him. However, even Joseph Conrad can be difficult to distinguish from the “Conrad” which critics have, in turn, made out of him: not the high modernist author of dozens of novels and more short stories, but the name which takes “the Africa of” as its possessive object, as in “Conrad’s Africa.” Ever since Chinua Achebe’s “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” transformed the frame through which that novel’s literary function could be understood, we tend to read *Heart of Darkness* for its negation of Africa, that which, in critiquing, we might work to negate.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, if we read the novel which Joseph Conrad wrote in 1899, the “Conrad” which we seek to draw forth from the text (or through which we understand the text to be signifying) must be compared to the figure that Achebe makes of him, an arrogant imperialist ignorance and contempt towards Africa. Achebe’s argument structures the questions we ask the text: even if we decide that Achebe is wrong, we will still see “Conrad” through the problem-space which Achebe established, testing him by how and to what effect he “represented” Africa.

In this sense, we might say that the “real” Henry Morton Stanley is a doubly effaced historical memory, buried beneath the burial of Joseph Conrad. But this double effacement is also a double mediation. If it can be difficult to see “Stanley” past Achebe’s “Conrad,” we also might only strive to remember him in the first place *because* of Achebe’s “Conrad,” because of the work which Achebe made the figure of “Conrad” do (beneath which we find the work which Conrad made “Stanley” do). In other words, we should not beg the question that the most interesting “Stanley” is the “real” one, the unmediated original figure who was born “John Rowlands” in Denbigh, Wales in 1841, who died a celebrated explorer in 1904, hoping to be buried in Westminster Abbey, but who was instead cremated and buried beneath a gravestone that read “Henry Morton Stanley, Bula Matari, 1841-1904, Africa.”<sup>9</sup> After all, the names on the tombstone raise more questions than they lay to rest: Because he was born in Wales in 1841, was he *really* Welsh? Because he was buried in England, where he lived most of his life, was he really British? Because he spent much of his life pretending to be American—and because he took the name “Henry Morton Stanley” while he was pretending to have always been an American—would it be fair to call him American? And what, most puzzling of all, are we to make of the word “Africa” on his tombstone, or the name he acquired in the Belgian Congo, “Bula Matari”?

Timothy Jeal’s hagiographic biography—*Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa’s Greatest Explorer* (2008)—nicely names the problem of the man as this quality of his “impossible” life, the irreconcilable simultaneity of different identities and the fact that so much of what Stanley said he “really” was in life, in fact, turned out to have been at least fanciful, and often totally fictional.<sup>10</sup> His *impossibility*, in this sense, is an important part of what he

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<sup>7</sup> Conrad’s “strong misreading” of Stanley could be theorized by reference to Harold Bloom’s model of influence criticism. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) and *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” *Massachusetts Review* 18:4 (Winter, 1977): 782-94.

<sup>9</sup> James L. Newman, *Imperial Footprints: Henry Morton Stanley’s African Journeys*, (Washington DC: Brassey’s Inc., 2004), 334.

<sup>10</sup> Tim Jeal, *Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa’s Greatest Explorer* (New Haven and

represents as a historical memory: the instantiation of myth, the realization—in life—of fictional narratives of identity which cannot actually—in life—obtain. Jeal therefore offers “Africa’s Greatest Explorer” as the resolution to that problem, a means of forgetting and displacing the fact that it even *was* a problem. By remembering his accomplishment—his “greatness”—and appealing to the fact that he really was a real man, who actually existed, Jeal’s biography papers over the contradictions by which he was made, insisting that his impossible life could, in fact, be shelved under “non-fiction.”

Forgetting Stanley—or some version of him—is what forms the fabric of his historical memory. He is not *erased* by a historical amnesia that makes him unavailable to us, in other words, nor should we seek to find the real Stanley hidden beneath an obscuring glaze of time and distance. Instead, “Stanley” is mediated by the structures of erasure which make one or another irreconcilable aspect of his personality the lens through which a total figure is made legible. We get one Stanley when viewed through the lens of Conrad, just as we get one particular Conrad when viewed through the lens of Achebe, a consequence of the fact that history lived forwards is always, necessarily, reconstructed in retrospect.

More broadly, the manner in which “Stanley” was made through erasure will establish the terms by which, I will argue, white masculinity is made across the range of figures treated in this dissertation: a fictional coherence produced as “real” through an insistent disavowal and effacement of the constitutive diversity that made it impossibly overdetermined in life, a desirable erasure which—as I will argue—was made possible by, was cathected onto, and concretized the making of settler frontiers, specifically in the space of East Africa. In the works of Stanley, Theodore Roosevelt, and the figure of “Tarzan of the Apes,” we see different versions of what I will argue to be the same essential process, the staged discovery that a unitary, autonomous, white, and masculine subjectivity is possible after all. In 1872, 1910, and 1932, of course, the terms of this narrative’s impossibility are different; in each figure, we find that different ways of theorizing the contradictions of white masculinity—at different historical moments—always necessitate different forms of fictive coherence. But in each case, by disavowing time and re-investing in *place*—the timeless space of East Africa—the white male can “again” take his established and natural place atop the hierarchy of society, discovering in Africa a place where again can be discovered the possibilities that modern civilization has made impossible.

The first point to make, then, is that there is no “real” Henry Morton Stanley without presuming some prior notion of which reality it is that interests us in him, without privileging the particular criteria by which he would be perceptible as singular and unified. Any such presumption will have the effect of erasing the other, but no less true, versions of the man. If he was British, saying so erases the fact that he was also Welsh, American, and/or African, and so forth; if he was an explorer, he was not a journalist, and if he was an imperial functionary, he was not a writer. Yet because his identity was composed out of a plurality of incommensurable identities, it can only be produced as singular and coherent by erasure. Rather than fetishize what is *forgotten* when we presume him to be one thing or another—preserving the nostalgic trace of an undivided subject—I wish to examine the productivity of that process of forgetting itself, to regard the construction of narrative identity as the *making* of history, rather than the site at which we might observe its failure to be real. In the same way that memory is literally inextricable from forgetting, as a cognitive process—since we remember only very particular and selected aspects

of a human being's total sensory experience, by forgetting the rest, thereby separating "signal" from "noise"—I would argue that any historical memory must be as much a product of forgetting as remembering, a function of the fictive coherence by which it is plucked from the complexly overdetermined fabric of total reality. We remember Stanley in order to forget something else, then, and vice-versa.

For example, remembering him as a "real" and "historical" figure—as Timothy Jeal does, attempting to recover him from beneath the myths that have sprung up around his name, and the general ignorance that obscures it—is a mode of remembering Stanley that takes forgetting him as its prerequisite: that he is an "impossible" myth is the memory which Jeal seeks to displace by a real and historical figure. But remembering him in this way is also a choice, putting to rest a set of very particular anxieties associated with the mythic Stanley by replacing them with a (less unsettling) historical memory. Because what we are presumed to "know" about Stanley is myth and ideology, in other words, recovering him as the subject of "Great Man" history recovers the possibility of that form of historiography, thereby insisting that the impossible myths were real and great. As A.G. Hopkins observed, in fact, Jeal writes about Stanley as if the Africanist archive had not expanded to include actual African voices.<sup>11</sup> To which I would simply add: this is a feature, not a bug.

At the same time, the popular tropes by which Stanley is most often actually mediated are also a way of forgetting the "real" Stanley: when the phrase "Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?" is used, or when one references "Darkest Africa" or "the Dark Continent," the most pertinent fact about the reference might be its common circulation, not its singular author. Using those phrases not only does not require one to realize that Stanley was the popularizer of these terms—or to know how and why he coined them—but one thereby neglects to know what those terms signified when they were taken to be—as they once were—specific references to a specific version of "Stanley." To go a step further, it is unlikely that one will recognize the kind of historical revision Stanley, himself, was engaging in when he wrote them, what he forgot in order to remember the narrative which we, in turn, have forgotten.

The central contradiction of Stanley's life, I will argue, was the question of whether he was an American or a Briton, whether he was born "Henry Morton Stanley" in Missouri or "John Rowlands" in Wales, a question which would eventually be displaced and rendered unnecessary by giving him the adjective "African," and the name "Bula Matari." In life, of course, the question didn't need to be reconciled at all. While he would eventually give up the pretense that he had been born in the United States—and his Welsh family would continue to know him as "John"—he would carry the name Henry Morton Stanley to his grave, and maintain the broad outlines of the life narrative he had invented when he was pretending to be an American. As a

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<sup>11</sup> Of Jeal's account of the African backdrop, Hopkins writes that "Historians of Africa have long since ceased to depict the continent in such simple terms. They have abandoned both the notion of the 'Dark Continent', which Stanley's books did so much to propagate, and the alternative romanticised idea of 'Merrie Africa.' Recent work in cultural history, none of which Jeal mentions, has underlined the prevalence of adverse stereotypes of Africa among contemporary observers and the extent to which the continent was darkened in their writings to enable Europe to appear in an even brighter light. It is dispiriting to find that almost nothing of value from a half century of immensely productive scholarly endeavour has illuminated the dense forests of this book." A.G. Hopkins, "Explorers' Tales: Stanley Presumes— Again," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36, no. 4 (2008)

lived reality, such contradictions are as unremarkable as linguistic code-switching in communities of mixed ethnicity, or of a phrase with a double meaning. But as a historical memory, this textural overlap and messy incommensurability is very specifically lost, not only when we recover “the impossible life of Africa’s Greatest Explorer” as a singular subject but when we regard the fragments of his personality in isolation from each other, thinking of it as a question which could be settled: was he “really” Welsh? Or was he “really” American? The fact that because he was both, he was also neither, requires us to ask a different question: what was contained in the incommensurability of Anglo-American identity that would require the problem be tabled and displaced by Africa?

As I will argue, Stanley was not only the man who popularized the two most famous “darkest Africa” tropes, and whose reputational credit kept those terms in circulation for many years; Stanley was also the originator of the notion of Africa as “bright,” most directly by his late-career effort to darken it, but also by the early career adventures, in *How I Found Livingstone*, which were the vision of brightest Africa that he, himself, had been working to forget.

In this sense, to anticipate the structural place that Stanley’s absence will have in Roosevelt’s writing about Africa, I will argue that Stanley is the negation which makes Roosevelt’s text both possible and meaningful. When Roosevelt’s *African Game Trails* programmatically describes Africa as bright, he does so in very precise and pointed contrast to the adjectival insistence on *darkness* which characterized Stanley ten years before Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*. But Roosevelt, himself, was originally sold on the idea of an East African safari by Carl Akeley, an American naturalist who spent his life quite explicitly working to combat “that horrible darkest Africa [which] the public has accepted,” as he put it, and whose career led up to the 1924 publication of *In Brightest Africa*, which he dedicated to Roosevelt’s memory, and whose title clarifies its polemic target as clearly as if it had named him.<sup>12</sup> For Akeley, Africa is innocent; while its “darkness” was brought to the continent by European colonizers, savage men like Stanley, in particular, were to blame for its dark reputation. “The dark chapters of African history are only now being written by the inroads of civilization,” he insisted, and so he struggled to bring the underlying beauty and essential purity of the continent before an American public who had been denied that vision, the underlying reality of a “jungle peace” which had *preceded* European interventions. In this sense, while *Heart of Darkness*, Stanley’s later books, and the rest of the “myth of the dark continent” tradition all showed an Africa which it was vain and foolish to try to know or see—an Africa whose dark and unknowable savagery made violence the only *rational* response—Carl Akeley and Theodore Roosevelt were part of a counter-tradition of conservationist Africa thinking (often, implicitly, American) which worked to make the African pastoral a rational place to visit, see, and know.<sup>13</sup>

In this sense, Akeley’s conservation was more of a mirror held up to Stanley’s dark

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<sup>12</sup> Akeley claims to have convinced Roosevelt to eschew Alaska for Africa, in Carl Akeley, *In Brightest Africa* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923), 158-9.

<sup>13</sup> On Akeley and conservationist visions of Africa, see Jeanette Eileen Jones, *In Search of Brightest Africa: Reimagining the Dark Continent in American Culture, 1884-1936* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), Lysle E. Meyer, *The Farther Frontier: Six Case Studies of Americans and Africa, 1848-1936* (London: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), and Donna J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

continent than a significant alternative to it, and his apparent critique and inversion of “Stanley” retained the essential core of what Stanley had actually seen. Blaming Europeans for making Africa “dark,” for instance, did not deny that “dark” was what it was (placing Akeley with Joseph Conrad, rather than in opposition). Indeed, the fact that “seeing” Africa placed it in a danger which was to be addressed by *more* “seeing” allows no alternate mode of approach: in a dynamic familiar to critics of “salvage ethnography,” bringing the technologies of modernity to bear on a pre-modern lifeway, to record it before it was gone, in fact only hastens (and legitimizes) that very process of its disappearance. Akeley’s efforts to *preserve* African nature still presumed a basic contradiction between “progress” and “nature,” a narrative in which the [European] former replaced and inevitably destroyed the [African] latter.

This narrative would, however, only be tautologically nonsensical if Africa had a future. For Akeley, Africa did not: like Conrad and Conrad’s Stanley, Akeley narrated Africa’s history through the presumption that the inevitable passage of time would, as inevitably as the progress of time itself, spell the end of the Africa which was the site of his desire. As a result, Akeley does not combat Africa’s imperial incorporation; at most, he might try to delay it and to participate in what Renato Rosaldo has called the imperialist nostalgia of “mourning for what one has destroyed.”<sup>14</sup> While lamenting the passing of natural diversity, he seeks to collect and re-value its survivals only at the cost of confirming the extinction discourse which makes its “survival” legible, since—in this context—a “survival” does not repudiate the inevitability of destruction, but actually records its completion, even brings it *to* completion.

I read Stanley back through Akeley, then—and Akeley back through Roosevelt—in order to bring to articulation the meaning which Africa had in 1872, for Stanley. When he found Livingstone, he did so against the backdrop of a bright Africa, but a bright Africa which he would spend the rest of his life forgetting, and whose erasure he would make into the instrument of his own historical memory, as the author of *In Darkest Africa* and *Through the Dark Continent*. However, the fact that he can only be “remembered” as the “Dark” Stanley by forgetting that he was also, or had once been, the “Bright” Stanley is the point of making that observation; I am not interested in recovering or privileging one or the other, but in clarifying the terms by which they were, contemporaneously, incommensurable. These were not separate tropes, nor are we capable of choosing one or the other: Stanley was not erased when Akeley wrote *In Brightest Africa*, any more than Achebe’s attack on Conrad has led to his being any less widely read. The reverse is the case. Precisely by the way these texts work to un-think each other, they imply and require (and are decontextualized without) their opposite number. “Africa” was never simply “bright” or “dark”; it was always both bright *and not-dark* (or both dark *and not-bright*). And to recover the narrative texture of Stanley’s total life—the life narrative which includes all the incommensurable fragments rather than invoking the authority of the “real” to exclude those which do not fit—we have to recover this dialectic process, the manner in which *How I Found Livingstone* is startled to discover that Africa is bright (not-dark) and the way in which *In Darkest Africa* and *Through the Dark Continent* are precisely as startled to discover that Africa is dark (not-bright).

This is not to say, however, that it is easy to find Stanley in Conrad, or even to figure their literary relation *as* a literary relation. More often than not, they occupy very different interpretive registers: Stanley is historical and Conrad is literary. While Conrad is remembered as

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<sup>14</sup> Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

a novelist (rather than the colonial functionary which he also was), Stanley is most likely be recalled as an explorer and empire builder, but not as the writer which he also was. For this reason, Stanley is most often framed and understood as one of the possible “models” for Kurtz, one of the real life figures who Conrad converted into representation in his novel; Ian Watt’s *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, for example, lays out a possible nine figures who could have influenced Conrad in producing his narrative (and argues that “[i]t is essential to the very nature of what Conrad was doing in *Heart of Darkness* that there should not be one but innumerable sources for Kurtz.”)<sup>15</sup> As Watt notes, however, Stanley is much more than simply one model among many; he is the primary and foundational reference point for Conrad’s novella, as historical actor, as literary predecessor, and as a basis of the “moral atmosphere” through which the problem of Kurtz was understood (Watt seems slightly confused on this point; while Stanley is “central,” he is also first among “innumerable” others. It is important that he be no more than one of many, but also that he be much more than that, and Watt does not resolve this apparent contradiction).<sup>16</sup>

It is clear why Stanley is given this privileged place, however: as King Leopold’s first and primary agent in the Belgian Congo, Stanley was an obvious inspiration for Kurtz: alone among “savages” in the Belgian Congo, he used terrific violence to harvest organic commodities—though rubber, instead of ivory—and the brutal force which earned him the Bakongo name “Bula Matari” (“breaker of rocks”) is reflected in Kurtz’s own “method,” or lack of it. Stanley stood out as the most violent, brutal, and most *obviously* so of his cohort of “Victorian” explorers. It is also very easy to show Conrad’s direct exposure to Stanley, beyond simply the assumption that he almost certainly read Stanley’s books: when Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski sailed a steamer up the Congo river in 1890—the journey he would immortalize under his Anglicized pen name—he was following Stanley’s own route from less than a decade earlier, proceeding from station to station which Stanley had founded. Moreover, as Sven Lindqvist observes, Conrad’s departure for the Congo perfectly coincided with celebrations in 1890 of Stanley’s “rescue” of the Emin Pasha; the young Józef passed through both London and Brussels, en route to the Congo, in the same two week period in which Stanley was being feted.<sup>17</sup> There is also a clear narrative lineage: Stanley was the only famous African explorer of his era whose journeys repeatedly took the form of “finding” a white man lost in the jungle, as Marlow finds Kurtz. In fact, Stanley liked this story so much that he sought to accomplish it twice, first with his “discovery” of Livingstone in 1871 and again in 1888, with the “Emin Pasha” (born Isaak Eduard Schnitzer). Like Kurtz, neither Livingstone nor the Emin Pasha would survive much beyond their rescue, leaving Stanley—like Marlowe—the only one left to tell the tale (and the only person to soak up the inherited glory).

If we make Stanley the “real life” model for Kurtz, however, we oversimplify their

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<sup>15</sup> Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 145. Also see Norman Sherry’s *Conrad’s Western World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), Jacques Darras, *Joseph Conrad and the West: Signs of Empire*. Trans. Anne Luyat and Jacques Darras (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), Andrea White, *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition: Constructing and Deconstructing the Imperial Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Brian Artese, *Testimony on Trial: Conrad, James, and the Contest for Modernism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Watt, p145

<sup>17</sup> Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminate All the Brutes* Trans. Joan Tate (London: Granta Books, 2002).

relationship, presuming a relationship of artist and object which can tell us little about the substance of their engagement. For one thing, it was primarily as a writer that Stanley's "real life" became available to Conrad in the first place. When Józef Teodor first sailed up the Congo river, in 1890, the manner in which Stanley had already written the place into Western cognizance—writing it as a "heart of darkness," one might say—was the narrative structure through which Conrad would be able to plot his own "real life" experience of Africa, an experience which would allow him to call *Heart of Darkness* "experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case for the perfectly legitimate, I believe, purpose of bringing it home to the minds and bosoms of the readers." At the level of textual production, his diary "wrote" his experience into a rhetorical tradition dominated (and exemplified) by the figure of Henry Morton Stanley. As private diary, of course, Conrad's original Congo writings did not imitate Stanley stylistically—that would only come when he re-packaged his experience for a public audience—but they register Africa in essentially the same terms through which Stanley marked his experience: trial, tribulation, and a textured and textual incomprehensibility. In this sense, when Conrad argued that *Heart of Darkness* was mostly true to what he experienced—and his "distortions" were only for the purpose of more clearly mediating the more essential truth of the place—what he took to be the essential truth of his experience, I would suggest, is recognizable as Stanley's mix of moralism, metaphysics, and epistemology, the manner in which "Africa" would become a legible experience through the associations with which its darkness was imbued.

At the level of the title, obviously, books like Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890) are the first reference points for Conrad's novella, and, more broadly, this rhetorical mode distinguished Stanley from the more respectable among his cohort of late Victorian African explorers. Stanley was many things, but he almost never respectable, a difference which is marked by the simple and direct geographical references in the titles and writing of men like Richard Burton and John Speke: men like this, left the more expressive (or impressionist) rhetoric to missionaries and eccentrics like Stanley. If placed among books like Samuel Baker's *The Albert N'yanza: Great Basin of the Nile, And Explorations of the Nile*, Richard Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, John Speke's *Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, Joseph Thomson's *To the Central African Lakes and Back*, or even David Livingstone's *Missionary Researches in South Africa*, Stanley's florid lack of geographic specificity sticks out like a sore thumb, as does his effort to make what he does *not* know into a structure of knowledge. For writers like these, the goal of the work was to inform, and so their titles reflected the careful prose and the scientific aspirations to technical precision which defined the horizon of their ambitions.

By contrast, if "impressionism" marks a moment in modern art where the texture of the artist's construction of reality becomes explicitly overt—say, by visible brush-strokes—and where the failure of the artist to accurately depict a reality that is, by its very nature, impossible to depict becomes a central function of the artist's work—as when a painter emphasizes movement and light over stable form and color—then the impressionistic touches that make Joseph Conrad a "modernist" author were first derived from Stanley, and specifically *not* from Stanley's peers.<sup>18</sup> In passages like this one, for example, we see the clear predecessor for what

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<sup>18</sup> Eloise Knapp Hay "Joseph Conrad and Impressionism." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Winter, 1975), 137-144; John G. Peters, *Conrad and Impressionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

F.R. Leavis would famously call Conrad's "adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery":<sup>19</sup>

The intending explorer, however, bound for that dark edge of the continent which he can just see lying low along the west as he looks from Zanzibar has thoughts at this hour which the resident cannot share. As little as his eyes can pierce and define the details in that gloomy streak on the horizon, so little can he tell whether weal or woe lies before him. The whole is buried in mystery, over which he ponders, certain of nothing but the uncertainty of life.<sup>20</sup>

As he gazes towards Africa from off the coast on the island of Zanzibar, the silence of dusk provokes in Stanley a reflection on the journey he was about to embark on, an African unknown which reflects the unknowability of the future. An explorer could see something in Africa, he argued, that a mere "resident" could not, precisely as a function of what the "explorer" did not know: in what he could *not* see in the landscape, he could see the unknowable mystery of his own future, and of *the* future. Just as Marlow would do for the Congolese heart of the continent, in other words, Stanley rhetorically transforms the dark landscape that he actually sees—or, rather, does not see—into a site for metaphysical speculations on the limits of human existence and knowledge; what one cannot know about Africa is a way of figuring and representing the uncertainty of life itself. Ignorance becomes an epistemology.

In other words, what Stanley and Conrad had in common—and what distinguished their visions of Africa from the broad mainstream of Africanist writing in the period—was an effort to make African darkness into something distinct from either "blank" or "explored," to make ignorance a virtue, or at least to reify it as a literary commodity. For someone like Burton and Speke, Africa was simply a map, with a frontier line dividing the known and the not-yet-known, a line that steadily moved towards the telos of totally-known. The parts of the map which were blank were simply the not-yet-seen, such that the work of the explorer—who operated within the framework of a body like the Royal Geographic Association—was to move that line forward, to fill in blank spaces on the map with *fact*. Stanley's innovation (or distinction) was to refuse this positivist epistemology, in favor of the metaphysical. He didn't "represent" Africa mimetically, as a problem of cartographic geography; he mythologized it as a topos on the landscape of human reality, in terms which Conrad would adopt and (by most standards) improve upon.

Rather than arguing that Conrad was immensely indebted to Stanley, however—an argument I find so self-evident as to be uninteresting—there are consequences to forgiving this debt, when we understand Conrad to be writing about "Africa" rather than writing about Stanley's Africa in particular. Why do we not consider Stanley to be the bestselling author whose literary vision of the continent structured the manner in which Conrad would experience it, in "real" life, thereby providing the textual foundation for his own attempt to realistically represent his own experience? What happens if we take *Stanley* seriously as a writer, and take Conrad at his word, that he sought to accurately represent—rather than synthesize, theorize, or

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<sup>19</sup> Frank Raymond Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (1948; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 201.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Morton Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent, or, The Sources of the Nile: Around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and Down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, Rivington, 1878), 38.

philosophize on—his subjective experience of Stanley’s dark continent? More to the point: what happens when we *don’t* do this? Why haven’t we done this? What is it that, by avoiding this reading, we ignore as a textual possibility?

In this sense, I would observe that there is a curious bifurcation in Conrad criticism, between his status as modernist and his status as Victorian realist. On the one hand, Conrad is understood to be a great modernist writer in terms both of period and style, in the anxious relation to the scene of writing itself which is taken to be emblematic of the modern. This is the anxiety which tempers any claims to authorial authority or epistemological validity; this Conrad was not writing about the “real” world, in other words, so much as he was writing about how we write about the real world, or don’t.

On the other hand, the fact that Conrad really went to the Congo, that many details of his journey found their way into his novella, and that he has described his novella in those terms—as he put it, it was part of the “spoil” he brought back<sup>21</sup>—has something to do with the ways in which the critical tradition has read him as “representing” Africa, as producing an essentially mimetic text. These are the terms in which Achebe criticizes him, after all, the manner in which his novel produces an “image of Africa” derived from ideological will. Achebe directly psychologizes Conrad, reading the truth of his psyche by analyzing word choices in his diary, for example, thereby not only equating the two, but rhetorically erasing the intense mediation through which Conrad’s experience became available to the reader of his novella, everything that changed between the diary and the novella. The diary *was* meant to represent, we can safely presume, but in becoming a work of creative re-imagination, it ceased to be a diary. Put differently, by incorporating Stanley—by making “Stanley” into its primary reference point through the invocation of African “darkness”—it ceased to be about Africa and became about how Stanley wrote about Africa.

In other words, we would seem to have two choices of how to read Conrad: either he was a modernist, who was not writing about Africa at all, or he was realist, describing Africa through the lens of his personal experience of it. We also have essentially the same two choices for how to read Stanley: as an explorer who saw Africa as “dark,” Stanley either accurately reflected the colonial difference through which it was impossible for him to see Africa (in which it was only possible for him to *not* see Africa), or he represented the worst of the arrogant colonial racism by which Victorians presumed to know that Africa was an absolute negation, a heart of darkness.

But as I think is clear, neither option is particularly satisfying on its own. In the way that Conrad was both modernist and realist—and was also, perhaps, “modern” and “Victorian”—he was also neither, and this fact is just as true of Stanley, and something important is lost when we content ourselves with this choice, between confidently depicting Africa and anxiously depicting how one cannot depict Africa. That choice is structured by an essentially “paranoid” sense of reality, in which truth is that which is rendered unavailable to us by subjectivity, in which the manifest content of a text—what is actually written on the page—hides the latent content which it is the work of the analyst, paranoid, or literary critic to draw forth and render speakable, and which is therefore privileged as a particular kind of real, or true.

The fact that we read Achebe reading Conrad reading Stanley in a particular (and ideologically determined) way does not make that version of “Stanley” any less true, of course. I

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<sup>21</sup> As Conrad wrote, “This story, and on other, not in this volume, are all the spoil I brought out from the centre of Africa, where, really, I had no sort of business.” Joseph Conrad, *Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1923).

make the observation only to suggest that when Achebe made his argument about the “Image of Africa,” in 1974, the truth in his statement was the truth which was necessary to him then, for reasons which were just as particular to that rhetorical moment and context. And it *is* true that Conrad produced an image of Africa as dark, and that he derived the meaning of that sense of metaphysical and epistemic darkness from Stanley’s later writings. But the Stanley which this particular structure of interpretation mediates—the Stanley who was a cipher for willful and destructive Victorian ignorance, an explorer “going at it blind,” which, as Conrad’s Marlow put it, “is the best way to tackle a darkness,” and who presumed that Africa was one—was only one of many Stanleys which we can find in the historical archive, and while Achebe drew forth one, in 1974, I wish to draw forth another, the Stanley who was or who could be—in not being British or Welsh—American and/or African.

In one sense, then, I am only building on a rather basic point about how history is constructed from its archival sources. There is an important difference between Henry Morton Stanley and Joseph Conrad—as men who lived and breathed and wrote and died—and their reconstruction as historical subjects, as the historical narratives by which they are made to serve particular, interested purposes in the present. Achebe’s use of Conrad is no more or less disinterested than my own will be of Stanley; we draw them forth and tell the story we tell because we have some reason to do so, some narrative function for them to play. As human beings, they had objective autonomy and existence, and were under no obligation to make much sense. But as historical narratives, they make sense, literally; indeed, all “they” are is a narrative means of making sense of the scattered fragments of a historical archive which does not tend to make much sense on its own.

In this way, what it means to “historicize” a text like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* or one of Stanley’s “Darkest Africa” books is, to place it in context with other (selectively chosen) texts that help us understand one version of why it is what is, and how it came to be, but only one version. *Heart of Darkness* makes more sense if we read it “alongside” Henry Morton Stanley, for example; Conrad’s text was written for an audience for whom the figure of Stanley—and his adjectival insistence on African “darkness”—was familiar, too obvious to need to be restated, but if we have not read Stanley when we read Conrad, we are missing an aspect of the text which was important to those who read it that way. Similarly, Stanley’s texts take a great deal for granted; without reflecting on the various other texts with which his books were read, when they were first written—reading Stanley “alongside” a book like Richard Burton’s *Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1860), for example—much that would have made sense to his audience—and even much that is explicitly invoked—will not make sense to us, and vice versa: much that would have struck his contemporary readers as odd and unsettling will, in the absence of the narratives which he unsettled, appear normal to our disassociated eyes, or not appear at all.

Historians, then, must choose to re-write the archive in ways that make sense, selectively adding aspects of the archive which restore some sense of (some version of) that archive’s inner sensibility, retroactively working to re-construct narratives of the past which are not, as such, the same as the past, thereby producing a coherence that primary texts tend not to provide unaided. Historians must re-construct the past, because “the past” no longer exists, by definition. But a consequence of this rather banal observation is that the textual archive that was produced by these figures—the many books, letters, and essays that they wrote—is much richer, deeper, stranger, and more complex and contradictory than any single narrative reconstruction of their lives could ever articulate. And in seeking to retroactively “make sense” of them, we impose a desirable narrative unity on lives that were fragmented by constant change and constantly

changing contexts, and whose textual record reflects that fundamental dis-unity. Over the course of his life, Henry Morton Stanley was many different things at many different times, as was Joseph Conrad, and not all of them—perhaps *none* of them—“made sense” in the way a satisfying historical reconstruction must do, almost by definition. Although we can strive to make sense of their development through their writings, to trace how they understood themselves and how that changed over the course of their lifetime, the narrative conceit of such reconstructions, invariably, will be to impose that sense of “making sense” on lives which, very often, lacked any such thing. If we search for certainty in the claims we make about the past—if we attempt to provide evidence that the claims we make are correct, warranted, and provable—we then impose that singularity of meaning onto a past that only becomes singularly meaningful by that reconstruction of it.

To repeat the point: neither Stanley nor Conrad made a lot of sense in life, and it is that anti-sensibility which I am trying to draw from the archive. When arguments are mounted over whether Conrad was or was not an imperialist, for example, we beg the question that he was anything at all, that his person can be reduced to some form of -ist, either pro or con, and the extent to which the statement is taken as true—the extent to which a text like *Heart of Darkness* is racist—can have the effect of flattening out the texture of a figure whose ambivalence and ambiguity was also constitutive of whatever it is his texts are supposed to be (and who might not have been sure himself). If Conrad claimed that *Heart of Darkness* was largely a true story, it is at least as important to observe that it questions the very possibility of truth. Something similar is true of Stanley, perhaps even more so; the more we might struggle to make sense of him, the more we obscure something which I will argue was of fundamental importance in his struggle to make sense of himself: the extent to which he did not make sense, did not add up, did not cohere, and—therefore—the extent to which he knew it and sought to deal with it, precisely by writing the way he did.

My argument, therefore, is precisely not that a “true” Stanley or Conrad exists in the archive, waiting to be found by those who search well enough or deep enough. Reconstructing “Stanley” or “Conrad” is an essentially constructive process: archival fragments must be recovered and reassembled before they can cohere and be meaningful, and it is only by pushing against the entropy brought by the passage of time that a historian can assemble the narratives and figures by which to the past can again be made immediate. But the necessary selectiveness of that process—the choice of which fragments to privilege and which to silently omit—betrays the agendas implicit in doing so. In other words, if time “dismembers” events and people that were coherently articulate when alive, historical memory is the re-articulation of that which time, distance, and obscurity has dis-articulated. But at the risk of becoming too metaphysical, what is remembered is not what was forgotten, and “history” is not the same as the past which it chronicles. We do not re-animate the past, raising it from the dead; we re-create it in terms which signify in the present.

After all, if Achebe’s central complaint about Conrad was the manner and extent to which Conrad’s novel silences Africans—rendering the African a categorically voiceless subjectivity—the strength of his critique of Conrad’s single African novel is not only not inapplicable to the other short story which Conrad took from his time in the Congo, but has necessitated that story’s absence from virtually all discussions of “Conrad’s Africa.” To say this, however, is not even to demur from those who do not treat “An Outpost of Progress” as part of Conrad’s “African” writing; *Heart of Darkness* was the subject of Achebe’s ire because it is a hypercanonical work of high literature, widely read, widely taught, and widely influential. If

Conrad “tarnished” Africa’s name with his novel, as he put it, his short story did not do much to restore it, because it did not circulate in the same ways.<sup>22</sup> I would suggest, however, that it did not circulate for interesting reasons: “An Outpost of Progress” shows Conrad’s European protagonists to be utterly dependent on their (Sierra Leonean educated) African servant to translate between them and an illegible African bush, and—since it is written in a much more realist mode than *Heart of Darkness*—it much more clearly shows Africa’s illegibility to be a consequence of the profoundly ignorant provincialism the story’s two protagonists bring with them. Moreover, the educated African on whom they are dependent has his own motives, his own agenda, and successfully accomplishes his goals by manipulating his greater expertise over the social terrain that their monolingual constraints prevent them from accessing. Not only does he speak, they do not, with critical consequences. If Achebe is right to note that *Heart of Darkness* effectively endorses its narrative picture of Africa—because, as Achebe puts it, the novella omits any “alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters”—one cannot make this claim about “An Outpost of Progress,” because it does precisely that, directly emphasizing the profound partiality of the narrator’s perspective and evoking the existence of alternate frames of reference to which they are blind.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, if we were to read Conrad’s “Congo diary” in search of what Conrad knew—rather than what he did not know—we would find ample support for the counter-argument that Conrad was, at the very least, far more knowledgeable about the country and its population than his novella would lead us to suspect, even that he had some sense of how much he did not know. Along with a small assortment of Bakongo words, and their French translation, for example, he records the four-day week used in one of the regions through which he passed—a temporality structured by the recurrence of markets every four days—and aligns it with his own calendar, both days of the week and date. The fact that he records local time as being fungible with the temporality he took as “standard,” or that he translates Bakongo words into French is hardly a defense from the charge of racism, of course. But if ethnographic otherness is produced through what Johannes Fabian calls “the denial of co-evalness”—exactly the temporality by which Marlow’s trip into central Africa gets re-signified as a voyage into the past—then these fragments from the archive demonstrate Conrad’s cognizance of the extent to which African practices and voices were temporally and linguistically translatable into his own.<sup>24</sup> If Marlow’s “dim suspicion of there being a meaning in [Africa] which you — you so remote from the night of first ages — could comprehend” is a “fascinating,” “thrilling,” and “ugly” thought—as he claims—it was not nearly so dim to Conrad as he writes it to be for Marlow, and perhaps not as ugly.

To be clear, I make this point not to *defend* Conrad from Achebe’s charges; I largely agree with Achebe’s polemical project, and find that those who criticize Achebe are better readers of Conrad than of Achebe, almost willfully so. Indeed, to expose the aspect of Joseph Conrad who understood more than he let on—who knew something about the land which he passed through that he would not allow himself to know, except in his journal—is, perhaps, to

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<sup>22</sup> Chinua Achebe, “Africa’s Tarnished Name.” In *Multiculturalism and Hybridity in African Literatures*, edited by Hal Wylie and Bernth Lindfors (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays, 1965-1987* (London: Heinemann, 1988), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

damn him all the more. His omissions were not the product of “his time,” or of externally imposed limitations on what he could know; he omitted these aspects of Africa, in *Heart of Darkness*, precisely because he knew what he was removing. And it is in understanding why he omitted what he did—what was useful about doing so—that we find his literary intervention clarified.

If Stanley was “dark,” however—and if there was a “dark” Stanley who is mediated by Achebe’s Conrad—I will now turn to the Stanley who was, in being “bright,” not-dark. But if I make use of aspects of Stanley’s textual record which other readers have tended to overlook, I do so not because my version of Stanley is the true one, but because Achebe’s Conrad’s Stanley is not. The only “truth” was that Stanley contained multitudes, and contradicted himself, as perhaps do we all. In unearthing an aspect of Stanley that, I will argue, has been obscured beneath the figure of Joseph Conrad and his *Heart of Darkness* (which is very much a narrative reconstruction by Chinua Achebe, in turn), I do so to demonstrate something different than what the “dark” Stanley has been used to demonstrate. And this difference is, itself, a historical data point: I am interested in the archival memories which are expunged, erased, and overlooked when the figure of Henry Morton Stanley is exclusively remembered through the figure of Joseph Conrad that is remembered through the lens of Achebe’s *Heart of Darkness*. In this sense, I am not only interested in *what* has been forgotten, however, but in the historical utility or historiographical process of that act of forgetting itself. In other words, the difference, dissonance, and friction between competing narratives reflect the imperatives which make one use of history more useful than another. Revealing the ideology of a text is less useful, in and of itself, if we presume that all texts *are*, in fact, ideological. Since I do presume this, the interesting question is not whether and how a text is “ideological,” but what are the contact points, contradictions, and dissonances through which a single text mediates different ideological forms.

## **II. Conrad’s Stanley**

It is easy to point out that *Through the Dark Continent* and *In Darkest Africa* were the texts which put those terms into circulation, even if *Heart of Darkness* has become the omnipresent point of reference. Before Stanley, the “darkness” of Africa signified in a specifically evangelical sense: the darkness of those who were without the light of Jesus Christ and beyond the pale of Christian society. The evangelical morality which Livingstone had begun to weld to imperial endeavors—while still making the saving of souls the primary purpose, for which even the emancipation of bodily slavery was only a pre-requisite—would only begin to signify without the associated religiosity after Stanley “found” Livingstone. In finding him, he also “found” his rhetorical mode, and transformed it to suit his own distinctly secular purposes.

If Stanley found and relieved Livingstone, however, he also buried him. His first “dark” Africa text, *Through the Dark Continent*, opens with the death of Livingstone for this reason: to appropriate his rhetoric for different purposes, Livingstone’s absence and silence was pre-requisite. By contrast, Stanley’s first book was written under Livingstone’s influence, before Livingstone was dead, and far from using Africa’s darkness to register its damnation and the absence of its salvation (which was Livingstone), Stanley’s crypto-oedipal challenge to the father is to “find” that Africa is “bright,” in the same way that by finding Livingstone to be alive, he saves his life, possessing its symbolic meaning.

This distinction has not been broadly understood. As we find him in the postcolonial critical archive, “Stanley” is a singular figure, a unified subjectivity, and he is adequately characterized by one particular mode of “seeing” Africa, what I would characterize as an

essentially repressive hypothesis of imperial subjectivity. In their accounts of Victorian exploration narratives, for instance, Patrick Brantlinger, Mary Louise Pratt, and Tim Youngs each address Stanley's particularities only by first grouping him within the larger umbrella category of "Victorian" explorers, framing him as one among the pantheon of Livingstone, Burton, Speke, and many others that form that tradition of colonial knowledge-making. Brantlinger's "Victorians and Africa: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," for example, provides an attractively coherent narrative of that tradition's uniformity—and places Stanley as a key link in the chain—but does so only at the cost of erasing the ambivalence Stanley that initially had for that tradition, and the extent to which he would resolve that ambivalence by joining it.<sup>25</sup> Tim Youngs actually makes this point in his review of Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness*, but when he turns to describe *Travelers in Africa*, his own attempt to summarize the totality of that tradition, he repeats Brantlinger's elision, paying no attention to the very different "American" Stanley, who wrote *How I Found Livingstone*.<sup>26</sup> Finally, while Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* does observe the extent to which "hyphenated" Americans like Stanley (and Paul De Chaillu) produced an "imperialist internal critique of empire," her emphasis is specifically on their "hyphenated" status—as a transnational identity—rather than the positive content of their specifically *American* identity. In this context, hyphenation appears to attenuate national identity (not describe it).

The result is that when we find two very different men in the historical archive, both named Henry Morton Stanley, we have little in the way of critical tools for apprehending the difference. On the one hand, the sensationalist American journalist who "found" Livingstone in 1872 was a vigorous young man from a vigorous young nation, succeeding where older and wiser men of science had failed. On the other hand, it was the aging British explorer who would be knighted and eventually accepted into the ranks of the British imperial scientific establishment, the old campaigner who wrote books like *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890), and who—as King Leopold's agent in the Congo—served as one of the primary inspirations for Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Because he is remembered as the British explorer that he was when he wrote *Through the Dark Continent* and *In Darkest Africa*—and because the "Victorian myth of Africa" is the most common frame through which they are read—Stanley is much less well or often remembered as the American he was pretending to be when he wrote *How I Found Livingstone*. As I will argue, however, his American identity—both as fiction and as the factual frame on which he erected it—was the structuring truth by which it became possible to understand Africa as "bright." It was precisely because he was American that he found Livingstone the way he did, and made that fact meaningful, significant because it was to inaugurate an American tradition of African colonialism. But it was not only because he was without Livingstone that he made Africa "Dark"

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<sup>25</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (autumn 1985), 166-203

<sup>26</sup> As Youngs observes, "Stanley's self-conscious adoption of the image of the Victorian gentleman gave the dominant ideology such discomfort that it emasculated and appropriated his famous phrase of greeting to Livingstone by ridiculing it and using it in advertisements." Tim Youngs, "Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914 by Patrick Brantlinger" in *History Workshop*, No. 28 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 178-180. Tim Youngs, *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues, 1850-1900* (Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 1995).

in 1878; his loss of Livingstone coincided with his loss of the American he had been when he found him (as well as, in a certain sense, America's own loss of an imperial ambition).

A fundamental shift in narrative mode separates 1878 from 1872, in other words, the difference between a text which could be abbreviated to a representation of the "Dark Continent"—which asserted a realist argument about what Africa was—and a text which instantiated a moment of sociality between white man and white man, in the phrase "Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?" After all, Stanley's dark continent is the backdrop for a magnificent narcissism, the violent penetration of a continent which resists being penetrated—necessitating violence—by the force of individual will which led to Stanley being known as the "Napoleon of Africa" in English, and "Bula Matari" in Bakongo. But this was not the Stanley who met Livingstone, who made of the latter a revered father figure and who filled his own void of personality with an "African" content. In *How I Found Livingstone*, in fact, Stanley did not "penetrate" Africa but was penetrated by it, as I will show.

First, however, I raise Stanley from the dead to recover the terms through which "Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?" was funny, the manner in which this joke mediated the hyphen in Anglo-American, and the extent to which it came to instantiate a reading public whose primary identification was nervous anxiety around the assertion of white racial unity. In other words, these elements are connected: as a joke, it mediated an affective relationship between white man and white man, both the whiteness which was "found" against an African backdrop and the nervous fear that that presumption would not be borne out by reality, the anxiety of the *question* rather than the assertion.

Stanley had first written it in one of his monthly dispatches for the *New York Herald*—which he would re-write and expand into his first book, the bestselling *How I Found Livingstone*—but as it circulated widely, the joke would take on a life of its own. Samuel Clemens and satirical magazines like *Punch* began riffing on the line almost immediately, and over the course of the next century, the line would attain a cultural status that it has not entirely lost, surviving everywhere from music hall comedy and literary humor to cinema, comic strips, and animated cartoons.

Today, most who "remember" the line, do so without remembering why they remember it, since the phrase mostly circulates without its explanatory context. When Stanley was one of the most famous men in the world, that line was his punctuation mark, his signature. Today, it is a form without narrative, content without context; if it remains a joke, its humor is not dependent on any knowledge of its original composition or author.

Why has it been forgotten? In 1872, Stanley had been laughing along with his audience. When he first wrote about the discovery that made his career—indeed, when he first planned that discovery, years earlier, as a very conscious effort to create a journalistic sensation—he was a person for which humor was appropriate and useful. *How I Found Livingstone* retains much of the light tone and impudent wit of the *Herald*, where perhaps a fifth of the material had first appeared, and although the book is different from the original dispatches in some important respects, it remains a work of essentially personality-driven sensationalism, a narrative performance for which humor was one of the tools its writer employed. Stanley's aim had been to find Livingstone and discover how he was doing—how Livingstone was "found" to be—but it was also, and more importantly, an effort to dramatize the story of doing so, to make his journey into a ripping yarn that would sell papers and books. And he accomplished that ambition very well.

As Stanley grew older, however—and especially after his discovery made him "famous

as Livingstone[,] having discovered the discoverer,” as his publisher would declare—he would cease to be a young and insecure American, would no longer be faced by the threat of a British father-figure who might reject him, and he would stop making jokes.<sup>27</sup> When he first wrote that line, after all, he was both an unknown who sought to bask in Livingstone’s reflected glory and a fatherless vagabond seeking recognition from a man he made into a father figure. Since “Livingstone” was his subject, or at least the main subject of interest, he could take himself quite lightly, make himself the object of his own humor. As he consolidated his fame by returning to Africa, however—six times over his lifetime—he would not only become a famous British explorer in his own right, but he would become a person who had always been British (and who had, therefore, never been an American journalist).

After writing *How I Found Livingstone*, therefore, Stanley’s subsequent books are written in a narrative style more consonant with the kind of person he would strive to be for the rest of his life, a respectable British imperial gentleman, and since he had never really been an American in the first place (or at least not by birth), it was an easy fiction to give up. Stanley’s refusal to laugh did not kill the joke, of course; if anything, his increasingly rigid image added fuel to the fire, re-emphasizing the stiff formality which had made the line funny in the first place. In that sense, the joke has had the last laugh: while a relatively limited audience recalls the historical Stanly, a much larger population recalls the joke he told, or at least recognizes it. But in another sense, this distinction is the substance of Stanley’s success. In distinguishing himself from the joke he had written as a young man, he sought to take on a more distinguished personality than the (somewhat comically incongruous) young man who had first set out for adventure in Africa in 1871. He would make real and sincere what had, then, been a transparent (and absurd) pose. The proof of his success is the fact that scholars and historians tend to remember the man he *became*, rather than the man he was when he wrote his most famous line. If we laugh at the joke, we do not see ourselves laughing with its author.

I want to ask, then, what they know of “Stanley” who only “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” know? After all, what we might call “ignorance” is not simply a negation. As negation, it has a story to tell, a narrative about how and why Stanley’s “American” origins became something it was not interesting to remember. For this reason, as the trace of what has been forgotten—when we remember the joke but don’t remember why—the American Stanley is not only tied to a moment in time which passed and was forgotten, but it helps clarify the very particular reasons why it was forgotten. And recovering the brief moment in time in which a journalist born in Missouri was known to have rescued a famous British explorer in Africa helps us establish what it was about the American Stanley that has made it necessary to replace him with the figure I will call the “dark Stanley.”

As Claire Pettitt has observed, Stanley finding Livingstone in 1872 was a very timely bit of geopolitics.<sup>28</sup> News of Stanley’s discovery was released precisely as negotiations in Geneva were completing the reconciliation between the United States and the defeated Confederate states’ most important ally, Great Britain, and the *New York Herald’s* exhaustive promotion of their reporter’s meeting with an Englishman in Africa quite literally competed for space with news of the negotiations in Geneva. After the two countries had been divided by the issue of African slavery, in other words, the diplomatic work of bringing the United States and Great Britain back together would be mirrored, echoed, and/or displaced onto the figure of an

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<sup>27</sup> Pettitt (2007), p.96.

<sup>28</sup> Pettitt (2007), p. 12.

American rescuing a British abolitionist in Africa. Stanley does not overemphasize the fact that he was an American—or that Livingstone was an Englishman—but the manifest obviousness of that fact makes it possible for him to avoid the redundancy of saying so.

Since it was an uneasy reconciliation, however, humor was the lubricant for the frictions which the narrative sought to smooth over. The joke, qua joke, is therefore inextricable from the Anglo-American Atlantic relationship which it played upon, the tensions which it released and made enjoyable. And it is because their story continues to mediate larger questions within global geopolitics that, as Pettit has put it, Livingstone and Stanley have been a memory we remember without remembering why: it functions best to resolve the tension of the hyphen in Anglo-American identity when the colors of the flags are washed together into a single field of white (known as such by the contrast with black).

Stanley's effort to narrate and perform a new Anglo-American solidarity can therefore only be read by imposing the underlying conflicts which made it necessary, but which Stanley prefers to glide past rather than evoke. The fact that Stanley would call his second great African journey the "Anglo-American Expedition," for example, is only legible by reference to the public, vicious, and event consequentially traumatic argument that Stanley had with the Royal Geographic Society after his return from his first journey, an argument which structured how he re-wrote the original dispatches he had written from Africa—in 1871—as the book he would publish, in 1872, as *How I Found Livingstone*. I explore the terms of that argument below, since it brought the tensions of the hyphen to the surface with a useful explicitness. But my point in using it this way will be to show the manner in which that argument subtended a variety of anxious concerns through a nationalist set of categories: the hyphen in "Anglo-American" after all, carries and has carried a great deal of weight, and while a particular discourse on civilizational solidarity would characterize the next century of this "special relationship," it has also been a relationship vexed by the uncomfortable problem of American ascendancy vis-à-vis waning British power, a drama which the vigorous young Stanley and the frail and elderly Livingstone performed in miniature. In this sense, while Stanley could narrativize this relationship as a kind of pseudo-family reunion, doing so only mediated by *rendering immediate* the terms which vexed that relationship, the sharp contrast between the youth and vigor of the former and the venerable experience of the other. This was also what made reader's laugh; as Clare Pettitt puts it, the line "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" was funny to Americans

because it showed the Americans getting the better of the British, but also because it tapped into uneasiness about the relationship between Yankee sincerity and Yankee vulgarity in the democracy of post-bellum American. In Britain it was funny because Stanley was not a gentleman and seemed hardly to be trusted. But it also made the British laugh a little anxiously too, at the English gentlemen's dilatoriness in rescuing Livingstone, and the ponderousness of their elite system more generally.<sup>29</sup>

Beneath this difference, however, was the problem of African slavery. On the one side of the visual tableau, we have an American throwing his weight behind an imperial endeavor that—though theoretically abolitionist—was laden with racial hierarchy, and with the kind of expansionist impulse which many sectors of the American public regarded as antithetical to the very idea of America. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Livingstone, and those in

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<sup>29</sup> Pettit, p.13.

Britain who supported him, literally sought to do in East Africa what the United States had done in Stanley's Missouri: replace the pre-existing native society with a cotton-producing empire composed by black labor's employment by white capital.<sup>30</sup> In Missouri, of course, the removal of native societies and the creation of racially marked labor regimes had been distinguishable processes—the genocidal elimination of American Indians which was followed by the importation of African slaves—while, in Livingstone's imagined East African future, the social transformation was to be the single process of converting indolent pagan savages into productive Christian workers. But while the production of this colonial difference was officially disavowed in the United States, after the civil war, it could still be displaced onto Africa itself, and was. If Stanley found Livingstone in 1871, in other words, he also found a structure of continuity that could connect the South-Western American racial society that he had known—and which was, after the Civil War and especially during Radical Reconstruction, in ideological crisis—to the futurity which was to be found in Livingstone's great gamble, the speculation that the three C's (variously, Cotton, Christianity, Commerce, and/or Civilization) could be planted in the soil of East Africa, and that they would take root more successfully than they had in West Africa.

On the British side, by contrast, allowing an abolitionist missionary to stand as representative of his country was a different kind of displacement, erasing the sense by which Britain had been joined at the hip—or the Manchester cotton mill—to the cause of the confederacy and racial slavery. More to the point, while it had been only a decade since the British empire had been shaken by the mutiny of 1857 in India—which was subjectively almost simultaneous with the 1865 Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica—the moment which is often taken as the beginning of Britain's second empire, the post-mutiny reconstruction of India and the scramble for Africa, could also be seen as the beginning of the end, the end of settler optimism and the beginning of the imperial pessimism. For now, the point is simply that the imperial consciousness of its empire was profoundly different in 1872 than it had been in the years before the mutiny.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the person of David Livingstone represented, in 1872, both that earlier moment of imperial optimism and a compelling counter-narrative for remembering 1857. It had been at precisely the same time that the British public had been reading reports of massive armed rebellion across British India—a “mutiny” which began in May of 1857 and would not be put down by force until 1858—that David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels and Research in South Africa* was becoming a massive bestseller in Britain, representing a powerful and compelling third option for imagining the meaning of the British empire. To observe this coincidence is to observe that it was not coincidental, in other words; in place of the corrupt West Indian creole planter society that uprisings in Jamaica forced Britons to acknowledge, or the authoritarian core to Britain's “liberal” rule in India—in which military force and governmental tyranny had always been required to impose freedom and liberty on unwilling subjects—the story that David Livingstone told in 1857 was a story of a benevolent Christian empire which sought only to liberate African slaves from their (Arab) captors. Stanley's recovery of that story, and the moment it indexed, could therefore be a comforting fiction, yet still elicit the nervous laughter of

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<sup>30</sup> See Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, & the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> My analysis largely follows the line laid down by Robinson and Gallagher, in Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny *Africa and the Victorians. The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, Macmillan, 1961).

the speaker who knew it wasn't true.

In 1872, Stanley's narrative of an American finding an English abolitionist in the jungles of Africa couldn't help but be read in those terms, as overdetermined as when the "Anglo-American Expedition" would be legible only by reference to the schism which it sutured together, the lingering resentments out of the past and ongoing antagonisms produced by clashing geopolitical interests, and by the assertion of the kind of identity which brought Americans and Britons together: either Anglophonic or Anglo-Saxon racialism or both. If the hyphen in Anglo-American does a great deal of work, in other words, it's the same work as was done by an American "finding" a Briton in Africa in the first place, and the nervous humor of the moment, in which both sides can laugh at each other, and themselves, was part of this reconciliation, turning a hyphen that might divide into a hyphen that bound together.

Yet if the line signified in 1872 by what was generally "known" about the hyphen in "Anglo-American," it has come to signify ever since by the gaps in that knowledge, by the doubts and unsettling decay of identity associated with the long, slow decline of imperialism. To slightly misuse Roland Barthes' terminology for reading photography, this line might be thought of as the "punctum" in Stanley's writing, the "accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)," as opposed to its "studium," the interest in writing about "Africa" which, because it was broad and "cultural," was a function of its conformity to expectations.<sup>32</sup> In 1872, after all, Stanley was full of surprises; it was only over the course of his lifetime that he became quite conventional, that he stopped being an American, a journalist, or a humorist, and he became very specifically uninterested in "sensation." In this sense, if the line had a particular meaning in the time and place in which Stanley first wrote it—and if its reception, circulation, and affect were produced by this contemporary meaning—the way this context has been forgotten is also part of meaning, as it came to mark something other than a joke.

For one thing, Stanley ceased to be an American because he had never really been one. He had actually been born in Wales, as "John Rowlands," and he grew up in the workhouse where his mother had left him. When he immigrated to the United States at the age of eighteen, he quite successfully forgot this origin and made his new name as a frontier journalist, covering General Hancock and General Sherman's campaigns against the Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and other plains Indians. "Stanley" was a name he acquired from a shopkeeper who employed him, and who he would remember as a beloved father figure. But if he would make his name, quite literally, as an American, his fame made this fictional identity untenable. When he became one of the most famous men in the world by "finding" Livingstone and writing about it, it was no longer possible to hide who he really was (not least because his original family came calling). As a result, he would not only become British, but he would become a person who had always been British (and who had, thus, never been American) and the lines which he had spoken—in the relatively brief period in which he had been pretending to be an American—were not so much repudiated as denied. He would spend the rest of his life both denying that it was funny, and even insisting that it had never been a joke at all.

In his posthumously published autobiography, for example, Stanley looks back on the incident and insists that he had only wanted to make sure that the white man he found before him actually was Dr. Livingstone. In the face of sudden doubt, he claims, he had decided that he "could do no more than exercise some restraint and reserve," and so he asked a simple question

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<sup>32</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, [1982] 1993), p.42.

to elicit a simple answer.<sup>33</sup> The substance of this revision is that the rhetorical surplus in the line disappears, everything that would make it a joke. Its performativity, for example—by which the incongruity of the line provokes a reaction from the audience—is stripped from the anecdote, which is instead re-framed by the rhetorical mode of “reserve and restraint” until it means only what it literally says and no more. In requesting reassurance, Stanley insists, the questioner is satisfied by being reassured, reducing the story itself to an accounting of what happened and to whom. And while the punchline had been “Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?”—to which no answer was necessary or even desirable—Stanley’s revision shifts the story’s weight onto the request for an answer which, in being provided, resolves the problem of the original question, eliminating its power to sting, cut, and render uncertain.

On the one hand, Stanley’s revision is an impossible reading of his original account because his comic awkwardness was described quite clearly as such. But even if Stanley had truly only been asking for information, his unintentional comedy would have been all the more funny as a function of that obliviousness. As Henri Bergson put it, “rigidity is the comic, and laughter is its corrective” such that “any image . . . suggestive of the notion of a society disguising itself, or of a social masquerade, so to speak, will be laughable.”<sup>34</sup> Even if Stanley tried to frame his “reserve and restraint” as a *negation* of affect, it was the reverse, an obvious affectation, and a funny one at that. Spoken by a young and insecure American, overwhelmingly concerned with maintaining a pose of dignity in meeting a respected and honored British father-figure, those words are and could only be a *performance* of “restraint and reserve,” an attempt to make himself out to be something he quite obviously was not, and to feel the difference all the more keenly for the pretense. Whether he knew it or not, this performance would be the joke. If he was in on the joke, it would be funny; if he was not, his blithe obliviousness would only intensify the effect.

In *How I Found Livingstone*, for example, the famous line is something approaching a serious question: what would Stanley find when he found Livingstone? How would he “find” him to be? In the idiomatic sense by which “how did you find him?” questions the person’s status and well-being—rather than the question of how one managed to find the person—the question is, and was understood to be, a deeply serious one: would a white man in Africa remain as he was, or would he devolve towards savagery? This was a problem for serious scientific inquiry in the 19th century, and no laughing matter. Which factor in human life was primary, racial inheritance or environmental conditioning? Was “whiteness” the fundamental truth of Anglo-American identity, a genealogical inheritance tied to blood descent and racial embodiment? Or was it simply a function of environment, education, and culture? If the former, blood would tell, and Livingstone would win out over Africa. If the latter, perhaps, his nearly ten years in Africa could be expected to leave him sadly diminished, altered in the way the Marlow’s doctor, in *Heart of Darkness*, suggests that Africa transforms those who go “out there,” which is to say: on the inside.

Stanley’s first book poses these questions to reassure his readers about Africa and about Africa’s relationship to white civilization: against the threat that the wild jungle of Africa would erode civilized society, he gives us the image of two white men meeting and recommencing the civilized conduct which the African jungle had (only temporarily) interrupted, answering the

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<sup>33</sup> Dorothy Stanley, ed., *The Autobiography of Sir Henry Morton Stanley* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 264.

<sup>34</sup> Henri Bergson, “Laughter,” in *Comedy* (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 89.

implicit question of the title, “How was Livingstone found to be?” with (implicitly) “still white!” When he finds Livingstone still to be himself, still a doctor, and still a white man possessed of his faculties and civilization—since Livingstone’s response to being hailed confirms the interpellation—Stanley is able to confirm the presumption that all is as it should be, that racial difference is objectively real, and that even in the midst of Africa’s howling absence of civilization, the thin white line connecting Stanley to Livingstone has still been shown to endure.

To the extent that the story is a “straight” performance, then, it examines and then confirms the solidity of racial hierarchy, for an audience concerned that it would not endure. Addressing the fears that would fuel books like Charles Henry Pearson’s *National Life and Character* (1893) or Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color* (1921)—anticipating the end of the white race’s centuries of political, economic, and military superiority, and blaming the fecundity of the world’s darker races for that dread futurity—*How I Found Livingstone* offers the comforting fantasy of a white masculinity that could not only survive jungle temptation, but could remain unchanged by its tropical blandishments. As a straight performance, in fact, the crux of Stanley’s story is proven by his ability to remain “straight”; as he recalls the moment before he met Livingstone, he struggles to maintain the dignity of a white man, just as Livingstone would himself prove his whiteness by his appropriate dignity:

My heart beats fast, but I must not let my face betray my emotions, lest it shall detract from the dignity of a white man appearing under such extraordinary circumstances. So I did that which I thought was most dignified...<sup>35</sup>

In this reading, Stanley’s story is broadly comparable to books like Edgar Rice Burroughs’ first *Tarzan* novel, which stages the same kind of racial test. By severing a white baby from his natal inheritance and losing him in the wilds of the dark continent, its author poses and answers the very serious question of whether the white man inside will win out against his savage surroundings. With his eventual marriage to Jane—consummating both civilized sociality and reproductive futurity—Tarzan proves the durability of the white race, the fact that even stripped of any and all environmental or social cultural influence, a white boy in Africa will still naturally seek to acquire the inheritance of civilization which is his blood right.

In a sense, a book like Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* might seem to be the opposite of Burroughs’ novel, or of *How I Found Livingstone*, since it answers this question in the negative. Kurtz is found as Stanley feared to find Livingstone, as a savage monster, demonically possessed by Africa. And yet the problem-space of Conrad’s address to Africa is the same broad social anxiety as that which animates *Tarzan of the Apes*. In Kurtz’ devolution from hyper-civilized pan-European to a head-collecting lord of savages, we find the negation of the same thesis, that racial character will endure. Left alone in the jungle—alone with only Africans—Kurtz goes native and is “found” to have done precisely what Tarzan and Livingstone did not do, taking up with an African woman, the ultimate betrayal of his race and civilization.

As negation, however, it participates in the same set of framing assumptions, about the relationship of race to environment. And if we take these canonical texts collectively, they define a particular, coherent, and very familiar way of thinking about the problem that was “Africa” at the turn of the 20th century, framing the serious dilemma it posed for “white” civilization in

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<sup>35</sup> Henry Morton Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries in Central Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1872), 411.

objective terms. As a threat to the substance of civilized identity, Africa demands an answer to the question of race's objective persistence. If a white man submerged in the jungle darkness of the continent would effectively cease to be white, and if the wilderness could erase the distinctions out of which civilizational hierarchies were made, then what, after all, was "civilization"? Conversely, if a white person could survive in the jungle with his civilization intact—if he could be separated from all the material accoutrements and social infrastructure of Victorian culture, and yet still carry them with him (particularly in his sexual conduct)—then those cultural values could be shown to inhere in "blood" alone, in the racial makeup that manifested in white skin. Those values, in short, could be seen to be objective, not only taking race as their correlate but remaining constant in different environments. Thus, while Burroughs and Stanley successfully "find" the continuity of white civilization in the midst of the jungle, Marlow concludes from his experience that civilization is a lie, and the claims of Culture are a sham to cover the fact that we are all naked under our clothes. Environment is irrelevant; gazing at London, he remarks that it too was once a place of darkness, and will be again, one day.

At the same time, the objective contest between whiteness and Africa also posed the question of objectivity itself: was there an objective truth—of Culture, Race, and Civilization—or were the subjectivities of "culture" simply the artifice which humankind invents to cover over the howling absence at the core of existence? If there was an objective answer, then one could seriously search for its essential truth, questioning whether or not race is real, and whether the answer was yes or no, its existence or non-existence would be, in its own right, an objective fact.

If not, however—if "race" is simply a fiction of human pride, prejudice, and subjective desire—then a different rhetorical tactic might be called for. In place of a dignified and noble perseverance, the insistence of whiteness in the jungle might be a humorous incongruity, an absurd and ridiculous affectation. In this sense, while Stanley's 1872 text foregrounds the reassuring dignity of whiteness—and does aspire to serious scientific authority—it also hints at the joke which many more of its readers would draw from it and remember, the absurdity of two white men meeting in the jungle as if they were on the streets of London. As Stanley anticipates the long awaited meeting with Livingstone, a congress of jungle whiteness which he both desires and dreads, he writes:

I would have run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob, - would have embraced him, only, he being an Englishman, I did not know how he would receive me; so I did what cowardice and false pride suggested was the best thing, - walked deliberately to him, took off my hat, and said, 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?'<sup>36</sup>

In exploring the subjectivity of his own internal struggle, the objectivity of Africa, race, and civilization begin to lose their substance, becoming identities that must be performed into existence. Burroughs and Conrad may have taken seriously the objective question of whiteness' solidity, to the same painful extent as the many theorists, critics, and polemicists who have written about them. But while someone like Stanley did see himself as making objective, empirical claims about Africa's reality—and in this sense, critical readers are reading him faithfully—the suggestion that whiteness in Africa was a kind of "false pride," motivated by fear, also casts doubt on the meaning of his formal question and of Livingstone's formal reply, and

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<sup>36</sup> Stanley (1872), 412

this was also part of the text he wrote. When the good doctor responds affirmatively to Stanley's hail ("with a kind smile, lifting his cap slightly"), what if he were simply responding to the same fear with the same false pride?<sup>37</sup> What if his brave facade were just as skin-deep as Stanley's? Burroughs would produce a naked Lord Greystoke to demonstrate that race alone was sufficient—that white skin would tell—while Conrad would produce an assortment of white men in Africa using clothing to keep themselves white and sane to demonstrate the opposite. But unlike these deeply serious texts, Stanley's account of finding Livingstone in 1871 adds to serious scientific inquiry something close to a self-defeating artifice: two white men in Africa stage ludicrous facades of civilized conduct, and in doing so only prove the artificiality of the concept.

Stanley was not only a serious, imperial man of science, in other words, and what he found in Africa was only one part of the problem-space which his text opens up and explores. The other part is what popular world audiences found in him, and in the joke he found himself telling. For if the former is an assertion of scientific fact—the discovery that Livingstone's racial whiteness had endured, even in the heart of African darkness—the latter is the erosion of objectivity itself, reality's intransigent refusal to be narrated in easy, coherent, and black-and-white terms. Instead of pointing to a transcendent truth, therefore—a reality hidden below the surface but subject to recovery by scientific method—the joke narrative dissolves the possibility of any such thing, substituting narrative affect for measurable fact. The joke might be said to be on the reader who takes it too seriously.

In this sense, while I am not uninterested in the efficacy and pleasure of "seriousness" as a discourse, as such, that seriousness was also contemporaneously interpreted, challenged, and even transformed by readers who *were* uninterested in serious truth claims. If the rhetorical texture of a book like *How I Found Livingstone* is partly a product of Stanley's effort to produce a "straight" reading, of himself and of Africa, it is also true that his readers' efforts to make fun of him for doing so was written into the subjectivity of the text, thoroughly anticipated and presumed as a reading. In 1872, Stanley sought to have it both ways, making the text somewhat incoherent, but also polyvocal: how Stanley found Livingstone and what it was that he presumed are questions with many true and contradictory answers. But the struggle over the text's narrative was both external to the text and constitutive of it, the force that gives it meaning: Stanley's seriousness anticipates the jokes (consciously or unconsciously), while the jokes presume his seriousness, and are premised on its ridiculousness as such.

For this reason, while we find two different and mutually exclusive men named Henry Morton Stanley in the historical archive (or in two differently articulated versions of history), they are the same man in more than simply a doggedly literal sense. In the literary sense by which narrative texts include and presume their own opposites—containing the very contradictions which they attempt to resolve or obscure—the two Stanley's presume each other in distinguishing themselves from each other. Like humor's relationship to the seriousness which it punctures or subverts—or the relationship of "seriousness" to the humor which it denies and suppresses—Stanley's relationship to himself is the necessary grounds on which he would articulate the two versions of his identity.

On the one hand, then, the sensationalist American journalist who "found" Livingstone in 1872 was a vigorous young man from a vigorous young nation. He had not only succeeded where older and wiser men of science had failed, and was quite bitterly proud of his

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<sup>37</sup> Stanley (1872), 412

accomplishment, but he made his trip to Africa into an exploration of the very sensual vitality that distinguished him from his aged colleagues. The Africa he discovers is “bright,” to put it simply, because it reminds him of the American frontier in its fertile promise and warm vitality. His “sensationalist” orientation not only describes his literary orientation—as a category of journalism—but also his essentially Lockean orientation towards the manner in which knowledge and identity are made, through sensual experience, and through the embodied subjective relationship of mind to world. Africa, as “bright,” is a place where this can be done, and Stanley, as a young man, is a person who could go there and do it.

On the other hand, the aging British explorer who is recalled by historians—both popular and academic—is generally used to exemplify a type, the African explorer. Yet what is often taken as the set of characteristics which made him typical, I will argue, is actually what makes him singular among the field of “Victorian” explorers. In a sense, he was not “Victorian” at all. Of course, no one was as Victorian as “the Victorians”; such names obscure as much as they reveal. Does the fact that Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* was actually published during the reign of Queen Victoria mean that calling it “Victorian” yields useful information? Those who call it a “modernist” text might disagree. My point is simply that calling Stanley a “Victorian” explorer is to place him accurately in his historical context—among and alongside the other explorers and writers who can be so named, and who were, as such, his contemporaries—but to erase the sense in which he represented a post-Victorian consciousness of empire, the sense of empire as in dissolution. Africa became dark because it was where empire fell apart.

To describe Stanley’s relationship to his peers, therefore, one must begin with the ways in which he was atypical, precisely the aspects of his writing which have been taken to exemplify the period. After all, when Stanley’s books are read—and generally, they are not—they are most often framed as exemplary of a type of “discourse” which is imagined to have had a kind of hegemonic dominance over the consciousness of the period, a period which is not only usually named with a useful vagueness as “Victorian,” but which is understood less by reference to the historical reign of Queen Victoria (or whatever that reign is metonymic of) than by the strongly determined set of associations which that term evokes in popular use. As scholars of the Victorian period are painfully aware, a great deal of what is said about “the Victorian period” by those who do not study it is, in fact, an overdetermined function of what the idea of Victorian Britain has come to represent: among other things, it signifies close-mindedness, prudery, and imperialist racism.<sup>38</sup> Nothing could be more “Victorian,” then, in this colloquial sense, than Marlow’s final act decision to be silent and to spare Kurtz’ “intended” the truth of his final words: using a very gendered, protective decorum—retreating into the false world “the women” imagine to exist, only in fiction—his decision to mask the truth of Kurtz’ genocidal racial violence scans as “Victorian,” without having anything necessarily to do with Queen Victoria or the actual structures through which she came to rule colonies in Africa and Asia.

For example, Patrick Brantlinger’s “Victorians and Africans: the Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent” is a widely cited, quoted, and reprinted essay on the Western “image of Africa,” and Brantlinger predictably begins the essay by invoking Conrad:

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<sup>38</sup> As Julian Wolfreys puts it, in the series introduction to the Edinburgh Critical Studies in Victorian Culture, “‘Victorian’ is a term at once indicative of a strongly determined concept and, simultaneously, an often notoriously vague notion, emptied of all meaningful content by the many journalistic misconceptions that persist about the inhabitants and cultures of the British Isles and Victoria’s Empire in the nineteenth century.”

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow says that Africa is no longer the ‘blank space’ on the map that he had once daydreamed over. ‘It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names.... It had become a place of darkness.’ Marlow is right: Africa grew dark as Victorian explorers, missionaries, and scientists flooded it with light, because the light was reflected through an imperialist ideology that urged the abolition of savage customs in the name of civilization. As a product of that ideology, the myth of the Dark Continent developed during the transition from the main British campaign against the slave trade, which culminated in the outlawing of slavery in all British territory in 1833, to the imperialist partitioning of Africa which dominated the final quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

This usefully concise statement of Brantlinger’s thesis—a claim which is structured along the same lines as Edward Said’s argument in *Orientalism*, but applied to Africa—is a perceptive paraphrase of an analysis which Conrad may have believed, and which can certainly be found in his most famous work. It is Marlow, after all, who argues that filling in a map that was once blank with “rivers, lakes, and names” is actually the process by which Africa was made dark. In other words, it turns out that this notion—that Victorian Britain made Africa “dark” by refusing to see it except through a racist ideology—was originally articulated by a Victorian writer, Joseph Conrad. And if Marlow was right, then so was Conrad, whose colonial allegory is *not* the European enlightenment of an already “darkest Africa,” not the bringing of light to “the dark continent,” but the effort to render these myths as such. Precisely as Brantlinger describes—because he gets it from Conrad’s novella—Marlow suggests that this myth is, as myth, one of colonialism’s own epiphenomena, the means by which colonialists hide the reality of their actions from their own consciences. In this sense, *Heart of Darkness* is already a text which deconstructs itself, in exactly the manner in which a Chinua Achebe, in turn, deconstructs the racist image of Africa which he takes “Conrad” to represent. But what Achebe takes “Conrad” to represent—and what Conrad’s Marlow takes Kurtz’s “the horror, the horror” to represent—is, in large part, the Henry Morton Stanley of *In Darkest Africa*.

Of course, if Stanley’s books are rarely read, the books written by his contemporary explorers are rarely even remembered, and to read them is to understand why: their prose could be as descriptively dry, timid, and over-long as their titles. Stanley’s most famous books have a clear and compelling narrative structure—twice, the finding of a lost European in Africa, and once the crossing of the continent—but the majority of his peers wrote books which were structured (or un-structured) by the circumstances of their journey, narratives which tended to be relatively un-compelling because they were determined by the important geographical problem of the moment, and relatively meaningless outside of it.

When Stanley “found” Livingstone, for example—in *How I Found Livingstone*—the act of finding the revered doctor in the midst of African darkness made him a popular legend because it was, above all, a good story (and the phrase “Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?” became an enduring joke because it was funny). But on his return to London, he found himself consumed with arguments over the validity of his geographical claims, specifically the question of whether the Lualaba was the head of the Nile river or of the Congo.<sup>40</sup> He was expected to play the part

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<sup>39</sup> Brantlinger (1985), p. 166.

<sup>40</sup> Felix Driver, “Henry Morton Stanley and His Critics: Geography, Exploration and Empire”

of a scientific explorer, and he tried to do so (and largely failed), but it was this technical—and rather academic—question through which his geographical peers understood his accomplishment; for everyone else, he is remembered for finding Livingstone and for journeys through an Africa that was insistently adjectival in its darkness.

The result is that Stanley is remembered in a way his peers are not. Stanley was essentially a storyteller—he would even call himself a “troubadour”—and this literary quality has allowed his stories to survive their author. The manner in which he figured Africa as the absolute limit point for scientific knowledge, after all, was taken up by Conrad and remains conceptually available as the association for the trope *Heart of Darkness* because of the narrative work it does. Conrad’s version might be more compelling, like the cover version of a song whose original it causes audiences to forget (or never to hear in the first place), but it was Stanley’s particular quality as a writer that made him distinct from his peers, and made it *his* narrative of Africa that Conrad would choose to adapt.

By a sharp contrast, even contemporaneously famous explorers like Burton, Speke, Thomson, and Baker tended to write books that could be better described as accretions of detail, description, and analysis. They told stories only in the sense that events were strung together into a narrative form in the most rudimentary sense; they were plotted across the passage of time, from the beginning of an expedition to its end, but largely lacked a sense of true narrative structure, in the sense by which events develop and build towards a satisfying conclusion. This distinction is neat, of course, perhaps too neat; Stanley’s books are not likely to be read for pleasure, as they are similarly baggy and overloaded with details and tedious descriptions, while a stylist like Richard Burton was capable of writing scintillating prose, and sometimes did. But at the level of the individual macro-structure, their expeditions are told by fundamentally different narrative designs. Stanley is remembered because he told the kind of story that could be abridged and turned into a children’s book—or made into a movie—and because he popularized phrases that would grace the tongues of millions, even after he was dead. As an amateur among professional explorers—a journalist, rather than a scientist—Stanley attempted to appeal to people, in general, rather than aiming his writing an elite audience of experts. His peers, by contrast, wrote books for people like themselves, books which functioned like bags for carrying narrated facts. For them, the point was exactly this kind of empiricism; a Burton or a Speke set out for Africa to discover the objective truth of their destination—the origin of the Nile, for example, or the location of lakes, facts which do not and could not change—while Stanley, unique among his cohort, sought to realize the story he had already plotted out in his head, long before setting out. Indeed, for these writers, a certain stylistic dullness was often a necessary result of the explorer’s primary means of claiming scientific authority: the reduction of the total experiential reality of Africa into an instrumentally-verified, quantifiable, and essentially data-based understanding of its empirical reality.

For this reason, historical memory has treated Stanley’s stories much more kindly. “How I Found Livingstone?” remains a famous joke, the trope of African darkness is omnipresent, and Timothy Jeal’s recent biography—*Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer* (2008)—briefly brought its subject back into the public eye, in a way that a much more rigorous and no less readable biography like Dane Kennedy’s *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (2007) could not do for its much more strange and fragmented subject.<sup>41</sup>

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*Past & Present*, No. 133 (Nov., 1991), pp. 134-166

<sup>41</sup> Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World*

Indeed, this comparison is a useful one: while Stanley narrated himself as a singular and self-evident subject—a person who knew who he was, and acted like it—Kennedy expresses Burton’s complexity as a historical subject by reference to the many totally different and irreconcilable aspects of his persona (e.g., in chapter titles like "The Gypsy," "The Orientalist," "The Impersonator," "The Explorer," "The Racist," "The Relativist," and "The Sexologist").

Because Stanley aspired to singularity—in a way that Burton did not—it is hardly surprising that the History Channel chose Stanley when staging the reality show, *Expedition: Africa* (2009): Stanley had told a good story about finding Livingstone, so it was possible for contestants to recreate Stanley’s journey to find Livingstone, and even climaxing in an episode entitled “Heart of Darkness.” The show was panned as a piece of imperialist nostalgia, predictably; as Alessandra Stanley put it for the *New York Times*, “the real purpose of this expedition isn’t to understand Stanley or Livingstone better but to allow viewers to discover Africa in a painless, entertaining way.”<sup>42</sup> But while Jeal’s biography was widely praised for his archival discoveries—and it certainly represents the state of the art in terms of biographical knowledge of Stanley—it would be hard to convince an Africanist historian that Jeal’s biography is anything but an attempt to revive and substantiate long-disproven myths about the golden era of African exploration, for which Jeal both shares great nostalgia with his readers and enables them to enjoy, again. Still, if one wants to “understand Stanley or Livingstone better,” the choice between reality television and biography would seem to be clear. On the one hand, we have popular entertainment, history re-purposed as entertainment and spectacle in a simulacrum of “reality.” On the other hand, we have a scholarly non-fictional account of the life, which carefully distinguishes between what can and cannot be verified and believed. But the two come together (or come apart) in the moment when Stanley “finds” Livingstone, an event which didn’t happen, but might as well have. While the reality show builds towards and recreates that famous moment of presuming (its “reality” being the real simulation of a historical event), Jeal argues that the story of the meeting that Stanley told was, in all likelihood, at least mostly fictional: Stanley not only revised his account of the meeting multiple times over the course of his life, but as Jeal points out, he tore the pages out of his diary that referred to that day.<sup>43</sup>

Is this the “truth” of Stanley? Put differently, which narrative do we privilege as historical when we think about how to remember the past? The choice is not nearly as clear as it might seem. After all, if Stanley probably didn’t “really” find Livingstone in the way he pretended to have found him—nor “really” uttered the words he will always be remembered for—this fact is probably as unimportant as the fact that he was born in Wales under the name John Rowlands, and lied when he claimed the name he is, nevertheless, remembered by. His family never called him by that name, and he seemed not to want them to do so; the fact that he went by both names speaks to the co-existence of the two identities, or at least their ability to be “alongside” each other.

Attempting to distinguish between “understanding” and “entertainment” obscures more

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(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Alessandra Stanley, “The Land of Induced Suffering,” *New York Times*, May 29, 2009

<sup>43</sup> As Jeal reports, “[Stanley’s] original diary entry for the day of the meeting ends at the bottom of a page: 'I saw a pale looking white man in a faded blue cap with an arc peak, tarnished gold lace, joke red jacket, sheeting shirt, tweed pants, as I saw him I dismounted...!'—and there the entry stops, in mid-sentence, the description plainly having been continued on the next page, which is torn out along with the one after it." Jeal (2011), p.118.

than we reveal by doing so. Jeal's revisionist biography is a work of imperialist nostalgia, explicitly an effort to revive and rehabilitate the reputation of an explorer best remembered for his brutality, and he does so by such a faithful attention to detail—to faithfully recovering the precise letter of the archive—that he comes to share in the aporias, gaps, and blind spots of that archive.

At the same time, while it is certainly true that reproducing Stanley's journey as a piece of popular sensationalism—in which “the panoramas and perils of the African interior pale next to the chafing of strong personalities,” to use (Alessandra) Stanley's words—does not look much like object scholarship, and isn't, *Expedition: Africa* certainly captures something closer to the spirit in which (Henry Morton) Stanley originally made his first journey. When he was dispatched by the notoriously sensationalist *New York Herald* to find Livingstone, after all, his intention was not to produce knowledge, as such, but to tell a ripping yarn. He did not go to find the Lulaba, in other words, or the head of the Nile; he went to Africa to find Livingstone. The complaint that *Expedition: Africa* “isn't so much a tour of exotic locales as it is an exploration of the horrors of spending too much time, in too tight a circle, with other people,” in this sense, could almost be a description of *How I Found Livingstone*. Indeed, precisely like a “reality show,” Stanley began his journey in 1871 with a broad outline for his journey already in mind—a script he had essentially written in his head, years before—and when he managed to convince the *Herald* to fund him, he proceeded to act it out, write it up, and make his name by doing so, exactly as he had planned.

My point is not to erase the distinction between these two forms of historical memory, but to frame the stakes in distinguishing between merely “sensationalist” popular entertainment and the kind of history writing which commands our sober respect for its validity (or our pious condemnation for its misstatements). While the former sets out to describe personalities and subjective experience, we task the latter with providing something closer to the objectivity of fact. Did Stanley truly “find” Livingstone, for example, and did he actually utter those famous words when he did? Timothy Jeal argues that he did not, and given the depth and variety of Stanley's other fabrications, it certainly seems reasonable to presume that the famous phrase was more of a fiction and a literary flourish than a truthful account of what he actually, objectively, said and did. Stanley would spend his life lying about who he was and what he had done, and we can reasonably presume that Stanley was writing fiction when he told the story of finding Livingstone.

The begged question, however, might be whether we want to be reasonable, or more to the point, whether we want to “presume,” and what it would mean to do so. Are we interested in what *actually* happened in in 1871, in East Africa, far from the eyes and ears of the “civilized world”? To argue that Stanley described a meeting that did not *really* happen—to make this our object of inquiry—would be to fix the question on an event whose paper trail is limited at best, to seek a resolution that is unlikely to be more than a probability. And if the question is an objective fact, it's of little more than subjective interest. Nothing depends on whether or not Stanley actually spoke those words, other than, perhaps, our opinion of Stanley as a personality.

In this sense, I would suggest that this archive is not, as such, the most important “truth” about Stanley, and it is certainly not why he is remembered. His stories survive—and his name remains historically significant—not because of what he did, but because of what he represented (and how he represented what he did). As the historian Bernard Porter observed in his review of the book, for example, Jeal's effort to restore Stanley's good name faced the uphill battle that “Stanley” is a name which is only remembered because it is *bad*:

For a biographer looking for an unlikely reputation to rescue, reputations don't come much unlikelier than that of Henry Morton Stanley. Widely excoriated in his own time as one of the most brutal of African travelers, condemned by historians for his part in the creation of King Leopold II's Congo Free State, and derided both then and since for his famous but embarrassingly arch greeting to David Livingstone when he 'found' him in Ujiji in November 1871 – 'Dr Livingstone, I presume?' – as well as for his silly 'Stanley cap' (like a chamberpot with holes and a tea-towel flapping at the sides), he has always been every historian's least favourite British explorer.<sup>44</sup>

As Porter observes, "Stanley" not only represents the worst side of the British empire—a combination of racist and violent exploitation with ludicrous vanity, moral hypocrisy, and a preposterous lack of self-knowledge—but for a historian like Porter, Stanley also figures the historian's own conflict and complicity with his subject, the modern imperial historian's struggle with an imperialist archive. Imperial historiography, after all, has always been imperialist, both originating an institutional function of imperialist knowledge production and reproducing the assumptions of the pro-imperialist authors who produced the archive's source texts. But a profession whose function was once to chronicle, praise, and guide the British empire—to show its origins and necessity and to point the way towards growth and reform—is now obliged to maintain a negative relationship with its subject, to not only adopt a critical attitude towards it but to show why "empire" represents something which we "moderns" have transcended. For this reason, Stanley's silly hats and embarrassing manners are as important as his reputation for violence—his role in building King Leopold's "Congo Free State" and his general participation in the scramble for Africa—because they form the Victorian image of Stanley that Jeal seeks to dispute. As "Victorian," Stanley's lack of self-awareness is the central core of his problem: he is doing things that may have seemed to make sense at the time, but he did not know what he was doing, in the ways that we now do.

This is the "Victorian" Stanley which imperial historians, African studies scholars, literary theorists, or other specialist academics unearth from the archive (when they do), a figure who is less a personality than the composite of an ideological myth-structure, the sense and sensibility through which African "exploration" could seem like something other than rough tourism or spycraft. For Brantlinger, it is a thing to be critiqued, an ideological structure of violent unknowing and imperial will. For Jeal, the romantic hero who lived an "impossible life" was a good thing: Stanley was sometimes called "the Napoleon of Africa," and Jeal proposes to extend the top-down historiography which finds History in the Greatness of Great Men like him. Finally, for Porter, the narrative is no less Napoleon-shaped—its history still the narrative of a European subject—but we have since learned that "the Napoleon of Africa" is not a particularly great thing to be; the Napoleon of Africa is still the structural center of African historiography—in the way that King Leopold's Belgian Congo really did begin with Stanley—but that history is a history of actions and beliefs which are now repudiated.

In the same way that *Heart of Darkness* both performs and critiques the "myth of the dark continent," the argument between Jeal and Porter shows the manner in which Stanley's

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<sup>44</sup> Bernard Porter, "Did he puff his crimes to please a bloodthirsty readership?" review of *Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer*, by Tim Jeal, *London Review of Books*, Vol. 29 No. 7 2007, 9-10.

life-narrative can either be used to show how silly and blind the Victorians were, or to demonstrate the rationality by which they made sense of their world. Stanley is a combination of Kurtz and Marlow—or, they are two version of him, their story a dream-worked vision of his own—and whether that narrative achieves coherence or collapses into inarticulate fragments of self-delusion depends on how we decide to read him, whether we let Jeal or Achebe be our guide.

### **III. The American Stanley**

The choice between Jeal and Porter makes other “Stanleys” unavailable to us. The Stanley that Jeal attempts to apologize for and whom historians enjoy disliking is the brittle and un-self-conscious conqueror-explorer who earned the name “Bula Matari” and wore it with pride; he is either the subject of “Great Man” history or he is, as a determination of his historical moment, a figure of the imperial past to be remembered so as not to be repeated. Whether we have nostalgia for this past—and find lessons and meaning in retelling the story of past greatness—or whether we condemn his “Victorian” ignorance and imperial racism, we still produce him as a singular thing. We just agree to disagree about whether or not it is a good thing.

As I am interested in a different kind of historical subject than either Jeal or Porter, I am interested in a different “Stanley” than they are. The Stanley who uttered the famous words “Dr Livingstone, I Presume?”—or claimed that he did—was an American, and the way this American identity was structured—the terms through which it was made sensible—cannot be recuperated into a sense of Stanley as “Victorian,” or even imperialist. This is not to say that he *wasn't* these things, also; in fact, it's precisely the fact that he was a Victorian imperialist that made “America” a useful figure for him: being an American allowed him to solve (or at least paper over) some of the constitutive contradictions of that identity, as it was lived.

If it was the “Napoleon of Africa” that wrote *Through the Dark Continent* and *In Darkest Africa*, built the Belgian Congo, inspired the narrative of Joseph Conrad's most famous work, and inspires or embarrasses imperialist nostalgia, Stanley would only come to fit this description in his later years, only once he had established himself at the apex of the reputational hierarchy of geographical exploration and after he had, for that reason, a need to forget his own past. In his early years, he neither looked for nor found an African darkness; he was not a Napoleon, nor even a violent imperialist, and far from his experience of Africa teaching him to “exterminate the brutes”—as it did for Kurtz, thereby disillusioning him of his home-bound and feminized illusions—the Stanley who wrote *How I Found Livingstone* would tell the story of African discovery as the discovery that Africans were human, like himself.

He is not, in short, the “Conrad” who Brantlinger took to be representative of the entire field of Victorian ideology, and who Achebe attacked as “a bloody racist.” The question of African humanity was the basis of Achebe's attack on Conrad, especially as he revised and refined it in his 1998 essay “Africa's Tarnished Name”: as a response to critics of his earlier essay, who argued “that the racial insensitivity of Conrad was normal in his time,” he observed that no such epistemological closure was necessary, that it was possible for a “Victorian” to think of Africans as essentially human. Pointing to the example of David Livingstone—who was forty-four years older than Conrad—Achebe observes that Livingstone had written, in 1857, that

I have found it difficult to come to a conclusion on their [Africans'] character. They sometimes perform actions remarkably good, and sometimes as strangely the opposite...After long observation, I came to the conclusion that [Africans] are just a

strange mixture of good and evil as men are everywhere else.<sup>45</sup>

Achebe could also have pointed to Stanley, however. At the start of *How I Found Livingstone*, for example, in literally his first experience of Africa, Stanley declares his surprise to find that Zanzibar is not what he has expected to find. His reading of the British exploration canon has misled him, he tells us: books like Richard Burton's *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* prepared him to anticipate an existential void, something like a white man's grave and a savage darkness fit only to be destroyed. Instead, after remarking enthusiastically on "[o]ne of the fruitfulest islands of the Indian Ocean," and the productive abundance he finds there, he describes how his experience of Zanzibar leads him to realize the failure of the books he had been reading:

When I left Bombay for the purpose of leading the 'New York Herald' expedition into the unknown heart of Africa, my abstract conception of the island was that it was but a little better than a great sandbar, or a patch of Sahara, with a limited oasis or two, surrounded by the sea, rife with cholera, fever, and nameless but dreadful diseases; populated by ignorant blacks, with great thick lips, whose general appearance might be compared to Du Chaillu's gorillas, who were ruled over by a despotic and surly Arab. How it had become thus distorted in my imagination I cannot conceive. I had read books and articles on Zanzibar, which were by no means unfavorably disposed towards it, yet it floated in my brain as an island whose total submersion in the sea would benefit the world.<sup>46</sup>

But if Stanley was surprised to find that Zanzibar was not a place which genocide would improve, a reader of Brantlinger's "The Genealogy of the Myth of 'the Dark Continent'" will be just as surprised to find Stanley, in 1872, to be a writer who would not write "Exterminate the Brutes." We will be surprised to find that Stanley was not a confident and egotistical British explorer who embodied the established prejudices and beliefs of "the Victorian era's" elite establishment; instead, we will find something altogether different. In 1872, Stanley was an American journalist, young, insecure, and uncertain, and with the ambition to make these qualities into a virtue. For Stanley, Africa is not a site of imperial epistemology, but a place which has been miswritten by its imperial knowledge-makers, a knowledge which his own ignorance allows him to un-write. If he asks the rhetorical question of "how [Africa] had become thus distorted in my imagination," after all, he answers it in the same sentence, the fact that he "had read books and articles on Zanzibar." And since he opens the book by proclaiming his immersion in the books of Burton and Speke—as he rhetorically demands, "Who will come to East Africa without reading the experiences of Burton and Speke?"—his claim not to know where he acquired this distorted impression is a little disingenuous, especially as he clarifies the particular manner in which Burton's books, in particular, prepared him to expect a darker Africa than the one he found. The posture of respect he assumes to his honored predecessors only obscures his passive aggressive displacement; it would be poor form, or at least impolitic, to attack Burton himself, but Stanley quite categorically attacks the vision of the continent that he gets from books like Burton's.

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<sup>45</sup> David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Research in South Africa* (London: Murray, 1857), 510.

<sup>46</sup> Stanley (1872), 1.

For example, after preparing for months by reading the colonial library inherited from his honored predecessors, he innocently proclaims that “One day’s life at Zanzibar made me thoroughly conscious of my ignorance respecting African people and things in general.”<sup>47</sup> This is a studied ignorance, acquired from Burton and others. But there is nothing shameful about this ignorance, since it is the road to experience. Moreover, as an American journalist writing for a popular audience in New York City, his discoveries in Africa structure his audience’s own journey from innocence to experience. But his mock humility also disguises the aggressiveness of his assertion that men like Burton and Speke were misleading their readers with their phlegmatic accounts of a dark and dangerous continent. One day’s experience in Africa teaches a greenhorn from Missouri more about the place than the accumulated knowledge in all of their books, precisely because he is, as American, innocent of what he calls “the wormwood and fever tone of Capt. Burton’s book,” which he attributes to the perspective-clouding effects of fever itself.<sup>48</sup>

For explorers like Burton, “fever” was a reality, but it was also a kind of master-trope for the manner in which Africa was “the white man’s grave.” It was a natural consequence of the inhospitable African landscape—West and Central Africa in particular—and it was the characteristic which made it most impenetrable (save by singular epic struggles) and also doomed its inhabitants to permanent savagery. If “jungle” was the metaphysical category through which Africa was understood, “fever” was its objective correlative, the point at which a white man began to lose control of his body, his faculties, his rational discipline and ability to work, and perhaps even his life. Fever is the lens through which Africa is seen.

For Stanley, however, fever is the lens which distorts and obscures, less a figure for Africa itself than for the shortcomings of the “Africa” imagined by men like Burton. Stanley not only conquers fever, therefore, but overcomes how it distorts one’s ability to see clearly. While he tells his readers that he had set out with a “feverish perspective,” in which he saw Africa as an “immense swamp, curtained round about with the fever,” his journey reveals to him that the place is not at all what he had expected.<sup>49</sup> It is as he is himself recovering from a bout of fever, in fact, that both the literal and metaphoric fevers lift simultaneously: as he recovers, he observes that “the pall like curtain had been clearing away and the cheerless perspective was brightening...Daily the country advanced in my estimation.”<sup>50</sup>

As it “advanced” in his estimation, however, the country also becomes increasingly American, or at least increasingly amenable to the modes of development by which the American frontier was settled. For example, a few pages later, he describes the hidden potential of the dark forest, at its rainiest, by the possibility of settlement which a railroad like the Pacific Railway would provide:

It being the rainy season, about which so many ominous statements were doled out to us by those ignorant of the character of the country, we naturally saw it under its worst aspect ; but, even in this adverse phase of it, with all its depth of black mud, its excessive dew, its dripping and chill grass, its density of rank jungle, and its fevers, I look back upon the scene with pleasure, for the wealth and prosperity it promises to some civilized

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<sup>47</sup> Stanley (1872), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Stanley (1872), 93.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley (1872), 93

<sup>50</sup> Stanley (1872), 93.

nation, which in some future time will come and take possession of it. A railroad from Bagamoyo to Simbamwenni might be constructed with as much ease and rapidity as, and at far less cost than the Union Pacific Railway, whose rapid strides day by day towards completion the world heard of and admired. A residence in this part of Africa, after a thorough system...<sup>51</sup>

Where Burton saw ominous gloom, Stanley sees the Northern Pacific coast. Where the British saw a feverish white man's grave, Stanley sees an American settler frontier. On climbing a mountain, for instance, Stanley finds himself "gratified with a magnificent view of a land whose soil knows no Sabbath, which, had professor Malthus himself but seen, he had never penned that foolish pamphlet of his."<sup>52</sup> In a sense, this is anti-Malthusian: in contrast with a Malthusian pessimism about man's inevitable fate to be penned in, Stanley looks out with a Jeffersonian enthusiasm at a raw and fecund Africa in which, as he puts it, "stout elbows will make room"<sup>53</sup> Malthusian political economy of the day tended to see the "cheap" races as a largely unsolvable problem for the white race: placed in competition with racial peoples who would work more for the less that they required—and outbreed the "expensive" races as a result—Stanley looks to Africa and sees a place from which Africans can be removed, as needed, just as were the native peoples of the Pacific northwest. As he puts it, "There are plenty of Hengists and Horsas, Capt. John Smiths, and Pilgrim Fathers among the Anglo-Saxon race yet, and when America is filled up with their descendants, who shall say that Africa and especially this glorious part of it, shall not be their next resting place?"<sup>54</sup>

Far from being a dark and primeval jungle, then, Stanley's vision of East Africa is a wilderness lightly leavened with settlements; over and over again, he notes a consistent parallel with the American frontier, especially the part of Missouri and Arkansas with which he was most familiar. He predicts that this land's "Indian corn would rival the best crops ever seen in the Arkansas bottoms" and, on leaving, he "look[s] back upon the scene with pleasure, for the wealth and prosperity it promised some civilized nation, which in some future time will come and take possession of it."<sup>55</sup> Where there are natural obstacles, he sees bridges and railroads springing up to cross them, and in one of his most revealing similes, he notes that if you took away "the presence of ripe civilization," New York's central park would provide "a not unfaithful image of the country which opened before us soon after leaving Kisemo."<sup>56</sup> And while he admits that the acclimatization to malaria that he acquired in Arkansas swamps is useless to him here, he also manages to treat it successfully by calling on his experience in Arkansas.<sup>57</sup>

What Stanley discovers in Africa is the possibility of its *reconstruction*, along the lines of

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<sup>51</sup> Stanley (1872), 106.

<sup>52</sup> Stanley (1872), 112.

<sup>53</sup> Stanley (1872), 112.

<sup>54</sup> Stanley (1872), 112.

<sup>55</sup> Stanley (1872), 114, 116.

<sup>56</sup> Stanley (1872), 110.

<sup>57</sup> As Stanley notes, "On the second day I was, for the first time, made aware that my acclimatization in the ague-breeding swamps of Arkansas was powerless against the Munkunguru of East Africa... The remedy, applied for three mornings in succession after the attack, was such as my experience in Arkansas had taught me was the most powerful corrective." Stanley (1872), 119.

the American South and West. If there is one Victorian “explorer” who directly embodied precisely the mode of unchecked violence that Conrad’s Kurtz came to stand for, it is the later Stanley, but we are only a few pages into Stanley’s survey of Zanzibar, when, as he walks through “the negro quarters of the Wanyamwezi and the Wasawahili,” he declares with a humble and self-conscious humanitarianism that “a white stranger about penetrating Africa” must:

learn the necessity of admitting that negroes are men, like himself, though of a different colour; that they have passions and prejudices, likes and dislikes, sympathies and antipathies, tastes and feelings, in common with all human nature. The sooner he perceives this fact, and adapts himself accordingly, the easier will be his journey among the several races of the interior. The more plastic his nature, the more prosperous will be his travels.<sup>58</sup>

Like Kurtz *before* he comes to Africa, the Stanley of 1872 is quite progressive compared with his secular predecessors. But if Kurtz learns the error of his presumptions by his experience of the dark continent—the nature which is too horrible to be looked at or admitted—Stanley marks his progress as the discovery of “plasticity.” Indeed, he discovers that “the more plastic his nature,” the better he will do; nature is not the horror of our bestial existence, which we invent feminine and “Victorian” fictions to cover up, but the question of how adaptable we can be changing to match changing contexts.

To be American is not to be one thing—in contrast to the one thing that “British” or “African” might be—but to be *anything*, whatever is necessary for the time and place. In this sense, racial determinism tells us more about the determiner than the supposedly determined; true knowledge is to be found in apprehending the fact that knowledge changes, and that nothing that does not change is true.

When Richard Burton returned from central Africa in the 1860’s, he very quickly became “one of the most fierce and vocal advocates of the view that black Africans constitute a distinct and inferior species of humankind,” as Dane Kennedy put it, as well as a (fairly incoherent) defender of slavery as a necessary and praiseworthy institution.<sup>59</sup> At a time when the question of race was boiling to the surface of debates over imperial form, he founded the “Anthropological Society” with James Hunt—in explicit opposition to the more liberal politic stance of the Ethnological Society of London—and argued that slavery “was the great civilizing agent of primitive races,” and that the “removal of the negro from Africa was like sending a boy to school; it is his only chance of improvement.”<sup>60</sup> Despite whatever useful improvement Africans might receive from slavery, however, an ethnographic chapter of Richard Burton’s *Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1860) makes clear that the African’s “apparent incapacity for improvement” places him in permanent contrast to both the “civilized West” and the “semi-civilized nations” of the East; instead, Africans are “the slave of impulse, passion, and instinct” and a race who “unites the incapacity of infancy with the unpliance of age.”<sup>61</sup> Burton would go on to make this

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<sup>58</sup> Stanley (1872), 9.

<sup>59</sup> Kennedy (2009), 131

<sup>60</sup> Richard F Burton, *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1864), 136.

<sup>61</sup> Richard F Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 325-6.

lack of plasticity the point at which an African was different than a European: the African “has stopped short at the threshold of progress,” he wrote, and “shows no sign of development”; since they are “absorbed in providing for their bodily wants [they] hate the trouble of thinking.”<sup>62</sup>

Burton’s vision of Africa, in this sense, was inextricable from a very specific environmental determinism, deriving from and complementing all the old tropes by which the naturalness of African subjection had long been understood by pro-slavery apologists: overcome by his “bodily wants,” the African was prevented from putting his mind to higher things, and was instead enslaved to “impulse, passion, and instinct.” This is not quite a rationale for slavery—the practice having become morally indefensible the moment the British stopped doing it—but it was a means of arguing the progressive usefulness of forced labor and the kind of imposed disciplinary regimes that would characterize imperial rule in places like the Belgian Congo. Indeed, “slavery” disappears as a moral problem the moment a white man like Burton steps foot onto the Africa that men like Burton saw it to be: the African might not be a slave in any *legal* sense (at least not any that a Briton could comfortably embrace), but since the African in Africa was so subject to that environment as to be ontologically a slave anyway, it was hardly necessary to quibble.

The claims which Stanley makes for his own “plasticity” of own nature—his ability to learn from experience, rather than being blinded to it by prejudice—he derives from the very different American environment in which he was educated, in which environmental determinism is disproven, in which Americanization implies a kind of dis-education. He specifically cites the American spaces in which he learned to see men as they were, not be blinded by their skin color; immediately after his walk through the slave quarters, for example, his mind passes back to his (only partially fictionalized) time in the United States:

Though I had lived some time among the negroes of our Southern States, my education was Northern, and I had met in the United States black men whom I was proud to call friends. I was thus prepared to admit any black man, possessing the attributes of true manhood or any good qualities, to my friendship, even to a brotherhood with myself; and to respect him for such, as much as if he were of my own colour and race. Neither his colour, nor any peculiarities of physiognomy should debar him with me from any rights he could fairly claim as a man. "Have these men--these black savages from pagan Africa," I asked myself, "the qualities which make man loveable among his fellows? Can these men--these barbarians--appreciate kindness or feel resentment like myself?" was my mental question as I travelled through their quarters and observed their actions. Need I say, that I was much comforted in observing that they were as ready to be influenced by passions, by loves and hates, as I was myself; that the keenest observation failed to detect any great difference between their nature and my own?<sup>63</sup>

Stanley, for example, has much to say about whites who come to Africa unable to adopt the proper plasticity of character, and he says it with the figure of future settlers in mind who will, as Americans did in America, take their character from the landscape. Especially set against his account of his own profound self-reliance, he pours scorn on people like Shaw who only want servants to wait on them, and on Farquhar, who only wants to speak in “Anglo-Saxon” and

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<sup>62</sup> Burton (1860), 326

<sup>63</sup> Stanley (1872), 110.

will not speak Kiswahili or Kisagara. His white lieutenants (who constantly disappoint him) can in this way stand in for figures like Burton and Speke who he cannot seem to categorically criticize; after all, while an explorer like Burton was quick to learn native languages when necessary, no plasticity of character was involved—doing so was simply an expression of an enlightened comprehension of savagery. For Stanley, by contrast, this very refusal becomes a sign of Farquhar’s obstinate separation of himself from his environment, a refusal to go native which (perhaps counterintuitively) is what makes him degenerate, or at least marks him as such.

If a refusal to go native marked the degenerate, however, the fact that Stanley’s whiteness was his willingness to re-make himself in Africa—to be “at home” there—would pose an unsettling problem for the geographical establishment in London, a scientific body whose form of expertise presumed a very different way of relating to Africa. If Stanley thought being “American” was a good way to be white, compatible with the whiteness of Britain, the exploration establishment saw him, from the beginning, as an outsider, an American whose lack of civil forms and civilizational propriety not only called into question the structure of their authority, and whose claims had to be attacked at the same level, on the question of epistemology.

This problem was latent until Stanley arrived in Britain, where the hostility of the British imperial scientific establishment made it manifest. When he first presented his work to the Royal Geographical Society at a celebratory dinner in Brighton, August 1872, the chair of the meeting—Sir Francis Galton—instructed Stanley to confine himself to *facts*, and icily rebuked the audience when it cheered too vigorously at the much more colorful adventure story that Stanley proceeded to tell. Stanley had no intention of confining himself to facts. After he began by declaring that “I consider myself in the light of a troubadour,” he told a story that bore almost no relationship to what was understood as scientific geography by the august scientific body he addressed.<sup>64</sup> Despite his success with the crowd—or perhaps precisely because of his popular appeal—this conflict swiftly escalated after his presentation was concluded. Speaker after speaker from the Royal Geographical Society rose to dispute the substance of his facts, point by point, and to make it clear that they neither trusted nor respected him or his methods of presentation. A statement from James Grant was read which disputed Livingstone’s claim to have discovered the source of the Nile “an extravagant idea which cannot be entertained, for there are many circumstances precluding such a thing,” and proceeded to describe them at great length, persuasively enough that Dr. Charles Beke rose to declare that “he was perfectly convinced that Livingstone had not discovered the sources of the Nile,” having previously been convinced that he had done it.<sup>65</sup> Most damaging of all, Francis Galton damned him with the word “sensational,” declaring that such discourse had no relation to real geography. As Stanley would hotly recall:

after I read my paper, and defended Livingstone from rather severe criticisms, your Vice President rose, and, in a sweet, smooth, bland voice, said, ‘We don’t want sensational stories, we want facts.’<sup>66</sup>

The problem arose because Stanley’s paramount goal in 1872 had not been to bring back

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<sup>64</sup> “Stanley and Livingstone,” *The New York Herald*, August 28 (1872) 5

<sup>65</sup> *Nature*, Volume 6 (1872), 347.

<sup>66</sup> Stanley (1872), 664.

“facts” at all, or at least not in the ways that the term would be understood in the halls of British geographical science. As bodies like the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) defined it, scientific exploration was a matter of objective fact and so they placed great value on the systematic and standardized modes of epistemology which produced that objectivity, practices which made subjective experience into scientific data. As Dane Kennedy puts it, “The traveler’s veracity came increasingly to be measured in terms of his commitment to a rigorous set of scientific protocols and practices, the purpose of which was to generate quantitative and physical evidence that could provide independent verification for his or her claims.”<sup>67</sup>

The need to be scientifically objective meant that explorers in Africa were quite sharply constrained in the kinds of stories they could tell, if they wanted the fame and reward that would await them on their return. To receive a gold medal from the RGS, for example, one’s expedition had to conform to a very rigid sense of scientific objectivity. Advanced scientific instruments were crucial, for example, in producing data that could be—by its adherence to standards of objective precision—deemed to be untainted by the distortions that sensory observation might introduce. And neither hear-say nor native knowledge could be accepted as solid geographical data: only a trained (European) observer, using the most advanced scientific instruments, could produce geographical data about Africa.

This prejudice against mere sensory data not only characterizes the “golden age” of African exploration—which conventionally begins in the late 18th century with James Bruce and Mungo Park and ends with Stanley, about a century later—but the categorical erasure of such knowledge was what made the era conceptually possible in the first place. Before Park and Bruce, Africa was not a blank space in the European consciousness, but the very opposite; as Dane Kennedy observes, “[m]ost British-made maps of Africa in the eighteenth century presented the continent as a crazy quilt of political and ethnic units, their boundaries delineated by distinct lines and their territories colored in separate hues.”<sup>68</sup> The accuracy of these maps was highly variable, of course; calling on a contradictory hodge-podge of travelers’ tales, classical sources, and a variety of second- and third-hand accounts and vague descriptions, such maps produced no singular or objective truth of African geography. But as a cartographic tradition going back to at least the Portuguese explorations of the 16th century (and incorporating information gleaned from the likes of Herodotus or Ibn Battuta), African geography was understood not as a blank absence, but as a messy and chaotic superfluity of places, peoples, and stories. However poorly informed they might have been, European cartographers nevertheless “conceived of Africa as place no less composed of territorially differentiated peoples and states than Europe itself”; if Africa was comparatively unknown in Europe, it was not ontologically distinct from it.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 28.

<sup>68</sup> Kennedy, (2013), 16.

<sup>69</sup> After all, while “Europe” has always been categorically distinct from its two great others—Africa and Asia—the tripartite division of the world into three continents, which the ancient Greeks used to orient themselves in the world, has always also been co-extensive with a variety of geographical imaginaries that were not reducible to that myth of continents. A singular sense of a broad Mediterranean Islamo-Christian civilization, for example, not only included the Ottoman empire and much of the North African coastline, but precluded any sense of “Africa” as a geographically distinct entity. For many centuries, the part of the world we would now

At the root of Stanley's disagreement with the RGS was the basic epistemological question: did one go to Africa to bring back knowledge—facts—or was the purpose of a journey like Stanley's to bring back *narrative*? The contradiction was already latent in Stanley's original story of his journey, but the conflict with the RGS made it manifest, most precisely in Galton's dry condemnation of Stanley's "sensational geography." For Galton, sensationalism was utterly incompatible with geography: the point of the compound was that it was a contradiction in terms, and that a journalist like Stanley could not be expected—or allowed—to do science.

Before Stanley, all African explorers had been sponsored by philanthropic, scientific, and/or governmental societies. Even a relative outsider like David Livingstone was thoroughly institutionalized: his *Missionary Travels* was the first African exploration narrative to be a popular bestseller, but he was sponsored by the London Missionary Society until they demanded that he do more missionary work and less exploring, at which point he resigned and joined the Royal Geographic Society. This institutional orientation structured the manner in which explorers produced knowledge about Africa, starting with the fact that what they produced was to be, in fact, "knowledge." Whether missionary or geographer, Livingstone was like all of Stanley's predecessors in that he sought objective knowledge about Africa. This knowledge could take many forms, of course; everything from strategic waterways to commercial opportunities or the location and ethnographic detail of different population groups was fair game, and even forms of information that might be used for purposes not yet known. But explorers of this type always went to Africa to find facts of a speculative temporality, which is to say, knowledge that was to be useful for some kind of future investment. Industrial capitalists were in search of markets and commodities, missionary organizations looked for fertile ground on which to plant the seed of Christ's love, and the British imperial establishment hoped to find strategic resources which it could use to better project its power. For all of these writers, then, the logic of discovery was speculative, and their narratives were driven by the imperative to obtain facts upon which more informed speculations could be based.

Stanley was both the first African explorer to be sponsored by a newspaper and to sensationalize Africa. In one sense, these are two ways of saying the same thing: instead of producing factual knowledge which investors could use to calculate the future, he sought to tell a personality driven story that would be, essentially, entertaining.

As George Juergens describes it, the rise of sensationalist newspapers like the *Herald*:

expanded the meaning of the human interest story to report what had hitherto been regarded as private, the gossip and scandals about individuals...they began to pay as much attention to personalities as to local or national events...[T]he language in a sensational newspaper tends to be slangy, colloquial, personal. In such a way does the sensational journal express its identity with the masses of people who patronize it.<sup>70</sup>

His dispatches for the *Herald* match Juergens' description, from their slangy language

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anachronistically call Europe was geographically oriented towards the Holy Roman Empire, which necessarily precluded a sharp distinction between itself and "Africa." See Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>70</sup> George Juergens, *Joseph Pulitzer and the New York World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

and irreverent puns to the personal interest story of an American journalist finding an English explorer in Africa. The humor of the scene also flows from the interaction between the two personalities. But people like Henry Rawlinson would argue that Stanley's profession and nationality—which he essentially merges together as twin expressions of vulgarity—disqualified him from the practice of real science. There had been “a certain vagueness at the outset about Mr. Stanley's object and resources,” Rawlinson declared, and after pretending to give him the benefit of the doubt—or struggling to “put the most natural ‘English’ construction on his movements”—he soberly judged that Stanley's productions, in the event, had disproven this original charitable optimism. Instead of being “actuated by a mere spirit of adventure and discovery,” Rawlinson finally decided, Stanley's was not an explorer (“in the usual sense of the term”), because his adventure had been motivated by a desire for publicity:

[H]e had been sent out by our Transatlantic cousins, among whom the science of advertising has reached a far higher stage of development than in this benighted country, for the purpose of ‘interviewing’ Livingstone, and communicating intelligence of his whereabouts to the *New York Herald*, one of the most energetic, as it is the most popular, of the American newspapers.<sup>71</sup>

Rawlinson's barbs hit home because his description of Stanley's intentions was true. He caustically reflected that this was “highly complimentary...to the extraordinary spirit of enterprise which animates the leaders of the American press,” but the backhanded nature of the compliment was broadly understood, especially by Stanley; calling advertising a “science” spoke volumes, as did the obvious sarcasm of calling England a “benighted country” at a lower stage of development than its “Transatlantic cousins.” It was—and was understood to be—a very artful class argument about the value of popular media, and would neatly articulate a class-based dismissal of a nation which defined itself by its popular democracy and the sensationalist journalism which catered to that sense of the population.

In this sense, however, Stanley and the RGS did not so much disagree about Africa itself as they agreed to disagree among themselves, and about themselves. By socially marking the disagreement as the difference between serious British geographers and a popular American journalist, both sides came away more or less satisfied: Stanley would open his address to the RGS by emphasizing that “I am not a man of science” (calling himself, instead, a “troubadour” and a “story teller”), and the RGS were more than happy to agree with this characterization, reminding him archly that “this is a serious society constituted for the purpose of dealing with geographical facts and not sensational stories.”<sup>72</sup> Stanley would agree, but after asserting that the problem of the Lualaba “was not a question of theory but of fact,” he would define the term in a significantly different way than his interlocutors: instead of being the opposite of “sensation,” it was the opposing term to “theory.” In this way, everyone could agree that “facts” were the important thing, because they disagreed on what a “fact” was: Stanley's facticity was disputed because he was interested in sensationalism—that is, experience—while he disputed theirs by attacking their lack of empirical experience, their confinement to studies, drawing rooms, and easy-chairs.

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<sup>71</sup> “Sir H. C. Rawlinson's Address,” in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Volume 16 (London: Saville Row, 1872), 370.

<sup>72</sup> Jeal (2007), 140.

For Stanley, an anti-theoretical orientation devalued tranquil reflection in favor of first-hand experience, bypassing the question of scientific process. He heaped scorn on “Dr. Beke, [who] living in London, and never having been within two thousand miles of the spot, declares positively that Livingstone has not discovered the source of the Nile,” and demanded to know “how a geographer resident in England can say there is no such river when Dr. Livingstone has seen it?” The fact that “Livingstone who has devoted thirty-five years to Africa... says he thinks he has discovered it,” was the important thing for Stanley, a form of knowledge he justified by invoking “the field.” As Stanley went on to argue, “if a man goes there and says ‘I have seen the source of the river,’ the man sitting in his easy chair or lying in bed cannot dispute this fact on any grounds of theory.”

For Stanley, then, bodily experience was the key to true knowledge, “sensation” in a more literal sense: he could know it because he had seen it. By the same token, Stanley’s body was the site of Galton’s attack: the question of *who* Stanley was, and where his body came from, was to displace and cast doubt on the question of what he had done and seen. And the RGS’s understanding of science hinged on being able to make precisely the opposite claim, that an “easy-chair” geographer could sort through the libraries and archives and ascertain the truth (precisely what the “man on the spot” could not do).

In this sense, while the sides disagreed about the relative value of “youth” and “age,” they more or less agreed on seeing the terms in a single set of matching binaries: Theory vs. Sensation, Science vs. Journalism, youthful vigor vs. elderly prudence, and Anglo- vs. -American. A British journalist could therefore characterize America (in the context of Stanley’s journey) as a nation of “no repose, no moderation,” and note with a certain pride that “we walk, planting one foot firmly before we take another step” while “they ‘go ahead’ on the slipperiest ground, until they fall.”<sup>73</sup> But the *Herald’s* correspondent in the Sudan would disparage British exploration in Africa in precisely the same terms, writing:

I am of the opinion (hastily formed perhaps) that twelve energetic, live, I might say reckless Americans, each with his special mental and physical gifts, could bare this whole continent to the view of an anxious mankind. The British are good, hardy, stubborn travelers, but they are like their journalism and ideas—slower than the wrath of the Grecian gods.

There is no better illustration of this difference than the contrast between the blustering Stanley—who in addressing the RGS, raced through his sentences with the same heedlessness as he raced through Africa—and the RGS, whose dignified and ponderous serenity stood suddenly accused for tardiness.

For the British, “publicity” also signified a certain troubling openness of speech that would dog Stanley for the rest of his career. Stanley had the worrisome habit of speaking plainly about and even emphasizing the kind of violence from which “exploration” in Africa was in practice inseparable, but which Victorian explorers carefully abstained from talking too much about. After Stanley’s next African adventure, for instance, the not-yet-martyred General Gordon would complain to Richard Burton that “These things may be done, but not advertised”—and his choice of words is telling—but it was also generally understood that Stanley’s openness in talking about the brutality that accompanied colonial conquest was deeply inappropriate.

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<sup>73</sup> *Guardian* (Halifax), 12 October 1861, cited in Pettitt.

Stanley's expeditions were completely unique within African exploration in that it was funded by a newspaper, and Gordon emphasized the particular politics of public spectacle in which Stanley-as-journalist was engaging, the extent to which his entire mission rested not on the notion of *science* (as the RGS had understood it) but on the intrinsic value of public revelation, and the sense of the social to which it appealed.

Another kind of class distinction obtained between London geographical society and the African explorer in the field. The RGS was willing to sponsor Livingstone's second expedition, but only as an investment, and not one into which they poured much confidence. For the Royal Geographic Society—as well as the imperial elite, more generally—accomplishments and knowledge were valued and respected, of course, but the person of the explorer was essentially dispensable, a mere vessel for a broad, scientific project that was much larger than any individual figure. Livingstone's letters and notes were worth paying for and acquiring; his body was not, or at least not nearly as much. His value to them was in his production of formal knowledge—textualized truth—not in his living, breathing presence.

One might distinguish “geography” from “exploration” in these terms, in fact. The embodied relationship of the explorer to the land he explored—seeing with his own eyes, as it were—was a very different epistemological orientation than that which obtained in London, and a very different site of expertise and authority. An explorer based his truth claims on the fact that he, and no one else, had *been* there, that he had seen and explored and recorded and witnessed, personally. Because the RGS had not, on the other hand, they vested their claims to scientific authority elsewhere, making a virtue of the fact that they had not, physically, been there.

In practice, the primary function of a body like the RGS was to socialize, incorporate, and control the accomplishments and knowledge produced by individual explorers, to receive their individual contribution and reconcile it with the broader social function of the imperial knowledge-making apparatus. When an individual explorer returned from an expedition in Africa, for example, his claims were not taken as gospel truth, but had to be examined, certified, and—to a significant extent—translated into properly scientific knowledge. Data would be accepted as valid, and accomplishments would be certified (and awarded medals), or in many cases, the explorer's claims would *not* be accepted, for any of a variety of reasons. From the RGS's point of view, field reports obtained in great haste and under adverse conditions had to be carefully scrutinized, checked, and corrected, at leisure, by scientific authorities whose minds would not be clouded by the overwhelming sensual experience of the tropics, by the limited perspective of an individual, or by the self-interested need of the explorer to lay claim to great discoveries.

There was, of course, something to this claim. Explorers in Africa were largely at the mercy of the elements and of their local intermediaries—and as Johannes Fabian has pointed out, they were also, quite often, out of their minds—and, unsurprisingly, the archive they produced of both firsthand and secondhand “knowledge” is far from a unanimous record.<sup>74</sup> It is anything but that, in fact; successive explorers not only build on each other's work, but in updating and revising the accounts of their predecessors, they make the case for the singular importance of their own discoveries only by refining or disputing the substance of what those who went before them had found. For this reason, “exploration” discourse is a dense heteroglossia of dispute. Victorian writer-explorers not only took great care to contextualize themselves within their

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<sup>74</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

tradition, such that the thick, sprawling books written by this small group quite conspicuously overlap and prop each other up, but the incestuous-ness of the genre was matched only by the bitter feuds and struggles for authority and pre-eminence which inevitably followed publication, as a new writer entered the symbolic field in which he would try to gain fame and immortality. “Exploration” is a dense family tree, in which new explorers pay their respects to their predecessors in order to join the collective project. But it was also a battlefield, in which the relationship between different explorers could take on a distinctly oedipal or fratricidal edge, a conflict which was mediated by disputes over “objective” facts. As a central authorizing body, the RGS therefore had the work of bringing order to the chaos.

At the same time, however, “armchair” geography maintained a position of superiority and control over individual explorers in “the field” through this authorizing function. The RGS certainly did value first-hand experience and eye-witness accounts, but only as data, and raw data at that. It was incomplete until cooked by experts in London, and untrustworthy except to the extent it was corroborated or rendered “objective” by the use of scientific instruments. Explorers in the field might argue the importance of embodied knowledge—of seeing Africa with their own eyes—but geographers in London argued the limitations of embodied knowledge, stressing the value of calm and leisurely scientific deliberation.

During the “golden era” of African exploration, London-based geographers held the trump cards, and individual explorers played the game according to rules set by bodies like the RGS. There is often a sharp disjunction, in fact, between the archive of knowledge that individual explorers produced specifically for that audience—the type of Africa writing they produced with the scrutiny of the RGS in mind—and the counter-archive which we find in secret diaries and correspondence. For now, however, I’m less interested in the substance of that disjunction than in the meaning of its presence: as gatekeepers to scientific authority, geographical expertise determined the terms through which individual explorers would produce knowledge.

The career of Sir Francis Galton exemplified this hierarchy of expertise. After exploring portions of South West Africa, Galton was awarded the Royal Geographical Society’s gold medal in 1853, and would eventually become one of the most important figures in Victorian science, among other dubious distinctions, as the father of eugenics. However, his career as a scientist and geographer would only advance beyond firsthand exploration when he began theorizing *The Art of Travel* in 1855, a theoretical work which explicitly argued for a hierarchy of theory above practice. As he introduces his subject, there is a clear progression from personal exploration towards scientific society:

The idea of the work occurred to me when exploring South-western Africa in 1850-51. I felt acutely at that time the impossibility of obtaining sufficient information on the subjects of which it treats; for though the natives of that country taught me a great deal, it was obvious that their acquaintance with bush lore was exceedingly partial and limited. Then remembering how the traditional maxims and methods of travelling in each country differ from those of others, and how every traveller discovers some useful contrivances for himself, it appeared to me, that I should do welcome service to all who have to rough it--whether explorers, emigrants, missionaries or soldiers,--by collecting the scattered experiences of many such persons in various circumstances, collating them, examining into their principles, and deducing from them what might fairly be called an ‘Art of Travel.’ To this end, on my return home, I searched through a vast number of

geographical works, I sought information from numerous travellers of distinction and I made a point of re-testing, in every needful case, what I had read or learned by hearsay.<sup>75</sup>

Galton's introduction describes his systematization of travel as "a welcome service to all who have to rough it," but the effect of subordinating practice to theory was to position practical exploration as subordinate to and dependent on the broader perspective provided by geographical theorists in London, who provided the frameworks by which mere data could become true knowledge. For Galton, the collection, collation, and examination of specific experiences were a means of deducing the broad "principles" which they made manifest, and without which they were limited and incomplete. In this way, knowledge in the field was merely "partial and limited," having not only to be vetted and certified at home, thereby suggesting a basic methodology for "re-testing" what had been mere "hearsay" so as to turn it into true knowledge. Local specificity was an impediment to the general applicability of raw material which explorers in the field provided; it was left to systematizing scientists, secure in their studies and libraries and conferences, to do the real work of producing geographical knowledge.

Put differently, arm-chair geographers presumed to know more about what was found in the field than the explorers who found it, claiming authority and ownership over the product of the explorer's labor in a way that is at least analogous to capital's relationship to labor, if only because institutions like the RGS actually did invest in the labor of exploration and did capitalize on the discoveries which were made. Geographical capitalists were dependent on the labor of exploration, but the fact of the latter's embodied relationship to the process of production was of less importance than the authority wielded by the institutional patron, who would also garner the majority of the reward. While explorers inevitably had to return to the field, geography was more of a lifetime sinecure, and the contrast between the careers of Galton and Livingstone describes a general pattern: unless the explorer found a way to move up to management, trading first-hand experience for theoretical knowledge, they would spend a lifetime repeating their endeavors, inevitably dying on the job. Galton never went into the field again; Livingstone, one might say, died in the workplace.

The point of this analogy is not to protest the exploitation of exploration labor, of course, but to bring into focus the way geographical knowledge was fetishized as a commodity, stripped of the first-hand labor which was required to bring it into existence, and appropriated by institutional authorities like the RGS. It was for this reason that Livingstone could be left to die in Africa: though the production of his labor was worth recovering—and the RGS was very interested in his notes, diaries, and other data—the laborer, himself, was not the subject of their interest.

Stanley's openness to sensations and experience—that his British colleagues sought to block out and repress—is not only repeatedly and directly flagged as *American*, but having prepared him to see and experience a black man's humanity, he even makes this openness to sensations of human sympathy is the key to defining the nature of that humanity; "Can these men--these barbarians--appreciate kindness or feel resentment like myself?" is not a question of good or bad qualities, after all, but a question of sensation or lack; the saving grace of "these barbarians," after all is that "they were as ready to be influenced by passions, by loves and hates, as I was myself." And when Stanley cannot detect "any great difference between their nature and

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<sup>75</sup> Francis Galton, *The Art of Travel; Or, Shifts and Contrivances Available in Wild Countries* (London: Murray, 1855), 5..

my own,” after all, the conclusion he therefore reaches is that their nature is, like his own, “plastic.”

Stanley’s education in America and the education in Zanzibar which his American identity makes possible are not clearly distinct; what he learned in the American North was the same plasticity of nature that makes him a good explorer here, the ability to both look on the environment and see it as it is, thereby judging “these black savages from pagan Africa” without even a hint of prejudice, in both its literal meaning and its colloquial. And it is also this very quality that he observes in the Africans that humanizes them, their readiness “to be influenced by passions, by loves and hates, as I was myself” that (implicitly) distinguishes his account from those of Burton and Speke, and his savages from Burton’s barbarians. For Burton, metaphorical African enslavement to passion renders them animals and legal slaves. But for Stanley, a readiness to be influenced by passion is the very sign of his American education, that which, in turn, allows him to look at what his predecessors saw as savages and see, quite distinctly (if not literally), African-Americans. What he was—and what he demonstrated himself to be by seeing Africans as—was a radically unwritten subjectivity, one whose freedom was a function of his openness to being educated not by books but by experienced environments.

The disagreement hinged on what counted as a “fact.” Stanley had not set out to do geography; in one of the original dispatches, he hopefully suggests that someone might eventually pay him to describe the countryside he was passing through, to actually do the objective work of empirical geographical study (“I should like to enter into more minute details respecting this new land, which is almost unknown, but the very nature of my mission, requiring speed and all my energy, precludes it. Some day, perhaps, the *Herald* will permit me to describe more minutely the experiences of the long march.”).

This still might not have been real geography, as the RGS would define it, but it serves as an acknowledgment of what the *Herald* had not hired him to do: his mission was focused on Livingstone, and not on the land in which Livingstone was found. When he found Livingstone, he was not an explorer. He was a penny-press tabloid writer, striving to get exclusive news of a celebrity, and his enterprise would succeed to the extent that it managed to titillate, amuse, and sell newspapers to New Yorkers. It was in this sense that he approached his work. However, his sensational success in 1872 would change the game. When he had been an obscure journalist fighting for the public’s attention, he was happy to be laughed at, to focus the attention on Livingstone, to make his own personality a site of anxiety and tension, and to relieve that tension through humor. However gentle, the joke of his presumption was at the expense of his own ego, funny because of the incongruity of his assertion of British decorum in the heart of the African jungle. What he calls “cowardice and false pride” was also a socially-imposed need to keep up two kinds of false appearances: to maintain dignity in the face of “such a mob”—the dozens or even hundreds of Africans witnessing the meeting around them—and to aspire towards emotional control and reserve in front of the “Englishman” he had discovered, who he feared would judge him harshly for his (American) manners and comportment.

In this sense, Stanley met Livingstone in two different contact zones, one between African and European—in 1871—and another in 1872, in Britain. The liminal space he reached across to grasp Livingstone’s hand was also the hyphen in “Anglo-American,” the gap between the whiteness of an American and the whiteness of an Englishman, which was a problem that the African surroundings intensified rather than erased. It was the tension of this gap that fueled the humor when he first wrote that joke. But the joke turned painful in Britain, when he was “hooted at, reviled and calumniated”—as he put it in angry passages that his friends convinced him to

excise from his manuscript—on the occasion of what should have been his greatest triumph. Far from being treated with the respect he expected and felt he deserved, he was treated as the threat he was: an American who had swept into London and plucked from the hands of the Royal Geographic Society their most precious possession, authority about African geography. “I resent all manner of impertinence,” he would later write in a letter to the *Telegraph*, “all statements that I am not what I claim to be— an American; all gratuitous remarks such as ‘sensationalism,’ as directed to me by that suave gentleman, Mr. Francis Galton...and all such nonsense.”<sup>76</sup>

In objective terms, of course, Stanley was wrong. In the terms by which they understood the issue, the RGS was correct on their geography: the Lualaba did not flow into the Nile, but into the Congo river. Livingstone had not, in fact, discovered what he thought he had, and so, neither had Stanley. Stanley was also not an American in the terms by which Francis Galton—the father of Eugenics—understood blood to signify: Stanley had lived in the United States for several years, but his parentage was Welsh, as was his place of birth. On meeting him in 1872, Queen Victoria would recall disliking his “strong American twang,” and this was the general reaction he received from the British upper class.<sup>77</sup> Samuel Clemens would see through the facade immediately, however; in a letter to his wife, Clemens observed that

Stanley lacks a deal of being a gentleman...In the first place he denies his nationality—denies it strongly—swears he is an American. Now that is bad. As soon as he opened his mouth to talk in private, I felt that he was a foreigner—the moment he spoke a dozen sentences in public, I knew he was a foreigner. Nobody here appears to know it for certain, but he will be detected at once, in America.<sup>78</sup>

By the time Stanley was being cross-examined in the RGS’ star chamber, his parentage was an open secret. Stanley’s Welsh family had come calling (for money), and although Stanley would not admit it for some time, the game was essentially up. While he had claimed to have been born and bred in Missouri, he had actually been born “John Rowlands,” a Welsh pauper who grew up in the workhouse where his mother had left him. When he immigrated to the United States at the age of eighteen, he tried to forget this origin and metaphorically made his name as a frontier journalist covering General Hancock and General Sherman’s campaigns against the Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and other plains Indians. More literally, “Stanley” was a name he acquired from a shopkeeper who employed him, and who he would remember as a beloved father figure.

The irony of Stanley’s story is that facing an “English upper-class closing of the ranks against ‘the American,’” would eventually cause him to cease pretending to be an American, to cease striving to be a sensationalist journalist, and to cease claiming that Livingstone had found the source of the Nile. In fact, his second exploration journey—in which he acknowledged his own British origins, named his mission the “Anglo-American Expedition,” and was co-sponsored by both a British and an American newspaper—would confirm, contrary to his original claim, that it had been John Speke who discovered the source of the Nile, in 1858. In

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<sup>76</sup> Jeal (2007), 142.

<sup>77</sup> Jeal (2007), 168.

<sup>78</sup> Samuel Clemens to Olivia L. Clemens, October 25 1872, in *Mark Twain's Letters, Volume 5: 1872-1873*, edited by Lin Salamo and Harriet Elinor Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 199.

almost every sense, he would become a Henry Morton Stanley who would public accept what the RGS had originally castigated him for.

When Henry Morton Stanley first set out on his first journey, however, he was an American journalist, a young man trying to hack out a living in a world that offered him no kindness. He was desperately insecure, not only financially and socially, but also psychologically: when he set off to find Livingstone, he not only couldn't know whether he would find the good doctor—or how Livingstone would react to being “found”——but he could have had no confidence that his employer would honor the debts he had accumulated in the Herald's name. If he failed in his expedition, as others had failed before him, there was a strong chance that they might not. He would tell the story of being specifically commissioned by the editor of the Herald to find Livingstone, and told to throw all economy aside and spare no expense; “Draw a thousand pounds now,” he claimed to have been told, “and when you have gone through that, draw another thousand, and when that is spent, draw another thousand, and when you have finished that, draw another thousand, and so on; but, FIND LIVINGSTONE.”

As Timothy Jeal shows, this was far from the truth of what happened; the mission had been Stanley's idea from the start, and it had taken a great deal of persuasion, over the course of several years, to convince Bennett to fund him to do so (and not nearly as generously as he would subsequently pretend). Stanley had good reasons to feel insecure, and finding Livingstone did not so much resolve the problem as transform it. His celebrity made his situation more complicated, by making it impossible to maintain the fictional identity he had created for himself, the pretense that he was a Missouri-born American. The dispatches he wrote for the Herald—which were published monthly in 1872—and the book he produced out of them, *How I Found Livingstone*, were written from the perspective of an American author. But this fiction could only be maintained when Stanley was an obscure journalist trying to hack out a living; when he found himself a titanic celebrity, it collapsed under the weight of the backlash.

Making his name as an explorer, in short, forced Stanley to give up the identity he had taken on when he became an American. And after 1872, he would gradually stop pretending to be an American, he would end his relationship with journalism, and he would spend the rest of his life striving to live up to the model of the African explorer which most critics have retrospectively credited him with being. He would also stop making jokes, and stop laughing at them. By the end of his life, he had settled into a comfortable elite existence in Britain, serving in Parliament from 1895-1900 and being knighted with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. And while his humble origins would prevent him from being buried in Westminster Abbey next to Livingstone, as he had hoped, his posthumously published autobiography would finally look back and recall his earliest, still painful origins. By then, of course, he no longer needed to hide from his past: if he had been born to an unmarried Welsh mother, he would become (relatively) comfortable with admitting it after he could use his original humility to cast how far he had come since then into sharp relief. He could afford to look at his natal shame when he had to squint at it across three decades of accomplishment.

This was the trajectory in which he wrote the words by which he is either remembered or forgotten, the phrase “Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?” He wrote it as a joke after he had achieved the greatest accomplishment of his life, finding Livingstone, but before that victory had turned sour in his mouth, when it was discovered that he was not an American. In *How I Found Livingstone*, for example, Stanley glosses the line by claiming (in a footnote) to have recalled an incident in Alexander William Kinglake's *Eothen*, in which an Englishman unexpectedly meets another Englishman in the desert, and elects to tip his hat silently and avoid conversation. This

expectation of English reserve had given him the fear that Livingstone might react negatively to being found. “[Livingstone] being an Englishman,” he writes, “I did not know how he would receive me.” Stanley therefore did his cautious best to graft Kinglake’s nonchalance onto the scene he was living, to play the English part, as he had taken it to be from an English text. In this telling, his sensitivity to being slighted was still raw, on the surface of the text.

This anxious explanation is not to be found in the original dispatches he wrote for the *New York Herald*, however; there is no trace of any specifically Anglo-American tension. In the original publication—written while he was still unaware of the challenge he would face in Britain—Stanley’s concern is not that his transatlantic cousin will find him vulgar, familiar, or reject him for being too American. Instead, he writes that “[i]t was the dignity that a white man and leader of an expedition ought to possess that prevented me from running to shake hands with the venerable traveler,” and he mentions only the presence of “grave-looking Arab dignitaries” as restraining him from his initial impulse. He even reports being mistaken as an Englishman by Livingstone’s African servants, even “though the American flag was in front,” a detail he not only omits from the book version, but which—since *How I Found Livingstone* is perhaps five times as long—he must have intentionally removed.

Between the original dispatches and the book-length *How I Found Livingstone*, in other words, Stanley’s general concern for white dignity in front of Arabs has been subordinated to the specific concern that he, an American, might not be received kindly by an English gentleman. His fear in 1872 was that an American journalist, writing for a decidedly undignified newspaper, might offend or be found offensive by dignified Englishmen: where the original dispatch makes a point of emphasizing the indistinguishable whiteness of Englishman and American (in the eyes of Arabs and Africans), this moment of misrecognition disappears in the revision, where a transatlantic gulf has opened up between them, one which only Stanley’s hail and Livingstone’s “kind smile” in response manage to suture together. He has, in the meantime, moved from one contact zone to another.

The question of how to read Africa flows out of this argument: the terms themselves are inflected with the intra-mural dispute. In other words, if the Anglo-American difference was a function of the practical distinction between theoretical and sensational facts, the reverse was also true: the problem of scientific method was being understood by reference to a geopolitical disagreement. To read the continent according to Stanley’s terms was to read it as an American, and vice versa. For Stanley, then, the idea of “theory” took on a particular kind of nationalist baggage, an argument for the primacy of fieldwork over educated authority which came to assert the superiority of American mobility (broadly understood) over ponderous British dignity. And while the RGS would give no ground in conceding the point—arguing instead that Stanley’s hasty and ill-equipped expedition could never have seen *properly*—they did so precisely because the characteristically American lack of repose and moderation was national fault. And to read the continent by the RGS’s cool and methodical process—an exercise conducted in libraries, not in the field—was to read it as a Briton.

Stanley, however, sought to read like an American. One of the recurring problems he grapples with in doing so is how to make writing do the things he needs it to do even as he argues for its insufficiencies. Periodic statements like “the preceding paragraph embodies many more words than are contained in it,” are less rhetorical flourishes than symptoms of a broader effort to overcome the limitations of the medium which he starts out by foregrounding—the extent to which writing fails to “penetrate the meaning, the full importance and grandeur” of

Africa—by the use of that medium itself.<sup>79</sup> His solution, to give up the ideal of objectivity and understand his personal difference in his *practicality*, allows him to put aside the disembodied scientific objectivity that geographers like Burton and Speke, by necessity, emphasized (as well as their reliance on books they had no choice but to grant reliable objective status), and so he anticipates that “stay-at-home, chimney-corner, and easy-chair loving people” will look with disfavor on his book. His audience, instead, will be “travelers who may succeed me in East Africa,” those who will learn from his example to carry on his work even farther.

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<sup>79</sup> Stanley (1872), 9.

## Chapter Two: Theodore Roosevelt's Country

"[I]n our own day, the histories written of Great Britain during the last century teem with her dealings with India, while Australia plays a very insignificant part indeed; yet, from the standpoint of the ages, the peopling of the great island continent with men of the English stock is a thousand fold more important than the holding Hindoostan for a few centuries."

—Theodore Roosevelt, "National Life and Character"<sup>1</sup>

"The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him. American and Indian, Boer and Zulu, Cossack and Tartar, New Zealander and Maori,—in each case the victor, horrible though many of his deeds are, has laid deep the foundations for the future greatness of a mighty people. The consequences of struggles for territory between civilized nations seem small by comparison. Looked at from the standpoint of the ages, it is of little moment whether Lorraine is part of Germany or of France, whether the northern Adriatic cities pay homage to Austrian Kaiser or Italian King; but it is of incalculable importance that America, Australia, and Siberia should pass out of the hands of their red, black, and yellow aboriginal owners, and become the heritage of the dominant world races."

—Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* <sup>2</sup>

"Wave upon wave, each with increasing virulence, is dashing this new religion of whiteness on the shores of our time."

—W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk"<sup>3</sup>

In 1909, Theodore Roosevelt stepped down from the presidency of the United States and took a nine-month big game hunting trip across what was then "British East Africa," the colonial protectorate that would become the independent state of Kenya in 1963. Disembarking from the coastal city of Mombasa, he crossed through the Central Highlands into the Great Rift Valley, continued onward to the lake region and eventually finished his journey with a steamboat up the Nile to Europe. The trip was his gift to himself for having completed his term, an opportunity to extend his passion for hunting and natural history beyond North America and to expand his son's horizons (Kermit Roosevelt left Harvard for a year to accompany his father). It was also a demonstration of virility, in at least a symbolic sense: after seeking the presidency for most of his life, 1909 found him in the curious position of having no life ambitions left to fulfill, at the relatively young age of 50. Roosevelt's biographers uniformly describe the post-presidential Roosevelt, therefore, as enduring a kind of existential loss. Patricia O'Toole, for example, narrates the post-presidential Roosevelt as "thrashing in the cage of his powerlessness," faced with a problem of what to do with himself, a problem which, she finds, he never quite solved.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "National Life and Character," *The Sewanee Review* (August, 1894).

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West, Volume 3: The Founding of the Trans-Alleghany Commonwealths, 1784-1790* (New York, Putnam: 1894), 29.

<sup>3</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," *The Independent*, 69 (Aug. 18, 1910), 339.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia O'Toole, *When Trumpets Call: Theodore Roosevelt After the White House* (New York,

Africa was the first thing he tried. For his biographers, however, Africa is a strange place for Roosevelt to be. Or, at least, it is strange and foreign to him, outside the story of an American president's American life, a sojourn away from the real arena. In *The Wilderness Warrior*, for example, Douglas Brinkley places Roosevelt's overseas naturalism squarely outside the bounds of a book which treats Roosevelt only as a specifically American conservationist.<sup>5</sup> And since Roosevelt's true "imperial" moment was his participation in the war of 1898, the occupation of the Philippines, and various forms of Pacific Ocean saber-rattling, his time in Africa—which was neither "official," nor a clearly imperial venture—tends not to register in books which seek to revive Roosevelt as imperialist villain.<sup>6</sup> Patricia O'Toole's *When Trumpets Call* does treat with the year-long expedition in detail, but she stages it in the same way as Edmund Morris would in *Colonel Roosevelt*: as a kind of pastoral interlude, a break in the action when the actor catches his breath before the play resumes.<sup>7</sup> Morris opens the final volume of his three-volume biography by showing us Roosevelt on a train, crossing through British East Africa, but framed by reference to Roosevelt's distance from home:

"His own continent recedes to time out of mind. Is it only seven weeks since he was president of the United States? His pocket diary indicates the date is 22 April 1909—not that the calendar matters much in this land of perpetual summer, with equal days and nights."<sup>8</sup>

In this way, Morris places the "Roosevelt Africa Expedition, 1909-1910" as literally a prologue to *Colonel Roosevelt*, one which is outside of and external to the main life-narrative. And if it links together Roosevelt's past and future, it only does so in the ahistorical no-time of Africa, where there is no "now" to imagine and nothing of substance happens. Even Morris' liberal use of free indirect discourse in ventriloquizing Roosevelt's actual *thoughts*—a striking authorial liberty from so scrupulous a biographical archivist—speaks to Africa's distance from the kinds of arenas where Roosevelt's actions and words made him a figure to be remembered, and where they would need to be carefully reconstructed from archival sources.

This is a fundamental mis-framing of what Africa signified to Roosevelt, and how he made his trip meaningful. As I will show in this chapter, his trip to Africa was not only one of the most important events of his own life—in some ways, the climax of his life—but it made a particular kind of sense within the narrative of his life as *he* wrote it. As I will argue, the difficulty his

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Simon & Schuster: 2005), Edmund Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 2010), 404).

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Roosevelt has often been used to figure the American "turn" towards empire at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the war of 1898 has become the representative moment of American imperial turn, and as its most iconic representation, Roosevelt's mythological charge up San Juan Hill stands in for something much larger and more complicated. See Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press: 2005), and James Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise: A Secret History of Empire and War* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> O'Toole (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 2010), 3.

biographers have had in placing it within the story of his life has much more to do with limitations and foreclosures in the narrative into which they emplot him than with the material itself. Indeed, the fact that Edmund Morris, of all people, would have so little to say about Roosevelt's trip to Africa is worth dwelling on: born and raised in colonial Kenya, of South African parents, Morris would leave Kenya on the eve of independence (to matriculate in Apartheid South Africa), and would eventually emigrate to the United States. However, the fact that "[m]inor descriptive touches derive from the author's own native background in Kenya" is all that Morris has to say about the connection which he might have made—between an American who went to East Africa and an East African "native" who would win two Pulitzer Prizes as his biographer in the United States—tells a story of its own.<sup>9</sup> Far from exploiting the connection to claim or demonstrate a superior insight into the *meaning* of the trip—placing Roosevelt contextually into the life-world of a particular white settlement colony, or historicizing the material consequences of his visit—Morris reduces the extent of his expertise to the "minor" descriptive flourishes which his "native background" enabled him to make.

In the way that Henry Morton Stanley's "American" identity has been forgotten, I would suggest that this subordination is the textual trace of an intention, a willed reduction that Roosevelt be no more than an "American" figure and a desire that his visit to a British-African settlement colony would be, in conventional terms, a trip "abroad." To the extent that he was on vacation, then, Roosevelt is not understood to have been doing work: Africa is a pastoral interlude and a site for personal exploration only, not of Africa itself. As I will argue, however, in the same way that Roosevelt's flight to the Dakota territory in 1884 had inaugurated his career as a national figure—the trip in which he transformed himself from an Eastern dude into a Western cowboy, laying the foundations for his public presidential persona—his flight to Africa was the same kind of attempt to remake himself and re-narrate his personality. Having escaped from the parochial confines of his New York origins by remaking himself as an *American* on the national frontier—and in the process, helping to reinvent what that meant—his African safari was an attempt both to repeat the gesture and to transcend it, to remake himself again by escaping from the parochial confines of merely national politics and become an *international* statesman, a spokesman and exemplar for the white race as a whole. *African Game Trails* is, as I will argue, his attempt to map out the imperial white project of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the manner in which white men would surge beyond the borders of their nations of origin and compel the future to be mastered by their will.

There are many reasons why this fact has been difficult to perceive. Because scholars have so often treated Roosevelt piecemeal—as either domestic cowboy or imperial expansionist, for example—the scholarship generally fails to recognize the manner in which, in *African Game Trails*, he sought to integrate and synthesize his large and multitudinous variety of contradictory selves into a single narrative of imperial expansion. Books like *The Rough Riders* and *The Winning of the West* are strikingly nineteenth century texts—each in their own way quite viscerally at odds with post-WWII notions of American identity—but *African Game Trails* has attracted the least and least satisfying scholarly engagement, I would suggest, precisely because it describes practices of empire that the United States has *not* so flagrantly outgrown.

After all, the "scandal" of imperialism has traditionally been the moment in which the republic becomes empire, the moment of irruption which the war of 1898 has often been used to represent (or the first gulf war, which coincided with a broad new interest in imperialism in

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<sup>9</sup> Morris, (2010), 581.

American studies).<sup>10</sup> Yet by fetishizing the distinction between the merely *continental* nation-state and its moments of extra-national imperial expansion, we tend to presume the legitimacy of the former by the very gesture of deploring the latter. 1898 can only be a scandalous aberration, after all, if we subordinate the “winning of the west” itself; in the framework used by William Appleman Williams to describe the “tragedy” of American diplomacy, the war of 1898 (or the war in Vietnam) can only be a turn *away* from the original ideals of the “nation” if we fail to recognize, as such, the United States’ imperial conquest of its Western territories, spaces that were once external to the nation, but which were conquered and settled in a process that looks “imperial” to everyone but Americanist historians.<sup>11</sup> One can only bemoan the tragedy of the American “turn” to empire by implying the lost virtue of the “republic” that was turned away from.

I would suggest, therefore, that “1898” occupies a position of centrality in American Studies’ apprehension of its own imperial past because it was a moment in which the American state threatened to take on the attributes of the British imperial state, by seizing and directly administering distant foreign territories. Yet what made 1898 an apparent aberration was not the fact that the United States had never been an empire, but that American imperial power had always been structured by a different logic than the British empire. By the 1890’s, the British Empire directly administered a vast and disconnected archipelago of occupied colonies, woven together by formal military authority and bureaucratic governance, and formally united by subjection to an imperial Queen. This, in an over-simplistic nutshell, is what American studies has generally meant by “empire,” and it is by these standards that moments of imperial expansion like the war of 1898 register as “imperial.” But 1898 was the road not taken, netting only Puerto Rico and Hawai’i as territories, one of the 19th century’s least impressive imperial hauls, while the real prizes were Cuba and the Philippines, both of which the United States elected *not* to formally colonize. Instead, what set the tone for the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not the war of 1898 *per se*, but prolonged counter-insurgency campaign in the Philippines, and the Platt amendment that legitimized the United States’ legal right to intervene in Cuban affairs, whenever it deemed necessary. Instead of the formal annexation of territory and political authority which had characterized European empire up to that point, in other words, US hegemony in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would be a function of its formal *disavowal* of direct empire.

It is relatively easy, then, to re-discover “1898” as an imperial scandal, because 1898 *was* a scandal, even then. After all, when Kipling coined the term “White Man’s Burden” in 1898, he was urging the United States to become an empire like its “parent,” Great Britain, to grow up by

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<sup>10</sup> The word “scandal” is worth glossing closely. As Nicholas Dirks has usefully described: “public scandals become ritual moments in which the sacrifice of the reputation of one or more individuals allows many more to continue their scandalous ways, if perhaps with minimal safeguards and protocols that are meant to ensure that the terrible excesses of the past will not occur again. Scandals often do lead to reforms, but the reforms usually work to protect the potential agents of scandal rather than its actual victims. Indeed, it is the scandal itself that must be erased, not the underlying systemic reasons for scandal. The scandal is only the tip of the iceberg, the moment of excess that in the end works to conceal the far more endemic excesses that, at least for modern times, have become normalized...” Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 30.

<sup>11</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell, 1962).

taking paternalistic authority for new colonial wards (“have done with childish days,” he commanded, and take responsibility for the “new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child” of the Philippines, Cuba, Hawai’i, and Puerto Rico). But it is precisely because American power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was *not* the assertion of political authority over subject peoples (in the way the Kipling urged) that episodes like 1898 or the wars in Vietnam and Iraq resonate as scandalous anomalies within our political culture. The lesson which men like Roosevelt (and Taft, his presidential successor, the former provisional governor of the Philippines) learned from the experience was precisely how and why to *avoid* the British imperial model.

In contrast with the scandal of 1898—America’s moment of British-style empire—a text like *The Winning of the West* is no scandal at all, so thoroughly woven into the texture of mainstream Americanist historiography that it has rarely scanned as interesting, except as a source for some of Roosevelt’s more explicitly racist pronouncement on global history. Indeed, buried beneath epic history like the popular film *How the West Was Won* or scholarly historiography like Frederick Jackson Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” a book like *The Winning of the West* becomes important only as a lens into Roosevelt himself (the discovery, for example, that he believed that “The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages”).<sup>12</sup> Just as we “forget” Henry Morton Stanley under the strong misreading of him which was made by Joseph Conrad, it is easy to forget Theodore Roosevelt; Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis has absorbed Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West*, while Ernest Hemingway’s *Green Hills of Africa* and other African writing have tended to absorb Roosevelt’s centrality in the genre of African hunting narratives.

In this chapter, I will recover Roosevelt’s American-Africanism by recovering Roosevelt the *writer*. After all, if we remember Roosevelt as a man of action—the “man in the arena,” as he put it—we do not tend to remember him as a historian, despite the fact that he was both a remarkably prolific and popular writer—the author of 40 books in the 39 years of his life after leaving Harvard—and he also served as the president of the American Historical Association, a presidency he took much more seriously than historians have tended to take him, as historian. If we remember him as myth, we do not tend to remember him as mythologist. But Roosevelt was not only a historian, first and foremost, but as a historical actor, he understood (and retroactively narrated) his actions in terms of their retroactive reconstruction as “history.” As president of the United States, he understood himself in historical terms, and wrote and acted for posterity. But his entire political career was, also, a function of the extent to which he had already re-historicized himself as American archetype, transforming himself on the American frontier into an American frontiersman. In this sense, the most important predecessors for *African Game Trails* are his earlier efforts to write the American frontier into existence through the medium of his own life, the autobiographical hunting and ranching narratives through which he had first crafted his persona as the definitive American everyman—*Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, *The Wilderness Hunter*, and *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*.

As I will argue, when we place *African Game Trails* in this lineage, it no longer scans as a “minor” Rooseveltian text, the afterthought, curiosity, or footnote that biographers and historians have taken it to be. Neither can it be dismissed as an outmoded colonial text, in the ways that African studies scholars have tended to do. Indeed, as I will argue, the virtual non-status of this

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<sup>12</sup> Roosevelt (1894), 29.

text in African studies—where it is read, if it is read, only by specialist scholars of East Africa, hunting, or conservation, and virtually never read deeply, or as other than a “symptomatic” text—is an absence that has been produced, ironically, precisely by the text’s enduring influences, by the structures of thought he established so fundamentally that they have ceased to scan as interesting. After all, Roosevelt’s safari not only survives, but thrives: from tourist brochures to the photographs which tourists take (in imitation of the brochures) to the art sold to tourists in Kenyan marketplaces (in anticipation of the kinds of pictures which tourists will want to buy) and to photography books sold to American and British consumers, a particular set of clearly definable generic attributes firmly makes up a very particular and popular image of East Africa, so intuitively known that it hardly needs to be concretely described.

The fact that Edmund Morris places Roosevelt’s safari outside the main narrative, then, I would argue to be an attempt to disavow settler empire. When Morris addressed the Nixon Foundation on his book tour for *Colonel Roosevelt*, in fact, he very briefly recalled seeing Roosevelt’s picture in a book, as a ten-year old boy, growing up in colonial Kenya. But while he suggests that this memory *might* have been part of his inspiration to study Roosevelt, he evokes the possibility only in order to quickly subordinate the importance of this memory beneath a much more conventionally “American” narrative: instead of an American in Africa, it was the words that Richard Nixon quoted from Theodore Roosevelt (“When my heart’s dearest died, the light went from my life forever”) which gave him the germ of the magnificent story that he would spend the rest of his life telling, the primal trauma of Roosevelt’s young life, the day when his wife and mother would die, on the same day, and from which Roosevelt would go West to recover.

As Morris puts it:

This double catastrophe impelled the young TR to give up his political career—he was already a New York state assemblyman—to go west and become a ranchman, and to try to recover from grief. Which he indeed did and within the space of two years ranching out West in the Dakotas, he built up his frail body into the familiar burly mechanism we know from a thousand caricatures. He repaired his soul, he wrote a few biographies, the first of his forty books, and he came back in 1886 to marry his childhood sweetheart Edith Kermit Carrow, already quite conscious of the fact that he was a potential—if not certain—future president of the United States. As he often said, “If it hadn’t been for my years in North Dakota, I never would have become president.”<sup>13</sup>

For Morris, the fact that Roosevelt would become president is the high point of the story he tells about him: *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* plots a teleology leading to *Theodore Rex* in the White House, with *Colonel Roosevelt* a kind of post-script, the fall of Theodore Roosevelt which follows his meteoric rise, producing a satisfying “the rise and fall of” narrative frame.<sup>14</sup> Morris is therefore struck by Roosevelt’s “ability to remember his own future,” as he puts it. The fact that Roosevelt seemed to know that he was bound for the White House—long before the circumstance and contingency of an assassin’s bullet put him there—is described by Morris as an

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<sup>13</sup> “Edmund Morris Discusses “Colonel Roosevelt,” [uploaded on Dec 10, 2010], video clip, accessed July 23, 2013, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeSIfcAEM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeSIfcAEM), 9:03-10:00

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Coward, McCann, & Geoghegan, 1979), *Theodore Rex* (New York, Random House: 2001).

“astonishing ability.” It becomes much less astonishing, however, if we position Roosevelt as the author of his own narrative, if we allow that his own driving ambition to be president had something to do with it. Moreover, while Roosevelt was probably right that his years in North Dakota made it possible for him to become the kind of public figure that he would become—that having hardened his soul in Western winds, he could play the role of hyper-masculine American statesman to populist acclaim—it was not what happened to him, in the passive voice, but how he actively narrated the meaning of those events that made him who he would need to become.

In this chapter, therefore, I will demonstrate how Roosevelt twice wrote himself into existence (or at least the Roosevelt we tend to remember), by *un-writing* the self he had been before, and along with it, the American narrative complexity which an American mythology of self-making frontier whiteness displaced. Just as Roosevelt was many different things before he went West and became simple, clear, and self-evident, so, too, was the “America” which he simplified, clarified, and rendered according to the self-evident surface truths of race and “nature” which he found. In the same way that Frederick Jackson Turner “emplotted the European occupation of Native America as the building of a modern democracy from wild nature”—as Kerwin Lee Klein puts it, in *Frontiers of Historical Imagination*—Roosevelt found his own origins in the historical story he found himself able to tell about America, both transforming himself in its image, and, in the process, transforming its image to match the story he told about himself.<sup>15</sup> He did this first as popular American historian—the author of *The Winning of the West*, for example—then as American statesman, and finally as statesman of an American-centric world history which he sought to inscribe in the history of the future, through the medium of the present.

However, while Roosevelt “lit out to the frontier” (as Huckleberry Finn put it) two times in his life, only the first would prove to be the structuring drama of his life, to contain in miniature the story he told about himself, and which his biographers have faithfully followed him in telling. While his time on the American frontier was part of his rise to the presidency, his time on the African frontier only led to his fall. In telling an American story of Eastern loss, Western recovery, and Eastern return, the American personality he sought to model and perform was able to recover and rejuvenate itself by recourse to the open possibility of the West. In Africa, however, Roosevelt was less successful; the diasporic story he sought to tell—about pioneers whose old country had become played out, who found new life on a global settlement frontier—never quite came true, in his lifetime, or after. After all, Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West* anticipated the consolidation of the victory he sought to describe, in terms which history would more or less confirm: when he anticipates that savage wars on settler frontiers—the savagery of genocide and extirpation of native peoples—will lead to, and be legitimized by, the establishment of a white republic, he was of course correct. He successfully anticipated a future that had, in a sense, already come true, a future he not only remembered, but which he could also participate in making into a self-fulfilling prophecy, a destiny that had once been latent, but which would become fully manifest.

In Africa, however, the prophecy never came true. Kenya would never become a “White Man’s Country” like the American West. As a result, we have largely forgotten that when Roosevelt looked to East Africa, he saw the same future opening in front of it, that he argued British East Africa “to be a country of high promise for settlers of white race,” that he was

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<sup>15</sup> Kerwin Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 8.

reminded “rather curiously of the great plains of the West,” and that he went on to declare, on the basis of this analogy, that “It is a white man's country.” As the biography of Roosevelt’s most celebrated biographer helps demonstrate, this missed connection—between Africa and America—was one that had not yet, in Roosevelt’s lifetime, become missed: only in the wake of decolonization and the broad official failure of avowedly white supremacist political ideologies, has a phrase like “white man’s country” come to be officially unthinkable. But for precisely the same reasons that have caused his biographers to skim over or externalize his time in East Africa, I wish to emphasize its centrality to his post-presidential life narrative, a narrative he constructed with as much artifice as any of the other books he wrote. Like his failed bid for a third term as president on the Progressive ticket, perhaps, Roosevelt’s failures might be more revealing than his successes.

In this chapter, I will place Roosevelt’s Africa in America. In chapter five, I will argue the significance of Roosevelt’s African writing both in the making of “Kenya” and also in the making possible of the mode of African knowledge by which “British East Africa” would become thinkable *as* Kenya, a form of knowledge, I will argue, that had not, before Roosevelt, been available to white men, the knowledge that Africa was a “white man’s country.” First, however, I need to establish the terms through which Roosevelt “Americanized” East Africa in the first place, what it was that he saw when he looked at Africa, saw the American West, and named it “the safari.” In section one, I will describe how Roosevelt (re)constructed his sense of himself on the American frontier, how the story which is told about him by his biographers—his regeneration through violence and recovery of futurity—was first written by Roosevelt himself, on the landscape of North Dakota. “Alice,” the name of his first wife, is the trace of erasure through which it becomes possible to see his effacement (and feminization) of the “American” he had been, but was no longer, an American identity which he both displaces on onto the idea of Henry James—the Anglophile, effeminate, and hyphenated American who shirked his martial, masculine duty to kill and conceive—and structures his sense of self by repressing. In section two, I will show how Roosevelt’s biographers have naturalized Roosevelt’s performance of this identity through the structuring conceits of biographical history itself: by placing his identity in the black box of a subjectivity that can only be drawn forth from without—the subjectivity structured by the subject’s unconsciousness of it—they also erase Roosevelt’s own agency in writing his life. His biographers, I will argue, simply repeat the narrative that he, himself, first wrote, discovering their own agency (as writers) by erasing his; detached from the artifices of consciousness, it becomes the natural identity which he discovered and embodied, but which only his biographers can describe: the discovery that he was a white man because he finds himself in a white man’s country.

In section three, by tracing out the global circulation of the term “white man’s country”—and the racial imagined community it indexes—I will demonstrate how the American frontier (and white supremacist south) became a mode of thinking the progress of white supremacy on a global level, a project in which Roosevelt was deeply embedded and for which his game safari was paradigmatic. In section four and five, I will show how Roosevelt “invented” the big game safari and articulate the terms in which he invented it: not simply a tourist practice or pastoral retreat but the work of transforming the colonial world into a white man’s country.

## **I. Remembering Roosevelt**

The idea of Theodore Roosevelt has become so thoroughly woven into the American

political lexicon that it can be easy to overlook its existence, especially at the level of presidential myth-making. Richard Nixon, for example, was an early re-adopter of the Roosevelt legacy, but both Bill Clinton and John McCain—politicians as apparently different from Roosevelt as from each other—have specifically named Roosevelt as a particular inspiration.<sup>16</sup> The extent to which politicians like Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Sarah Palin have attempted to mythologize themselves in the Rooseveltian model almost speaks for itself: the ritual deployment of “the ranch” as a site for presidential performance (a particular favorite of Reagan and Bush) or the spectacle of Sarah Palin shooting Alaskan wolves from a helicopter are absolutely unmistakable variations on the theme Roosevelt first established as “presidential.” Even the kind of white populist common touch that Theodore Roosevelt was so adept at affecting can be seen by its absence in the conservative refrain that George H.W. Bush, John Kerry, or Barack Obama were elites who are out of touch with *real* Americans; such a criticism only makes sense if the presumption is that a president should be, like Roosevelt, essentially a common person (and through the kind of commonality defined by the American frontier). When the George H. W. Bush faced this criticism—notoriously baffled by the price of groceries, perceived as a wimp, and dogged by the accusation that he was a New England patrician—it should come as no surprise that he responded by seeking to emphasize Roosevelt’s personal influence, replacing a portrait of Coolidge in the White House with one of Theodore Roosevelt, and placing not one but *two* sculptures of him in the Oval Office itself.<sup>17</sup>

Since the efficacy of political gestures like these is so often a function of the fact that they do not explain themselves—that much is implied, but little is made explicit—it is easy to beg the question of politicians mean when they use his name and image. What, then, *is* this Roosevelt? In asking this question, however, his political use allows us to observe that he has become a political mythology, in the sense by which Barthes describes “depoliticized speech.”<sup>18</sup> Roosevelt can function as a bipartisan exemplar for American presidential masculinity because he stages the social order in a way that makes it seem like a natural given, and not the result of particular historical or political circumstances that could have been different. In that sense, these stories of Roosevelt are less de-politicized than depoliticizing. Because and to the extent that Roosevelt’s natural American identity is a thing that wasn’t made, but just is, the “America” he represents is just as given, just as natural, and just as far beyond critique. Like “the family” or the

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<sup>16</sup> John Robert Greene, “The Man in the Arena: Presidential Co-option of the Image of Theodore Roosevelt, 1916- 1989,” in Naylor, Natalie, et al eds. *Theodore Roosevelt: Many Sided American* (Interlaken, N.Y.: Hart of the Lakes, 1992), 577-94.

<sup>17</sup> Sidney Blumenthal, “Bull Moose: George Bush and Teddy Roosevelt,” *New Republic*, Jan. 7, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> As Barthes puts it, “myth is depoliticized speech. One must naturally understand political in its deeper meaning, as describing the whole of human relations in their real, social structure, in their power of making the world; one must above all give an active value to the prefix de-: here it represents an operational movement, it permanently embodies a defaulting. In the case of the soldier-Negro, for instance, what is got rid of is certainly not French imperialism (on the contrary, since what must be actualized is its presence); it is the contingent, historical, in one word: fabricated, quality of colonialism. Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (tr. A. Lavers; Frogmore, Paladin; 1973), 142-3.

depoliticizing myth of “the child”—as Lee Edelman describes it—the figure of Roosevelt makes a particular form of American identity a figure beyond mere politics.<sup>19</sup> Yet it is, of course, political, as political as “the child.” Roosevelt’s America naturalizes an intensely and specifically masculinized and martial expression of civic virtue, inscribing it on the body of a feminized landscape, and bringing forth a reproductive futurity as a consequence of the domesticity which is torn from the wilderness. In other words, he renders, latently, in the blank, white American identity, the same white supremacist imperatives that structured native removal and the eugenic imperatives that built segregated states; sublating *that* whiteness within the mere “blank slate” of the settler state, he enables white supremacy to be as natural and as unquestionable as “The family.” This is what is lost when Morris displaces his settler colonial memory of Roosevelt by the moment in which Roosevelt recovers his family in the American West: by forgetting his own family origin in a white settlement project that failed, he remembers, instead, the Roosevelt who found a family, and a future, in the white settlement spaces of the American West.

This “Theodore Roosevelt” was born on Valentine’s Day, 1884. Hours after his mother passed away from typhoid, and in the same house, Roosevelt’s young wife Alice would die from complications in the delivery of their first daughter, also named Alice. Roosevelt was in Albany at the time, serving in the New York state legislature. When he was alerted by telegram, he rushed home but arrived too late to do anything but bury the dead. His old life came to an end on that day, almost literally: after writing that “when my heart’s dearest died, the light went from my life forever”—the line that Richard Nixon would quote, bizarrely, almost ninety years later—he packed up his old life and began a new one.<sup>20</sup> He sent his newborn daughter to his sister to raise, concluded what business he had in the East, gave up his seat in the legislature, and went West, settling with every appearance of permanency on the North Dakota cattle ranch he had purchased the year before, but at which he had not spent much time up until that point. There, he regenerated through violence, shooting and killing 170 animals in a forty-seven day hunting trip in the Dakota Big Horn mountains. As Richard Slotkin put it, “Roosevelt went West to escape from personal grief and disappointment by living out his fantasies through hunting and managing the large Dakota cattle ranch.”<sup>21</sup> As Edmund Morris notes, somewhat more pithily, “[after Alice’s death] his diaries had become a monotonous record of things slain.”<sup>22</sup>

Roosevelt didn’t simply go west to recover from a traumatic loss, however; he transformed his sense of who he was by reference to that loss and by the narrative of recovery he made of it. Before the light went out of his life, he had been a member of the East coast elite: a part time politician, a part time historian, and a full time New York dandy. His ranch had been little more than a rich man’s hobby, as fashionable (and as necessitated *by* fashion) as the clothes he purchased by the season and just as inevitably replaced; he was the very picture of a New York “dude.”<sup>23</sup> But when he left New York and turned to managing a ranch and writing about it in a

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<sup>19</sup> Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *In Memory of My Darling Wife Alice Hathaway Roosevelt and of My Beloved Mother Martha Bulloch Roosevelt Who Died in the Same House and on the Same Day on February 14, 1884* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1884).

<sup>21</sup> Richard Slotkin, “Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt’s Myth of the Frontier,” *American Quarterly* 33 (Winter 1981): 608-37.

<sup>22</sup> Morris (1979), 278.

<sup>23</sup> As John Milton Cooper observes, “The term ‘dude’ was coined at almost the moment

series of well-received ranch memoirs, he buried and forgot the person he had been, Roosevelt the dude. When we recall Roosevelt as the “Rough Rider,” the statesman who proposed to “speak softly and carry a big stick,” or the evangelist of military preparedness and what he called “The Strenuous Life,” we necessarily forget the person he had been *before* that Valentine’s day, a person who had quite manifestly been none of these things. In remembering him, we forget, for example, that he had been born an “Oyster Bay” Roosevelt, growing up the frail scion of a New York “Knickerbocker” aristocracy that proudly traced its origin back to the original Dutch settlement of New York. We overlook that he had been a social butterfly and a notorious dandy at Harvard, welcomed by the nation’s elite into its most prestigious and exclusive societies. And we have no place for the peculiar information that, in the New York state assembly in Albany, his peers had given him nicknames like “Oscar Wilde” and “the chief of the Dudes,” or that opposition newspapers had called him “his Lordship” and suggested that he was “given to sucking the knob of an ivory cane.”<sup>24</sup>

If the first phase of Roosevelt’s political career was vexed by his elite background and by the cultivated effeminess of his manners, however, his transformation into a cowboy would make *him* the vexatious accuser. In his 1894 essay “True Americanism,” for example, Roosevelt would attack the figure of the “overcivilized, over-sensitive, over-refined” American, and as he excoriated the Americans he described as seeking to become second-class Europeans—arguing that they had, in the process, lost “the hardihood and manly courage by which alone he can conquer in the keen struggle of our national life”—we can safely presume that his readers were not reminded of the young Roosevelt, Europhile and sensitive as he had been.<sup>25</sup> Roosevelt’s upbringing had included the European “Grand Tour” and he had certainly been raised to be as civilized, refined, and sensitive as was normal for his class and station. Yet by 1894, his description of “the undersized man of letters, who flees his country because he, with his delicate, effeminate sensitiveness, finds that he cannot play a man’s part among men, and so goes where he will be sheltered from the winds that harden stouter souls” evoked only the thinly veiled

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Theodore Roosevelt began his political career and his association with the West. It seemed tailor-made for him. His foppish dress and refined manners drew snickers in the Republican club, which the new Harvard graduate and society bridegroom joined in the fall of 1880. His cultivated, squeaky voice, eyeglasses on a silk cord, and the name Theodore aroused derisive laughter when he entered the New York state legislature in January 1882. His glasses earned him the nickname “Four-eyes” in the Dakota Territory, where he alighted in a fancy buckskin-fringed hunting outfit during the summer of 1883 and proceeded to buy into the cattle business.” John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1983), 23.

<sup>24</sup> David Weir, *Decadent Culture in the United States: Art and Literature Against the American Grain, 1890-1926* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 19. Also see Joseph Bucklin Bishop, *Theodore Roosevelt and His Time: Shown in His Own Letters*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 10, in which Bishop relates that a correspondent reported on his first speech in Albany in the following terms: “The next orator was Mr. Theodore Roosevelt of the twenty-first, a Republican. This young gentleman has been dubbed ‘Oscar Wilde’ by his admiring colleagues, who were much amused by his elastic, movements, voluminous laughter and wealth of mouth.”

<sup>25</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “True Americanism,” *Forum* 17 (April 1894), in *Works: National*, vol. 13, American Ideals, p. 27.

caricature of Henry James that they were intended to resemble.<sup>26</sup>

It is not a coincidence that Roosevelt buried any memory of his first wife and first daughter along with his first life, or that the autobiography that he wrote in 1913 excludes mention of both. On the one hand, his early life is comprehensively revised to match the model of proper boy-hood for which Roosevelt—as the “boy president” in his forties—would be held up as exemplar, in which to be a boy was to be a kind of man, and to be a man was to be a kind of boy. On the other, he categorically excludes what his biographers uniformly take to have been the foundational trauma of his early years, omitting any mention of his first marriage (and consequent flight to the frontier). Instead, while the chapter “In Cowboy Land” inaccurately implies that his move to the West was a simple continuation of prior habits, the previous chapter describes the period of his life in which he was first married and first entered politics and says nothing about his marriage, even while exhorting his readers that “the greatest privilege and greatest duty for any man is to be happily married” and that “no other form of success or service, for either man or woman, can be wisely accepted as a substitute alternative.”<sup>27</sup> The name “Alice,” which Roosevelt refused to speak or write after his first wife’s death, appears only once in the book, when Roosevelt describes the man who gave him his start in politics (a ward captain named Joe Murray), and writes that “[w]hen I knew him he was already making his way up, one of the proofs and evidences of which was that he owned a first-class racing trotter — ‘Alice Lane’ — behind which he gave me more than one spin.”<sup>28</sup>

I will return to the ways that both this moment and Roosevelt’s transformation of it and through it have been given meaning, retroactively, both by Roosevelt’s biographers and by Roosevelt himself. But the crucial point is this: Roosevelt’s *persona*—the “Theodore Roosevelt” who still lives on in the American cultural repertoire—was produced through omissions like these, and by the way they are given meaning. Of course, a very active form of un-knowing always plays a crucial role in the production of knowledge; choosing what not to know—filtering out “noise”—is an integral part of processing mere information into coherent knowledge. In this sense, memory and forgetting are always inextricably part of the same process. We can remember particular images or events only by first erasing sensory perceptions that have been deemed extraneous to them. In this specific case, however, if “ignorance” has a verb form, then “Theodore Roosevelt” is its subject (and object): Roosevelt forgot himself into existence.

Moreover, Roosevelt understood this fact quite explicitly. The very first sentence of his autobiography alludes to what he has omitted in his construction of himself as a narrative: “Naturally,” he writes, “there are chapters of my autobiography which cannot now be written,” and he remains silent on what and why he has chosen to forget.<sup>29</sup> But this stand-alone paragraph-sentence is an apologia, not an apology, and however conventional and intuitive these omissions may have been (however “natural”), he elaborates on their utility in the very next sentence:

It seems to me that, for the nation as for the individual, what is most important is to insist on the vital need of combining certain sets of qualities, which separately are common enough,

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<sup>26</sup> Roosevelt (1894), 27.

<sup>27</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s and Sons, 1913), 36.

<sup>28</sup> Roosevelt (1913), 59.

<sup>29</sup> Roosevelt (1913), vii.

and, alas, useless enough.<sup>30</sup>

This ceases to seem like a non-sequitur if we regard it as a theory of composition: first of the nation, then of the individual (as its metonym), then of the “Theodore Roosevelt” which he has become, and then, finally, of the book he is writing to display himself as the model American, the boy who grew up to be American president. To explain why certain chapters of his autobiography cannot (“naturally”) be written about, after all, he jumps to the specific qualities which the nation requires, and which the individual must therefore cultivate; in the next line, for example, he declares that “[p]ractical efficiency is common, and lofty idealism not uncommon; it is the combination which is necessary, and the combination is rare.”<sup>31</sup> But the particular qualities he highlights are less important than the logic that weaves these sentences together. Because the *nation* requires these qualities, the individual must cultivate them, to the implicit exclusion of the qualities which the nation does *not* require, and which must be passed over in silence. At the same time, the logic of the transition from the first sentence to the second structures the autobiographical narrative itself: just as naturally as he must insist on combining qualities in the individual which are useless when dispersed among the population, he must also, naturally, exclude the “chapters of his life” which speak to the qualities have been suppressed in making it.

Though implicit, these analogies are not abstract. In essays like “True Americanism,” Roosevelt would repeatedly demonstrate his interest in combining “certain sets of qualities” in the nation at the level of the individual, always an insistent metonym for the nation. A good nation is composed of good men, but the scalability of that quality, as well as the analogy between individual and nation that it demands, turns out to describe the structural relationship *between* nation and individual: just as the world’s nations are an open series, autonomous entities collectively generalizable only as a category, so too are the individuals of a nation an open series, autonomous entities collectively generalizable only through the national category. Neither nation or individual, in other words, is divided: just as it would *not* be sufficient for the nation to combine all of these “desirable” qualities distributed amongst separate individuals (who would therefore not contain the entire combination in themselves), so too would it be a problem for the individual American to be more than one person (or divided by a hyphen). As he would put it, in the specific context of WWI and the issue of German-Americans—but rhetorically casting a much broader net:

There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism...a hyphenated American is not an American at all. This is just as true of the man who puts “native” before the hyphen as of the man who puts German or Irish or English or French before the hyphen. Americanism is a matter of the spirit and of the soul. Our allegiance must be purely to the United States. We must unsparingly condemn any man who holds any other allegiance.<sup>32</sup>

His vision of political community is therefore emphatically *not* an aggregation of disparate individuals, collectively combining separate characteristics that they do not combine as a group:

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<sup>30</sup> Roosevelt (1913), vii

<sup>31</sup> Roosevelt (1913),vii

<sup>32</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “Americanism” in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George Doran Co., 1916), 361.

“separately,” he insists, such qualities are “useless.” A “true American” is not large and does not contain multitudes; the work of Americanization must therefore occur at the level of the individual. And in sharp contrast with contemporaries like Jane Addams or W.E.B. Dubois—who imagined American community in terms of macro-structures that were *not* necessarily replicated at the micro-structure of the individual, and who therefore explicitly theorized a patriotic utility for diversity—Roosevelt’s description of how the *individual* was to be made is an essentially compositional process which would, of necessity, leave a great deal on the cutting room floor. Everything which the nation did not require was to be removed.

When Roosevelt wrote and rewrote himself as a “True American,” then, the *form* of his autobiographical writing not only reflects the imposed coherence of the political imaginary that motivates it, but quite explicitly alludes to the process of disciplinary repression by which it was to be produced. If his ideological fantasies define the kind of nation he desires, the process of repression by which it is to be brought into existence is not, itself, repressed: after all, the autobiography’s truth-claims about Roosevelt’s own life are only made *after* he discloses having removed chapters of his life from our view. We are being shown the finished product (and with the process of its production so directly implied as to almost cease to be mere implication).

In Roosevelt’s autobiography, therefore, the frisson of his subjectivity is emphatically *not* that of the bildungsroman, in which the experience of the past is viewed through the subjectivity formed *by* that experience in the present (and by which both are de-centered). Nor is it a narrative of socialization, in which the process of *bildung* reconciles the individual to his place in a society which is in any way external to him. Instead, Roosevelt not only tends towards but explicitly argues for a mode of self-writing in which that which does not fit and which is not suitable for preservation is to be openly removed and forgotten. He is an unapologetically revisionist autobiographer, in other words: while he begins with the source material of his own life as it was actually experienced, he writes himself by editing out that which is not suitable, thereby producing a perfect representation of the individual he has become, or claims to have become, and without any record of the internal conflict by which this has occurred. All of it has been, instead, quite “naturally” removed, in a choice of words that speaks to the heart of his creative fantasies: to write the self is to correct by deletion, but such deletions are as “natural” as the evolutionary process itself, the “natural selection” by which that which does not fit the idealization (towards which the species tends) is removed.

Roosevelt’s compositional process was not simply negative, however. When he gave his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1913, he described the *constructive* process that such omissions make possible. The great statesman and historian, he declares (hardly needing to remind the audience that he was both), would be a “man of imagination,” a composer who does *not* simply possess and accumulate “facts from the treasure-houses of the dead past,” but who would *re-create* them, actively, by “the power to marshal what is dead so that before our eyes it lives again.”<sup>33</sup> By means of narrative will and authorial vision, the historical archive of past and gone facts, fragments, and records would be re-articulated and made to speak again. “History,” therefore, was produced by the historian, in the same fashion as a statesman would make History in the present: narrative formed out of the narrative will that called it forth, a function of the “imagination” which, in turn, indexed the greatness of those who were great because they *mastered* the merely material record (rather than

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<sup>33</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “History as Literature” in *History as Literature and Other Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner’s and Sons, 1913), 10.

being mastered by it). Roosevelt is clear and direct on this point: what would make a historian and statesman great would not be representational accuracy but representational *agency*. The responsibility of great men was not to passively imbibe and translate, but to re-shape and transform both the nation in the present and its archive in the past. In this way, just as a great statesman embodied the best of the Demos but checked its excesses and failings through a strength of will—inspiring, rather than being inspired by popular masses—the Historian was to take from the heterogeneous superfluity of the archives the core narrative of human Progress, the immanently progressive movement by which a more homogeneous and coherent telos was made manifest. In short, he not only believed that the present and future were to be consciously molded out of the past (which was, in turn, re-formed in service of its telos), but his theory of composition made that process of selection “natural,” an index of a man’s greatness. “Great Men” not only “made history,” but they were to be known by the way they made (and re-made) their own, transforming what was into what should be.

In this sense, while Roosevelt’s autobiography was sufficiently “revisionary” as to be almost fictional, and far more a fantasy of what his life should have been than any objective record of what it was, Roosevelt’s theory of composition made that revisionary, subjective desire the very point of the endeavor, the mode of composition which was also being modeled. He did more than simply produce a very selectively edited version of his own life in his 1913 autobiography: he also produced a clear theoretical justification for why it would have been his responsibility, as president, historian, and as citizen, to transform himself in this way. Not unlike Ernest Renan’s argument for national formation through selective and collective amnesia—but with none of the attitude of critique through which a contemporary phrase like “the invention of tradition” is deployed—Roosevelt was a historian who believed that some form of structured and collectivized amnesia was necessary in imagining the national community into existence.<sup>34</sup>

He was also, however, an individual who would do so through the medium of his own life. After all, unlike his French contemporary or the historians he addressed, Roosevelt was a statesman and a world celebrity and he could not only perform the act of revisionary imagination that he theorized, through his own person, but he could call on a broad array of political and social resources in doing so. There was nothing abstract about his social theory, in this sense; he literally made history. In this sense, while historians have often followed H.G. Wells’ pronouncement that “[n]ever did a president before so reflect the quality of his time,” I would propose that Roosevelt was never a passive function of his age’s zeitgeist, but always the active composer of it that he knew himself to be.<sup>35</sup>

This aspect of his persona has been almost comprehensively lost. Richard Hofstadter’s scathing appraisal of Roosevelt as a demagogue with an “uncanny instinct for impalpable falsehoods,” may not have survived Hofstadter’s generation, but the broader framework through which that cohort of progressive historians framed the first Roosevelt presidency still informs his historiographical presence, effacing his formidable intellectual agency by presenting him, for good or ill, as merely an actor, though not in the appropriate sense of a dramatist who interpreted

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<sup>34</sup> Ernest Renan, “What Is a Nation?” translated and annotated by Martin Thom, in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>35</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Future in America: A Search after Realities* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1906), 250.

and transformed his own part.<sup>36</sup> And yet, Roosevelt was unquestionably one of the most engaged intellectual presidents this country has ever had. He was such a prolific author, in fact, that it would almost be more accurate to describe him as a writer who significantly dabbled in politics than the reverse: not only was he a writer *before* he was a president, but it was *as* a writer that his presidential run became possible in the first place; only through the authorial persona that he created in his early “Western” memoirs—*Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, *The Wilderness Hunter*, and *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*—that he became the most popular and celebrated public figure of his day. It would be no exaggeration to say that his national political career was an effective function and outgrowth of that autobiographical self-fashioning: only through his account of his time in the Dakota territory was he able to re-position himself as a *national* political figure in the first place, to transform himself from a rich, young lawyer with deeply Dutch New York roots into an every-American, into “Roosevelt the Citizen,” as Jacob Riis would name him. It was only by transforming (and effacing) the parochial state-level politician—whose seat in the Assembly had been an almost aristocratic birthright, but from which no advance to the *national* was particularly likely—that he re-wrote himself as the representative frontiersman, and caused his experience to define the identity of the nation itself. Roosevelt’s meteoric rise was a function of this transformation. To fail to address this act of self-creation—and the manner in which it was *written*—would be to miss the most important aspect of him.

It is, however, completely intuitive that Roosevelt’s own agency in self-creation has been forgotten, since even his direct allusions to the “chapters of my autobiography which cannot now be written” are still, by the logic of the figure, only allusions. The paramount function of such a gesture is to make the imposed artifice of self-making scan as *natural*. And one of Roosevelt’s great political assets was his ability to apparently do “unconsciously” precisely the thing that the most Machiavellian politician would have done intentionally; the fact that his contemporaries so often underestimated his cunning and political acumen was an important part of what made him so successful as a politician. His ability to “capture” his own biographers and admiring historians stems from this same tendency, a historiographic tradition which tends not only to take him at his word, but to reproduce his own production of himself in all its contrived simplicity and self-evidence. While appearing simple is a complicated thing and Roosevelt worked hard to produce himself as acting through unpremeditated spontaneity, his biographers have collectively ratified this effort by overlooking the traces of its production. In this sense, while it might be important to establish that we remember him as having *lived* the strenuous life only because he wrote books like *The Strenuous Life*—or as “the Rough Rider” because he wrote *The Rough Riders*—he also wrote about his life so thoroughly and so well that he all but rendered the “reality” superfluous. The fact that he never actually charged on horseback up San Juan Hill, I would argue, is precisely as irrelevant as the fact that he more or less *did* live a strenuous life of action. History is less interesting than historical memory.

I make this point for two reasons. On the one hand, the *subject* of Roosevelt’s revisionist composition is worth exploring in its particularity, because the fantasy subjectivity that he articulated and popularized, over the course of a lifetime of self-writing and re-writing, continues to be an influential fantasy of identity, perhaps nowhere more than in safari visions of East Africa. Just as “Western” fantasies teach Americans how to desire that identity, the safari is a

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 297.

fantasy teaching “white people” how to desire something very similar, to recreate the American frontier in Africa. By his own standards, then, Roosevelt was a great “literary historian,” because he both re-imagined a mode of subjectively experiencing the world and, by calling it “American,” succeeding in imposing that meaning on the Americans who chose to follow his example, thereby forming a public (in the sense that Michael Warner considers a public to be a textually mediated formation of subjective identity).<sup>37</sup> Whether he did it or the social forces that gave him meaning allowed him to do so is irrelevant; to understand the process of this cultural narrative’s formation, we have to approach it in its specificity, trace the particularities of its continuity by tracing the particularities of that original formation. One thread of my argument will therefore be to connect the particular way that Roosevelt learned how to be “American”—in North Dakota, in 1885—to the manner in which he taught generations after him to follow that example, in East Africa, in 1910. I want to establish this connection in narrative form, then, to demonstrate how the American frontier narrative becomes the African safari, as a way of unearthing the commonly held political desire which such fantasies index, the desire which could be broadly understood as a settler colonial *gestalt*. To understand the *meaning* of the post presidential trip to Africa that he took with his son in 1910, I argue, we have to start with the erasure of his wife, mother and daughter in 1884 that made his rise to the presidency possible in the first place. And if he replaced “Alice” with a “first class trotter” in his autobiography, he replaces the absent feminine principle, in Africa, with the animals he kills.

At the same time, it is at least as important to address how this particularity is made to seem natural, objective, and normative. The friction between what we can call *objectively* true and what Roosevelt defined as his own *subjective* truth becomes the means of prying open the Rooseveltian *gestalt*: as a way of de-naturalizing what Roosevelt took to be natural and manifest commonsense truth—of showing what he took to be and showed to be true as, instead, meaningful only *subjectively*—I will venture to treat the work of contemporary historians on the western American and the East African frontiers as my baseline for the variety of what *can be considered* objectively true. I do this not because they exhaust reality of its meaning or reduce reality to its essential core of meaning, as Roosevelt himself might have put it, but because they do the reverse, restoring the multitudinous quality of a reality for which singular narratives are always reductive simplifications. In this way, opening up space between what Roosevelt *could* have seen and what he reported himself to have seen—that is, between the multitude of Roosevelts that exist in conceptual possibility and the singular Roosevelt which he gave us, and which his biographies continue to give us—makes it possible to address the manner in which the primary Roosevelt narrative constrains both the possible meanings of “American” and of whiteness in Africa. Roosevelt’s omissions do not so much omit what was objectively true, in other words—and that category is problematic in this context—but decline to allow the possibility of what *could* be true, a simplification that can only be recognized through the lens of that which has been culled from the record.

## **II. Biography and Public Writing**

Rather than addressing myself to the “real” Roosevelt, the industry of Roosevelt biography is the archive through which we approach the reality which Roosevelt narrated into existence. He is a popular subject of biography, perhaps the most compelling presidential subject in American history. But his biographical literature has also had a renaissance in the last forty years: Candice

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).

Millard's *The River of Doubt* (2005), Douglas Brinkley's *The Wilderness Warrior* (2009), the final volume of Edmund Morris' Pulitzer prize winning trilogy, *Colonel Roosevelt* (2010), Roger L. Di Silvestro's *Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands: A Young Politician's Quest for Recovery in the American West* (2012), and Doris Kearns Goodwin *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism* (2013) are only the most recent additions to a hagiographic tradition that began its renaissance with David McCullough's *Mornings on Horseback* (1979) and Morris' Pulitzer prize winning *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (1981).

There are important differences between these texts, of course, but I would suggest that they have in common the effort to test "Roosevelt" as the ideal American, the exemplar of a "True Americanism" which admits no hyphen. In this sense, while they do not always find the historical Roosevelt to have lived up to his own example, even finding him wanting only more firmly establishes that standard of Americanism as "true," the endpoint for his process of self-revision. As Roosevelt has been remembered and narrated, then, he both stands in for and performs the production of True Americanism: in him, the common was united with the aristocratic, the violent warrior with the nurturing father, the frontier with the city, the conservationist with the industrial modernist, the trust-buster with the capitalist, the jingoistic imperialist with the Nobel peace laureate, the progressive with the conservative, and the pluribus with the unum.

As I began by noting, however, Roosevelt's autobiographical revision began three decades before he wrote his official autobiography, when the death of the two most important women in his life became the occasion for his transformation into the Theodore Roosevelt we have since come to remember. But if Huckleberry Finn's choice to light out to the territories is the necessary and overdetermined ending of the novel out of which sprang all of American literature—as so determinedly Rooseveltian a writer as Ernest Hemingway would proclaim, in East Africa—then Roosevelt's life was one of the great real-life models of that moment, having himself lit out for the territories to escape being civilized, to escape from sentiment, and to escape from the feminine principle.<sup>38</sup>

This becomes clearer if we start with his attack on Henry James (or the James-type) in "True Americanism," an attack whose structure and rhetoric echoes that flight to the frontier. In that essay, "True Americanism" is exclusively defined by reference to the un-Americanisms that threaten it: provincialism, Europeanism, cynicism, pacifism, and others. But while his descriptions of these negative Americanisms—are elaborate diatribes, the energy and rhetorical emphasis he invests there stands in sharp contrast with his lack of interest in describing what the true American is supposed to look like. Henry James is clearly recognizable, in other words, while Roosevelt himself—the truest American of all—is defined only by the extent to which he does not resemble James. If "True Americanism" has an identifiable shape, in other words, it is only the affective response of *disavowing* the un-American. Sentences like "[t]he stoutest and truest Americans are the very men who have the least sympathy with the people who invoke the spirit of Americanism to aid what is vicious in our government" or "we must never let our contempt for these men blind us to the nobility of the idea which they strive to degrade" are not only typical, they are tediously formulaic.<sup>39</sup> Over and over again, the true American is knowable

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<sup>38</sup> See Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," *American Quarterly* 33 (Summer 1981).

<sup>39</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "True Americanism," in *American Ideals and Other Essays, Social and*

by the particular response that is required to those who threaten that true Americanism, the lack of sympathy and presence of contempt that marks him. Beyond the necessity of this disavowal, the essay provides no particular criterion for Americans, to such an extent that “particularity” itself comes to be a property of un-Americanism. To be anything in particular, it seems, is to be un-American. To be American, by contrast, is to be defined by that contrast with particularity itself.

In part, this approach was a necessary function of the problem faced by anyone who would set out to define the “American” character in the 1890’s: in the absence of any particular commonality (or of a privileged region which could be made to serve as synecdoche for the nation as a whole), the only thing that could be said to truly unite all nominal Americans was the fact of being nominally American. But since it was a category without content, categories that *did* have particular and specific content—alternate ways of naming identity—came to stand for the problem to be defused. In this sense, Roosevelt’s tautological approach was typical of his time and his project.

In another sense, however, Roosevelt’s essay was his own very particular gesture of disavowal. For while writing it demonstrated his own affective response to the un-American—his own contempt and lack of sympathy—it allowed him to put forward his own claim to “True Americanism” only by embodying that un-Americanism in the specific person of Henry James, to specifically figure (and specifically disavow) a particular set of characteristics he found particularly troubling. In this sense, while his performance of “True Americanism” remains the kind of form without content that it had to be, the trace still remains of the particular content that had been evacuated from it: what Martha Banta has called the “scandal of failed masculinity” which characterized his own early life, now safely displaced on to the figure of Henry James.<sup>40</sup> Roosevelt inoculates himself from his own, earlier, scandal of failed masculinity by being scandalized by James. By placing the burden of scandal onto the James figure, Roosevelt defines in reverse the American that James is not. Or, rather, by identifying as the not-James, a “True Americanism” comes into existence by the disavowal and contrast.

On the one hand, then, Roosevelt uses the figure of the “Henry James” type to stage a narrative of *degeneration*, the American who has fled his native soil because of a “delicate effeminate sensitiveness,” and who, as a result, “only ceases being an American, and becomes nothing.” In this account, “civilization” is a purely negative and enervating force, posing the threat to masculine potency which will haunt much of Roosevelt’s writing. As he put it in 1913, for example, “[o]ne of the prime dangers of civilization has always been its tendency to cause the loss of virile fighting virtues, of the fighting edge...[w]hen men get too comfortable and lead too luxurious lives, there is always danger that softness eats like an acid into the manliness of fibre.”<sup>41</sup> If this is not an attack on Henry James directly, it might as well have been, for it

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*Political*, Part I (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 32-3.

<sup>40</sup> Martha Banta’s “Men, Women, and the American Way,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, ed. Jonathan Freedman (Cambridge, 1998), 21–39. Roosevelt’s ire was primarily aimed at the James “type”; the *New York Times* reported Roosevelt as saying that James “bore the same relation to other literary men that a poodle did to other dogs. The poodle had his hair combed and was somewhat ornamental, but never useful,” but Roosevelt never names James in particular under his own byline. (*New York Times*, October 16, 1884).

<sup>41</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “The World Movement,” in his *Presidential Addresses and State Papers, European Addresses*, December 8, 1908, to June 7, 1910 (New York 1910), 2224.

describes many aspects of public persona, the unmarried and hyper-civilized Europhile who failed to fight in the civil war. But the important point is that the “True American” emerges as this structure of degeneration’s negation: by naming and disavowing the *degenerative* force, the American which it threatens almost emerges as the thing which is being degenerated without the need ever to describe it specifically.

On the other hand, alongside this narrative of civilization’s negative effect, Roosevelt also tells a positive story of frontier *bildung*: the “winds that harden stouter souls” becomes a metonym for the formative frontier experience that Roosevelt not only argues will prepare Americans “to play a man’s part among men,” but which give American masculinity an affective content: pain and struggle. Masculinity is therefore also a thing which has to be made. If the over-civilization of the East has the power to degenerate men into women, the issue might simply be avoidance: an American man must turn away from the luxurious blandishments of the East and remain true to the natural hardiness of his nativity. But what if the frontier was less of a birthright than a story? After all, what did Tocquevillian generalizations about the American’s frontier character have to do with a boy who grew up in the luxurious high society of New York City, or who spent over two years of his childhood on a European “Grand Tour”?

For such a boy, the frontier experience was not a natural inheritance but something which had to be painstakingly acquired, narrated, and imagined. Theodore Roosevelt was such a boy; as Hermann Hagedorn’s 1919 *A Boys Life of Theodore Roosevelt* puts it, for example, Roosevelt’s life is “the story of a small boy who read about great men and decided he wanted to be like them.”<sup>42</sup> Or as Eugene Thwing describes it—in his thoroughly “authorized” version of Roosevelt’s life—Roosevelt’s turning point occurred when the young boy recognized himself in the “poor sprig of a grand line” of Robert Browning’s “The Flight of the Duchess,” a young duke who, as Thwing writes:

admired his ancestors and wanted to *appear* to be like them without making any effort actually to *be* like them. Those lines pulled Theodore Roosevelt up sharp, like a lasso. He felt that the resemblance between that young duke and himself was close enough to be disquieting. He felt discovered; he felt ashamed...one day he suddenly discovered that a new resolve had taken shape in him. There was no harm in dreaming, but henceforth he would not be satisfied unless, even while he dreamed, he labored to translate the dream into action.<sup>43</sup>

As Roosevelt put it, elsewhere, “A man with a horse and a gun is a picture or idea that has always appealed to me. [Novelist] Mayne Reid’s heroes and the life out West also always appealed to me.”<sup>44</sup> Acquired from books, there was nothing “natural” about Roosevelt’s version of masculinity, in other words, or at least nothing given or inevitable about it. Instead, Roosevelt worked to naturalize something which was sharply unnatural: in the urbanized context of “gilded age” America, the frontier masculinity that a Henry James so scandalously lacked (and which Frederick Jackson Turner theorized as being the core attribute of the American character) was something which had to be sought *outside* the normal bounds of everyday life, a retreat into the

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<sup>42</sup> Hermann Hagedorn, *The Boys' Life of Theodore Roosevelt* (Harper and Bros., 1922), 1.

<sup>43</sup> Eugene Thwing, *The Life and Meaning of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Current Literature Publishing Co, 1919), 14.

<sup>44</sup> Julian Ralph, “Theodore Roosevelt: A Character Sketch,” in *The Review of Reviews* 12 (August 1895): 163.

fantasy world of a novelist like Mayne Reid. The work of “normalizing” that which was abnormal—pathologizing the life in which he had been raised and had in common with Henry James—was not only a disavowal but the public narration of that disavowal (and self-denial) was the very central act of American self-making.

This disavowal, however, was not a private affair; it was quite strikingly public. His cowboy persona was an artifice which his audience was *not* meant to see through, of course; Roosevelt would only live in the Dakota territory for parts of a single year, and only occasionally and for brief visits thereafter, but he would consistently exaggerate that length of time for the rest of his life, both explicitly and by implication. Indeed, he would begin composing this persona in his study in New York, where he wrote his first Western memoir, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, only upon his return to the East in January of 1885, and the carefully staged publicity portrait he commissioned for its cover—costuming himself in a spectacular buckskin suit, posed in front of an indoor backdrop dressed to look “Western,” and photographed by a New York photographer—is a nice emblem for the artifice of the entire book’s production. As Edmund Morris notes, for example, his “minute description of the Elkhorn ranch interior, with its flickering firelight, antler-hung walls, and well stocked-shelves, was written at a time when Sewall and Dow had not yet put on the roof.”<sup>45</sup> Details like these allow us to see past the fiction which was meant to be true.

At the same time, the most obvious thing about his retreat from the East is so obvious it could go unsaid: he was in a kind of public grieving that was all the more meaningful and spectacular for being narrated through his own absence and lack of narrative. His contemporaries, after all, understood what was at stake, uniformly describing his reaction to the loss as a retreat into solitude and silent suffering. As his close friend Isaac Hunt recalled, “you could not talk to him about it...He did not want anybody to sympathize with him”; Roosevelt “hiked away to the wilderness to get away from the world...went out there a broken-hearted man.”<sup>46</sup>

This reading of the event is, uniformly, how his biographers describe what Roosevelt failed to describe in his own self-account, a fact which they note both to reinforce the point—so grief-stricken was Roosevelt that he could never again speak the name of his first wife, etc—and to emphasize the value being added by their own accounts. What Roosevelt would *not* say in his autobiography—his moment of grief—was being said by his (after-the-fact and objective) biographers. They explore that which he repressed, rendered unconscious. However, these kinds of biographical master-narratives are completely overdetermined by Roosevelt’s own (necessarily unseen) authorial hand. The first editor of Roosevelt’s diaries was Theodore Roosevelt himself, who compulsively crafted even his own “private” writing towards the posterity he anticipated reading them, and he eventually destroyed or suppressed so much of his earliest journal writing and correspondence that what is left behind should be regarded only as a fictitious whole, a picture so comprehensively re-shaped and edited that its resemblance to the real thing is the true conceit. Roosevelt was the primary author of his story, always. If we proceed from that position, then, absences are *visible* when they represent a dramatic divergence from the norm. Roosevelt’s was visible in exactly this way: his departure from the West was

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<sup>45</sup> Morris (1979), 824.

<sup>46</sup> David McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback: The Story of an Extraordinary Family, a Vanished Way of Life, and the Unique Child Who Became Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 294.

surely primarily motivated by personal grief, but it instantly became narrated as an intensely public event. If his response to private tragedy was *apparently* to retreat from the public eye, we should focus on the manner in which that retreat into privacy was, itself, a public performance. Even Roosevelt's "private" life was utterly public, in a way that make those categories misleading: while his scrupulous control of his public persona is part of the story, it is no less true that who he was in private was just as insistently a function of who he was *supposed* to be in public, and the public performance of privacy was an important way—for a Victorian like him—to display propriety in personal conduct.

It is no coincidence, for example, that Isaac Hunt's recollection of Roosevelt's silence and retreat to the wilderness was related at a public dinner, a kind of public testament to Roosevelt's proper observance of his own (and his wife's) privacy. By the same token, when the New York State Assembly formally recognized and publicly sympathized with Roosevelt's loss and grief, it did so by explicitly recognizing the importance of *not* talking about what had occurred: after a resolution "[t]hat while no words nor resolutions can assuage the grief or allay the anguish which, at a moment's warning, has entered his soul," the assembly voted to express "our sincere sympathy and our sorrowing condolence" by *adjourning* for the day. It was, in other words, a public performance by way of ending the public performance of legislation, the use of silence as part of an understood public vocabulary of privacy.<sup>47</sup>

This kind of writing has been a difficult for biographers to register, and for quite intuitive reasons. As a genre, the biography privileges the private, presuming and establishing the private personality by the very effort to unearth and publish it, by the voyeuristic access to its subject which a biography offers. This is particularly clear if we compare Roosevelt's own autobiography—or even an "official" campaign biography like Jacob Riis' 1904 *Roosevelt the Citizen*—to the virtual industry of Roosevelt biographies that followed his death. Modern biographies lack the direct access that an autobiography (or official biography) has to its subject, but their license to exist is their promise to provide insight into the subject's psychology which, as such, Roosevelt himself could never officially express, either because of subjective limitations or public decorum. They attempt to write the "chapters of [his] autobiography which cannot now be written," in other words, peering into corners that he expresses as "naturally" off-limits. This means, however, that when these biographies discuss elements of Roosevelt's life which neither he nor Riis would speak about—like the death of his first wife—these events are framed by a very different narrative logic than the official biographer would employ: instead of recording Roosevelt's public actions as an example for his public to emulate—or as a representative American who is therefore suitable to represent America in government—the biographies written *after* the end of his public life tell the inimitable story of a private individual, an internal and psychological drama of his personal development. Instead of *Roosevelt the Citizen*, therefore, we get books like William Roscoe Thayer's *Theodore Roosevelt: An Intimate Biography*.<sup>48</sup>

The importance of this distinction is that while an autobiography or an official campaign biography will be woven through with omissions—as any narrative must be—using these omissions to emphasize a (later) biographer's particular epistemological access tells a *differently* partial story, one constructed according to a differently particular logic of exclusion. If we name

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<sup>47</sup> *The Journal of the Assembly of the State of New York, at their One Hundred and Seventh Session*, Volume 1 (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and co., 1884), 264.

<sup>48</sup> William Roscoe Thayer, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Intimate Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919).

what was private and internal as *true*, privileging that which was excluded from the public gaze and marking the public sphere as the artificial, we implicitly narrativize the personality by referring to the psychoanalytic story of the private struggle to overcome public constraints, the *true* interior boxed in by public prohibitions. But if there's a certain validity to this version of the story, it gets staged only by excluding what Roosevelt's actions and life meant in the public sphere, the manner in which his willed repression was the exemplary act. Presuming this economy of private and public, in other words, creates a blind spot in the biographer's analysis: the extent to which Roosevelt himself was working to establish, shape, and define the meaning of that which he chose not to speak about. And whether we decide that Roosevelt was the un-self-conscious man of principles and belief that he worked so hard to present himself as, or the scheming and Machiavellian politician his enemies claimed him to be, to even ask that question is to lose critical purchase on the narrative that defines the opposition in the first place, the characteristically (if not exclusively) late Victorian conceit that the inner and domestic individual produces the outer and public citizen, and that the place to begin in creating the republic is in producing and regulating republican subjects and subjectivities.

It is worth noting, therefore, that Roosevelt never seemed to chafe very much against the constraints of what could and couldn't be said. He did write to his wife's sister that "It is very difficult to strike just the happy medium between being too reticent and not reticent enough," as he began composing his autobiography, and the first lines do refer to the chapters that "naturally" cannot be now written. Yet is this a complaint? His open admission that some things are to be silently excluded seems to indicate acceptance, as does the word "naturally." Meanwhile Roosevelt's moralistic temperament was always, in keeping with his age's public face, emphatically convinced of the virtue of restraint and self-control.<sup>49</sup>

By contrast, Edmund Morris' biographical account of Roosevelt's autobiographical process in *Colonel Roosevelt* is representative of voyeuristic biography's natural antipathy to self-restrained autobiography. Morris not only presumes that Roosevelt's omissions require explanation but he places them in sharp contrast to the moments of what he characterizes as more real, the passages "here and there" where Roosevelt sets down "stretches of beguiling autobiography." Yet Morris begs some important questions when he characterizes the things Roosevelt does not say, respectively, as—in his words—regrettably evasive, shy, terse, dismissive, self-serving, self-aware politicking, a moral censor, and an optimistic disinclination to record things as they *really* were.<sup>50</sup> Roosevelt's omissions are, if not betrayals, at least disappointing to Morris. In describing how the autobiography was produced, Morris not only describes a struggle between Roosevelt and his publisher but strongly implies it to be regrettable that Roosevelt wins: his publisher had initially ("shrewdly") convinced Roosevelt to relax in front of his fire with a friendly interlocutor, where he could not only talk "with freshness and freedom" but also be recorded by a secretary who, because he could not be seen, would not

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<sup>49</sup> As Roosevelt put it in a speech entitled "Duty and Self-Control": "We teach a boy that government means to control himself, and he is able to escape the need of parental control just so far as he develops that power of self-control. There are some boys you can trust, and who are able to shift for themselves just because they are able to control themselves. So it is with our citizenship." Theodore Roosevelt, "Duty and Self-Control," University of Wisconsin at Madison, April 15, 1911.

<sup>50</sup> Morris (2012), 266-7.

inhibit the “effortless sequitur and wit” of Roosevelt the “natural raconteur.”<sup>51</sup> While this scene of analysis, Morris writes, “promised to be the most entertaining American memoir since Benjamin Franklin’s,” Roosevelt’s “rediscovery of his narrative voice” would be interrupted by his “fatal decision” to halt the proceedings, take control of the book himself, and write or dictate the rest of it directly.<sup>52</sup> Morris judges the final product to be flawed both by this self-consciousness and the restraint it imposes, a restraint which is best seen in the inhibitions which Morris blames on “that traditional mute on the autobiographical trumpet, the over-protective wife.”<sup>53</sup> That Morris cites no evidence for the assertion that Roosevelt’s “headachy and frail” wife inhibited him from writing the kind of autobiography that his biographer would have preferred him to write doesn’t necessarily mean this isn’t what happened. Perhaps it was. But the fact that no evidence is required to make the assertion tells us something more important about the kind of story that we accept without the burden of proof, even as we categorically overlook and downplay Roosevelt’s own account of his autobiography’s production.

Meanwhile, the fact that Roosevelt both chose what to omit and had complete control over the process disappears; to give credence to Roosevelt’s own reading of how “I have had to refuse to write a whole raft of interesting and sensational things that [his editors] would have liked me to put in,” would give us an image of Roosevelt asserting his own editorial brake on an autobiographical trumpet being played by his publishers, a picture which does not easily square with Morris’ idea that the refusal was external to Roosevelt (and embodied in the “traditional” restraint on manly men like Roosevelt, the woman).<sup>54</sup> While Morris admits that Roosevelt was “relieved to be in control of his own story,” he clearly implies the opposite, that the most real and truthful part of Roosevelt’s autobiography is the first chapter, which was first written in Frank Harper’s shorthand, then edited and reconstituted by Lawrence Abbot at the offices of *The Outlook* magazine, and only *then* given to Roosevelt for “approval.” The fact that Roosevelt felt differently about it goes unremarked, or at least unheeded; instead, the version of the autobiography which Roosevelt produced in his own hand—in his own study, at his own pace, and according to his own editorial preferences—is judged to have failed to live up to the “promise” of the first chapter, a betrayal of Roosevelt’s “re-discovery of his narrative voice.”

Morris’ interpretation is, however, as much a begged question as the often unsupported presumption that a *true* account of the psyche is the one produced under expert psychoanalysis, whose rituals effectively serve to liberate the subject’s self-knowledge from the constraints and inhibitions of the subject’s own self-analysis and inhibitions, placing the power to narrate in the hands of the analyst. The way a subject presents himself or herself publicly, then, is trumped by the private life which the analyst both uncovers and privileges. Such unspoken privileging of the biographically defined “interior” self over the autobiographed “public” figure allows us to conclude that while the *real* Roosevelt was impeded by the editorial efforts of Theodore Roosevelt himself (and his inhibiting wife), the *true* narrative of his life emerges only with the expert and external assistance of men like Frank Harper, Lawrence Abbot, and (of course) Edmund Morris.

There is, in fact, a telling parallel between the Roosevelt biography which his publishers

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<sup>51</sup> Morris (2012), 258

<sup>52</sup> Morris (2012), 259

<sup>53</sup> Morris (2012), 259

<sup>54</sup> Morris (2012), 260

sought to produce (through manly conversation among men at a fireside, and from which Roosevelt's wife and her "headachy and frail" inhibitions had to be excluded) and the central crux of the story which biographies like Morris' inevitably narrate, but which—and here is the point—his own autobiography does not. In both, the moment when Roosevelt's public career is to have begun, when Theodore Roosevelt became the person he *really* was—after the women in his life were all dead and he had lit out for the frontier—the "real" Roosevelt gets staged not only as the product of absent females but through their removal. Their removal as civilizing influence on his *actual* life—since the cowboy can be neither son nor family man—is as important as the removal of the bourgeois restraint which a "frail and headachy" wife would impose on his ability to spin yarns for his friends.

I want to re-emphasize, therefore, that Roosevelt's autobiography omits the Valentine's Day tragedy precisely *because* Roosevelt himself took control of his story, and made that absence a meaningfully written event. It was one of the "whole raft of interesting and sensational things" that Morris would have liked Roosevelt to include (in fact, the one piece of autobiographical writing which Morris singles out for approval turns out to be an "elegiac" chapter about Roosevelt's years in North Dakota, a period in which the loss that Roosevelt was *actually* mourning was that of his wife). But while Morris gives Roosevelt's flight to the frontier tremendous narrative prominence, I make his autobiographical omission, as such, the focus: not on the absent story that Roosevelt didn't write, but to bring into focus the story that its omission allowed and enabled him to write, instead, about the disciplinary process of omission itself. His positive disinclination to speak about such things, after all, was a function of the things about which he *did* want to write, but which Morris' focus on the things he *didn't* disables us from seeing.

For example, in the chapter which describes the period of his life in which he was first married and first entered politics, he doesn't mention his own marriage, but he does mention *marriage*, itself, as a public and civic issue. After saying nothing about his *own* marriage, Roosevelt nevertheless exhorts his readers that "the greatest privilege and greatest duty for any man is to be happily married," going on to argue that "no other form of success or service, for either man or woman, can be wisely accepted as a substitute alternative."<sup>55</sup> This omission may seem strange, then, something which must be explained (as Morris does, for example, by blaming Roosevelt's second wife). It may seem even more perverse that the name of Roosevelt's first wife and first daughter (Alice), appears only once in the entire book, when Roosevelt describes his political patron's "first-class racing trotter." But I want to suggest that Roosevelt repressed the name of his greatest private tragedy—by displacing it onto the origin of his public career—for something more complex than psychic comfort: transforming private and personal experiences into expressions and narratives about social life was a political imperative that drove Roosevelt for his entire life; publicity, it would be fair to say, was the force that gave him meaning.

Seen this way, I would suggest, the fact that his private life has quite literally disappeared into a description of the public's duty to procreate—one of Roosevelt's favorite rhetorical themes for his entire career—should not therefore be seen as an omission, but as just one example of Roosevelt's broader pattern, in which he integrated his private existence into public narratives. If Roosevelt lived up to the cliché of the Victorian who deemed sexual lust to be unspeakable and scrupulously abstained from speaking about personal desire in pretty much

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<sup>55</sup> Roosevelt (1913), 36.

every forum, he also lived up to Foucault's description of the Victorian world's intense interest in making an officially unspeakable personal sexuality a locus of social politics.<sup>56</sup> Roosevelt didn't talk about sexual pleasure or private desire because he talked constantly and obsessively about the broad historical, social, and political imperative to render sex *procreative*, to preserve the race (however he variously understood that term to signify) by the useful labor of marrying and having children. In talking about sex and reproduction in public terms—respectful silence followed by amnesia on the death of his wife in childbirth, or the argument that more white babies were needed to preserve the race—he was also talking about the need to render private desires publicly respectable.

To pick another example, in describing Roosevelt's speech on the occasion of his son's death in WWI—his “generalized eulogy for all the Quentins fallen and still falling in Europe”—Edmund Morris caustically describes Roosevelt as “just another bereaved father unable to say what he felt,” and prefers the “[m]uch more expressive” moment of *private* grief in which Roosevelt was voyeuristically spied on while he wept in a stable (by a source which is second-hand even to Morris).<sup>57</sup> Morris goes on to coldly pronounce that the “hackneyed images” in his speech “did not work,” that the speech “sank to a level of bathos more suited to the death of Little Nell,” and that it “degenerated into an embarrassing argument that the bed and battleground were equal fields of honor [and that p]rowess on each was necessary to militate against race suicide.”<sup>58</sup> Yet, again, there is nothing more characteristic of Roosevelt's personality than the impulse to turn a private tragedy into an example of public morality; the fact that he turned his son's combat death into an occasion for exhorting Americans to procreate and avoid race suicide was the most predictable and personally consistent thing he could have done. To expect him to be more “expressive” and to publicly mourn for his loss would be to expect Roosevelt to have been a different person than he was (and to reject the force of public self-making that defined him). If this is embarrassing to Morris, it is because we are now (ironically) so thoroughly comfortable with “private” expressions of emotion as to be uncomfortable with the very way Roosevelt was *most* comfortable rendering his grief: through broad generalizations and abstractions.

In this sense, when he builds walls around his own private life—when he leaves his first marriage completely out of his autobiography, for example—he is doing so as a *public* act of omission, the same way building a fence around a domestic space produces a publicly legible space of privacy. Roosevelt's decision not to mention what his biographers uniformly take to be the most important event of his young life, therefore, is not an absence of self-knowledge, or any kind of simplistic disavowal; silence on such matters was both a socially appropriate way of expressing grief and, as such, was a public performance in its own right. In this sense, Roosevelt's self-knowledge is not so much unconsciously repressed as it is openly and formally and appropriately repressed. When the first line of his autobiography references how *natural* it is that “there are chapters of my autobiography which cannot now be written,” we should be reminded of Victorian customs which policed how one could talk and feel about dead wives and grief, the genteel rules of appropriateness which Roosevelt sought not merely to follow but to model.

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<sup>56</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1, An Introduction*, 1976, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1978).

<sup>57</sup> Morris (2010), 537.

<sup>58</sup> Morris (2010), 538

### III. White Man's Country

As I have suggested, Roosevelt's journey to Africa was not a minor episode in his life; it was a spectacular event, a crowning triumph; on his return to the United States, he would be greeted by cheering crowds, a popular president made even more popular by foreign adventures and a global celebrity at the very apex of his fame. The book he wrote about his experiences, 1910's *African Game Trails*, would be a bestseller and it would also popularize a kind of African experience that had previously had little precedent in English writing, loosely indexed by the terms "safari" but more broadly including what I have elsewhere called "Brightest Africa." In this way, Roosevelt not only made Africa bright, but he did so by implanting a colonial imaginary—whose origins had been the American settlement of its Western frontier—onto the palimpsest which had been made of East Africa. Whether he knew it or not, he was following in Henry Morton Stanley's footsteps in doing so; like Stanley, he is repeatedly surprised to find that Africa is not a dark continent or a *Heart of Darkness*, and as Stanley did, he argues that the white race can find a new frontier in the fecund and fertile spaces of East Africa.

Roosevelt's Africa, however, is not the subject of imperial designs, not a dark continent to be conquered or exploited. Instead, it is a site for pleasure and domesticity, the building of white households for white families. Before Roosevelt, after all, the (white) world's sense of "Africa" had been many things, but all were rather epic in scale: an imaginative backdrop for British crusades against Arab slavery and pagan ignorance (in the work of Livingstone and other missionary-imperialists), modernist allegories for the futility of man's ambition (Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*), romantic psycho-sexual treasure hunts (H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mine* or *She*), and a site for the grand heroic genre of African geographical writing (from Richard Burton to Henry Morton Stanley). What it had virtually never been, however, was the setting for a pleasure journey, nor a site for white reproductive futurity. Africa was not a place, in short, where you went to stay.

After Roosevelt, the safari would perform the kind of international whiteness to which the phrase "white man's country" gave a name, the frontier mythology by which a violent masculine pleasure (directed towards a range of African objects) became the means of producing white domestic futurity, both the social reproduction of white society, as it was understood, and the literal reproduction of white babies. And just as Roosevelt made himself on the American frontier, by erasing all that did not fit, I will argue that the big game safari structures a mode of self-making on the African landscape by which all that is not properly white would be removed.

Stanley pre-figures Roosevelt, in a certain sense, but Roosevelt would be the fulcrum for this change in popular media, both its primary author and the figure on whose life the change would be inscribed. Before Roosevelt, Africa was, if it was anything, the white man's *grave*. Where there were exceptions to this rule, they tended to prove it, to clarify the terms through which Africa was *not* the destination for a pleasure journey. When Mary Kingsley introduces her 1898 *Travels in West Africa*, for example—a text which describes her travels through Africa with a great deal of zest, and no clear or concrete goal—her introduction profusely apologizes, as it must, for her "heinous literary crime[s]," chief among which is the enjoyment she takes in her journey, and her comfort in the country. As she writes:

[Y]ou must make allowances for my love of this sort of country, with its great forests and rivers and its animistic-minded inhabitants, and for my ability to be more comfortable there than in England. Your superior culture-instincts may militate against your enjoying West

Africa, but if you go there you will find things as I have said.<sup>59</sup>

For Kingsley, taking pleasure in Africa is a failing, to be apologized for and defended against—and she remarks on how her editor has struggled in vain to “lasso” her prose to the things to which it is supposed to be attending—and she flags this pleasure as flowing from a character defect that her editor strives to corral and correct. Especially when she assures her readers that their “superior culture-instincts” will “militate” against their ability to take pleasure in the place, this is a performance of gender; since her presence as a female writer is at least as pronounced as the masculinity of her editors, readers, and models, her word choice is just as revealing: a masculine and militant culture-superiority is opposed to a feminized pleasure and comfort. The apology is, of course, not exactly sincere. But as with most gestures of subordination, the performance of hierarchy is more important than its actual substance. Kingsley did a very queer thing when she took a trip through West Africa and enjoyed it; Africa was not a place where women went, and not a place one enjoyed; her “love of this sort of country” was a strange sort of love. Her careful apology and explanation are therefore overdetermined by, and illuminate, the normative forms of social expectation which a white European brought with him to “Africa.” In this way, she frames and describes the normativity which formed the “normal” white subjectivity in Africa.

When Kingsley observed, for example, that “I have seen at close quarters specimens of the most important big game of Central Africa, and with the exception of snakes, I have run away from all of them,” her gender was her alibi.<sup>60</sup> Since masculine hardship and manly sacrifice were both the price of admission and proof of membership for the literary tradition which Kingsley awkwardly joined, the fact that she could never measure up to such standards also meant she did not really need to try. Instead, she carefully distinguishes herself—with her peculiar “ability to be more comfortable there than in England”—from the reader she addresses in the second person, who she rhetorically positions as superior, and who she petitions to make sympathetic allowance for her eccentricity, just as she has done with the various men who attempt to help her and improve her writing. In this sense, while she avows that she has “endeavored to give an honest account” of the country and of the manners of its people—and insists that “if you go there you will find things as I have said”—she also admits that her account is colored by her subjectivity, and specifically by her pleasure. In this way, she reassures her readers that she had *intended* to do as her (male) predecessors did, thereby legitimizing her journey by its good geographical and ethnographic usefulness. But at the same time, she establishes that she has failed at being a proper man, as is proper for a woman. Her feminine pleasure in the landscape has stopped her from being appropriately useful, solving both problems at once: while she attempts to be dutifully faithful to masculine conventions of what one does in Africa—thereby legitimizing her attempt to set out in the first place—she also fails to live up to that masculine example, thereby reassuring us that she is a proper woman after all. The fact that she, as she, was not supposed to be there at all meant that she could enjoy being there: if the trip was not something that a woman did, but the men who were supposed to make such trips were enjoined from taking pleasure in doing so, the queer pleasure she took in her journey could confirm the exception she would otherwise form to the rule, which was: men could go to Africa, they just

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<sup>59</sup> Mary Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa, Congo Français, Corisco and Cameroons* (London: MacMillan 1897), iix-ix.

<sup>60</sup> Kingsley (1897), 268.

couldn't enjoy it.

"Africa" would only become a destination for pleasure travel, I will argue, when Roosevelt evacuated it of its prior content, making the absence of that content a site of interest and pleasure in its own right. This was, as I will show, the invention of the safari.

Making "absence" into Africa's defining feature may not seem like an innovation. Africa has and had often been conceptualized by reference to lack, deficiency, and absence. But whatever else "Africa" was in the 18th and 19th century, it was not of *interest* because of what was absent from it, except as philosophical object lesson: with bourgeois comforts left behind, the African jungle could stand as the naked reality of a life that was nasty, brutish, and short, the constitutive outside for civilized society, and a space composed by the absence of civilized places. But this absence of civilization was not what made it interesting to readers, nor what made it desirable for writers in search of a subject; Africa was the narrative backdrop for epic quests about something else. And while there is only one *Heart of Darkness*, the heaping shelves full of books about Africa in this period written by the explorers, missionaries, and merchants from Europe who actually went to Africa, collectively make it quite clear that "Africa" was a thing to be endured for very instrumental reasons: to test the soul (or save souls), to discover wealth, and/or to further the course of science or empire. Indeed, because pleasure might distract the African explorer or missionary from his charge (and a need for "luxury" living was what made it difficult for white commercial agents to out-compete brown or black ones), pleasure becomes a positive hindrance, a danger in its own right. Suffering was endowed with a positive value, and for almost exactly the same reason: because the experience of Africa's resistance to penetration was marked on the bodies of its European explorers, their scars and privations concretely testified to their heroism, to the hardships endured, thereby clarifying the physical distinction between African and European. If Africa was the "white man's grave," then discomfort, violence, fear, and death all testified to the fact of a man's whiteness. To suffer in Africa was to prove and display one's status as alien to it, a function of Africa's resistance to foreign bodies. To enjoy it would, perhaps, be to prove the reverse.

After Roosevelt, this would change. Through his invention of the big game safari, an "Africa" modeled after a particular version of *East Africa* would become the object of a spectatorial desire which both imagined and reconstructed African spaces according to fundamentally different principles: its radical *availability* became the condition of possibility for a new kind of imperialist subjectivity, the white settler of Africa. While imperial functionaries went to the colonies to work ("the East is a career"), settlers came to stay, to live and to breathe "free."

If this was a new subjectivity as applied to Africa, it was an old desire if placed in the long *durée* of what James Belich has called "The Settler Revolution."<sup>61</sup> Through Roosevelt, it was a (mis)remembered translation of settler colonial practices as they were to have been on the American frontier, first, and then in the white dominions which formed, loosely, the constellation of international whiteness that Rudyard Kipling had named "The Five Nations."<sup>62</sup> These were colonial forms which sought to learn from and emulate the past; as Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds show, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada all built and established their legal practice in the 19<sup>th</sup> century out of a tradition of juridical reasoning that had the United

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<sup>61</sup> James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Five Nations* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1903).

States' settler experience and example at its center.<sup>63</sup> But the desire to emulate the past stemmed from new imperial experiences. Migrations of Chinese laborers to Australia and California helped contribute to a new sense of whiteness among Europeans and Americans, followed by the development of what Lake and Reynolds call new "discursive frameworks" of race across a global white frontier that was increasingly understood as such. For example, James Bryce's *The American Commonwealth* (1888) argues that the experience of reconstruction in the American South demonstrated the impossibility of multi-racial democracy, and this argument was of particular interest to the framers of the 1901 Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia, which dictated immigration restrictions against non-Europeans.

Of more interest to my project, however, is the fact that after 1903, Lord Delamere would use the racialized plantation system of the American South as a model for thinking through the future of settler Kenya, while Charles Eliot—British East Africa's commissioner from 1900–1904, who oversaw the first wave of white settlement—would explicitly argue, in 1905, that the 1898 Wilmington North Carolina insurrection had demonstrated the impossibility of multiracial democracy, and the necessity of white supremacist governance. As he put it,

government in the southern States is only carried on by rendering the Constitution a dead letter, and by using various devices to prevent the negroes from exercising the influence to which their numbers entitle them. If they do exercise it, a revolt among the white population is the result. In 1898 a political combination was made in North Carolina, by which, in order to secure the negro vote, a certain number of judicial and municipal offices were distributed among negroes, with the result that in a few months, all parties united to turn them out by force and to pass a law rendering such occurrences impossible in future.<sup>64</sup>

For specific details of legal and juridical practice, the Kenyan settler state looked to the United States' western frontier as exemplary predecessor, officially inquiring about the administration of the "Homestead Act" and "Desert Act."<sup>65</sup> And while Kenyan "native reserve" policies were more directly patterned on South African practice and law, it was also the American example on which the South African state had leaned most heavily in developing its own system of native reservations. Even the phrase "White Man's Country," the title of Lord Delamere's posthumous biography—written by Elspeth Huxley—seems to find its origins in the United States, an expression of Southern resistance to reconstruction after the civil war. As Ulrich B. Phillips put it (in a 1928 essay of the same name), "[t]he Central Theme of Southern History" was "a common resolve, indomitably maintained that it shall be and remain a white man's country."<sup>66</sup> Or, from the Joint Committee's 1872 report on the "Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States," we find Cornelius McBride recalling being whipped by a group of Mississippi vigilantes for running a school for former slaves:

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<sup>63</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Color Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008).

<sup>64</sup> Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), 103.

<sup>65</sup> Gerald Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem: The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p38.

<sup>66</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Central Theme of Southern History," *American Historical Review*, 34 (October, 1928).

I asked them while they were whipping me what I had done to merit that treatment. They said I wanted to make these niggers equal to the white men: that this was a white man's country. They said, 'God damn you! Don't you know this is a white man's country?'<sup>67</sup>

The first occurrence of the phrase in the *Times* of London is an attribution in 1865 to North Carolina's provisional governor Holden, who is then directly quoted as saying "it was nonsense to suppose [North Carolinians] would ever tolerate attempts to make the negro their equals."<sup>68</sup>

The phrase wouldn't be used to describe Britain's colonial possessions in the *Times* until 1884, and it would not be until well into the 1890's—when its frequency increases dramatically—that it would be used to describe lands deemed to be suitable for European settlement. This meaning would shortly become the most common one; in a description from 1895, for example, of Leander Starr Jameson's and Cecil Rhodes' tour through Great Britain advertising for South African settlement, the *Times* correspondent notes that thanks to their efforts, everyone who cares to know "is now aware that the province is a white man's country of great natural wealth and commercial possibilities."<sup>69</sup>

When Theodore Roosevelt declares in *African Game Trails* that British East Africa reminds him of the American frontier, calling it a "white man's country" and extolling the virtues of its natural abundance, climatic suitability, and—in particular—its suitability as a site for the production of white babies, we could be read him as either using a term which circulated in post-reconstruction white supremacist discourse or as using the phrase which Kenyan settlers like Lord Delamere—one of his hosts—used to imagine their colonial future. As I hope is clear, however, to ask which meaning of the phrase Roosevelt was calling upon—to distinguish them—would be to ask the wrong question. It is both. In fact, as I will argue, the sublimation of the former meaning *into* the latter is precisely the substance of Roosevelt's analogy to the United States: he analogizes precisely so as to make that connection.

These kinds of administrative, juridical, and political arguments circulated widely. As Marilyn Lake has argued, white reconstruction in the American South and white hegemony on the colonial frontier were, in the 1890's, coming to be broadly perceived as a singular white movement, a "defensive project of the 'white man's country' [which] was shared by places as demographically diverse as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Kenya, South Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Australia."<sup>70</sup> As she puts it, "a spatial politics of exclusion and segregation [was] common to them all," which was understood — by the settlers themselves—to be a trans-national common cause, an ethos which Lothrop Stoddard would sum up much later in *The Rising Tide of Colour*, declaring that "Nothing is more striking than the instinctive solidarity which binds together Australians and Afrikanders, Californians and Canadians into a 'sacred union.'" And as Lake and Henry Reynolds demonstrate, Britain's great settler colonies—South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—built and established their legal practice in the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Report of the Joint Select Committee to inquire into on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 79.

<sup>68</sup> OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT. "America." *Times* [London, England] 30 Nov. 1865: 5. *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 24 July 2013.

<sup>69</sup> "The Colonies." *Times* [London, England] 4 Feb. 1895: 11. *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 24 July 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Marilyn Lake, "White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project," *Australian Historical Studies*, 122 (2003).

century out of a tradition of juridical reasoning that had the American experience and example at its center.<sup>71</sup>

In this sense, while the international whiteness that Kipling was describing in 1903—and which Roosevelt would perform in 1909—might have been nostalgic for the past, and structured by a reactionary desire to return to a mythologized origin, this desire, itself, was distinctly new; as W. E. B. Du Bois, put it, in 1910:

Wave upon wave, each with increasing virulence, is dashing this new religion of whiteness on the shores of our time.<sup>72</sup>

In drawing the “global color line,” as Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds put it, men like Kipling and Roosevelt were pouring old wine into new bottles.<sup>73</sup> They were imagining a mode of international fraternity among “white men”—a term that was un-gendered only in the sense that it made women a debased form of man—that would be the structure on which, as they hoped, an American-style union of white domestic nations would replace the fading and failing imperium of Britain, an empire which had shown itself insufficient to the challenge of maintaining racial hegemony precisely by its inclination to extend English liberties to non-white subjects. As Lake has argued, white reconstruction in the American South and white hegemony on the colonial frontier were, by the 1890’s, coming to be broadly perceived as a singular white movement, a “defensive project of the ‘white man's country’ [which] was shared by places as demographically diverse as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Kenya, South Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Australia.”<sup>74</sup> As she puts it, “a spatial politics of exclusion and segregation [was] common to them all,” and what was understood—by the settlers themselves—to be a trans-national common cause, was the ethos which Lothrop Stoddard would sum up much later in *The Rising Tide of Colour*, when he declared that “[n]othing is more striking than the instinctive solidarity which binds together Australians and Afrikanders, Californians and Canadians into a ‘sacred union.’”

This sacred union, both a “solidarity” that was responsive to events like censuses and an “instinctive” function of racial origin, was for Roosevelt, the primary subject of history. As early as *The Winning of the West*, Roosevelt had argued that what made the United States unique was that it was a “race expansion--as distinguished from mere conquest”; by a contrast he drew with mere “flag imperialists” (exemplified by the “Latin” empires of Spain or Rome) who merely “sat down in the midst of a much more numerous aboriginal population,” he argued that settlers conquer by demographics; the “Latin” empires failed, he argues, because they gave savage peoples their laws, order, and language, but lost the war of race demography: being “hopelessly outnumbered” by their savage wards, they were “soon lost in the mass of their subjects.”<sup>75</sup>

In this way, Roosevelt measured imperial history in geography, not time: instead of progress

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<sup>71</sup> Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Color Line*

<sup>72</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, ‘The Souls of White Folk’, *Independent*, 1910.

<sup>73</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> Marilyn Lake, “White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project,” *Australian Historical Studies*, 122 (2003), 346-63.

<sup>75</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), 1:16.

from savagery to civilization, he was interested in the white race's diffusion into what he called "the world's waste spaces." As a result, he argued that multi-racial empires like British India were, to the extent that they were following the "latin" imperial path, as inevitably retrograde and anti-democratic as slavery itself had been, though, of course, his interest was in the detrimental effect the institution had on the character of the white masters. Instead, he argued, the white race's future would be found in the mono-racial settler spaces of colonies like the American West, Australasia, and Southern Africa. As he would put it in 1894, in a review of Charles Henry Pearson's *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, India was the past and Australia was the future, "from the standpoint of the ages, the peopling of [Australia] with men of the English stock is a thousand fold more important than the holding Hindoostan for a few centuries."<sup>76</sup>

In this sense, while Roosevelt could not be said to have questioned "empire," as such, he performed his own strong misreading of the imperial narrative, making British India a footnote to a story whose central protagonists were "the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces." In this way, he Americanized the story of the white West: instead of a white man's burden to raise the savage towards modernity, the American "Winning of the West" defined and exemplified a Malthusian race-war which the white race was fighting over a global geography. In the *Winning of the West*, therefore, Roosevelt's argument is *both* that the United States is exceptional, historically unique and privileged, and that it is historically continuous with the rest of the white world. The "spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces" is "not only the most striking feature in the world's history, but also the event of all others the most far-reaching in importance," both an exceptionalist claim—in which the American story is the central drama of human progress and civilization—but also a comprehensive one: by framing this (American) movement within the "perfectly continuous history" of the English race and emphasizing that the "vast movement by which [the North American] continent was conquered and peopled" was actually only "the crowning and greatest achievement of a series of mighty movements" which started with Columbus, he not only leaves the space open for this movement to continue to *other* white frontiers, even after the American frontier had closed, but he clarifies that the American exception—to class struggle, degeneration, and over-civilization—was not *limited* to the continental United States, just exemplified by it.

While Kipling had urged America in 1898 to take up an imperial burden hitherto carried by Europe, Roosevelt understood America's historical mission to have begun with its own founding, a white man's burden which it was, in fact, now Europe's turn to take up via present-day settler colonialism. Roosevelt understood world history by reference to the European settlement of North America. It was therefore only contemporary European participation in analogous settlement projects that allowed Europe to re-enter a narrative in which the American nation had now achieved centrality. For Roosevelt, in other words, what made America distinct from old Europe was also what made it representative of the *global* civilization which Europe was being urged to belatedly join, the "perfectly continuous history" which Roosevelt would argue connected King Alfred to George Washington.

In this sense, while hindsight has often framed Kipling and Roosevelt as ideological companions, they were divided by the hyphen in Anglo-American.<sup>77</sup> The question of which

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<sup>76</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "National Life and Character," *The Sewanee Review*, August, 1894.

<sup>77</sup> When Christopher Hitchens, for example, sets out to write of *Blood, Class, and Empire: the Enduring Anglo-American Relationship*, his references to the "Rhodes-Kipling-Roosevelt-Hay

nation was to take up the burden of the other—England or America—characterizes the banter of the two men’s first meeting: while Kipling mocked the Americans for having extirpated their aboriginals—“more completely than any modern race has done”—Roosevelt would loudly proclaim his pleasure at having “not one drop of British blood in him.”<sup>78</sup> They would become fast friends, but they would not settle the point: Kipling responded by telling him “nice tales about his Uncles and Aunts in South Africa who esteemed themselves the sole lawful Dutch,” at which point Roosevelt “became really eloquent, and we would go off to the Zoo together, where he talked about grizzlies that he had met.”<sup>79</sup>

However trivially, the banter between these two men reflects a fundamental structuring difference between settlement colonization and franchise colonialism. On the one hand, Kipling would deride American pretensions to empire by reference to American crimes against its imperial subjects, mocking American failure (to “have done with childish days”) by the extent to which Americans had so far failed to live up to their burden to uplift and civilize their “new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child.” In other words, the burden they had failed to take up was the task of civilizing subject peoples. Roosevelt, by contrast, had different priorities: instead of taking the taming of “half-wild” natives as the imperial imperative, Roosevelt’s emphasis was always on the work of taming the wilderness, an essentially *land*-based standard of value that saw emptiness as an opportunity for the extension of bloodlines. And if Kipling’s India mythologized the former, it was Roosevelt’s invention of the big game safari, I will argue, that rendered frontier colonialism so natural that an argument barely needed to be advanced in favor of it.

#### **IV. Inventing the Safari**

When I say that Theodore Roosevelt “invented” the big game safari in 1909, I mean that his heavily publicized nine-month trip to British East Africa, the articles he wrote about it for *Scribner’s Magazine*, and the bestselling book he compiled from those articles (*African Game Trails*) inaugurated and popularized the core elements of what would only become a long-running and coherent tourist practice after his example. He was far from the first to go “on safari” in any absolute sense, but his was the first example to become exemplary. As Edward Steinhart puts it, Roosevelt would “introduce and sanctify by celebrity example” the evolving “ritual and drama” of the African hunt, whose three key elements Steinhart names to be the extravagance of death and luxury living, the circumscribed roles and identities of the local guide and the professional white hunter, and the veneer of scientific respectability which would give

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worldview” presumes that there is one on route to the argument that it does “endure” Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class, and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship* (New York: Nation Books, 2004), 364

<sup>78</sup> For this conversation, see Morris (1979), 491, and Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself and Other Autobiographical Writings* edited by Thomas Pinney (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 72-3.

<sup>79</sup> Roosevelt, by contrast, thought he had gotten the better of Kipling, writing, in a letter “That Kipling is an underbred little fellow, with a tendency to criticise America to which I put a stop by giving him a very rough handling, since which he has not repeated the offence.” (sic) Theodore Roosevelt to James B. Matthews, 29 June 1894, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Elting E. Morison (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 390.

the entire exercise a conservationist rationale.<sup>80</sup> But while Steinhart's anatomy of a practice describes Roosevelt's hunting trip quite aptly—as well as the kind of practical influence he would have on those who would emulate his example—to apprehend the safari as a formal structure, composed of “elements,” is to risk decontextualizing what was and is, in both Roosevelt's time and ours, a basically material engagement with living history. Regarding the safari as a *form* induces us to beg some important questions about its ontology as a cultural practice, and regard it as a question of “what,” rather than “who” and “where.”

In terms of “what,” Roosevelt was not the primary innovator, as I have said; few elements of his safari were original to him and he took scrupulous care to learn from and emulate his (mostly) South African guides, from whom much of the content of what can be loosely understood “safari culture” actually originates. When British East Africa/Kenya was founded as a settler colony, in 1903, many of its white settlers hailed from South Africa, and many more regarded their new home as a place where the ambitions, fantasies, and desires that had been frustrated in Southern Africa could again be recovered, everything from the “white man's country” they hoped to make of it to the wild and well-stocked game reserves which made it a hunter's paradise. In terms of “who” and “where,” however, 1909 was the watershed moment in which Roosevelt transformed the context through which the phrase “on safari” would be understood, starting with the fact that it would be understood at all.

First and foremost, Roosevelt *Anglicized* an experience that had been either a local practice or was distinctly inflected with a South African lineage, and made it something that could seem available to a general audience, the sort of thing an average person could imagine themselves doing. He started with the word itself, a term which was, before Roosevelt, an exotic and recognizably foreign word to Anglophone audiences, a Swahili term that would be glossed and italicized by writers who not only presumed their readers' ignorance of it, and other East African matters, but by that presumption established a veil of incomprehensible difference.

In 1890, for example, the “Church Missionary Gleaner,” introduces the term with this exclamation:

A ‘safari’! What is a ‘safari’? and why not call it by an English name? Simply because there is no English name—the thing is purely African; but, to get as near as we can, a ‘safari’ is an African journey.<sup>81</sup>

This usage is typical of the rare occasions when the word finds its way into English books. As a surprising discovery—a “purely African” thing—it is specifically *not* English, incommensurable and subject only to limited translation. Since the “journey” is “as near as we can get,” the inability to approach the purely African effectively reinforces and maintains the sense of a distinct English “we.” Instead of a drawing-closer, therefore, the safari confirms distance and distinction, an untranslatable word marking the resistance of the “purely African” to being approached in English. This dissonance, between the English practitioner and the “purely African” practice, confirms, reiterates, and displays the incommensurable distance between the Anglo-Saxon subject and the African practice.

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<sup>80</sup> Edward I. Steinhart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006).

<sup>81</sup> “A ‘Safari’: Letter to the Gleaner from Mr. G. I. Pilkerson” *The Church Missionary Gleaner*, Volumes 16-17 (London: Church Missionary House, 1889), 170.

Before 1909, this usage is the norm. Abel Chapman's 1908 *On Safari*, for example, notes that the "Arabic term 'Safari' has no precise equivalent in our British tongue," and so he ventures "to introduce it to our common language."<sup>82</sup> A reviewer would complain about the book's "title that will puzzle all who are unfamiliar with the Arabic verb for travel, or trekking," and would grumble that "[w]hen a man has paid sixteen shillings for a book, however admirable, he does not wish to be puzzled by it."<sup>83</sup> Examples of this sort are easy to accumulate. Harold Frank Wallace's *Stalk Abroad*, for example, recalls the "haunting persistence" with which this one word "falls on the ear of the new-comer," and he flags with careful scare-quotes the manner in which it distinguishes the local from newly arrived:

[E]very one you meet is engaged in one pursuit. He is 'on safari'; just 'going on safari,' or 'just come back from safari.' At first it is rather puzzling, and one wonders what this mysterious 'safari' can be.<sup>84</sup>

Like Wallace, Sir Frederick Treves introduces the term in his *Uganda for a holiday* (1910), as a source of puzzlement that eventually admits no more than a limited understanding. As he observes—at arm's length—it is "a word of conspicuous elasticity," but

the term 'safari' is, I understand, the Swahili for caravan...as a noun it implies a crosscountry journey, as well as the equipment for and the personnel of such an expedition. It appears as an adjective at times, for there are individuals described as 'safari porters,' while as a verb one hears of those 'who have safaried' to this place or that.<sup>85</sup>

It is a word one hears *there*, and which one only belatedly comes to understand. Richard Tjader's *The Big Game of Africa* (1910), for example, also glosses the term by its local use and function in the process of acclimating to a new region:

Safari is a Ki-Swahili word...If it is said, for instance, that anyone is "out on safari," it conveys the idea that the person in question is out on a trip with porters, oxen, mules, horses, or donkeys; in one word, moving about the country living in his tent. 'Safari,' therefore, is one of the first words the traveler learns of the useful Ki-Swahili language, the *lingua franca* of the whole East and Central Africa.<sup>86</sup>

For Tjader, the fact that an English-speaking traveler will need to learn some Kiswahili—and the word "safari" will be the first word in that education—positions both the language and the practice as resolutely local and external to the visitor: it is the language of the natives of the region, the language which identifies it *as* a region, and the language which, as such,

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<sup>82</sup> Abel Chapman, *On Safari: Big-Game Hunting in British East Africa* (London, 1908), v.

<sup>83</sup> F.G. Aflalo "The Writing of Books on Sport; And Some Books of 1908" *The Fortnightly Review* - Volume 91 - Page 153

<sup>84</sup> Harold Frank Wallace, *Stalk Abroad, Being Some Account of the Sport Obtained During a Two Years Tour of the World* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), 170.

<sup>85</sup> Sir Frederick Treves, *Uganda for a holiday* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1910), 118.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Tjader, *The Big Game of Africa* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1910), 20.

distinguishes “the traveler” as alien to that region. It is also, as it is for most writers of the time, a word that is heard before it is spoken, a word which “appears” and which “falls on the ear of the new-comer,” marking it as more of a phenomenon than a practice, something one experiences in the passive voice. More than that, the “safari” is marked for the English reader as a vehicle for exoticism, as an experience of something alien. Translating it is shown to be a problem, the linguistic and conceptual dissonance that must be overcome between the African conveyance and its English passenger, but which never quite is. As a mark of the space to be traveled, between English and African, therefore, going “on safari” distinguishes the traveler from the very distinctly East African space (and language) where he does so. In short, to use the word is to venture outside of English and to be all the more English by the contrast; the distinctly extra-English location of the practice all the more firmly emphasizes the practitioner’s Anglophonic difference. To go on safari is to *not* go native; it is to speak a foreign word in such a way as to emphasize that it is alien.

In Roosevelt’s account, by contrast, the safari is neither puzzling nor mysterious, and he affects a particular and quite meaningful casualness when he first uses the term. Mentioning that his safari was awaiting him at Kapiti plains, he belatedly glosses the term as the sort of thing one does in East Africa, placing the explanation in a throwaway subordinate clause:

[...]‘safari’ being the term employed throughout East Africa to denote both the caravan with which one makes an expedition and the expedition itself.<sup>87</sup>

As the question of who actually employs this term disappears into the passive voice, the safari becomes a familiar and routine conveyance. It ceases to be flagged as exotic or expert, or to require explanation. All other contemporaneous “safari” writers make it clear that what they are doing is distinct from the “normal” they thereby distinguish as such. Roosevelt does not do this. Even Abel Chapman’s *On Safari* was clear that making the safari *familiar* requires work on his part. Roosevelt conspicuously eschews such work.

Roosevelt was not the first writer to buck this trend, but he was the last: after his bestselling account, the number of writers who assume their readers’ knowledge of the term rises, dramatically, from roughly none to roughly all of them. After Roosevelt, safari writers can safely presume that theirs is not the first such text that their readers will have read, and they are likely to be correct. As early as Stewart Edward White’s *African Camp Fires* (1913) and *The Land of Footprints* (1914), for example, White uses the term without bothering to define it—he even mentions that he knows no Swahili—and he takes it equally for granted that his audience will know about “Colonel Roosevelt’s” trips, which he also references without gloss or explanation. Just as “one” knows what a safari is, “one” also knows what kind of a trip Colonel Roosevelt took. It has become a convention. But because “conventional” is often synonymous with “unremarkable,” it is easy to overlook how the safari *became* conventional, what kind of work was done and was required in doing so, and what the consequences of this convention were. Roosevelt’s text is also easy to dismiss on aesthetic grounds; it is long and repetitive, and especially because it is, in many respects, hardly distinguishable from the literary conventions to which he carefully adhered, its significance has largely gone unremarked. In this, he is like many “inventors,” who are often not innovators, themselves, but only the most successful at packaging,

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<sup>87</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails: An Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter-Naturalist* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1910), 20.

marketing, and *claiming* an innovation, thereby capitalizing on other people's intellectual labor.<sup>88</sup> Roosevelt was this kind of "inventor" of the big game safari: it is true but irrelevant that his safari follows faithfully in the footsteps of great white hunters like Frederick Selous, carefully re-packaging, popularizing, and personalizing what Selous and others directed him to do. If they developed the practice in the first place, it was his investment in the safari which developed the practice into a globally legible vehicle for African experience and knowledge, and it was under his "brand" that it would be marketed.

Roosevelt's journey prompted a boom in writing about African hunting, in fact, a distinct literary trend which both built on Roosevelt's personal popularity and took Roosevelt for granted as its defining center. He was "a mythical figure for all the hunter-naturalists of the period," as John MacKenzie puts it, and as the most widely read, known, and emulated safari writer, he assumed a gatekeeper role for the commercial niche he had helped to create.<sup>89</sup> No one wrote more introductions, prefaces, or reviews of safari narratives than Roosevelt—everything from extensive introductions to a simple letter indicating pleasure in the book's existence or in the author's authorship—and no one was the subject of more adoring dedications than he was. His was the approving blurb that aspiring safari writers hoped to acquire, and he was the conduit by which quite a few hunters became writers. And while there are safari writers who don't look to Roosevelt as patron saint, who chart their own path, there is no analogous figure to him, no competing patron saint. In describing safari-writing as a genre with a defining center, in other words, it is Roosevelt, or no one, and those safari-writers who chose not to orient themselves according to his example were, nevertheless, legibly making that choice: to *not* orient themselves according to Roosevelt. He was unavoidable. As the safari came to be increasingly conventional after 1909, it was Roosevelt who quietly policed the boundaries of these conventions, who directly and indirectly oversaw the establishment of a critical mass of white authored texts on East African hunting, and who, by molding what had been a series of scattered and anomalous travel narratives into what was increasingly a coherent corpus of knowledge, made it possible and obvious to put a "the" in front of "safari."

One might even say that the very conspicuous modesty of his ambition was his most dramatic intervention. In the 19th century, Europeans who went to Africa belonged to a distinctly select group, marked off by profession, social class, or personal heroism. Big game hunting was, in particular, the preserve of the colonial functionary, the ultra-rich, or the strange and anomalous exception to the rule. Roosevelt's intervention was to take what had been the exclusive purview of a class of distinctly elite individuals and to make it into the sort of thing "one" could do, aspire to do, or at least to regard as familiar. He popularized it, in this sense—making it populist instead of elitist—less by setting an example that could be followed than by creating a popular reading public for and through his account of his travels. Edgar Rice Burroughs, for example, would be so directly inspired by Roosevelt's example that the first edition of *Tarzan of the Apes* would place tigers in Africa—a mistake that he copied from newspaper accounts of Roosevelt's journey—and Ernest Hemingway would recall, as a boy, seeing Roosevelt's stop in Oak Park on his post-safari tour of the United States. When he finally

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<sup>88</sup> Mark A. Lemley, "The Myth of the Sole Inventor" (July 21, 2011). Stanford Public Law Working Paper No. 1856610.

<sup>89</sup> John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation, and British Imperialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), 162.

went on his own safari, in 1933, he would hire Roosevelt's own guide.<sup>90</sup> As this familiarity deepened, the safari became a generally available metaphor, a term which could be used to describe and re-frame a variety of different experiences. On the one hand, it would be sufficiently deracinated from its original linguistic, cultural, and geographical location as to be applied to a broad variety of locations, as in books like Richard Lightburn Sutton's *An Arctic Safari, with Camera and Rifle in the Land of the Midnight Sun* (1932). On the other hand, it would become a familiar enough concept that it could be joked with, played with, and riffed upon; in 1955, for example, LIFE magazine told the story of a "Town on Tour," in which

[t]he biggest and swankiest mobile town in the world has been jouncing across Mexico...a safari of 500 trailers housing 1,500 Americans driving heavy cars — mostly Cadillacs, Chryslers and Oldsmobiles. They were out for something different and they got it: a 3,000-mile tour from Nogales to Acapulco and back.<sup>91</sup>

### **V. The Pleasure of Making Nothing Happen**

What *is* the safari? In *African Game Trails*, Roosevelt not only repeatedly reports being surprised to find Africa to be unlike the dark continent he has expected, but this surprise turns to recognition—over and over again—as East Africa continually reminds him of the American frontier landscape. This, I would suggest, is the affective content of Roosevelt's safari, and there are as many examples of this claim as there are of his surprise at *not* finding an Africa which is dark (usually linked). In Kijabe, for example, he notes that though his party was "nearly under the equator, the beautiful scenery was almost northern in type" and he reports that "the days were as cool as September on Long Island or by the Southern shores of the Great Lakes"<sup>92</sup> Later, as his party is trekking through the Uasin Gishu basin, he remarks that "although we crossed and recrossed the equator...[t]he landscape in its general effect called to mind southern Oregon and northern California rather than any tropical country."<sup>93</sup> When he is hunting buffalo outside of Nairobi, he tells us that the "country of wooded hills, with glades and dells and long green grass in the valleys...did not in the least resemble what one would naturally expect in equatorial Africa...it reminded me of the beautiful rolling wooded country of middle Wisconsin."<sup>94</sup> Finally, while he makes the same basic point in a variety of ways, this passage is the fullest expression of the American analogy:

I believe it to be a country of high promise for settlers of white race. In many ways it reminds one rather curiously of the great plains of the West, where they slope upward to the foot-hills of the Rockies. **It is a white man's country.** Although under the equator, the altitude is so high that the nights are cool, and the region as a whole is very healthy. I saw many children, of the Boer immigrants, of English settlers, even of American missionaries, and they looked sound and well. Of course, there was no real identity in any feature; but again and again the landscape struck me by its general likeness to the cattle country I knew so well. As my horse

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<sup>90</sup> Neil Stubbs, "Theodore Roosevelt and Ernest Hemingway: A Study in Two Strenuous Lives," *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal* 25 (2002): 9–14

<sup>91</sup> "A Town on Tour," *Life* (February 21, 1955), 142–143.

<sup>92</sup> Roosevelt (1910), 176.

<sup>93</sup> Roosevelt (1910), 382.

<sup>94</sup> Roosevelt (1910), 170.

shuffled forward, under the bright, hot sunlight, across the endless flats or gently rolling slopes of brown and withered grass, I might have been on the plains anywhere, from Texas to Montana; the hills were like our Western buttes; the half-dry watercourses were fringed with trees, just as if they had been the Sandy, or the Dry, or the Beaver, or the Cottonwood, or any of the multitude of creeks that repeat these and similar names, again and again, from the Panhandle to the Saskatchewan. Moreover a Westerner, far better than an Easterner, could see the possibilities of the country. There should be storage reservoirs in the hills and along the rivers — in my judgment built by the government, and paid for by the water-users in the shape of water-rents — and irrigation ditches; with the water stored and used there would be an excellent opening for small farmers, for the settlers, the actual home-makers, who, above all others, should be encouraged to come into a white man's country like this of the highlands of East Africa. Even as it is, many settlers do well; it is hard to realize that right under the equator the conditions are such that wheat, potatoes, strawberries, apples, all flourish. No new country is a place for weaklings; but the right kind of man, the settler who makes a success in similar parts of our own West, can do well in East Africa...<sup>95</sup>

This is a strange and strained analogy, straining to suture together two dissimilar objects. After all, when Roosevelt writes that he “might have been” on the plains of Texas or Montana, or that he sees water courses “as if they had been” the Sandy or the Dry, his recourse to analogy is an implicit acknowledgment that he wasn’t and they weren’t. To state the obvious: East Africa is compellingly similar to the American West. For Roosevelt to look beyond the concrete forms—the very distinct and particular flora, fauna, geology, and climate of East Africa—and to perceive a deeper resemblance to the continental United States was, at the very least, an *unnecessary* connection. One will look in vain for versions of this analogy in contemporaneous texts, especially by British writers; when Joseph Thomson first crossed through Masailand, for example, the land which Roosevelt saw as resembling the American frontier struck Thomson as resembling his native Scotland.

Instead of an objective resemblance, Roosevelt’s is an *affective* response to a landscape whose concrete resemblance he is actually quite careful not to claim, finding only a “general” likeness and disclaiming any “real identity in any feature.” The resemblance he sees and claims is one of purpose and possibility; what he sees is the potential which is to be found precisely in the absence of anything preventing it from becoming what he wishes it to become. In other words, while East Africa is not *concretely* similar to America, he finds—to his and to our surprise—that it is both less different than he expected it to be and bears within it the potential to *become* more like. That potential, however, is a function of the defining *absence* of form that they are seen to have in common. Like the American landscape, the East African highlands are what he wants them to be only because and to the extent that they *aren’t anything else*. In this sense, Roosevelt’s analogy is perfectly apt. In terms of empirical geography, the American West was no less heterogeneous and resistant to generalizations than was the East African terrain through which Roosevelt trekked in 1909. But if the American “West” was a singular place—a unified conceptual field defining the terms through which Americans would engage with the landscape they constituted as such—this singularity was made through an analogous projection of racial-state power as that which Roosevelt hoped to produce and enable in British East Africa, the particular array of imperial technologies that are specific to white settler colonialism (and its

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<sup>95</sup> Roosevelt (1910), 38-39 (my bold).

accompanying historical teleologies). Roosevelt never asserts a direct and qualitative similarity, because the logic of the analogy doesn't require him to do so. Instead, his argument is simply that no reason exists why it might *not* become a second American West, that no obstacle stands in the way of the settler project's continued expansion. There is, in short, an *absence* of countervailing forces to the settler project; what makes it appropriate to be settled is the absence they both have in common.

In Roosevelt's surprise to find that Africa is not dark and his surprise to find that Africa is like America, of course, there is a slippage between not seeing the "dark continent" and the kind of positive recognition of the landscape (as a "white man's country") that his time on the American frontier has enabled him to make. By replacing the Africa his audience expected to find with an Africa composed by that erasure, and affectively known by his surprise, Roosevelt not only "sees" an America in Africa by making it signify as *not-Africa*, but—as that failure to obtain becomes a positive quality—he also tacitly redefines "America," itself, in precisely the same terms. After all, if its status as a "white man's country" makes East Africa resemble "America," then has not America become, in turn, a "white man's country"? As I will argue, rendering Africa "bright" is a way of contradicting the significance that its darkness would have had. But making the absence of "Darkest Africa" meaningful—making it a thing to be affectively experienced—also reconstructs a sense of the place which he can then see it to resemble, the America which he quietly redefines as he sees Africa to resemble it, precisely and only because it is *not* like "Dark Africa." His surprise to not find the "dark continent" is, in this very *affective* sense, the same as his surprise to find a place so like "America." Both are constitutively defined by what they aren't.

As I will show, this is as true in East Africa in 1909 as it was in North Dakota, decades earlier; it is precisely as true, in fact, because the "frontier" which Roosevelt found in the American West, while grieving for the death of his wife in childbirth, was the same frontier which he would find in East Africa, where in the company of his son, he would replace the mother and wife with an Africa he infantilizes, sexualizes, kills, and causes to live again.

The safari is easier to recognize than to describe, however, because it is, essentially, an absence of form, a denial of history and context. For example, in a photo of Roosevelt and his son Kermit sitting atop a buffalo they've killed—which served as the cover for several versions of the book—we see an "Africa" composed by its welcoming spatial emptiness, and the empty and featureless landscape stretching out behind the two men to an unremarkable horizon. Yet if this is an instantly recognizably generic scene of the African game safari—and I would argue that it is—it is precisely because the landscape is so totally devoid of any feature that can scan as particularly or specifically "African" that it can signify in those terms, as an "African" safari. If this is Africa, after all, it would be hard to say why: these broad panoramas, brilliant vistas, and vast skies come to collectively represent "Africa" only through their brilliant and desirable emptiness, an Africa that is known by the lack of Africa that is shown.

Instead, the unobstructed sight-lines that stretch to distant horizons offer total comprehension of the landscape, a landscape in which a lack of obstruction—which is also the lack of anything to actually see—becomes the thing to see itself. Put differently, unobstructed comprehension is the comprehension of absence, a way to make sense of something that cannot, as absence, be made sensible. The safari is or can be a kind of grieving, a way of sensing the love object which is absent. If the object of mourning has been displaced by the presence of whatever takes its place, absence itself becomes the site of its recovery, or at least the denial of its loss.

The safari therefore represents a very peculiar version of Africa, a generalized "Africa" from

which all that is particularly African has been removed. This desirable absence animates the safari and structures its aesthetic logic: instead of a desire for Africa as the primal absence of the human, civilization, or European knowledge—in which “Darkest Africa” is conceived by an absolute and alienating alterity and figured by its claustrophobic and stifling jungle blackness—Africa becomes “bright” when it becomes the desirable experience of Africa as absence of the African, when its empty spaces, that allow the total comprehension of an empty landscape, are the desirable thing itself.

Roosevelt’s 1910 *African Game Trails* is the ur-text from which all other modern safari narratives develop, effacing the sense of the term that had previously obtained—as a Swahili word, indexing long established networks of African-Asian trade that bound the region together as a blind spot in European maps—and making the absence of geographical narrative a site of pleasure, and a specifically generative, sexualized, and racial pleasure at that. And yet, while Roosevelt’s *African Game Trails* works hard to establish that Africa is a pleasurable place to see, shoot, and comprehend, it is very difficult to establish exactly why that is. I would argue, in fact, that the most un-ask-able question of Roosevelt’s text is also the most important: why go on safari? Why is shooting animals in Africa pleasurable? And what is it in his monotonous account of animal after animal shot dead—intermixed with “dead time,” more or less defined by the fact that animals are not, then, being shot—that makes it an account worth reading? It is, to put it bluntly, a very boring book; there is no narrative development, its characters are rudimentary, and the visceral, tangible, and essentially embodied pleasures which it describes are, by virtue of its medium, the experiential reality it is least able to provide for its readers. So why do we read it? And why would we then seek to emulate it?

Roosevelt’s book does not say, and it does not say repeatedly and with great emphasis. In the introduction, for example, Roosevelt asserts that “there are no words that can tell the hidden spirit of the wilderness,” and though this would seem to be a strange admission from the author of such a formidable tome, he answers himself with a rhapsody that is spectacularly empty of anything but pure assertion:

There is delight in the hardy life of the open, in long rides rifle in hand, in the thrill of the fight with dangerous game. Apart from this, yet mingled with it, is the strong attraction of the silent places, of the large tropic moons, and the splendor of the new stars.<sup>96</sup>

He aestheticizes the hunt through its refusal of context or meaning, and thereby normalizes the omission. “Is” is the only verb here, describing both a pleasure spectacularly bereft of any object and a form of desire with no wish being fulfilled. I would argue that this is precisely the point: instead of locating his safari, instead of giving it meaning and significance by embedding it into narrative, history, or context, Roosevelt works to make the safari a thing whose pleasure is to be found in the escape it provides from narratives, histories, and contexts. One goes on safari, I will suggest, in order to forget why one goes on safari, to erase the desires which motivate it, and to dis-imagine the empirical Africa on whose non-existence the entire experience is founded.

In this sense, in fact, I would apply both to Roosevelt and to the many Kenyan big game hunters who followed in his wake what Clifford Geertz famously wrote about “deep play,” the observation that

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<sup>96</sup> Roosevelt (1910), xi.

[t]he transfer of a sense of gravity into what is in itself a rather blank and unvarious spectacle...is effected by interpreting it as expressive of something unsettling in the way its authors and audience live, or, even more ominously, what they are.<sup>97</sup>

But as with Geertz's Balinese cockfight, ritually performing that which is, in some sense, "unsettled" was not an effort to change, mediate, sublimate, or transcend the contradictions being expressed. Instead, it was the poetry of making nothing happen, of making the status quo itself—and its reinforcement—the only possible site of pleasure. He therefore invests the "blank and invarious spectacle" of an empty and vanquished landscape with a profundity of meaning as a way of silencing and unthinking all the other potential sites of narrative meaning that he could have—but didn't—photograph or include. In so doing, he evacuated of force the anxieties and contradictions they represent. To put it perhaps too simply, the important thing about being "on safari" was everything one was thereby enabled not to see.

If the safari is a thing which had to be *made* intuitive and natural, then the extent to which it explains itself—the extent to which its meaning does not require explanation, but is immediately obvious, intuitive—is what makes it successful: to "go on safari" is to obviate the need to explain and narrate why one shoots animals in Africa.

At the same time, making the safari scan as "natural"—which was simultaneously to make Africa scan as a "natural" place, since it was where one went to go on safari—was also to imply, to naturalize, and to render intuitive the idea of settler colonialism in Africa. In this sense, the consequence of Roosevelt's "invention" of the safari is the extent to which he made *settler colonialism* a source of enjoyment, precisely by legitimizing and glorifying in the process of *un-seeing* by which the landscape was reconstructed. To "go on safari" was not only to play at being a settler, but it was to see the landscape as the settler saw it: empty of all but the welcoming and empty virgin wilderness. In this sense, the "safari" is only a definable *form*—a particular set of images, accoutrements, and practices which make it recognizable as such—because of the specific mode of narration, perspective, and set of guiding assumptions which un-see everything but a settler teleology in the landscape's emptiness. It is not only a particular interested misinterpretation of the (East) African landscape, in other words, but a practice of seeing and comprehension which is structured so as to produce and reproduce the very misinterpretation of the land which settler colonialism presumed, to exclude from view everything that contradicted it.

As a text about Africa, the "safari" produces an Africa without Africa. But as a text about the family, the state, and the race—and Roosevelt's *African Game Trails* is certainly these things too—the natural African absence naturalizes what would otherwise scan as violent, the absences for which one no longer needs to grieve, or atone.

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<sup>97</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 412-453.

## Chapter Three: Indian Country

“Who will come to East Africa without reading the experiences of Burton and Speke?”<sup>1</sup>

—Henry Morton Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone*, 1872

“Those pages of the book of nature which are best worth reading can best be read far from the dwellings of civilized man; and for their full interpretation we need the service, not of one man, but of many men, who, in addition to the gift of accurate observation shall, if possible possess the power fully, accurately, and with vividness to write about what they have observed.”<sup>2</sup>

—Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails*, 1910

Henry Morton Stanley’s name is missing from *African Game Trails*. This fact is, in fact, a meaningful absence. It is also meaningful that Roosevelt doesn’t mention David Livingstone or Richard Burton, and while he does refer, once, to the “great trips of exploration and adventure” made by “Speke, Grant, and Baker,” that single reference is just as striking by its casual brevity.

After all, exploration writers tended to be scrupulously careful to write themselves into what they thereby formed as an ongoing genealogy of exploration writing, to emphasize their connection to the tradition whose expanding empire of knowledge made their own efforts meaningful. Even if they aggressively positioned themselves as having surpassed their elders—as Stanley did with Livingstone, for example—exploration followed in the footsteps of the past, jealous to inherit the reputation capital it had accumulated. The geographical tradition function, as an unbroken line of genealogical descent, helped narrate a sense of imperial continuity and singularity, and especially because “exploration” built on a deep infrastructure of imperial conquest, each new exploration journey implied and depended upon its successors and competitors. As a result, a particular kind of citation was a fundamental feature of exploration writing: the thick, sprawling books written by successive generations of African explorers overlapped with and propped each other up as they sought to place themselves within the broader public project they thereby imagined into being.<sup>3</sup>

By a sharp contrast with an interdependent imperial exploration project, however, Roosevelt stands alone on the African savannah, or at most, with a few bosom companions and his son,

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Morton Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries in Central Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1872), 169.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails: An Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter-Naturalist* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1910), p.340

<sup>3</sup> The project was far from harmonious, of course; explorers were often invested in the heroic figure of the romantic individual and internecine squabbling was perhaps as integral to the genre as was its progression towards greater and greater comprehension. But the tension which produced inter-familial struggle and bitter intramural feuds (as between Burton and Speke, most famously) also reflected the basic structure of the symbolic economy within which explorers made their journeys meaningful: explorers not only had to contextualize themselves by reference to others, but the need to further and advance the tradition made the inevitable internecine struggles just as inevitably sublated onto citational practice.

Kermit. For Roosevelt, the world of Victorian exploration is a distant memory, and quite palpably so: the “great trips of exploration and adventure” he references seem to have occurred a long time ago, deep in the historical past. If one still read their books, it was no longer a prerequisite. For Roosevelt, the experience of Africa is not mediated by its textuality; nature is the book one reads. While Victorian exploration writers produced themselves, as a genre, by interpellating themselves into a particular, pre-existing community, the genre of Roosevelt’s writing found in his *refusal* to do so, the implicit claim and ambition to a *sui generis* status that distinguishes what Africa is to him, how he sees it, and how he performs identity through his experience there. Instead of seeing through the eyes of his predecessors, he insists on the primacy of unmediated experience. And since every hunt is a new beginning, a new narrative, the totality of his journey is a trip without an endpoint, just a clock counting down and an accumulation of animal bodies. The absence of his predecessors indexes the genre of Roosevelt’s writing as unmistakably as careful citations did for the people he is omitting.

Moreover, it is not simply an omission when, in 1910, an explorer like Joseph Thomson only survives in the landscape through his animal namesake, the Thomson’s gazelle, or “Tommie.” As Roosevelt observes, after describing a group of gazelle:

“The last were of two kinds, named severally after their discoverers, the explorers Grant and Thomson; many of the creatures of this region commemorate the men — Schilling, Jackson, Neuman, Kirke, Chanler, Abbot — who first saw and hunted them and brought them to the notice of the scientific world.”<sup>4</sup>

It would perhaps be too much to suggest that shooting gazelles named after explorers expresses some form of antagonism for his predecessors. Yet naming the explorers Grant, Thomson, Schilling, Jackson, Neuman, Kirke, Chanler, and Abbot, but only referring, then, to the fact that they had been hunters—rather than what they would have understood to have been their primary accomplishment, geographical exploration—is a more aggressive removal: if Roosevelt is only interested in hunting, and uninterested in geographical exploration, then it is the work of his text to demonstrate that Africa is interesting in the former terms, not the latter. Hunting has replaced exploration. And if an explorer’s seeing testified to the unexplored status of the place to which he travels—thereby reifying that very quality of darkness, even in the act of brightening it—Roosevelt’s seeing demonstrated and testified to the extent to which he was visiting an already surveyed (and utterly survey-able) space. Indeed, even when he traveled “out” to hunt specimens for the Smithsonian museum of natural history—drinking champagne and reading Lucretius on the trail—he was conducted by white settler guides, who not only showed him *their* land but warmly contained him in the bosom of the settler society which was making (or re-making) British East Africa in its own image, into a domestic, settled “Kenya.” In this sense, the fact that Roosevelt brought his son Kermit with him and the conservationist bent of his hunting index the domestic character of his trip, in both senses of the word: if hunting has often represented the performance of violence against an externalized wilderness (the space mythically located outside the city), Roosevelt’s attitude towards the animals he hunts is strikingly paternalistic, inclusive, and (insistently, if not convincingly) conservationist. As the epigram to the book declares, therefore, “[h]e loved the great game as if he were their father.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Roosevelt (1910), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Roosevelt (1910), xxiv.

In one sense, this shift is intuitive, unsurprising. The world had changed a great deal since the “Golden Age” of African exploration. Stanley, Livingstone, Burton, Speke, Grant, and Baker were all dead, Africa had been more or less fully “explored” by the time Roosevelt arrived, and as the Scramble for Africa turned into imperial rule and colonial administration, geographical exploration gave way to ethnology and economics as the privileged hermeneutics for knowing the continent. While Stanley had journeyed into a terrain external to European knowledge and power, Roosevelt in 1909 visited a decisively post-conquest landscape. And as it became internal to the British empire—rather than marking what was beyond its outer frontier—“Africa” became a thing to be managed and controlled, a knowable and predictable set of systems and arrangements which it was the work of the imperial state to better understand, so as to more profitably rationalize and exploit.

This transformation was particularly sharp in British East Africa, where radical economic, political, and cultural transformations were being consolidated at precisely the moment when Roosevelt arrived. As John Lonsdale has put it, “[i]n the ten years between 1895 and 1905 ‘Kenya’ — if such a retrospective concept may be permitted — was transformed from a footpath six hundred miles long into a colonial administration.”<sup>6</sup> Through the lens of that retrospective concept, the transformation was dramatic. And yet, to see it this way—to look backwards with so much knowledge of what would come after—can also obscure how *purposeful* Roosevelt’s observational fidelity to this telos was, and can obscure the extent to which Roosevelt describes this environment, in the way he did, precisely in order to transform it more fully into the thing which we can only retroactively presume it to have already been. Like Stanley in 1872, in other words, Roosevelt was not passively responding to a historical change that had already occurred but working to making “the future” manifest in the present: to place the cart before the horse would be to beg a question that was, at the time, very much still open (and to erase his own interpretive agency in answering it). When he went to Africa, Roosevelt was actively working to write his vision into both conceptual and concrete existence; the manner in which he “saw” East Africa (and then wrote about what he saw) was anything but passive. The apparently artless simplicity of his narration is, in its own right, an effective means of obscuring this fact.

However, the assumptions and frameworks of nationalist historiography—the “retrospective concept” of “Kenya,” as Lonsdale puts it—not only obscure the process by which that concept was proleptically imagined into existence, at the time; they also mask the fact that this was done by the work of unseeing other competing contemporary possibilities, other possible futures which were present in the past, even if they didn’t come true. Transitions between stages—for which synecdochal figures like “footpath” and “administration” stand—adequately name change experienced across a *diachronic* timeline, but such models are a strikingly poor way of contextualizing the *synchronic* dialogue and conflict by which any particular historical moment would be experienced, a moment in which many conceivable futures seemed possible. After all, distinguishing between a “footpath” and a “colonial administration” implies a stadial model of history, in which “Kenya” is the endpoint of the nation’s pre-history; however inadvertently, a statement like Lonsdale’s reinforces and naturalizes the retrospective narration of a teleological coming into being of the Kenya that is now, manifestly, an empirical fact. In such history, then, there is always Kenya, in different stages of its progression towards realization. For this reason, it can be difficult to describe the manner in which different future possibilities interacted in

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<sup>6</sup> John Lonsdale, “The Conquest State of Kenya 1895-1905” in *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980, in Honour of B. A. Ogot* (London: Evans Brothers, 1989).

Roosevelt's present, how these interactions structured the literary field through which Roosevelt's text moves, and how a book like *African Game Trails* engaged in a contentious intra-colonial debate over the future of Kenyan settler colonialism.

In 1909, after all, "Kenya" was far from inevitable; British East Africa wouldn't even become "Kenya" until 1920, and that date represents the earliest possible point of no return for the white settler project. Yet when we retroactively tell the story of how Kenya came into being—using "Kenya" to name the thing which "Kenya" will replace by coming into existence—we omit from the narrative the range of historical possibilities which had not yet been closed off in 1909, and which were not only palpably felt and recorded at the time, but which existed as threatening possibilities to be neutralized, by people like Roosevelt, who wanted to bring a colonial administration into existence. In other words, because we know that the "footpath six hundred miles long" *will* become Kenya—and because an "administration" is the lens through which we narrate colonial Kenya—the infrastructure on which that administration would be built inherits a kind of structural centrality in the past which it would only achieve much later. But before a railroad was built along the route taken by that footpath—and before a colonial administration came into existence around it—a retrospective gaze can only make that footpath into the focal point of the region by over-privileging pre-cursors of a future that had not yet become manifest.

This kind of retroactive historicizing has its uses, of course; it makes sense to be more interested in the course that *was* taken by history than by what wasn't. But much is lost when the present is the only lens through which we can see the past. For example, when "Kenya" already exists in 1890, structuring the sense by which we apprehend the region's historical dynamism in that moment, we will have a difficult time perceiving the process by which the Gikuyu name of a mountain, *Kere-Nyaga*, was first transliterated into a more Anglophonic "Mount Kenya," a name which was only then applied to a settler colonial vision of the "East African Protectorate," and only being realized in 1920, when it formally became the Kenya colony. But what was the region before this conceptual change was made? From within a proleptic historian's perspective, it is counterintuitive to say anything at all about what it was that the nation replaced; from within that perspective, before the nation there is only, still, the nation's pre-figuration in its own telling of its own prehistory.

I make this point to flag the very different geographical function of an exploration tradition—which frames, freezes, and reifies the dark unknown, the better to produce it as a literary commodity for consumption in Europe (where the explorer inevitably returns)—from the proto-nationalism of a gaze like Roosevelt's, which is not only resolutely forward-looking in its anticipation of the nation yet to come (and finds that proleptically imagined entity in the present), but which frames "hunting" as a process in the stadial development of a settled white man's country. Exploration writing only more deeply established Africa's exteriority to Europe; hunting, by contrast, embedded "Kenya" within a European narrative of the world, incorporating it as a knowable space.

After all, "exploration" presumes the autonomous existence of the (pre-existing) object being explored. That object may then disparaged, subordinated, or slated for destruction, but its autonomous existence as a coherent other will always be the starting point for actions taken against the *it* which it nevertheless persists in being. Exploration never forgets that the thing it finds is different, strange, foreign, unsettling; if it were none of these things, after all, what would be the point in discovering it? An explorer like Stanley therefore includes descriptions of local political units and native populations and customs, in all their alterity; pre-existing African

socio-political structure was as much a part of the exotic landscape as bodies of water, flora, and fauna.

By contrast, Roosevelt's hunting was, itself, part of proleptic effort to historicize the future, to read the present as the past of the future to come, not only by distancing the exploration journeys of the past, but by imagining the domestic space coming into existence, for which "hunting" cleared the way. Where explorers saw an African darkness, Roosevelt sees an open frontier, a nation in the making.

Instead of saying that Roosevelt saw East Africa differently because of how *it* had changed since the era of its exploration, therefore, we must begin with the ways his choice of where to look, how, and why (and also where not to look) were actually the determinants of what he saw, a nation to which he does not give the name "Kenya," but which he anticipated in formation. His seeing was a self-fulfilling prophecy, accelerating the way the object of his sight changed into the thing which it could, then, retroactively, seem to have always and already been. In this sense, while it is true that "Kenya" had been dramatically transformed in the decades before his visit (though what modern historical moment can't be characterized in this way?), it is also and perhaps more importantly true that Roosevelt's choice to regard only one part of that still very heterogeneous multiplicity as the true "it" (and to overlook any competing narratives while doing so) was a narrative desire that produced rather than reflected any necessary or empirical facts.

Out of the multiplicity of East Africas which Roosevelt could have seen, then, the fact that *his* East Africa proleptically anticipates becoming—as he will repeatedly proclaim—a "white man's country" is only a function of the many East Africa's that he prevents himself from seeing. Despite the attractive neatness of formulations like Lonsdale's, there was no single moment when a footpath suddenly became an administration, or when the era of "conquest" became the era of "administration" (as is just misleadingly implied by the architecture of the book in which Lonsdale's essay appears).<sup>7</sup> And this messy process—which a conventionally nationalist historiography works to clarify into a one-dimensional and linear transition—was also geographically distributed, uneven, and overlapping, and can only be positioned as a temporal break by dramatically oversimplifying its *geographical* complexity. On the one hand, then, the process of colonial "administration" began even *earlier* than 1890 in places like central Gikuyuland and much later than 1910 elsewhere (to say nothing of the Swahili coast's already century-long subjection to British power, and the significant autonomy which the coast enjoyed much longer, as a result). On the other hand, the period of "conquest" was by no means completed even by 1910, if it ever truly was; what some Kenyan historians have called the "second colonial occupation" of the 1930's was an effort to expand and consolidate a project of land alienation and proletarianization that is often supposed to have already been complete decades earlier, but which was never "completed" at all, even then.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, if we regard the Mau Mau revolt as a direct response to the dispossessions and alienations of that period—from the late 1930's to the immediate post-war era—and observe that Mau Mau led, just as directly and necessarily, to Britain's concession of Kenyan independence in 1962, the question of when the "conquest" was completed is either to ask the wrong question or to beg it.

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<sup>7</sup> John Lonsdale, "The Conquest State of Kenya 1895-1905" in *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980, in Honour of B. A. Ogot*, edited by William R. Ochieng'. (London: Evans Brothers, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> J.M. Lonsdale and D.A. Low. "Towards the New Order, 1945-63," in D.A. Low and Alison Smith (eds), *History of East Africa, Vol. 3* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 1-65.

Attending to the ways that history is dispersed across spatial geography, by contrast, helps to clarify what nationalist chronologies gloss over, the ways in which retroactively distinguishable periods and epochs were actually experienced in synchronic simultaneity. It is easy to show, for example, that one part of East Africa was “already” being administered while another part was “still” being conquered. But while it is possible to retroactively yoke these utterly separate historical experiences together into a single nationalist narrative—using some variation on the term “meanwhile,” the nationalist historian’s rhetorical term of art (as Benedict Anderson notes in *Imagined Communities*)—it’s only a particular kind of narrative will that compels us to do so.<sup>9</sup> The fact that we *can* see it this way obscures the important fact that, in the majority of the space that could only proleptically be designated “Kenya” (or even “British East Africa”), the historical experience of the present would never have been narrated in those terms. The idea of “Kenya,” and all the narratives associated with it, would have made little sense to the vast majority of people inhabiting that space (and its retrospectively distinct historical destiny) in either 1890 *or* 1909; diachronic timelines shift our gaze away from synchronic conflict, making it difficult to regard the proleptic imagination of “Kenya,” in 1909, as the minority position it truly was. In the hands of a historian like Roosevelt, this is precisely the point.

In this chapter, my intention is not to recover the voices being occluded, but to explore the structure of their occlusion. Perhaps these voices cannot be adequately described, and perhaps we should not even try; as Gayatri Spivak famously observed, a desire to represent the unrepresented may always also represent nostalgia for the undivided subject of history, the very structuring category which makes subaltern history impossible.<sup>10</sup> But we can describe, with much more certainty what it was that these voices and forms of historical consciousness were *not*: even at the turn of the century, it would only and exclusively be from the perspective of the colonizing invaders that “British East Africa” could seem to be a thing being first conquered and then administered into existence, the wilderness “frontier” of a nation about to be—or having just been—born (and only a distinct minority of them). Far from being a teleological necessity, in other words, “Kenya” in the decades after 1890 was a highly contested projection of a relatively small group of white settlers, in some ways well-connected politically, and in others, utterly isolated from the imperial hierarchy in London. But even without making any descriptive claims about what it actually was that some imaginatively “typical” Gikuyu or Masaai might have thought about what was happening to them and the region they shared, it is safe to say that their sense of the possible would not have been limited to the kinds of historical consciousness which guided the European experience of East Africa, or to the historiography which has been retroactively imposed ever since. As we put away the nationalist historian’s sense of teleological inevitability, this work of disavowal can no longer be seen as responsive to or determined by

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<sup>9</sup> As Anderson puts it, “What has come to take the place of the mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time is, to borrow again from Benjamin, an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar...So deep-lying is this new idea that one could argue that every essential modern conception is based on a conception of meanwhile.” Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 24-5.

<sup>10</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994).

historical events (how the world had changed), or as the simple and passive experience of a history external to the observer. It becomes visible, instead, as a work of creatively destructive historiography in its own right.

As Alfred Korzybski famously put it, “A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness.”<sup>11</sup> In the case of Kenya—and the work done by statements like “British East Africa, which occupies roughly the same space as contemporary Kenya”—maps are particularly useful in imposing the structure of “use,” itself, on top of a reality which is not and was not reducible to that function. If the coming into existence of “Kenya” was one thing that was happening in the early 1900’s, it was far from the only thing, and not necessarily the most important. Yet reading history as a cartographic simultaneity—“Kenya” as defining the “meanwhile” of the region—distinguishes that which is useful from that which is not; it is useful to note the “rough” correspondence between map and territory, while the dissonance, friction, and conflict between map and territory (between representation and reality) is less “useful” to note.

In this chapter, I will describe the role played by “hunting” in imagining the settler nation of Kenya, how Roosevelt’s big game safari function to make the shooting of animals in Africa into a “useful” thing to do—in narrating into existence the “meanwhile” by which white settler publics would displace pre-existing African communities as anchoring the “now” of nation-time—as well as how this notion of “use” restructures a sense of what is interesting in Africa, away from exotic and unsettling strangeness towards the familiar experience of home.

In the first section, I will describe what was beneath the “footpath” which would lead to a railroad, the underlying structure of Swahili commerce which gave the region a shape, long before it would acquire a center. In this way, a settler-focused teleological historicism effaced the forms of globalization which obtained in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—which linked the African interior to South Asia by way of the Indian Ocean—in favor of a story about Africa that was fixated on empty space, empty space which became the barrier separating local from global, and a barrier which could be and was only overcome by the mechanisms of technological modernity: clocks, telegraphs, guns, and railroads. By orienting on the moment of 1903—in which the settler colonial project went from a speculation to a fact on the ground—I demonstrate how the form of Kenyan pre-history which “the colonial” as its structure of enunciation (thereby making thinkable both the “post-colonial” and the “pre-colonial”) is dependent on this original erasure, by which, in 1903, East Africa was transformed from a place filled with people, tribes, and history to a space inhabited by no one, a terra nullius which was thereby suitable for settlement.

Roosevelt “invented” the big game safari—with the qualification that, like nearly all inventors, Roosevelt’s claim rests on the productive amnesia by which the contributions of others were erased—in order to establish his particular centrality to the project of imagining a place called “Kenya” into existence. Kenya and the safari which performed it are settler colonial structures of knowledge which were not only distinct from the practices and archive of “British East Africa,” but a construction whose foundational erasures continue to haunt the postcolonial Kenyan state. Far from being co-extensive with imperialism, full stop, the settler colonial imagination by which safari-goers imagined Kenya into existence was a distinct and quite embattled form of white consciousness within the British Empire. It was also different kind of imperial gaze: if the British empire in London “saw like a state”—as James Scott, for example,

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<sup>11</sup> Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*. (Chicago: International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Co., 1941), 58.

describes the paradigmatic techniques by which states comprehended and rationalized their object—white settlers in East Africa preferred to see and to know as little as possible, thereby all the better to mediate the violence of settler conquest and white hegemony.

In the case of colonial Kenya the figure of “British India” represented precisely the form of colonial rule which the white settler population most wanted to avoid, even as colonial administrators in London sought to impose it. This conflict had deep roots and a long *durée*, but at its basis, the question was rather simple. Was British East Africa a “white man’s country”? Was it a “Black Men’s Country”? Or was it a cosmopolitan space of empire? Was it a land suited for white men to live and raise families; was it a jungle darkness, suited only for savage primitives; or was it a space where many different races and ethnicities could co-exist and have commerce, safe under the civilizing aegis of the Pax Britannica?

Theodore Roosevelt’s safari was an alliance with British East Africa’s settlers, a work of propaganda and a polemical argument for their worldview, that Africa was a “White Man’s Country.” As I will show, detaching himself from imperial history was, in practice, a means for Roosevelt to detach his proto-nationalist narrative from the structural contradictions of the imperial state, among which we find, first and foremost, the fact that Africa was filled with Africans. Those who argued against this settler vision—such as Winston Churchill in 1906, for example—emphasized the presence of Africans (and Asians), precisely as the problem of comprehension which made imperial administration a problem. For the administrative mind in London, the problem of British East Africa flowed out of the “fact” that it was a “black men’s country,” a colonial territory where the presence of non-white imperial subjects necessitated the state forms which had been developed elsewhere—particularly in India—for white men to rule over “savages.”

This problem was Kenya’s defining primal scene, a struggle between white settlers, Africans, Asians, and British imperialists to see East Africa in the terms which would not only advance, necessitate, and legitimize their particular political projects, but which would erase the historical contingencies by which they could be denied, the terms in which “Kenya” could be otherwise imagined. In the sense by which Barthes describes myth, in other words, different groups and interests produced different scenes of Africa—staged different accounts of the space that would eventually become “Kenya”—because they sought to make different histories into nature, and to render unthinkable the mythologies of their interlocutors.

In this sense, Kenyan political history begins from a very confusing point of mutual, willful misapprehension: as a consequence of the level at which the argument was conducted, all sides sought to prevent themselves from seeing the perspective of all the other sides. For this reason, if we retrospectively read as “Kenyan” history the era in which “Kenya” had not yet become a meaningful term—or when the structures of thought and identity which formed it had not yet taken form—we read out of the record the discursive, social, political, and economic arguments which preceded its formation, thereby bringing to a prematurely retroactive completion what was, in actuality, a much later nationalist effort to replace, erase, and forget. This was the point of it; Roosevelt’s gaze is proleptic, in this sense, a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy which sees Kenya as Kenya in order to help it become the particular Kenya he wants it to become, a “white man’s country.” But the extent to which it came true can make it difficult to discern everything that he looked at but refused to see, the structural *disinterest* which his interest made necessary: if his gaze predicted one outcome, it was precisely his desire that other outcomes not come true that made it necessary not to see their conditions of possibility.

Like Stanley’s “Dr. Livingstone, I Presume,” the safari is a text whose historical texture must

be felt by staging the layers of erasure and occlusion which made it meaningful, useful, and necessary in its time, and which it therefore includes and implies even now. While something that was added to the archive can be degraded or lost over time, something which was removed does not, over the course of time, tend to have its own erasure undone. Entropy points in the other direction; that which is forgotten tends to stay forgotten. In that sense, amnesia is the most enduring memory of all.

### **I. Remembering Kenya in 1903**

First and foremost, Swahili describes what was erased, the sense of regional geographical coherence which—for Europeans—preceded the beginning of a national history. The Swahili coast was well-connected to Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika—across the Great Rift Valley and the pastoral peoples that lived there—by long established patterns of trade, going back centuries. Indeed, “East Africa” for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was primarily thinkable as a region—in Europe—by reference to the “safaris” which not only carried the Swahili people’s language and commerce across the region, but which therefore structured the region as a traversable unit. This commercial trade not only laid the foundation for the sense of “East Africa” which continues to be demarcated by the use of Swahili today, but which was then understood as such. And if East Africa is defined by Swahili, the safari is its vehicle.

The earliest use of the word “safari” in English is Richard Francis Burton’s 1859 *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, his account of his journey with John Speke. Reminded of “the hosts of camels and mules that traverse the deserts and the mountains of Arabia and Persia,” he describes a commercial infrastructure that “[f]rom time immemorial” formed a “road to the coast”:

...though wars and blood-feuds may have temporarily closed one line, another necessarily opened itself. Among a race so dependent for comfort and pleasure upon trade, commerce, like steam, can not be compressed beyond a certain point...Caravans, called in Kiswahili safari (from the Arab safar, a journey), and by the African rugendo or lugendo, ‘a going,’ are rarely wanting on the main trunk-lines.<sup>12</sup>

“Time immemorial” is an exaggeration, of course, but the 18<sup>th</sup> century trade in ivory and the 19<sup>th</sup> century trade in slaves were no more than a dramatic expansion of a trade infrastructure that had long predated even the Portuguese arrival in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a coastal merchant network that had provisioned the interior with salt, iron ore, cloth, and other widely dispersed commodities. It was this trade network which made European access to the interior possible, and it was only with the encouragement and cooperation of Zanzibar and other African potentates that men like Burton and Speke were able to “explore” East Africa at all; far from going where no one had gone before, they traveled along well-established trade routes and made use of a deep repertoire of safari practices and conventions that had long preceded them. They understood—in ways which they either suppressed themselves or which have been forgotten by others—that European “influence” in the region was a shallow skin laid atop a skeleton of coastal commerce, capital, and labor.

Burton, therefore, could describe the established routes, conventions, and practices which formed the fabric of distinct African social formations; as he noted, some tribes had developed a

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<sup>12</sup> Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 23.

way of life precisely through their participation in the inland safari trade:

Porterage, on the long and toilsome journey, is now considered by the Wanyamwezi a test of manliness, as the Englishman deems a pursuit or a profession necessary to clear him from the charge of effeminacy. The children imbibe the desire with their milk...And they are ever quoting the adage that men who travel not are void of understanding—the African equivalent of what was said by the European sage: ‘The world is a great book, of which those who never leave home read but a page.’<sup>13</sup>

It may not be surprising that so prolific a travel-writer found the idea felicitous that traveling was a form of reading (especially if the suggestion was implied that reading might be a form of traveling). But we should be surprised to see him admit that the metaphor—that maturity and masculinity might be a function of travel, and one’s gender identity, reproductive fitness, and adult status depended on having left the home and made one’s way in the world—was *not* his invention. The Nyamwezi—what Stephen J. Rockel calls the “Nation of Porters”—was a “nation” which developed to serve a specific economic niche in the 19th century, supplying a particular form of economic demand for labor.<sup>14</sup> And as such, the Nyamwezi are a useful example of the ways “African” social identities could be and were structured by broader economic relationships with “external” groups (in this case, Swahili merchants on the coast), and how macro-social relationships could become the basis of something as micro-cultural and intimate as a notion of masculinity.

If “globalization” marks the moment when a society’s most intimate “cultural” relationships—child rearing, gender identity, maturity—come to be premised on economic relations with “external” networks of capital and demand, then the Nyamwezi were well and truly “globalized” well before Richard Burton passed through. Stephen Rockel observes that it would not be until the second half of the 19th century that “market relations emerged as the dominant form of economic organization,” and it would be hard to deny that the interior region’s economic ties to the coast greatly increased in the latter part of the 19th century, as the scramble for Africa picked up steam and became direct colonial rule. But the word “dominant” is being made to carry a greater burden than it can possibly bear, narrating into existence a dramatic and qualitative historical shift where nothing so dramatic can be observed. As Burton’s example shows, wage labor markets were highly developed and culturally incorporated long before European capital ever arrived. And even Rockel admits that after the market’s “dominance,” it was still true that “non-market relations frequently substituted for weakly developed commercial institutions and tools.”

In this context, a term like “globalization” can’t even be said to obscure more than it reveals; as an ideological construction of reality, it is part and parcel of the reality we hope to use it to understand. For one thing, the question of *when* the Nyamwezi became globalized is not a good question: if we posit a decisive and historical turning point—the moment when “market relations” became “dominant,” perhaps—we will be able to find one only by fundamentally obscuring the more gradual and less dramatic modes of social development by which market relations were incorporated beforehand, and by which they were mitigated afterwards.

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<sup>13</sup> Burton (1860), 235.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen J. Rockel, “A Nation of Porters!: The Nyamwezi and the Labour Market in Nineteenth-Century Tanzania,” *Journal of African History* 41, no. 2 (2000).

“Globalization” is not a phenomenon that can be tested, in other words, and notions of market “dominance” tend to be so ideologically determined as to be useless as analytic tools. To say the Nyamwezi were “globalized” because market relations had become “dominant” tells us far more about the kinds of benchmarks that those terms are meant to mark—and the grand meta-historical narrative which they measure—than about the Nyamwezi themselves, who tend to be re-shaped and re-imagined so as to fit the story they are being used to tell.

To call a tribe-nations like the Nyamwezi “globalized,” however, would be to make an assertion about those tribes who are not, by implied negation. The idea of “globalization” is premised on the fiction that, before the coming of some version of modernity, social identity was a function of an individual’s autonomous relationship to place, the fiction that before being “globalized,” the societies and cultures in question were cut off from the outside, or were at least were not fundamentally concerned with that which was external to them. This idea is palpably false, even if we relax our grip on the idea that “globalization” is a strictly European and “modern” phenomenon: the Nyamwezi were always connected to and implicated broader regional economies, and were unthinkable as a social unit without reference to some sense of the larger bodies, categories, circulations, flows, and networks which made them nameable as such. In this, they were the exemplary rule, not the exception. To tell the pre-colonial history of any East African tribe-nation is to describe their integration into regions already well defined by socio-economic macro-relations, not by their autonomous micro-identities.

If “globalization” cannot tell us much about the Nyamwezi, however, the Nyamwezi can tell us a great deal about the uses, limits, and ideological origins of term like globalization. As Jeremy Priestholdt uses the Comoros islands to argue, in *Domesticating the World*,

Contemporary globalization rhetoric regularly obscures pasts that never easily conformed to the distances, dichotomies, and differences that we often imagine to have constrained human relationships across space...the fiction of historical isolation and global disjuncture that appears commonly in globalization discourse and spurs the revival of such nineteenth-century abstractions as hybridity is a conceptual inheritance of modernity that deserves challenge.<sup>15</sup>

“Globalization,” in other words, is not an analytic tool, but something like what Eric Voegelin called an “apodictic horizon,” a meta-historical narrative which distinguishes between the pre-history that need not be taken into account and the moment at which demonstration and objectivity become possible and necessary.<sup>16</sup> Globalization is when History begins: if there was, in some sense, a pre-history, it is not part of history, by definition, and becomes a repository for anything that does not properly fit into the narrative being posited.

The Nyamwezi are, in some ways, an extreme example, in that they were more wholly dependent on an external demand for something close to “wage” labor, which was far from typical. But the general case was much closer to this reality than to the opposite extreme, the myth of the un-contacted African tribe. This fact is particularly clear and pertinent in East Africa, which was not only the last part of Africa to be colonized by Europeans, but was also the last

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<sup>15</sup> Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Consumerism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Eric Voegelin “Remembrance of Things Past,” Chapter 1 in Gerhart Niemeyer, ed. and trans., *Anamnesis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).

part of the continent to be colonized by Africans, and quite incompletely. In this sense, the West's "modernity" did not transform an otherwise unchanging traditional order, or even one that was characterized by its durable stability. If anything, the reverse was the case: it was because East Africa was never not an unstable region—characterized by shifting and evolving layers of economic, cultural, and ecological relationships—that European settlement could implant itself where and when it did. Or, rather, the character of its socio-political instabilities described the terrain on which the struggle for power would proceed, once European powers joined in. It is only because we are accustomed to counting back from the event of first contact—or the beginning of settlement—that terms like "pre-colonial" can seem like an appropriate historical category, that the most relevant fact about East Africa in the year 1870, for example, might be what had not yet happened to it.

This historiographic structure, the not-yet colonial, is a poor analytic framework, yet it tends to be the default. When Louis Leakey composed *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, for example, he produced the authentically Gikuyu by a kind of negative reference to the beginning of white settlement in 1903, a date whose significance is so obvious he does not even need to explain it.<sup>17</sup> For him, the authentically African was a function of being previous to "contact" with modernity, the moment when anthropology passes the baton to history. "Writing" is the master-metaphor for this moment, standing in for what was absent and structuring how that absence will be understood and written about. The condition of possibility for Leakey's text, for example, is the fact that the oral had not yet become written: he explicitly contrasts his own book with the kinds of traditional knowledge that he drew upon in compiling it, but from which *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903* was also categorically distinct. As he put it, because the Gikuyu were "without a written language," and "had no history in the strict meaning of that word, the story of their origin and development can be obtained only from their traditions, which become more and more vague the further back they go." He stages his reliance on oral tradition, in other words, as an evil necessitated by the absence of a *real* history (a written one), an absence which requires, in turn, the development and employment of a variety of techniques and scientific procedures to transform that vague uncertainty into something reliable and true. In this sense, as he set out to produce an authoritative history of the Gikuyu people, his presumption of the basic inadequacy of the oral tradition, both comparatively and as the problem that he had to overcome, helps to produce and reproduce the difference between "the story of their origin" which he sought to write down (in a monumental 1400 pages) and the unwritten "traditions" from which he obtained the raw data for it. It is worth pointing out, moreover, that while Leakey claimed a particular kind of insider status as Gikuyu, he at no point allows *his* writing to be considered part of the Gikuyu tradition; even though it could be argued to be written *by* a Gikuyu (himself), its very status as written (and in English) marked it as distinct from the Gikuyu tradition which he defined, negatively, as *un-written*.

When the Oakland Zoo constructed an exhibit which they named "Traditional East African Woman's Dwelling," this framework informed both how that hut would be constructed and how its authenticity would be historicized. As Zoo carpenter Rick Mannshardt described the process by which he built the house:

Following the descriptions from a book written by famed anthropologist Louis Leakey, I drew out a floor plan and began gathering the many rustic materials needed for the project:

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<sup>17</sup> Louis Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu before 1903* (London: Academic Press, 1977)

wooden poles and sticks, ecola heather, reed mats, bamboo, straw and dried leaves. Inside the hut, I constructed separate mother's and daughter's bedrooms for sleeping, a pen for the animals, a storeroom, a goat fattening pen, and a central kitchen with a stone hearth for cooking. According to long-held tradition, these rooms are laid out in precisely the same manner in every hut, along with a wealth of taboos about conduct and social rituals. For example, if a cooking pot should crack while food is being cooked in it, that food can only be eaten by women past childbearing age. And if an owl hoots near a homestead, or a frog or lizard falls into the fireplace, a house purification ceremony is required.<sup>18</sup>

Or as a 2009 press release described,

Rustic materials were collected...diagrams were diligently studied...and an authentic replica of an East African hut has finally emerged! 'My goal was to bring an authentic look, feel, and smell into the structure, so visitors receive a true depiction from the exhibit,' says Rick Mannshardt, who has been on staff at the Zoo for more than 17 years. In its completion stands a 23 ft round hut crafted to portray a pre-1903 East African design. Inside the dwelling, Zoo visitors will find a traditional mother's bedroom, a daughter's bedroom, and a kitchen with a fireplace. It's an excellent opportunity to discover the traditional lifestyle of the Kikuyu people, who lived off the land, cooked over wood fires, and raised goats and sheep.

His statements about the "traditional lifestyle of the Kikuyu people" are, of course, not even wrong. Many Gikuyu still live "off the land," cook over wood fires, and raise goats and sheep; the fact that they also did these things before 1903 does not give the term "traditional" any analytic purchase on the people it purports to describe, except as a name for that pre-1903 period. It's also worth noting that his verb tenses shift between the ethnographic present of the traditional—conveyed through the passive voice of "laid out in precisely the same manner" or "a house purification ceremony is required"—and the sense of that present's past-ness, the fact the "traditional lifestyle" is a property of people who "lived," "cooked," and "raised." The people who did these things are dead and gone, but the ethnographic experience remains in the present, mediated by the representative apparatus of books and exhibits. For this reason, even though "Africans living in the local community" were, in some sense consulted as part of the design process, their (presumably oral) testimony was not and could not be the authority on the "authentic." Only Leakey's written word could fulfill that function, both capturing the pre-colonial authentic—through the voices of lost local interlocutors who could testify firsthand to what pre-1903 was like—and distinguishing itself from its subject, as written instead of the merely oral. Texts survive, in ways that voices do not.

As Oakland Zoo Executive Director Dr. Joel Parrott explained to me in an email, however, the purpose of the hut was not simply to recreate a piece of the lost past. It was to bring to Oakland the present experience of pastness that one can still obtain in East Africa:

The general thinking behind this project was to recreate a sense of the experience of what it means to go to East Africa. I have now been there nine times. What is unmistakable, when I

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<sup>18</sup> "Goats in the Kitchen," Oakland Zoo, accessed July 2012, <http://www.oaklandzoo.org/blog/2010/04/07/goats-in-the-kitchen/>

go to Africa, is that it is a total environment, and not just a collection of pieces. A big problem with zoos, is that they tend to show animals, even those in naturalistic exhibits, separate from each other and separate from the rest of the world. The intent here was to try to give a sense of unity in the East African experience.<sup>19</sup>

When a visitor like Parrott goes to East Africa, his experience is in the present tense (“when I go”). But while “the East African experience” is both a unity and a temporal constant, the unchanging nature of the visitor’s experience takes place across a different temporality than the experience of the Africans in question: while the Gikuyu who “lived,” “cooked,” and “raised” are lost to us—neither representing nor represented—the “Africans living in the local community” can be consulted, but they are as cut off from the past being re-created as we are. The genealogy for that past is therefore a purely white lineage, and presented as an experience of and for visitors, as ontologically distinct.

## **II. Terra Nullius**

What East Africa wasn’t—for those who hoped it would become “Kenya”—was full of Africans. Of the Mau Escarpment, for example—the western rim of the Great Rift Valley, and firmly within what had been Maasai territory—Lord Lugard would declare the land to be “uninhabited, and of great extent,” that “it consequently offers unlimited room for the location of agricultural settlements or stock-rearing farms,” and that “[h]ere, if anywhere in Central Africa, in my opinion, would be the site upon which to attempt the experiment of European settlements.”<sup>20</sup>

Of course, it should go without saying that British East Africa was, in reality, full of native Africans, place names, and history. This reality went *particularly* unsaid by East Africa’s white settler population, for whom it was of existential importance that East Africa be empty. To use Bruno Latour’s definition of “reality” as “that which resists” (or “that which cannot be changed at will”) is appropriate: in opposition to the symbolic order which Roosevelt and the white settler community sought to imagine into existence, a variety of realities interposed their existence, and had to be dealt with.<sup>21</sup>

First and foremost, when Charles Eliot began leasing “crown” land to white settlers on a large scale in 1903, it had already been a minority position since 1899 that “wastelands and other unoccupied land and that occupied by savage tribes” were to be made available for settler use, but the forced logic of that phrase nicely illustrates the elisions by which the process had to go forward in practice: since alienable land’s categorical status as *empty* was what made it appropriate to be seized and leased to immigrant settlers, native lands could only be “alienated” through a tautological equation of native occupation with non-occupation.<sup>22</sup>

This was, in its rough outline, the juridical tradition of *terra nullius*, by which Australia had been declared “empty.” According to the *terra nullius* argument, legitimate ownership of

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<sup>19</sup> Joel Parrott, e-mail message to Aaron Bady, August 28, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire: Early Efforts in Nyasaland and Uganda* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893), 419, viii

<sup>21</sup> Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Latour and Woolgar, 1979), 260.

<sup>22</sup> Norman Miller and Rodger Yeager, *Kenya: The Quest for Prosperity*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994).

property (as opposed to mere *occupation*) was derived from a twofold criteria: first, that the land be *improved* (and separated off from “nature” by this improvement) and that it be embedded within a system of settled government, which could guarantee the exclusive enjoyment of ownership privileges to those who had made the improvements. By these standards, the fact that British East Africa was one of “the wide waste spaces of the earth, unworn of man, and changed only by the slow change of the ages through time everlasting,” as Roosevelt put it, illustrated the African failure to acquire, by labor and government, any ownership rights that would need to be respected. And while Roosevelt does note that a few natives had come under the white man’s influence (or that of the Muslims on the coast), he also makes a point of observing that “most of the natives are still wild pagans, and many of them are unchanged in the slightest particular from what their forefathers were during the countless ages when they alone were the heirs of the land—a land which they were utterly powerless in any way to improve.”<sup>23</sup>

Roosevelt’s language is far from innocent: as a lawyer and a statesman, there is nothing accidental in the fact that he happens to employ precisely the juridical vocabulary that was used to describe how and why “natives” could be rendered “alien” to land which could then be leased to white settlers. Occupation was distinguished from ownership because unimproved land was not *property* and could not be inherited, especially if (as was uniformly maintained) a regulatory system of private property did not exist before the coming of British crown. The question of African dispossession, therefore, does not even arise, because African *possession* has been precluded by definition: “savage property rights” is a contradiction in terms. In this sense, when Roosevelt is reminded of “conditions in Montana and Wyoming thirty years ago” and he quickly leaps to describe the various reservoirs, irrigation ditches, and other public improvements which will be required to entice settlers and home-makers “to come into a white man’s country like this of the highlands of East Africa,” his language just happens to be just as precise in fixating on the state-driven *improvements* which will make property ownership possible.<sup>24</sup>

In 1910, however, Roosevelt was only the latest in a long line of settler visionaries who looked at East Africa and saw empty land (Charles Eliot’s observation, for example, that “[w]e have in East Africa the rare experience of dealing with a *tabula rasa*, an almost untouched and a sparsely inhabited country, where we can do as we will”).<sup>25</sup> Settlers in British East Africa tended not to directly refer directly to the doctrine of *terra nullius* itself, but the underlying logic of those practices was so firmly established in practice that no such legalistic theorizing was necessarily warranted; moreover, it had also become a problematic theory to assert explicitly. After all, East Africa was *not* empty, and in any case—by 1903—it could be safely admitted (and was) that Australia and North America had not been either, since white settlement had firmly become “facts on the ground.” In this sense, the metaphor of *tabula rasa* was apt in a way Eliot almost certainly did not intend: like the literal “blank slate” to which he refers, the emptiness of British East Africa was a man-made artifact, a palimpsest whose blankness had to be manufactured before it could be written on, and which reality resisted. Qualifiers like Eliot’s “almost” and “sparsely” register a certain experiential dissonance between the reality of an Africa occupied by Africans and the fantasy of empty space to which he was bound, but the work of his text was to convert the unbelievers, to write into existence an emptiness whose eventual failure to obtain (through the existence of concrete African presences) would doom the settler

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<sup>23</sup> Roosevelt (1910), 18.

<sup>24</sup> Roosevelt (1910), 42, 40.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), 3.

project on which he had staked his career. For as with most settler colonies, the empirical facts obstructed imperial consensus only to the extent that they were seen and recognized: if an imperial consensus agreed that East Africa was empty, the existence of African occupants would not impede the process of their dispossession. Their removal would only bring into existence the already accepted version of the status quo, and would thus be invisible as violence.

The beginning of white settlement in East Africa is to be found in the books which were written to report on the land's absence of occupants. As Lord Lugard proudly recalled half a century later, he had been, in 1893, the first to make the case that while the world's equatorial tropics were, by and large, suitable only for the occupation of the darker skinned races, the anomalously high elevation of the East African highlands made possible white settlement along the lines of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa. In *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, he proclaimed that "[t]he fertile highlands of Africa," might turn out to be "the embryo empires of an epoch already dawning—empires which, in the zenith of their growth and development, may rival those mighty dependencies which are now the pride of the Anglo-Saxon race." And he was right to look back with pride at his foresightedness: at that time, the idea that equatorial East Africa might be a "white man's country" was a massively revisionary account of the region, since the climatic line separating the white settler colonies in southern Africa from the malarial tropics had traditionally been understood to be far to the south, somewhere around the Zambezi river. As Harry Johnston had put it some years earlier, in describing what is now Eastern Malawi, "this eastern portion of British Central Africa will never be a white man's country in the sense that all Africa south of the Zambezi, and all Africa north of the Sahara will eventually become — countries where the white race is dominant and native to the soil."<sup>26</sup> British East Africa was well north of that line, so partisans of East African settlement—eventually including Johnstone—would eventually argue that the elevation made the highlands an *exception* to an otherwise concrete rule.

What was at stake in that exception was not, however, a question of political right, but its displacement onto a problem of climatic fact, the apparently *empirical* question of whether the climate would allow white families and cash crops to grow (and the accompanying assumption that there was a natural line separating "white" and "black" climates). For this reason, while the supposed sparseness of Africans in the regions deemed to be "white man's country" was as much a fiction as it had been in the "terra nullius" that Australia had been declared to be—something that would only become more and more problematically apparent as white settlement proceeded—African absence implied a specific geographical content of whiteness. If Africans were absent, then it was a "white man's country," and the reverse was taken to be just as intuitively true: if it was climatically suitable for white people, then there were and could be no Africans there.

In this sense, while Lord Lugard is best known for his 1929 theorization of indirect rule, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* is not so different from *The Rise of Our East African Empire*. Together, they represent a single and organic vision of imperial praxis: while the former describes how African *labor* was to be put to use, the land describes how African *land* was to be rendered profitable. But the difference is one of framing, the difference between different climatic zones which therefore require different approaches: while tropical territories are pictured by the variety of products that were being wasted for want of native *labor* (as Lugard

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<sup>26</sup> Harry Johnston, *British Central Africa; an attempt to give some account of a portion of the territories under British influence north of the Zambezi* (London: Methuen. 1897). 182.

put it, “[m]illions of tons of oil-nuts for instance grew wild without the labour of man, and lay rotting in the forests”), more temperate climates offered waste *lands* which white farmers were needed to husband into productive fertility. They have in common the same moral authority derived from an imperative to render useful what was “wasted,” but climate defines two distinctly different imperial teleologies: the *Dual Mandate* describes the imperial repertoire necessary to render useful the “products [which] lay wasted and ungarnered in Africa because the natives did not know their use and value”—a program of putting Africans to work to harvest commodities—while *Our East African Empire* was an argument for how to deal with empty space, unoccupied and virgin soil.

For a macro-imperial theorist like Lugard, the difference between the imperial repertoire of a settler state (like Australia) and a franchise colony (like Nigeria or Uganda) was easy: while white men should settle in the “white man’s countries,” the natives of the “black man’s countries” should be given slow and careful guidance towards civilization, by putting them to work. But for a micro-theorist of British East Africa, this was a troublesome question; parts of the region seemed particularly suitable for white settlers while others seemed to call for colonial administration of colonial labor. And while Roosevelt’s observation that “[a]lthough under the equator, the altitude is so high that the nights are cool, and the region as a whole is very healthy,” pictures the region by reference its settler potential, there were many influential voices in the empire of 1910 who not only saw the region in the terms by which Lugard imagined franchise colonial spaces, but who had firmly established reasons to look for the landscape in those terms.

A year earlier, for instance, the Undersecretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill had written (in a book Roosevelt read) that “[i]t is still quite unproved that a European can make even the Highlands of East Africa his permanent home...still less that he can breed and rear families through several generations.”<sup>27</sup> And Churchill’s skepticism is precisely as informed as Roosevelt’s was: as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Churchill spent four months touring British East Africa and Uganda in late 1907, and while the places he looked at were almost precisely the same as Roosevelt would visit a few years later, he is quite polemically uninterested in seeing them by the telos of white settlement. Instead, Churchill emphasizes the “more than four million aboriginals in East Africa alone,” which both “impos[ed] a grave, and...inalienable, responsibility upon the British Government,” and caused him to dramatically fear for the “ill day” when these native races “are removed from the impartial and august administration of the Crown and abandoned to the fierce self-interest of a small white population.” By starting with the millions of Africans who lived there—and the fact that its white settler population was always very small—Winston Churchill was representative of an entire class of London-based colonial functionaries who looked at East Africa and saw not a burgeoning white republic, but an African country with a dangerous settler population. And if imperial thinkers in the 1890’s had begun thinking about how to make British East Africa into a settler colony like South Africa, the second Boer War (1899-1902) was only one of the most decisive of the many reasons that politicians like Winston Churchill were having second thoughts about the desirability of another South Africa. Having fought a bloody and inglorious war with intransigent settlers in South Africa, they had no desire to repeat the experience.

The colony that would become Kenya was constituted by this disagreement from before its beginning, the vastly different perspective (or vision) taken by settlers in Nairobi and by colonial bureaucrats in London. Was Kenya to be a franchise colony like Nigeria or British India, or a

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<sup>27</sup> Winston Churchill, *My African Journey* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1909), 58.

white settler colony like Australia or South Africa? Was its economic basis to be the corporatist mass exploitation of native labor or petty agriculture by white farmers? Were its natives to be semi-autonomous subjects of the empire—with a certain amount of power devolved to local leaders along with responsibility for keeping the King’s peace—or were they to be displaced (and more or less presumed not to exist) to make way for the building of a “Britannic” republic? And, perhaps most importantly, what was to be done with the colony’s sizable Indian population?

For each of these questions, the colony’s settler population and the colonial office not only had different answers, but they framed their answer by “empirical” statements about “the facts.” In this sense, the underdetermined question of climate expressed—by sublimating—the *political* argument over the meaning of imperialism that would set London and Nairobi at cross purposes for almost the entire period of colonial rule. Because London and Nairobi had irreconcilably different answers to that question, they pursued irreconcilably different approaches to questions like labor, immigration, land tenure, and political relationship with the empire. But since both sides wished to imagine a singular and united imperial community, this argument proceeded not by making “empire” its subject (which would explicitly foreground dissension) but by focusing on the question of the land itself.

In 1908, this conflict (briefly) boiled over. Lord Delamere had demanded that “all government officers be directed and be strictly required to encourage the native to seek labour,” the issue that would plague the settler community for its entire existence: white cash-crop agriculture could only thrive through cheap African labor, but since Africans showed little interest in joining the cash economy in the numbers that were required, a variety of coercive methods had to be established to “encourage” them. In 1908, however, after flagging Delamere’s plan as “the Nyasaland and Rhodesian system,” Governor Hays-Sadler refused to either agree or disagree with the settler demands, nor even to explain why. Instead, the conversation simply ended; after admitting that “there has been a serious falling off in the supply of labour” (and even endorsing the basic justice of the settler grievance), he tabled the issue, ended the meeting, and went home. Not to be put off, Lord Delamere and a group of unruly settlers followed him home, where ensued the confrontation which Churchill would meaningfully characterize as “organized demonstration of an insulting and disorderly character,” a particular manifestation of what Roosevelt was working to unthink more categorically, not only the conflict which the settlers wanted to both imagine and argue out of existence, but, in particular, the Africans and Asians who were at the root of it.<sup>28</sup>

The immediate results of this confrontation were ambiguous: Delamere and others were briefly suspended from the Protectorate’s Legislative Council while the governor’s inability to govern led to his eventual replacement. But as the first test of recalcitrance as a political tactic—and the settler’s first discovery of administrative docility in the face of open defiance—it was also the first of many such feints, setting the pattern that colonial politics would follow for decades. Open insurrection could never succeed, but the imperial government’s hand was far from free: the only military force in the colony capable of putting down a real settler rebellion by force was the Kings African Rifles, a white officered but primarily African force, and using black troops against white colonists would have been political suicide for the colonial official forced to do so. Because the colonial office had more to lose by calling the settler bluff than the settlers had to lose in threatening it, the settlers found that they could quite effectively *threaten*

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<sup>28</sup> All quotations from Elspeth Huxley, *White Man’s Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya* (London: Macmillan, 1935).

revolt—and did, repeatedly—to win concessions from an administration that preferred to fold the hand rather than pay the political cost of winning it.

While the standoff laid bare what had been the defining but unspoken political dynamic of the colony since well before its founding, Winston Churchill had already seen and hinted at the latent threat of settler revolt when he toured the Protectorate in 1907, the year before the confrontation at the Governor's house. In describing the settler capitol, for instance, the specter of the Boer war and the broader problem of anti-colonial white nationalism which it represented inflect with an implicit but clear threat his apparently bland statement that "Nairobi is a typical South African township," as does his characterization of the settler population as "South African in its character and proportions."<sup>29</sup> And when he infamously declared that "[e]very white man in Nairobi is a politician; and most of them are leaders of parties," he was not only putting a Boer face to the fractious settler community, but framing that fractiousness as a disloyalty to established political authority by a population that (depending on whether the Afrikaners were British subjects or Dutch nationals) was either treasonous or foreign.<sup>30</sup>

In this way, Churchill sought to disimagine what the settlers were demanding their intransigence to be: claims for Britannic liberties that were being denied, the tyrannical injustice of subjection without representation. As Huxley would put it in 1935 (echoing Delamere's rhetoric and thinking), "the same policies which stung America to revolt a century and a half ago [are] jangling East Africa's nerves to-day"; when the colonial administrators attribute "the settler's periodic outbursts against the Government" to climatic factors like the African sun, she gave voice to the sarcastic settler retort that "'perhaps...the American colonists suffered from the low humidity.'" Delamere and company had mobbed Hays-Sadler's house because they regarded him as *their* representative, and were demanding that he listen to *them*, a claim he had difficulty directly refusing. As Elspeth Huxley would years later recount, what Delamere had argued was at stake in the 1908 protest was the same basic right of self-governance which they saw as having animated the American Revolution itself.

"English people do not like being arbitrarily governed from the outside," Huxley channels Delamere to argue:

[t]hey consider, rightly or wrongly, that they know more about the conditions under which they live than people who inhabit a different continent and hemisphere [and] the aspirations which have in time turned all British colonies where British people have their homes into self-governing dominions (all save one, that is, which, finding the door bolted, battered it down) exist with the same intensity in tiny communities as in large. They are less effective, that is all. Opinions which are mere ranting in East Africa once made history in America. It is simply that God is on the side of the big battalions...

The settler community's numbers were too small to reasonably hope for real self-government, of course, and they didn't; settlers like Delamere had learned the lessons of the Boer war as well as had Churchill. But they had learned a more important lesson from the American civil war. The South's claims for "autonomy" had been the frustrated demand for federal support of slavery—just as the settler grievance was insufficient assistance from the colonial government, the demand that the imperial state organize African and Indian labor to

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<sup>29</sup> Churchill (1909), 20.

<sup>30</sup> Churchill (1909)

exclusively benefit white agriculture. But if Southern secessionists had claimed the American revolution as a legitimizing precedent for the recalcitrance of a white supremacist regional economy against free labor economics, they had decisively lost to the latter's "big battalions." It is therefore not surprising that the settler community tended not to draw direct comparisons with the American civil war itself; a lost cause was hardly the kind of historical precedent they would find amenable. But the broader "lost cause" mythology and the white reconstruction project it was embedded within provided what the settler society *did* need; after all, if the South lost the battle for slavery in the 1860's, they won the peace in the years that followed, in which reconstruction was rolled back and white hegemony was re-established, and they did so in terms that nicely matched the situation the settler community found itself in. Actual *slavery* was just as fundamentally and officially verboten in the British colonies as it was in the post-bellum United States; Britain was the global champion of free labor and derived a great deal of its imperial mythology from its mission to liberate Africans enslaved by ignorance, paganism, and despotic chieftains. What white reconstruction had to offer to white settlers in Kenya, therefore, was a model for white hegemony not based on official force, but on the natural solidarity of white men against black laborers whose official nonexistence they sought to emphasize.

In sharp contrast, in fact, to the way Churchill emphasizes Boer traitorousness as making them *different* than the English subjects who remained loyal, Roosevelt's address to the lingering specter of the second Boer war was to understand it precisely as a civil war that *united* both sides in glorious conflict, not only replicating American post-bellum reunification in general terms but directly referencing it. Roosevelt frames Boer participation in the "South African War" as precisely the thing they have in common with the English settlers they fought against. He can't completely ignore the lingering resentment, of course; he admits that not only had many of the English settlers "fought through the South African war," but "so had all the Boers I met," and that these Afrikaners "had been for the most part members of various particularly hard fighting commandos" who still "felt very bitterly, and wished to avoid living under the British flag." But just as white North-South reunions had taught civil war veterans in the US to regard themselves as having fought *together*, Roosevelt re-imagines the veterans of the South African conflict as having been united by their common participation, going so far as to Anglicize the Dutch word "Afrikaner" to produce an otherwise unique term, a South African "Africander" identity from which English settlers are explicitly *not excluded* (writing of ethnically English South Africans, for example, he notes that Clifford Hill "had never been in England" but then calls him and his family "fine fellows; Africanders, as their forefathers for three generations had been, and frontiersmen of the best kind").<sup>AGT, p78</sup> Instead of a divisive Afrikaner/English split, in other words, he tells a story of United European "Africanders" in Africa, rendering the South African settlers, English and Dutch both, as the very picture of white racial unity (a move, in fact, which the Anglophilic but Dutch-descended Roosevelt regarded very personally).

As scholars like David Blight have shown, the American North and South had come to be affectively reunified in the post-bellum era by re-narrating the civil war in precisely this way, transforming it into a "glorious struggle" by removing any trace of the underlying disagreement that had motivated it, the problem of black labor. And the story Roosevelt tells is not simply *like* the postbellum American narrative of reunification through glorious struggle; Roosevelt makes the comparison explicit when he holds out "hope that the men who in South Africa fought so valiantly against one another, each for the right as he saw it, will speedily grow into a companionship of mutual respect, regard, and consideration such as that which, for our inestimable good fortune, now knits closely together in our own land the men who wore the blue

and the men who wore the gray and their descendants.”

The work of Roosevelt’s text, therefore, was not only to forget the dissension that Delamere’s riot revealed, but to re-render its cause unspeakable, to establish white solidarity (on settler terms) by unthinking the existence of Africans and Asian which had forced the two sides apart. Yet in doing so, he was not only applying the same kind of structural amnesia by which the cause of the American civil war—black personhood and citizenship—was allowed to recede from American consciousness and memory, he was unthinking the very same “American” terms through which the imperial argument over British East Africa’s place in the empire had originally been debated. After all, as shown by Huxley and Delamere’s appeal to American revolutionary precedent, the American experience as a revolutionary colony could provide a very different kind of historical memory. Roosevelt therefore replaced the narrative of nationalist struggle against imperialist metropole with a much more congenial story, a sexualized story of white men subduing and rendering productive a fertile but virgin continent.

### **III. "Ox-Wagon Pioneers in the Age of the Model T Ford"**

White settlers in East Africa, however, had bigger problems than insufficiently docile colonial administrators. British East Africa was out of step with its moment, founded long after the era of true settler colonialism had passed. Churchill was representative of his turn-of-the-century peers in understanding the expansion of the British Empire not as the movement and expansion of white populations into unclaimed territories—as had characterized the empire a century earlier—but as the extension of London’s political and military authority over subject peoples. In sharp contrast to the settler model that had obtained in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century—which lived on mainly in the imaginations of men like Roosevelt—imperial thinkers in 20<sup>th</sup> century London overwhelmingly understood their imperial sway in terms of *governance*, seeing the empire as a messy assemblage of many different races and many different forms of social order, united only by their common subjection to a singular crown authority, their common status as an imperial white man’s burden.<sup>31</sup> “Australia” increasingly came to represent an aggravating problem—a vacuum sucking up political and financial capital without significant return—while *India* was not only, concretely, the most important colony in the empire, by far, but obviously represented the future of a viable imperial system. As a result, as franchise colonialism became the dominant model of empire, the place of settler dependencies within the larger system became more and more precarious, putting men like Churchill at direct cross purposes with both the white settlers and sympathizers like Roosevelt, men and women who still understood empire as the expansion of white *populations* into what they considered to be the world’s empty “waste spaces.”

Kenya would not have, in other words, the historical context which made the problem of aborigines seem to solve itself, as it had in “classic” settler colonies like Australia or the United States (or even South Africa), the much older colonies which white Kenyans hoped to emulate.

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<sup>31</sup> As Elspeth Huxley claimed, in 1935: “Uganda and the East African Protectorate were not taken over by the government in order to develop them. In those days, a government’s function was to administer and not to develop... Government officials regarded it as a country to be occupied, pacified, and then administered-- that is, order enforced, taxes collected, and justice dispensed. That was their job; and they did it magnificently. But Delamere came at it from another angle...” Huxley (1935), 54-5.

Earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the aboriginal populations of North America and Australasia had been exterminated and pushed away from the land they had once occupied in ways that Kenyans could not emulate. White settlers never came to East Africa in the numbers that characterized the great age of migration in which “classic” settler colonies were settled; the demographic tides had shifted in Europe for a variety of reasons (not to mention that prospective settlers could still find better conditions in Australia, Canada, and other open land frontiers than in British East Africa). As a result, as John Lonsdale has pointed out, the number and economic significance of the Kenyan settler community—especially by comparison with “true” settler colonies like Australia—was so small that the Quixoticness of settler aspirations has to be seen as one of their defining characteristics: at its peak, the white settler population never constituted even close to 1% of the total population, a percentage John Lonsdale points out is “ridiculously small” compared to even the still overwhelmingly outnumbered (and only marginally less doomed) Southern African settler colonies of Rhodesia or South Africa. “Classic” settler colonies like Australia were such because they had developed a critically massive white population on which to base an exclusively white economy. Kenya never had a chance to even be in the same ballpark. Reality resisted: so settlers took refuge in fantasy.

To contextualize the broad political failures of twentieth-century settler colonies like Kenya, then, we need to begin with the failure to obtain of the conditions that made broad political consensus around white settlement possible into the 1830’s. After all, when settler colonization of South Australia was first being planned and established in the 1830’s (instead of simply convict transportation), the logic by which Europe’s settlement of the world’s “waste spaces” could be seen as an obvious and natural response to the crisis of the impoverished urban working classes was a line of thinking that had not only first been put into practice in the Americas but which seemed to have proven itself there. Thomas Jefferson, for example, made the American escape option into the very well-spring of American liberty, arguing in 1805 that American manufacturers would be “as independent and moral as our agricultural inhabitants... as long as there are vacant lands for them to resort to [since] whenever it shall be attempted by the other classes to reduce them to the minimum of subsistence, they will quit their trades and go to laboring the earth.”<sup>32</sup>

This escape option can look like US “exceptionalism” within the American tradition; as Henry Nash Smith put it, for instance: “One of the most persistent generalizations concerning American life and character is the notion that our society has been shaped by the pull of a vacant continent drawing population westward through the passes of the Alleghenies, across the Mississippi Valley, over the high plains and mountains of the Far West to the Pacific Coast.”<sup>33</sup> But this understanding was also simply the same Malthusian logic that had made settling the *world’s* vacant spaces an obvious means of mitigating the problems of industrialization; for imperial thinkers who sought to replicate it with Britain’s laboring poor, there was nothing *exceptional* about the American example. For people like Edward Gibbon Wakefield, for example, the theoretical mastermind of Australia’s “systematic colonization,” the principles of political economy for which the United States was exemplary were universal: in the year before 1834’s South Australia Act, for instance, Wakefield’s *England and America* had argued that since “the chief social evils of England are owing to a deficiency of land in proportion to capital

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<sup>32</sup> Jefferson, to Mr. Lithson, Jan 4th, 1805

<sup>33</sup> Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol an Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p.4.

and labour, and those of America to an excess of land in proportion to capital and labour,” en route to advocating for a colonization scheme that would more properly balance the “three elements of production... land, capital, and labour” and which could, as he argued, avoid the characteristic social disorders of each in its own right (slavery in the case of the Americas and urban poverty in England) and also incidentally mitigate England’s glut of labor.<sup>34</sup> But the perfect balance he sought was simply that which, at the turn of the century, Thomas Jefferson believed the United States to already have achieved (especially since slavery had not yet metastasized into a national political crisis).

These thinkers had in common a basic Malthusian political economy in which surplus food production was seen to have created a bubble in Europe’s laboring population, a bubble which now begged for release as its labor was massively devalued by the pressure of over-competition. Thomas Carlyle, for example, gave voice to this common sense in his 1838 “Chartism” essay, in which he characterized the “overcrowded little western nook of Europe” as being “on the verge of an expansion without parallel; struggling, struggling like a mighty tree again about to burst in the embrace of summer, and shoot forth broad frondent boughs which would fill the whole earth.”<sup>35</sup> Both his sense of anticipation and the organic metaphors he used to express it depend on this Malthusian understanding of Europe’s developmental superiority: white hyper-fecundity was a function of the same industrial developments that made it practical to conquer far-flung countries, such that Britain’s development of the military and industrial power to rule an empire (even as its surplus population made doing so necessary) was a single expression of its civilizational potency.

At the same time, as Carlyle himself considered emigration to New Zealand, he saw Europe’s teeming cities standing in sharp contrast with

a world where Canadian Forests stand unfelled, boundless Plains and Prairies unbroken with the plough; on the west and on the east, green desert spaces never yet made white with corn,” an empire crying out to Europe: “Come and 'till me, come and reap me!

This was the flipside of the Malthusian coin: just as Malthus had argued of the “Nations of hunters” that “their population is thin from the scarcity of food,” Carlyle describes “nine-tenths” of “our Terrestrial Planet” as “yet vacant or tenanted by nomades.” The “Terra Nullius” that was Australia, a massive continent only very sparsely populated by the most backward aboriginal population imaginable, was the apex of this fantasy. For imperial thinkers in the 1830’s, therefore, the “tide of population” was a wave propelled outward from Europe by its super-density of laboring populations, a wave that was then sucked into the vacuum of “[g]reen desert spaces” like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and California.

Malthusians had important disagreements about whether permanent equilibrium could be established, of course; Malthus himself considered the laws of population to be permanent and unyielding (though he eventually pronounced emigration “useful as a temporary relief”), though more enthusiastic settlement boosters argued or at least implied the gains to be closer to permanent. Wakefield, for instance, had argued colonization to be “a natural means of seeking relief from the worst of our social ills,” and he successfully lobbied for the first settler colonization scheme in Australia on that theory. But especially during the early stages of what James Belich has

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<sup>34</sup> Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America: A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1834).

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (London: James Fraser, 1840).

called the settler revolution, there was broad consensus that the hyper-fecundity of civilized nations was the paramount social problem, the swarming masses in cities like London and the social pathology caused by them (which Carlyle diagnosed as Chartism, “the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition therefore, or the wrong disposition, of the working classes of England”). Settler frontiers, it seemed, could provide the answer, and the cultural formation of settler colonialism is inextricable from this historical moment.

The white settlers of British East Africa, on the other hand, shared that aspiration but were cursed with a very different historical moment in which to attempt it. In the 1830’s, it was still plausible (in London at least) to believe Australia to be a “terra nullius,” and to imagine the uncivilized portions of the world to match its example, a world of “green deserts” crying out for civilized hands to do what sparse and idle savage nomads could not. By 1903, when the first wave of settlers flowed into East Africa—mostly from South Africa—such beliefs had long ago ceased to be even an attractive imperial fantasy for the political mainstream; except for the very small minority that made up that settler population, it was broadly understood that settler colonization was essentially a doomed proposition.

One problem was that most of the spaces that had been imagined as “terra nullius” had been used up; in the United States, the frontier was declared to be “closed” and a similar situation obtained in Siberia, Canada, the South American southern cone, and the original terra nullius itself in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand. All the desirable land that could be efficiently seized and depopulated by a predatory imperial power more or less had been. At the same time, however, once it had become a more or less moot point, it was also broadly recognized across the Anglo-American world that both North America and Australia had never been “Terra Nullius” at all: precisely because those nations were now fully legitimized by decades of precedent and demographic dominance, it could now be admitted that those settler states had been founded in murder and theft at a continental scale. Even if founding fathers were retroactively pardoned for an ignorance which usefully absolved them of guilty intent, the crime itself was more or less broadly admitted to have been what it was because it no longer mattered. The deed was done. But the door which those states had opened in the 1830’s was now closed to settler states which wished to emulate them. The fact that so enthusiastic an imperialist as Rudyard Kipling could lightly mock the Americans for having extirpated their aboriginals “more completely than any modern race has done” shows how dramatically notions of legitimate imperial practice had changed. Genocide was out of favor.

More generally, within the British empire, the much vaunted “new imperialism” of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the culmination of a broad shift in imperial priorities. The empire in the 1830’s had more or less been a settler empire; even after the loss of North America, overseas territories were understood to be desirable according to that model of colonial practice (which is why Australia was the next logical move). Even as late as 1866, Charles Dilke’s *Greater Britain*, the first systematic attempt to travel through and assess the empire as a whole, had distinguished between the mere “garrisons” Britain held in places like Gibraltar and the Gold Coast and her “true colonies in North America, Australia, Polynesia, and South Africa.” “Empire” meant white settlement, and since India, as Dilke regretfully concluded, was largely unsuitable for white settlement (with the exception of Kashmir, whose “deep mountain valleys are cool enough for English settlement”), the “Asia” section of his book runs contrary to the framing narrative of the first two thirds of it: in place of the “Sketches of Saxondom” he draws of England’s overseas progeny, he argues that the “England in the East is not the England that we know,” explicitly claiming it to be a repudiation, rather than a replication, of Britain itself. Dilke still defends the

manner in which “Britannia, with her anchor and ship, becomes a mysterious Oriental despotism,” of course; there is no trace of anti-imperial critique in his account. But it is utterly clear that the extension of garrisons into direct and comprehensive imperial administration is a thing for which he lacks a coherent conceptual vocabulary, making India’s growing importance almost completely indescribable; phrases like “[a]lthough despotic, our rule in India is not bad” are common, and nicely demonstrate the confusion men like him had in defining the status of a settler empire not only expanding to include “native states” like those in India, but coming to be increasingly characterized by them.

In 1868 Dilke could still proclaim that “our race seems marching westward to universal rule,” but while he could still describe the manifest destiny of the “English horde, ever pushing with burning energy towards the setting sun” as such, the imperial assemblage he named “Greater Britain” was already very different than the one in which Carlyle, Malthus, or Wakefield had forecasted the future. There are, for Dilke, no more “green deserts”: while early Victorians looked at Canada, California, and Australia as safety valves for an industrial working class whose labor had been devalued by its overpopulation, Dilke sees Greater Britain’s expansion as pushing against the inarguable and prohibitive counterflow of resident non-white populations. As he put it, “the difficulties which impede the progress to universal dominion of the English people,” he writes, is “the struggle of the dear races against the cheap.” The problem, in other words, was no longer a devaluation of labor by an excess of white laborers; the problem was now direct competition with the very populations of non-white laborers whose absence had been an article of faith, whose essential non-existence had been key to the hydraulics of settler imperialism as it had been understood in the 1830’s.

For Malthus and Wakefield, the tide flowed out from England, but by 1890, that tide was turning: having tried and failed to cosmetically update his earlier work, Dilke was forced to write an “entirely new book upon the same subjects,” now entitled, significantly, *Problems of Greater Britain*, in which a unified Greater Britain (which included the Americas) now faced competing powers in Russia and the United States, and in which the problem of expansion had wholly become a matter of imperial defense and naval might. More importantly, cheap labor had become “[t]he bugbear of the colonial workman,” and “the terror of being dragged down from the high position in the scale of comfort which he now occupies” was beginning to settle on competition from “inferior races” whose labor could no longer be relied upon to be less efficient than the white man’s, a cheapness which was now a real threat.

By Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color* in 1921, the tides of population flowed outward from the empire. Stoddard’s world was one in which “The Ebbing Tide of White” faced a demographic explosion from races whose fecundity had previously been understood to be, in Malthusian terms, hopelessly foreclosed by their benighted cultural status. For countless millennia, he argued, “black multiplication was kept down by a wide variety of checks,” for while the African was “the quickest of breeders,” he believed that, in the past, the “natural and social causes [endemic to Africa] combined to maintain an extremely high death-rate” and thus keep African populations in check. The establishment of European world hegemony, however, changed everything. With the “establishment of white political control,” he wrote, “these checks on black fecundity are no longer operative. The white rulers fight filth and disease, stop tribal wars, and stamp out superstitious abominations. In consequence, population increases by leaps and bounds. . . It is therefore practically certain that the African negroes will multiply prodigiously in the next few decades.” And this, he argued, was a global process occurring with every non-white race as it fell under white political control:

There can be no doubt that at present the colored races are increasing very much faster than the white. . . Such checks as now limit the increase of colored populations are wholly external, like famine, disease, and tribal warfare. But by a curious irony of fate, the white man has long been busy removing these checks to colored multiplication. . . Wherever the white man goes he attempts to impose the bases of his ordered civilization. . . In response to these life-saving activities the enormous death-rate which in the past has kept the colored races from excessive multiplication is falling to proportions comparable with the death-rate of white countries. But to lower the colored world's prodigious birth-rate is quite another matter.

At the same time, the unchecked fecundity of the non-white races was seen to be coinciding with “a profound malaise” in the white race, a “declining birth-rate which affected nearly all the white nations.” Stoddard was Malthus turned upside-down, the argument that population growth was *negatively* correlated with civilization level, and that—as he approvingly quoted Havelock Ellis— “[a]s we approach the higher forms of life, reproduction gradually dies down.” cite The races who were closer to animals propagated more quickly, while the higher races—in order to maintain higher standards of material comfort—voluntarily checked their population growth, to their ultimate doom. The course of human history was therefore *towards* controlling population growth: “the whole course of biological progress has been marked by a steady checking of that reproductive exuberance which ran riot at the beginning of life on earth.”

For Stoddard, the African had replaced the aboriginal Australian or American as the ideal opposite to civilized man. Malthus and his generation had tended to see the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia and the Americas as the “lowest stage” of human existence because they had understood the hierarchy of development according to *production*, a great chain of being stretching from those who (barely) subsist on the “unassisted soil” at the bottom to those who transformed the world with their labor at the top. Stoddard ranks the races of the world in strikingly different terms: while the white races demonstrate their evolutionary advancement by their greater productive capacity, they not only do this in order to increase their consumptive capacity, but as the races come to share the same markets in both labor and produce, consumption becomes the only point on which race-distinctions can be made.

The shift from production to consumption in understanding race is profound. For Malthus, human growth rate had been a constant function of food supply, such that what distinguished different “races” from each other was precisely *not* intrinsic racial characteristics. Malthus, after all, was notably agnostic on the question, correlating production and civilization level in terms that excluded “race” as a meaningful factor. He argued that savage populations were limited by their inefficient and undeveloped modes of production, after all, but this lack of culture was what determined their (lack of) procreative desire: when he notes, for example, that “the American women is far from being prolific” he specifically argues that this “want of ardour” is an epiphenomenon of cultural relation with the environment, that rather than being “peculiar to the American savage,” it is to be found in “all barbarous nations, whose food is poor and insufficient, and who live in a constant apprehension of being pressed by famine or by an enemy.” The chief reasons for a thin population, then, were the concrete check of caloric limitations buttressed by “the hardships and dangers of savage life, which take off the attention from the sexual passion.”

Yet what happened when the more primitive races came to share in the high levels of production that, as all agreed, characterized civilized society? The issue was simply not an issue in

the 1830's for thinkers like Malthus, Carlyle, and Wakefield; reflexively peopling their world with coherent, self-contained populations, they understood each to be defined by its cultural relationship with a particular environment with which they were precisely and exclusively co-extensive. European expansion into the world's "green deserts" could therefore be imagined as a simple matter of more efficient producers replacing less efficient producers, the substitution of English settlers, for example, for American Indians. There simply were no multiracial societies in that scheme, and to the extent that populations actually faced each other, the transference of legitimacy was a painless and natural process: aboriginal populations simply lost the will to exist, either fading away completely or interbreeding into extinction. And to the extent that miscegenation was even apprehended as a concern, it confirmed rather than challenged the rising tide of whiteness: as white men sowed their seeds in aboriginal populations, the resulting progeny was white.

The transformation in race-thinking which Stoddard would bring to a certain kind of culmination, then, was less a *reversal* of Malthusian theories than their adaptation to an age of historic global migration, the unprecedented period between 1850 and 1920 in which Europe's imperial expansion massively globalized and integrated world labor markets. Malthusian imperialists in the 1830's had speculated confidently that the settlement process would be a purely one-way transfer of excess European laboring populations into fertile, virgin lands, and that the few and scattered aboriginal inhabitants would swiftly fade away or be assimilated. But reality failed to conform to this fantasy. For one thing, a "terra nullius" like Australia was nothing of the kind, nor did aboriginal peoples melt away at contact with white settlers; faced with manifest evidence that aboriginal peoples did indeed occupy and use their land in all sorts of juridically recognizable ways. As Henry Reynolds argues in *The Law of the Land*, for example, Australian settlers quickly discovered the errors on which their charters and structures of legitimate occupation were based, but since they could find no way out of the conundrum in which that discovery placed them, they ignored and forgot it.<sup>36</sup> However good faith their original belief that the land they were occupying was actually empty, the subsequent discovery that aboriginal land claims could be and were mounted in terms which their own juridical procedures recognized and honored was simply not a reality that could be comprehended without invalidating the entire basis of their entire project. Rather than do so, therefore, they elected not to comprehend it, to forget what they had discovered.

Charles Henry Pearson's 1893 *National Life and Character: A Forecast* would most clearly mark the transformation which had forced Dilke to revise his work: a British born emigrant to Australia, Pearson's vision of the future was one in which the globe was "girdled with a continuous zone of the black and yellow races, no longer too weak for aggression or under tutelage, but independent, or practically so, in government, monopolising the trade of their own regions, and circumscribing the industry of the European."<sup>37</sup> His vision included fully developed

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<sup>36</sup> Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> As "Viator" would put it in in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1908, "Charles Pearson's theories upon the inevitable decay and fall of white civilization...shook the self-confidence of the white races," and, what was more, revealed to "Asiatic students...what some of them had suspected—that the impassive forehead of the white man was part of a brazen mask, the mind within being full of doubt and trouble, prone to self-dissolving reflection. The effect was like the first moment when the trainer's glance flinches before the eye of the tiger." Viator, "Asia Contra Mundum," *Fortnightly Review* (1 February 1908), 200.

and internationally legible non-white nations, whose citizens would be “taken up into the social relations of the white races,” would “throng the English turf, or the salons of Paris,” and would be “admitted to intermarriage”; “Chinamen,” the “nations of Hindostan,” the “States of Central and South America,” and even “African nations of the Congo and the Zambesi,” he predicted, would be “represented by fleets in the European seas, invited to international conferences, and welcomed as allies in the quarrels of the civilised world... We shall wake to find ourselves elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside by peoples whom we looked down upon as servile, and thought of as bound always to minister to our needs.”

Stoddard’s “rising tide of color,” was the demographic threat that Charles Henry Pearson’s 1893 *National Life and Character: A Forecast* would first bring to Roosevelt’s attention, and which would leave him shaken (in his words, a reader of Pearson’s book would be “forced to ponder problems of which he was previously wholly ignorant”). In an argument that, as Lake and Reynolds point out, “in some ways anticipated Frederick Jackson Turner’s famous ‘frontier thesis’ of 1893,” Pearson warned that white men might soon be “cramped for land” and argued that either expansion into new lands or the inevitable decline of white hegemony were the two possible forecasts for the future. While Roosevelt could not share Pearson’s pessimism about the future, he became convinced that the declining British birth rate and the implications of China’s vast and increasing population were matters of the very gravest import, and that “no race has any chance to win a great place unless it consists of good breeders as well as good fighters.” After reading Pearson’s book, Roosevelt became obsessed with fertility rates and would become a vocal Cassandra on the dangers of what he called “race suicide.” But to Pearson’s prediction that “once the tropic races are independent, the white peoples will be humiliated and will lose heart,” he argued that white supremacy was still possible:

[T]his does not seem inevitable, and indeed seems very improbable... No American or Australian cares in the least that the tan-coloured peoples of Brazil and Ecuador now live under governments of their own instead of being ruled by viceroys from Portugal and Spain and it is difficult to see why they should be materially affected by a similar change happening in regard to the people along the Ganges or the upper Nile.

#### **IV. The Frontier**

It was possible for Roosevelt to shrug off the rise of native self-governance, however, only because he believed that white men would *not* soon be “cramped for land,” an optimism which Americans and Australians were particularly suited to share. Imperial-minded thinkers in Britain understood the bio-political problem of race as an absolute scarcity of land and an overabundance of non-white bodies; when a Churchill looks at East Africa, after all, he sees teeming masses of brown and black populations. Roosevelt does not see these teeming masses. If thinkers in Britain were chastened by experience, Roosevelt is emboldened by myth: while better-informed Britons saw a 20<sup>th</sup>-century world in which the prospect of “free land” had ended, decades ago, Roosevelt systematically manages not to notice this frontier foreclosure. And where previous safaris had used native interlocutors as a primary site of experience—understanding their own foreignness to the land by reference to its “native” inhabitants, who mediated Africa for them—Roosevelt sees no natives but the white families that will arise in the future.

In this way, he looks at a colony and sees a frontier. After all, Roosevelt’s book actively ignores the presence of the human infrastructure (and human knowledge) that made his safari possible, and that had made all safaris before his possible. If we compare Roosevelt’s book even to

Abel Chapman's 1908 *On Safari*—a book which Roosevelt not only read, but brought with him—we will find that Roosevelt has no place for what was, for Chapman and those before him, the quite unremarkable fact of total reliance on African labor. Chapman repeatedly emphasizes the importance of a good native headman (or “neapara”) in organizing his expedition, and clearly links the smooth functioning of a safari to the problem of labor management:

An efficient headman, strong, insightful and forceful, means a contented safari and a smooth-running expedition...On the other hand, a feeble eye-serving neapara wrecks the whole show.<sup>38</sup>

While outfitting an expedition requires the consideration and forethought of “shooting-agents” in Mombasa and Nairobi, the concrete organization of a safari “largely depends on the ‘Neapara’ or headman”:

...details of organisation, discipline and the like...must be settled; and upon their efficient execution day by day depends nothing less than the comfort and success of the entire venture. Nor are these duties any slight or insignificant business... the provision, superintendence and daily issue of rations...the apportionment of loads and other duties...the setting and relief of watches and work-parties...the constant maintenance of order and content, and a hundred minor matters. All this falls—or should fall—upon the Neapara or headman aforesaid.”<sup>39</sup>

Along with any mention of the “neapara”—which was common in other contemporary shooting narratives—Roosevelt's account also omits Chapman's occasional anxiety on being dependent on a “savage Soudanee” to run his caravan, as he puts it; *African Game Trails* has no equivalent to this passage from Chapman:

Our first headman was a born leader—and he looked it. When first introduced at Mombasa to that huge swarthy personality, vast of frame and truculent of visage, a tremor of fear—let me admit it—would scarce be suppressed. I trust it was concealed. The idea of spending months in the wilds, in company with that savage Soudanee, *did* disconcert for a moment; but no long time elapsed before we came to appreciate the treasure we possessed. Before that iron will (and obvious power to enforce it) difficulties and troubles melted like butter on hot toast—few, indeed, ever dared to confront it. Discipline, in savage Africa, relies first on the moral power; but when that fails, in the next resource force becomes the only law.<sup>40</sup>

The de-Swahilification of the safari not only evacuated the accumulated experience of generations of African safari-porters and hunters, but it displaced them by masterful white men like Tarleton, Cuninghame, and himself, great white hunters. If the word “safari” had originally been a Swahili term for trade caravan—and had referred to and implied centuries of African commerce between the Indian ocean and the interior—Roosevelt's *white* safari transplanted upper-class hunting practices onto that East African backdrop. In this way, he replaced a tradition in which explorers—like Stanley—engaged with a foreign land through their native

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<sup>38</sup> Chapman (1908), 284.

<sup>39</sup> Chapman (1908), 284.

<sup>40</sup> Chapman (1908), 284.

interlocutors with a tradition in which white men stood, alone, on an empty landscape, as they had, years ago, in myth, on the American frontier.

In displacing Stanley, Roosevelt produced a different kind of imperial genealogy for the settler state: the United States. To argue that the frontier was still possible, Roosevelt had to argue that the American frontier was *not* exceptional. Yet in generalizing the American frontier, as a settler colonial expansion of the white race, he was also transforming the meaning of the term itself, taking a very specifically American version of the term and, by rendering it general, erasing the non-American meaning it had previously had. As Frederick Jackson Turner himself noted, the American meaning of the frontier had displaced a European usage that carried with it a very different set of framing historical assumptions:

The American frontier is sharply distinguished from the European frontier—a fortified boundary line running through dense populations. The most significant thing about the American frontier is, that it lies at the hither edge of free land.<sup>41</sup>

As John Juricek has been little heeded for having pointing out—in 1966—“modern historians have persistently misinterpreted what earlier Americans meant by ‘frontier’ and the contexts in which they used the word.”<sup>42</sup> For the early Americans, as Juricek laboriously shows, the frontier signified in that original European sense, indicating only the space *between* competing sovereignties. And by granting the effective permanence of these competing sovereignties, no teleology of settler destiny was necessarily manifest. Instead, as Ed White has put it more recently, the early republican backcountry was a “massive negation” and a “cultural nonbeing”; instead of the primeval wilderness and crucible of American identity, what was called “the great American desert” represented a kind of basic and existential *absence* of all that was knowable, something much more like the darkest Africa of a Henry Morton Stanley than the open potentiality of Roosevelt’s proto-Kenya. Indeed, the American interior was called the “backcountry” because the early Americans faced *away from it*, metaphorically looking to their future in Europe, across the Atlantic, rather than by moving forward across the continent itself; like Africa in the Victorian 19th century, it represented a primeval backwardness and the danger of atavistic reversion. Before the greater trans-Appalachian was crossed, before the Louisiana purchase, before the Mexican-American war and the seizure of the Southwest, before the California gold rush made the Pacific coast an indispensable part of the domestic economy, before the civil war and the trans-continental railroad, before the various Indian wars had reached their conclusion, and before the great land rush was fully underway—before, in short, the 19th century radically altered the sense in which “America” signified as a nation—the sense in which the United States had a “frontier” was utterly different from the sense in which theorists like Turner looked back and argued the term to signify, and to define the nation.

As Juricek puts it, then, over the course of the nineteenth century,

[T]wo basic questions about the western frontier of the United States became more and more

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<sup>41</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1921), 3.

<sup>42</sup> John T. Juricek, “American Usage of the Word ‘Frontier’ from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (Feb. 18, 1966), 10.

difficult to answer in the old familiar ways... (1) ‘What lies beyond the frontier line?’ and (2) ‘Where exactly is it?’ [T]he distinctively American meaning of "frontier" was to develop out of the confusion [over these two questions]. In the first decade of the nineteenth century the first of these hypothetical questions would have been answered ‘Indian Country’; in the last, very likely ‘free land.’ In the meantime the Indian Country had for practical purposes disappeared.<sup>43</sup>

In this transformation from “Indian Country” to “Free Land,” the frontier comes into existence. Or, to put it another way: as Indian Country was evacuated of native sovereignty, its transformation into a “frontier” marked the presence of this historiographic absence. For earliest Americans, by contrast, the frontier could never have “disappeared” because it was not the sort of object whose eventual teleological disappearance was encoded into the national DNA. In a political space where the amount of “free land” available for the taking was negligible to nil, after all, the term “frontier” described no more than the unclaimed – because essentially unclaimable—buffer zones that separated and distinguished different sovereign powers. Even when American Indian powers were no longer respected as national sovereignties, what Richard White has called “the middle ground” still described the space of political triangulation that gave native sovereignties the ability to continue their existence in the face of military assaults and settler land hunger. Native sovereignties could, up to the first part of the 19th century, still triangulate between European powers so as to take advantage of a variety of political, economic, and military options that would eventually be foreclosed. And it was only when historical events removed the structural possibilities for native sovereignty—the end of competition from other European powers, for example, and a variety of technological developments that made the “Winning of the West” possible and profitable—the distinctly “American” use of the term came into existence in response to that very transformation of “Indian country” into “free land,” and a broad political amnesia that forgot the extent to which Native “tribes” had once been treaty-making powers and nations.

Before the American frontier acquired this meaning—the meaning that Turner would make central to all of American history in the 1890’s—the American frontier had not, in fact, been the American frontier at all. In this sense, Patricia Limerick’s complaint that the “[f]rontier is an unsubtle concept in a subtle world” was accurate, but described the limitations of the term itself less well than its mystifying function. What she takes to be a bug is a feature, I would argue; the stripping away of subtlety is precisely the point. Before the frontier was ever a thing that could “close,” it was something very different, and not quite an “it” at all; indeed, the closure of the frontier is also the beginning of the terms dominance as historiographic paradigm. In a sense, the frontier only begins to exist once it can be seen in retrospect.

By the turn of the 20th century, then, the emergence of the “frontier” as a discourse indexes the fact that there was no longer any “backcountry”; the United States had become a Westward facing nation looking towards an open expanse of “free land,” broken only by an archipelago of Indian reservations that were, as such, doomed to be broken up and to disappear. After the frontier, the only limits to US sovereignty between the two oceans were the archipelago of Indian reservations whose status Chief Justice Marshall first theorized in coining the term “domestic dependent nations,” a series of political enclosures whose severely-compromised sovereignty the South African apartheid state would emulate—both indirectly and directly—in forming what

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<sup>43</sup> Juricek, (1966), 24-5.

came to be known as its native reserves and “Bantustans.” But *prior* to this stage—in the development of settler colonial states in North America, South Africa, and East Africa alike—the status quo was a state of affairs in which indigenous states were sufficiently powerful that they had to be treated as *external*, and were – because it was unavoidable – offered treaty recognition as competing sovereignties. However grudgingly and incompletely this recognition ever was, it existed, flowing organically out of “facts on the ground” which did not, yet, favor the expansion of the settler state.

If it is this process that makes the American “frontier” sharply distinct from the European sense of the term, then we should note carefully what has disappeared in the transition: the sense in which a part of the continental landmass was already claimed, the sense in which “Indian Country” signified as a competing sovereignty. “Indian Country,” therefore, has a peculiar status in the American political lexicon, referring not merely to a political configuration that has been officially forgotten—the historical moment when the United States government could not avoid treating with Indian nations as competing sovereign powers – but also to the hostility of the present towards reminders that such a state of affairs ever obtained. To speak of “Indian Country” is, first, to speak of a country to which Indians were native, and to understand that country by reference to the problem of their nativity and residency. By contrast, to speak of the “frontier” (in the most intuitively American sense) is to forget that this set of problems existed, or ever had. And since both federal treaties and the many maps and surveys that name “Indian country” as external to the United States can now be seen as registering an official recognition that has since been comprehensively scrubbed from the official record, such discourse now serve to mark the dissonance between the official genealogy of the present and that strata of alternative historiographic data that it has worked to forget. With the achievement of the American manifest destiny, its frontiers closed and this moment not only ended but also became unthinkable, contrary to the founding premise of the transcontinental movement itself.

In this sense, East Africa before Roosevelt was an “Indian Country,” a contemporaneously unremarkable status quo that would become, as a result of retroactive historiography, almost constitutively unthinkable. East Africa’s darkness registered facts and obstacles that the nation could only come into existence by forgetting. In the archive of Victorian explorers like Livingstone, Burton, Speke, Grant, Baker, and Thomson, the territories that were or would become British East Africa were decidedly not colonial administration, nor frontiers in the Turner-ian sense: just as Missouri had still been an unincorporated “Indian Country” when Henry Morton Stanley first visited (reporting on a treaty parley with still recalcitrant Native powers which gave him the notoriety, expertise, and ambition to propose his analogous form of African journey), the East Africa that he and others visited during the great era of Victorian exploration was still (or had recently been) defined by the same kind of native sovereignty.

This was not a fact that Victorian explorers enjoyed acknowledging, of course, any more than early 19th century American settlers enjoyed admitting the power that Native sovereignties had to force recognition. And in its own ways, the discourse of “exploration” functions to mystify what was really going on. But the *details* of Victorian travel narratives comprehensively and collectively contradict the master-narrative they might have vaguely and half-heartedly sought to impose. And however much they might have preferred to gloss over such details, men like Stanley were able to explore “new” territory *only* by hiring Africans guides to take them there and then by paying tribute to the local African authorities to authorize their temporary presence, and these kinds of logistical problems are inescapable. Stanley’s constant complaints about “posho” need to be understood in this light, both the practical problem it presented and the

deeper significance of what it represented. He puts a more advantageous spin on the practice for his readers back home, but the meaning of the transaction in its local context is utterly clear and conventional. Posho was a tributary recognition of the effective authority held by the local sovereign power. No matter what it said on maps in Berlin or elsewhere, and whatever Stanley might have said about it in his books, the facts on the ground were simple: European authority on the ground was negligible compared to the effective sovereignty that was distributed amongst a variety of African actors. By contrast, Roosevelt's journey occurred after the East African "Indian Country" had become a Kenyan space of "Free Land," and so, instead of giving tribute to the native potentates on whom his passage is dependent, he gives gifts of game to local villagers as an expression of *Noblesse Oblige* (though it's unclear whether the Africans who received these gifts understood it in these terms).

For Roosevelt, the transition was of recent enough vintage that the work he does to remove all of these details remains, in its way, quite visible. And in removing the details which had rendered an African journey so picturesque, so interesting, and so exotic—effectively domesticating the landscape, one might say, by making it less *strange*—Roosevelt's narrative becomes something *uninteresting* in a quite concrete sense, not only in the subjective opinion of this particular reader, but in the way in which it is composed by the negation of everything that made his predecessors interesting. It is no exaggeration to describe Roosevelt as taking pleasure, precisely, in an *absence* of the very details that had made Victorian texts about Africa interesting. He is interested in Africa—both affectively and in utilitarian terms—as a place where those details are absent. And so he invents the safari as a means of rendering their absence present.

In 1909, however, the problem with the American frontier was that it had closed: if it was the site from which American exceptionalism sprang in the past, it could no longer cement that exceptional identity in the present. When Roosevelt dwells on British East Africa's resemblance to the American West, therefore, he not only renders it the same kind of mythically empty settler dreamscape as he described in *The Winning of the West*, but he de-exceptionalizes both by the analogy. By rhapsodizing on "the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces"—which he argues is "not only the most striking feature in the world's history, but also the event of all others the most far-reaching in importance"—he frames this spread within the "perfectly continuous history" of the English race, producing an Anglo-continuity where the American narrative had run aground. In other words, by emphasizing that the "vast movement by which [the North American] continent was conquered and peopled" was actually only "the crowning and greatest achievement of a series of mighty movements" (which had started with the voyage of Columbus itself) he opened conceptual space for this movement to continue to new white frontiers even after the American had closed.

At the turn of the 20th century, East Africa seemed to have one thing in common with the older settler colonies its settlers hoped to emulate: European penetration into the interior had brought with it the kind of ecological catastrophe that made American and Australasian settler colonialism possible. British settlers in North America and Australia had, after all, arrived to find an array of natives who seemed to be melting away in the face of historical necessity, and while these plagues did not *quite* empty the land as effectively as they might have wished—"History," it turned out, had to be helped along in its genocidal course by human hands—it is nevertheless true that the American "manifest destiny" and fiction of Australia as "Terra Nullius" *began* with the strange plagues that left vast stretches of fertile land conveniently and providentially empty. And while the severity of the smallpox and rinderpest epidemics (and accompanying famine)

that swept through the Rift Valley in the 1880's and 1890's were not quite on the same order as the great catastrophes of North America in the 17th century, they had a similar effect: settler-minded explorers and surveyors could pass through areas that had, only a generation earlier, been fiercely defended and controlled by strong native sovereignties, and find them to seem, providentially, something close to empty.

Of the Laikipia plateau, for example, Joseph Thomson would write in 1886 that “[t]he greater part of Lykipia—and that the richer portion—is quite uninhabited, owing in a great degree, to the decimation of the Masai of that part, through their internecine wars” and in describing the “park-like country” he noted that “great herds of cattle, or flocks of sheep and goats are seen wandering knee-deep in the splendid pasture.” This is partially an interested obfuscation; splendid pasture does not make itself, cattle do not collect themselves into herds, and the Maasai had not quite done Europeans the favor of exterminating themselves (as with the “virgin” soil of North America, it was generations of careful human cultivation that had left the highlands region as strikingly fertile as it would prove to be for white farmers).

But Thompson was also not lying when he found vast stretches of fertile land to be inexplicably deserted, nor had he invented the catastrophe of internecine warfare. The truth – or, at least, the historical record as historical consensus now agrees it to be – lies somewhere in the middle. While the seasonal migration of pastoralists and the shifting cultivation of cultivators made the amount of land under African use seem far smaller than it was – such that a settler-minded surveyor could find the land to be unsettled – a particularly brutal cycle of inter-Masai wars had also been topped off with a round of truly devastating famines and epidemics that dramatically reduced the total amount of land that actually was under pastoral or agricultural cultivation. Joseph Thomson was the first European to be able to cross through Maasai territory, in large part, because the Maasai were in a state of full-scale retrenchment, and something similar was the case with nearly every African “tribe” that Europeans encountered. Across the entire region, the outer edges of African expansion were retreating back to older settlements and pasture, leaving suddenly unoccupied “frontiers” in the space between.

If we look at the Rift Valley region holistically, in other words, we can see a great deal that Europeans in the 1890's would not, but also *could* not, see. Vast stretches of East Africa had, as recently as two centuries earlier, still been free land for its *African* settlers, but that settlement had achieved no more than a still-fragile and unstable equilibrium at the moment in time when European colonization began. The Maasai had more or less fully occupied the Rift Valley by the beginning of the 19th century, but the period between 1830 and 1870 was defined by an ongoing series of wars between the expanding clans of the Maasai core—known as the pure pastoralists, the *Il Maasai*—and the mixed-economic Maa-speakers in the border regions—the *Iloikop* and others—over cattle and grazing land. As the open frontier which the Maasai had first taken became more and more densely populated, the expansionist dynamic of Maasai society had created an inward directed bellicosity, such that when Thomson reached Maasai country in 1886, a certain limited equilibrium had been achieved only by the victory of the strongest *Il Maasai* sections, the Purko, the Kisonko, the Loitai, the Kaputiei. It was, however, stability far more akin to Europe in 1920 than the primeval equilibrium of a people without history. Like nearly every other people in the region, the Maasai had reached the limit of a cycle of “free” expansion which left them poorly situated to fight off new (and extremely formidable) invaders, as well as without a strong sense of attachment to the territory which they, themselves, had often occupied only a few generations earlier.

Richard Waller suggests that, had the *Il Maasai* not been wracked with devastating stock

losses from pleuro-pneumonia and rinderpest in the 1880's (which was followed then by smallpox, as pastoralists without stock searched for food among cultivators suffering the epidemic), further internal conflicts would have probably been inevitable anyway. For reasons organic to the stock-based economic politics of Maasai-dom, he argues that stock inequalities tended to fuel and produce future conflicts: military victories and successful conquest tended only to lay the seeds of future border skirmishes, wars, expansion, and dispersion. The permanent state of Maasailand, insofar as there was one, was a constant state of flux. Even the agricultural Gikuyu people – whose farms were much more permanent, and who were much less hard hit by the catastrophes of the 1890's – were a society in a state of constant expansion, which meant that when hard times *did* hit them, there was a full-scale retreat from only recently cleared and occupied lands (on the fringes of Gikuyuland) and, since roots there were relatively shallow, much less deep resentment of the Europeans who took their place.

There was nothing *inevitable* about the end of Maasailand's imperial sway, of course. It is true that the rinderpest epidemic (that came first from the Russian cattle that were used in the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and then from the Indian cattle brought by the largely Indian labor-force imported by the British to build their railroad) destroyed the ability of the Maasai to control their borders and to demand tribute and favorable trade with neighbors. As a people whose entire economic order was based on cattle—and in this capacity, allowed them to serve as the banking system of the entire region—they were particularly vulnerable to the devastating cattle plagues that struck them first in 1890-1 and again in 1898, and were left reeling. But along with the arrival of crippling and lethal jiggers (which came from Brazil, by way of the Congo coast), these disasters transformed rather than destroyed the economics of Maasailand, making self-sufficient cattle production impossible difficult that alliances with external peoples came to seem a better way of maintaining the way of life which the *Il Maasai*—who saw themselves as the only *true* Maasai, in contrast to the Maa-speakers who were not able to survive solely on cattle pasturage—were determined to maintain. And so, while many Maasai took refuge with neighboring cultivating peoples with whom they had blood relationships (and thereby ceased to be *real* Maasai in the eyes of the *Il Maasai*) many other saw alliances with the British, as military labor, as a means of acquiring the necessary critical mass of cattle to maintain that way of life, to remain *Il Masai*.

As a result, the Maasai empire, which had once been the great obstacle to penetration of the region, suddenly became an important vector of European military conquest. This marked a total and complete turning point for the region: if Swahili commerce had defined the region's incorporative shape—the extent to which it could be seen as incorporated into a single economic or cultural unit connected to the coast – Maasai hegemony over the interior rift valley region had long defined the limit point of both Swahili and European penetration.

As an “imperial” sway, the Maasai represented both a military power and a competing form of economic rationality (to the European and Swahili commodity trade alike). While the former defined that interior region's political shape, the latter formed the central “bank” of the stock-based economy that was—as such—both illegible to the Swahili commodity trade, resistant to it, and largely uninterested in it. It was this system's precipitous *collapse* that allowed white settlers not only to access the interior (using a Swahili infrastructure) but to incorporate it in strikingly new ways.

An analogous polity to the Maasai would be the Comanche “empire.”<sup>44</sup> Both the Comanche

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<sup>44</sup> “The Comanches...were an imperial power with a difference: their aim was not to conquer

and Maasai were expansionist and cattle-based empires who translated military power and a very mobile flexibility into an ability to capitalize (and, to a significant extent, *control*) the fates of neighboring communities, but who did not—for this very reason—see themselves (or signify to Europeans) as incorporative imperial powers: instead of implanting the kind of permanent order on a spatially defined territory which Europeans would have recognized, they created a regional political economy which their way of life could best exploit and benefit from. And when that regional economy collapsed, it left very little trace of itself behind for Europeans to perceive (even had they wanted to).

## **VI. Indian Country**

Before 1890, if visitors to the region saw the space between the Indian Ocean coast and the central African lake region in linear terms—as a “footpath six hundred miles long”—it was because the space was primarily knowable to them as a geographical barrier, the barrier of space and time. From London, in fact, British East Africa was little more than the empty space connecting the Ugandan interior to the Indian ocean coast, empty space which was a barrier because it translated into the time in which to get sick or to run out of food, and the difficulty that one had in traveling across the space, necessitating a particular dependence on African labor and making the explorer dependent on the whims and goodwill of local African sovereign powers.

Seen as a “footpath,” however, the space which is now “Kenya” did not really exist, or at least not as a place. To use Michel de Certeau’s distinction:

A place is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location. The law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own ‘proper’ and distinct location, a location it defines.<sup>45</sup>

By contrast, a “space” is a function of the “ensemble of movements deployed within it, and “the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it a function of polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities.”<sup>46</sup>

As the barrier of empty space, the distance spanned by a footpath was a zone of impropriety, the lack of any structuring order which put things in their places. Uganda, by contrast, was a place, a distinct polity with coherent institutions and commerce, and a strategically important position at the head of the Nile; Zanzibar, too, was a place, a modernizing “Oriental despotism”

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and colonize, but to co-exist, control, and exploit. Whereas more traditional imperial powers ruled by making things rigid and predictable, Comanches ruled by keeping them fluid and malleable. This informal, almost ambiguous nature of the Comanches’ politics not only makes their empire difficult to define; it sometimes makes it difficult to see...when examined closely, Spain’s uncompromised imperial presence in the Southwest becomes a fiction that existed only in Spanish minds and on European maps...That Spanish Texas and New Mexico remained unconquered by Comanches is not a historical fact; it is a matter of perspective.”

<sup>45</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1984), 117.

<sup>46</sup> de Certeau (1984), 117.

that was the commercial entrepôt linking the East African interior to the broader commercial and political world of the Indian ocean. Britain had a relatively long and secure relationship with both places, and with both political orders. Christianized Baganda was the great example of a modernizing African kingdom—and would form the basis for what would become Lord Lugard’s theory of indirect rule—while Zanzibar was essentially an outpost of British India on the coast of Africa, a valuable commercial possession, and a site for the naval suppression of the slave trade. But the space between was not only without value, in conventional terms, but it was all but invisible: producing little or no surplus, with little prospect of mineral development (as the Imperial East Africa Company discovered, going bankrupt in doing so), and without particular strategic significance, “East Africa” only existed to the imperial mind to the extent that it threatened or impeded other, more important, imperial objectives.

If we “permit the retrospective concept of Kenya,” it is possible to describe the process by which Kenya came into existence in the two decades before Roosevelt’s visit. Germany’s entrance into imperial competition created a new set of imperial difficulties for Britain, for a start, because of the vague fear that Germany would extend its influence north from German East Africa (present day Tanzania) into the headwaters of the Nile, where it would be able (somehow) to dam its flow. Though this was a remote possibility at best, the fear was that commerce in Egypt would be interrupted, leading to famine and bread riots, in turn raising the possibility that Britain’s passage to India would be placed in danger. Or at least these were the terms in which East African colonization was publicly rationalized: in 1890, the Anglo-German agreement established British East Africa’s southern border with German East Africa (which would soon take the name “Tanganyika”), two years after the Imperial British East Africa Company had been chartered to look for ways of profiting from the space, in particular, by prospecting for minerals. By 1893, the IBEAC had collapsed—having found nothing—which led, in 1895, to the necessity of the British crown buying-out and incorporating what was left as the British East Africa Protectorate, bordered on the West by its Uganda Protectorate (the IBEAC, one might say, was too big to fail). But in the absence of any commercial prospects in the region—the British government had no more success than the IBEAC—the empty space between Zanzibar and Uganda continued to be important and knowable only relative to the economies of places like Uganda, Zanzibar, Egypt, and India. It was of interest and knowable only as a barrier to be crossed.

In theory and on maps, this entire region was controlled by Britain from the coast to Lake Victoria, enfolded within British imperial sovereignty. In practice—due to imperial apathy and effective local political autonomy—it was structured by a barrier between East and West, by the Great Rift Valley and more importantly, by the Maasai and other pastoral peoples who occupied that region. When Joseph Thomson first crossed *Through Masailand* in 1886, for example, he would narrate his passage “through” Africa in the same way that Stanley had crossed *Through the Dark Continent* in 1878, discovering (as Stanley had) a land that was not only covered by the veil of not-yet-having-been-seen by European eyes, but was also “darkened” by the problem of being outside the European sphere of control. For Thompson, as it had been for Stanley in 1878, the experience of going there—of crossing *through*—was always a struggle, to cross through a land which because it had not yet been seen and conquered, had to be penetrated by force. Such exploration narratives therefore tended to reinforce Africa’s status as undiscovered “darkness,” both as a consequence of the desire which drew its “discoverers” there in the first place but also as a means of demonstrating and intensifying the difficult heroism of the discovery. And so, while the endpoint of exploration might ostensibly have been knowledge and data, the process of

acquiring it, the texture of their exploration narratives, is the violent work of pushing through, forcing in, and beating down.

At the turn of the century, the space that would become British East Africa was a frontier, the defining limit point of Anglo-African political sovereignty in Uganda and Zanzibar. It was where “place” became “space,” the dark barrier separating political entities that were brightened by their legibility. In 1901, however, the railroad line between Mombasa and Lake Victoria was completed, and the manner in which space indexed time—both traveling time and the asynchrony of distant places—became a much less important structuring principle of East African geography (at least in the area where the railroad went). The railroad transformed a space to cross (indicating the time and danger of doing so) into a destination in its own right; the station at the halfway point became the city of Nairobi, and the railroad not only made possible the kind of cash-crop market economy that the British empire would conceptualize Kenya as becoming, but made it seem necessary: the substantial debt which the railroad had incurred seemed impossible to pay off unless white agriculture was introduced; in this way, “Kenya” became a site for white settlement in 1903, under the direction of Charles Eliot, the Commissioner of British East Africa until 1904, who sought to create a plantation economy whose commodity production would feed the railroad with enough commerce to make Kenya into the economically viable enterprise that the Imperial British East Africa Company had failed to be.

Each of these events brings the telos of “Kenya” more clearly into focus. And when Roosevelt bases his travels in the guest-rooms and parlors of the many settler barons whose warm and generous hospitality he enjoyed, his account of the country resembles and anticipates the “Kenya” which they were transforming it into, which they had invested their lives and fortunes in producing. Roosevelt’s Nairobi, therefore, is the city it would become, growing into a comfortable settler capital from an arbitrary and ramshackle railroad depot.

In this sense, Roosevelt’s “Africa” was very different than the Africa which Stanley and Thompson had crossed “through.” Africa was no barrier to him, and no violence was required in penetrating it, because the railroad had abolished the “objective” barriers of time and space. If Thomson and Stanley had struggled painfully on foot *Through Masai Land* and *Through the Dark Continent*—carrying their supplies by means of unreliable human conveyances—Roosevelt could travel in ease and comfort, and could even ride on a specially constructed viewing platform at the front of the train, propelled forward into empty space.

In this Africa, there was nothing to penetrate, or at least no violence in doing so. When Roosevelt disembarks in Mombasa and travels overland by train to Nairobi—from which he makes a series of pleasure excursions on his leisurely and luxurious way to Lake Victoria—and then steams up the Nile back through Egypt to Europe, he was traveling across roughly the same terrain as had Thomson and Stanley, a generation earlier, but the East Africa he sees is such a hospitable and inviting geography that being passively conveyed across spectacular vistas of wildlife and human habitation, which opened themselves up to him without risk, violence, or even work, was almost dangerously easy. As he admitted in a letter to Frederick Selous, “I feel a little effeminate in going so much better equipt than you on your East African trip of five years ago”).<sup>47</sup> There was, of course, no point in pretending to break new ground—traveling, as he was,

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<sup>47</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to Frederick Selous, September 12, 1908, Zimbabwe National Archives, cited in Roderick P. Neumann, “‘Through the Pleistocene’ Nature and Race in Theodore Roosevelt’s *African Game Trails*,” in *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental*

by train—nor did it make any sense to hide the essential safety and comfort of his journey. But the effect was that Africa becomes a sequence of stops and sights to be seen, a space of hospitality to be enjoyed and a safe container for a variety of very safe and contained dangers to be experienced.

Put differently, then, the absence of the driving imperative to get *through*—which had structured the journeys of Thomson and Stanley—transforms the texture of his narrative, and the text it makes of Africa. Early explorers sought to do what a white man had never done before, such that their work of conquest and transformation—to discover an undiscovered country, and by doing so, to remove the veil of the unknown—was, by definition, not something which could be repeated. Only one man could be the first to penetrate a new country. Once it had been explored, it could not be “explored” again (unless it could be shown that the first explorer had not explored properly, in which case the “successor” would be the true first explorer). Roosevelt’s journey is therefore structured by a ritualistic repetition that fails by definition: instead of being the first, Roosevelt seeks to be *like* the first travelers, to symbolically follow in the footsteps of the “great trips of exploration and adventure” which were made by “Speke, Grant, and Baker,” as he puts it. As a repetition, however, it was not true repetition, only ritualistic homage: to faithfully follow in the footsteps of path-breakers is precisely not to break a new path, to distinguish oneself from the originality of the original by the very process of its faithful imitation.

In fact, because Roosevelt mentions his predecessors so dismissively and with such apparent lack of interest, it can be easy to overlook the importance of this dismissal, the negative work he is doing to dis-interest his readers in the narratives of East African spaces that had been produced by people like Stanley. If Stanley’s absence from the text can be simply explained—by broad changes in “objective” conditions in the region—his desirable absence is also something the text itself produces, at the level of subjective affect, precisely through Roosevelt’s performance of a lack of interest in what Stanley represents. The sentiment behind Stanley’s rhetorical question “Who will come to East Africa without reading the experiences of Burton and Speke?” is not only absent from Roosevelt’s text, but represents a somewhat striking omission if we consider how central this narrative of African exploration was to Roosevelt’s generation, growing up; reading Livingstone as a boy, one biographer would claim, was a life-changing experience for Roosevelt, inspiring in him a desire to become the naturalist he would become, which would eventually take him on a hunting expedition to the continent which Livingstone had first attempted to “brighten.”<sup>48</sup>

Roosevelt’s safari—and the forms of Africa-thinking which it crystallizes—emerges out of this break, this sense of distinction from the exploration past. That Roosevelt was not an “explorer” is, of course, quite obvious, and he never pretended otherwise. But the consequences of this distinction need to be articulated clearly, because “the obvious” is where ideology most effectively hides its existence. If it had been obvious to Stanley that no one would “come to East

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*Studies in Africa*, edited by Byron Caminero-Santangelo, Garth Myers (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 47.

<sup>48</sup> As Jacob Riis wrote: “when I cast around for a starting- point, there rises up before me the picture of a little lad, in stiff white petticoats, with a curl right on top of his head, toiling laboriously along with a big fat volume under his arm, ‘David Livingstone’s Travels and Researches in South Africa,’ and demanding of every member of the family to be told what were ‘the foraging ants’ and what they did.” Riis (1904), 8.

Africa without reading the experiences of Burton and Speke”—so obvious as to make the question purely rhetorical—Roosevelt takes a different set of facts to be too obvious to require being made explicit. While explorers sought to write the next chapter in the Book of East Africa—a forward moving, accumulative temporality, mediated by a genealogical narrative of exploration—Roosevelt’s writing is structured by a very different sense of temporality, an effort to see and record “nature” before history brought it to an end. If Stanley pushed back against his predecessors, after all, his intention to replace them was an oedipal function of the inheritance he coveted, his desire to make it obvious that no one would go to East Africa without reading the experiences of Stanley; in displacing the father, he sought to replace him, but to continue the patriarchal narrative by which successive men explore Africa.

By contrast, as I will argue, Roosevelt’s desire is to be a boy, a masculine identity he constructs precisely by its distinction from the labor and responsibilities of adulthood. If Stanley sought to step into a lineage of exploration writing, therefore—advancing the project of imperial knowledge by adding his own name to a list of Europeans who collectively turned a blank space into an explored place—Roosevelt’s object in East Africa was the remaining “blankness” itself, that which had not yet been entered into History. What he sought was not a book, but its absence; indeed, because “Nature” is his object—not “East Africa”—the problem that structures his desire is the fact that “Nature” is being modernized out of existence. The lines which precede the quote above, for example, frame the need for “ample and well-recorded observations by trustworthy field naturalists” as a time-sensitive effort to observe “the wilderness before the big game, the big birds, and the beasts of prey vanish.”<sup>49</sup> In this sense, while the exploration tradition sought to update and improve a developing record of the territory itself—writing it into historical geography, and knowing it empirically as a function of increasing imperial comprehension—Roosevelt wants to go to Africa because it is the *pre*-history to the human development that will follow. Nature, he argues, must be seen before History has brought it to an end.

This impending and teleological foreclosure not only structures Roosevelt’s account of the place, and his own place in it, but also characterizes the boyhood he seeks to re-capture there, the fleeting experiences which adulthood makes impossible. For all its profoundly reactionary politics and intensely racist assumptions, Roosevelt’s safari was an experience whose *jouissance* stemmed from its exteriority to the work and responsibilities of empire. This is not to say that it was critical of empire, of course; his safari presumes exactly the sober and abstemious Victorian devotion to duty—to production and to necessity—which one would expect to find there. But this presumption is simply the necessity of growing up and going to work, a thing which must be faced with good spirits, but which can also be put off as long as is possible. In this sense, the safari is an effort to carve out and limit a place for everything which that duty foreclosed, the holiday which makes work bearable. Within an imperial project construed by duty and devotion to cause—a “white man’s burden” of “thankless years” and the necessity to “have done with childish days”—the safari is an interlude of boyishness, even rejuvenation.

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<sup>49</sup> Roosevelt (1909), 340.

## Chapter 4. After the Safari: Flights into Fantasy

When life becomes the overarching imperative... all social relations become subordinate to the discursive network that has been generated to keep it going, so much so that even a negative, discriminatory fact such as racism is legitimated in the name of the living. Rather than straightforwardly assuming the form of a callous willingness to kill, therefore, racist genocide partakes of the organization, calculation, control, and surveillance characteristic of power--in other words, of all the 'civil' or 'civilized' procedures that are in place primarily to ensure the continuance of life. Killing off certain groups of people en masse is now transformed (by the process of epistemic abstraction) into a productive, generative activity undertaken for the life of the entire human species. Massacres are, literally, vital events.<sup>1</sup>

--Rey Chow

A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.<sup>2</sup>

--Captain R. H. Pratt

Whatever happens, we have got/ The Maxim gun, and they have not.<sup>3</sup>

--Hilaire Belloc, *The Modern Traveller* (1898).

Love was a problem for Theodore Roosevelt, or, more precisely, because love was the solution to the problem of violence—its mirror-image inversion—*African Game Trails* works to strip violence of its violence by displacing it with the work of love. To use Slavoj Žižek's distinction between objective and subjective violence, the ideological apparatus of big game hunting mediates for Roosevelt the (objective) violence of hunting and killing an animal in such a way as to foreclose its subjective possibility: if "hunting" is many things, one of them is a framework through which the life of "prey" ceases to be grievable.<sup>4</sup> An important part, then, of the discursive work done by the big game safari—or by writing about it—was to derive the need and license to kill out of an overarching imperative to sustain and protect life, to argue that the latter not only necessitated the former, but that (as Rey Chow puts it) a massacre was really a "vital event."

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<sup>1</sup> Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction* (1892), 46–59. Reprinted in Richard H. Pratt, "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites," *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1880–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260–271.

<sup>3</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Modern Traveller* (1898)

<sup>4</sup> On the distinction objective violence and subjective violence, see Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008). On grievable life, see Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010)

It was not, however, only animals who were to be killed to save them. On the original cover of one of the first editions of the book, Roosevelt can be seen shooting a lion which appears to be attacking an unarmed and helpless African, who is lying prone and bleeding beneath the animal (and also in the rifle's line of fire), pathetically trying to ward off the great beast with his empty hand. Presumably, Roosevelt is killing the beast to save the man; though there is nothing like this event in the book itself, the scene only makes sense if we read the protective violence of Roosevelt as being enabled and legitimized by the predatory violence of the lion and the helplessness of its human prey. Killing a predator that is attacking an African, in this way, becomes a vital act: if we read his shot as protective, his violence makes the African live. Yet why should we presume that this is the case? Why would we assume he is killing the lion to save the man? He may be judged—with equal plausibility from the information we are given in the image—to be shooting at the lion and African both. It is only because we already know what he is doing that we find that narrative in the image; only because the higher imperative is to make the image “make sense,” that we introduce facts not immediately in evidence.

In this sense, it is only the need to legitimize Roosevelt's violence that puts the African in danger in the first place. On the one hand, this might literally have been the case, since Roosevelt's porters, beaters, and gun-bearers were only ever in danger from lions because they had come hunting with him. But on the other hand, since the scene is a product of the artist's imagination (and no such event occurs in the book), we could observe that the African in the picture is only placed in danger so that Roosevelt can rescue him. This is his rhetorical function in the image's semantic structure, to answer the question of why Roosevelt is shooting a lion. For this reason, he is both about to be killed by the pouncing lion and also already wounded and bleeding, apparently, from having already been attacked; this nonsensical temporality is a function of his dual function: he must be already injured—to legitimize Roosevelt's avenging violence—but he must also be not-yet-killed, the better to valorize Roosevelt for saving him.

Reading the cover against the grain, in other words, reveals an image—and a story—whose primary motivation is the need to transform violence against Africa into love, killing into a vital act, and a rifle into an instrument of healing and reproduction. In this way, while there is no great interpretive leap in observing the phallic signification of Roosevelt's gun—and it therefore proves very little to make the connection—the conversion of a racialized violence into love and reproductive futurity allows us to observe that the ejaculation of Roosevelt's gun, which kills in order to make live, nicely figures the broader problem of the text. First, there is the violence of killing the great game, the paradigmatic “event” of the book. Then, retroactively justifying the primary act, an African is written into the scene, both licensing the necessity of shooting the lion but, also, being introduced into the scene after it, for that purpose. The fact that the African is, himself, also in the sight-line of the rifle is—given the necessary proximity of lion to man—hardly surprising; it would be difficult to draw the scene in any other way. But just as the obviousness of a gun's phallic dimension doesn't obviate that meaning—since, quite often, a cigar is not “just” a cigar, but is, in fact, a phallus—the fact that Roosevelt is allowed to shoot at an African because a lion has attacked is a fact so obvious we can easily overlook it. For this reason, the temporality I have imposed—Roosevelt attacks a lion, necessitating an African to be retroactively defended—can be inverted once more: what if killing the animal is only necessary to mask the barely hidden desire to kill the man?

If the cover has an obvious sanctioned reading—killing the beast to save the man—there is also nothing in the image to prevent us from reading the image, rather, as lion and man, together, killing the African (with the lion, perhaps, getting in the way of the man's line of fire), or of

Roosevelt indiscriminately targeting both lion and African together. Roosevelt would never be so impolitic as to *explicitly* align Africans with animals, of course—and in a variety of ways, over the course of the book, he argues the more liberal position, that killing predators was a way to save their prey, or at least their crops—but that elision was far from a counter-intuitive leap in 1909. If we presume Roosevelt as a non-genocidal, non-racist subject, we can find in the image a comforting confirmation of that fact, but if we recall the Roosevelt of *The Winning of the West*—who wrote that “[t]he most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages”—then we can easily find, in the image, a shooter whose concern for African life, as such, cannot be presumed, *except* as ideological cover. That the image is overdetermined—that the gun is pointing at the African both because he is in danger and in order to kill him—only serves to give the murderous desire a liberal alibi.

A great many other hunting writers, however, were much more explicit in describing quite clearly what Roosevelt only hints at. Richard Meinertzhagen, for example, write that “the hunting of men—war—is but a form of hunting wild animals,” and Robert Baden Powell’s *Sport and War* makes the same connection just as explicitly.<sup>5</sup> Yet the ease by which hunting animals seamlessly melds into violence against Africans in big game hunting narratives illustrates the point even more clearly: in C.H. Stigand’s *Hunting the Elephant in Africa*, for example—whose “Foreword” was written by Roosevelt—the chapter on “punitive expeditions” against natives (Chapter 20, “Stalking the African”) is not only seamlessly integrated into a broader narrative about the hunting of big game, but is narrated through precisely the same terms and tropes. Stigand is at pains to establish that “[t]he usual African punitive expedition is a poor enough show,” but the fact that Africans are the least interesting form of game does not obscure the fact that they are, in fact, “game.”<sup>6</sup> In telling the story of tracking a Kisii warrior, for example, Stigand writes first that “the Kisii turned and ran like a hare” and after following him to the place at which he had disappeared, he “presently heard a faint sound like a hippo coming up to breathe.”<sup>7</sup>

Hunting animals could also be a way of hunting man. Stigand, for example, understands the elephant to be the most interesting and challenging form of game—and “accounts of elephant hunting generally present the creature as a uniquely profound contest for the hunter,” as Nigel Rothfels observes—but the killing of an elephant was the particular pleasure it was because it displaces the African human as the possessor of a variety of human characteristics.<sup>8</sup> In one of the most famous Victorian accounts of an elephant hunt, for example, found in R. Gordon Cummings’ *Five Years of a Hunter’s Life*, the killing of an elephant is an experience to be savored, even prolonged, despite the fact that elephant displays so many characteristics of humanity, described as “gentle,” “noble,” “dignified,” and even as weeping. Or perhaps, as Mary Midgley argues, it is precisely these characteristics that make the elephant such interesting sport, along with the cunning and strength that makes it the most dangerous game: it is because—not in spite of the elephant’s humanity—that it is a kill to be savored.<sup>9</sup> After Cummings wounds the elephant,

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary, 1902-1906* (Edinburgh, 1957), 178-9.

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Stigand, *Hunting the Elephant in Africa and Other Recollections of Thirteen Years Wanderings* (New York: MacMillan, 1913), 309.

<sup>7</sup> Stigand, (1913), 309.

<sup>8</sup> Nigel Rothfels, "Killing Elephants: Pathos and Prestige in the Nineteenth Century" Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture" Edited by Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin A. Danahay (London: Ashgate, 2007), 55.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1983), 16.

therefore, he pauses to build a fire and put a kettle on, watching the wounded animal suffer, leaning against a tree: “There I sat in my forest home, coolly sipping my coffee, with one of the finest elephants in Africa awaiting my pleasure beside a neighboring tree.”<sup>10</sup> As Midgley notes, the animal is always pathetic, pathos-inducing: it is only the hunter’s consciousness of the animal’s consciousness that makes the kill pleasurable, its agony worth extending while Cummings enjoys his coffee.

If Roosevelt was the first big game hunter, he was also the last; even in 1909, he was already an antique, a Victorian in a modern world, and he became progressively more and more out of step with the world as it changed around him. He would die in the waning years of the Great War—would not live to hear it renamed “World War I”—but this, in a certain way, is part of his endurance as figure of nostalgia: having not survived into what we might now consider “modernity,” he indexes possibilities which modernity foreclosed: he is a kind of Great White Man for which the modern world has no room. In attempting to adapt his vision of the frontier to a modern, global future, he made himself superfluous to it, an anachronism while alive and a sacred relic in death. Elspeth Huxley once called Lord Lugard and the other white settlers in Kenya—Roosevelt’s bosom companions—“covered wagon pioneers in the age of the model-T,” and this statement could be applied to Roosevelt himself, especially in Africa: if he sought to see Africa as a white man’s country—and a massacre as a vital act—history would not bear him out. Kenya would not become a “white man’s country.”

This foreclosed futurity, however, would be clear much earlier than formal decolonization in 1963. Certainly, when the Devonshire White Paper in 1923 declared that Kenya was a “Black Man’s Country,” its imperial authors did not mean what the unnamed speaker in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *A Grain of Wheat* means when he declares that “Kenya is black people’s country” (or what Mugo Gatheru meant by his rhetorical question, in 1964, “How can there be an exclusive ‘white highlands’ in the black man’s country?”).<sup>11</sup> After independence, and in retrospect—after the settler colonial state had provided the basic structure for the independent African nation of Kenya, a state which would be less the dismantling of settler colonialism than its inversion—it would be possible to understand “Black Men’s Country” to signify a racial right to the land, the necessity of black sovereignty. But in 1923, or earlier, when John Ainsworth declared that Kenya “is primarily a Black-man’s country and can never become a European colony,” what was meant was simply the impossibility of the settler colonial vision of Kenya as a *white* men’s country.<sup>12</sup> The demographic

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<sup>10</sup> R. Gordon Cummings, *Five Years of a Hunter’s Life in the Far Interior of South Africa, Volume II* (New York: Harper, 1850), 14-16.

<sup>11</sup> Or, when Ngugi recalled the “gist” of a song sung by a group of women—as they were being forcibly dispossessed of the land they had occupied—he inverts the white ethnic cleansing of black people into a black ethnic cleansing of white people, translating their song as the promise that “you will one day drive away from this land; The race of white people; For truly, Kenya is a black man’s country.” Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Homecoming*, (London: Heinemann, 1972), 48. As Rosemary Marangoly George observes, “One cannot but notice the blatant romanticizing and masculinizing (‘Kenya is a black man’s country’) that Ngugi performs on the women’s text in the course of his translation.” Rosemary Marangoly George, *Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Maxon, *Struggle for Kenya: The Loss and Reassertion of Imperial Initiative, 1912—1923* (London: Associated University Presses, 1993), 271.

preponderance of non-white bodies had no necessary content of its own; not until African independence was an accomplished fact would it become thinkable to white colonizers. But for a broad variety of settler colonial thinkers in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the writing was on the wall for Kenya, a light which would fail. Winston Churchill's vision, not Roosevelt's, would win the day.

The result is that just as one can no longer torture an elephant while enjoying a nice cup of coffee, a white man cannot kill the Indian to save the man, nor displace the native to make way for the white man, on land which is declared to be a "White Man's Country." This does not mean that the desire to do so has disappeared, nor—some would argue—has this desire ceased to be realizable in practice. It has simply been officially disavowed, rendered unspeakable. In this way, in fact, the end of "empire" in Africa—and the consequent unspeakability of formal colonial conquest and racial governance—has not produced the end of settler colonial structures of thought, but defined the conditions of their continuity as their formal repression. But one can still go to Africa to "shoot" animals with a camera, and to also shoot Maasai; as Noel Salazar observes:

Although photographic safaris have largely replaced hunting, most tourists still travel to Tanzania hoping to see the 'Big Five,' a hunting term historically used to denote the five most dangerous African animals: lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and buffalo...Not without irony, some have expanded the Big Five to the Big Six by including the Maasai people.<sup>13</sup>

In this sense, while Roosevelt represents the apex of a settler colonial desire that sought to imprint itself on reality, we find the reflection of that desire in Africa fantasies which are not, as Roosevelt was, real. After Roosevelt, you could not be Roosevelt; you could only mourn his contemporary impossibility, and melancholically dwell on the lost love-object.<sup>14</sup>

Or, at least, this is how Ernest Hemingway used the memory of Roosevelt, in a short and bitter poem he wrote in 1923 and entitled, simply, "Roosevelt":

Workingmen believe  
He busted trusts,  
And put his picture in their windows.  
"What he'd have done in France!"  
They said.  
Perhaps he would-  
He could have died

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<sup>13</sup> Noel Salazar, *Envisioning Eden: Mobilizing Imaginaries in Tourism and Beyond*

<sup>14</sup> Here, I would call upon Paul Gilroy's effort to "consider the political and psychological reactions which attend the discovery that imperial administration was, against all the ethnic mythology that projects empire as essentially a form of sport, necessarily a violent, dirty, and immoral business"; as Gilroy argues, the transformation of "sport" into "violent business" helped produce a "chain of defensive argumentation that seeks firstly to minimize the extent of the empire, then to deny or justify its brutal character, and finally, to present the British themselves as the ultimate tragic victims of their extraordinary imperial success." Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 93-94.

Perhaps,  
Though generals rarely die except in bed,  
As he did finally.  
And all the legends that he started in his life  
Live on and prosper,  
Unhindered now by his existence.<sup>15</sup>

“Legend” and existence diverge, fantasy and reality: the living body of Roosevelt—who died in bed—would have impeded the enjoyment of the fantasies he created in life, so his death, too, is a vital event, making the fantasy live. But you could not repeat Roosevelt’s performance in 1923, in 1933, or in 1954; the First World War, the great depression, and the “Mau Mau” insurgency had destroyed the possibility for the kind of synthesis of Victorian gentry and modernist progressive of which Roosevelt was the great example. The figure of the legendary charge up San Juan Hill, after all, the Rough Rider’s glorious cavalry charge into gunfire, had become the fields of slaughter in France, where industrial butchery made heroic bravery into meat (including Roosevelt’s own son). As Hemingway’s poem observes, “[w]hat he’d have done in France” is die.

Roosevelt had also been the millionaire everyman, the president who was a man of the people, and who had been proud to be named by the rank of colonel: high, but not too high. Hemingway, by contrast, makes him the general who dies in comfort, in bed, while battlefield death is left for the lower ranks and classes. In 1933, when Hemingway would go on the big game hunting trip that would provide him with the material for *Green Hills of Africa*, the great depression had made it much more difficult to ignore the class distinctions that divided a millionaire scion of the Roosevelt clan from the humble hunters in whose ranks he sought to vanish; where Roosevelt blithely hunted in aristocratic comfort—only occasionally admitting a certain uneasiness at the apparent contradiction—Hemingway is consumed by the sense of acting a part, the artificiality of his pose of simplicity. Roosevelt could overlook his position atop a vast hierarchy of servants and hired men; Hemingway was constantly irritated by his reliance on their services, ever aware of his inability to be truly self-reliant.

By 1954, when Hemingway went on his second big game safari in East Africa (which he would write about as *Under Kilimanjaro*), the Mau Mau insurgency made continued settler colonialism impossible; even if one believed—as Hemingway and most white people did—that Mau Mau was simply a pathological atavism, the fact of it was as unmistakable as the demographic threat of Kenya’s black super-majority. In this sense, however uncertain the future was, the one thing it could not be, for Hemingway, was a white man’s country. He cannot even use the phrase; he uses the word “country” in precisely the same idiom as Roosevelt had—in describing the replenishing fecundity of the land’s reproductive futurity—but the word “white man’s” must remain implicit, unspoken. In this sense, while Roosevelt narrated the closing of the frontier in order to imagine it into existence—and wrote the “Winning of the West” in order to glory in that victorious sport—Hemingway’s Roosevelt might concede that it never existed at all. The belief of workingmen might run aground the reality of a legend that never existed, a legend which could only be a site of belief because, in fact, it had no objective reality. The legend could be printed, in other words, only because there was no reality, and never had been.

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<sup>15</sup> Ernest Hemingway, “Roosevelt,” in *Complete Poems* (New York: Bison, 1992), 45.

All of Hemingway's Africa writing is about failure and frustration, one way or another. On the surface, it is women who are the frustrating force: both "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" are, fundamentally, struggles with women, and as always, "women" in this case really means the emasculating force of civilization, the impossibility of virile futurity for a great white man. Hemingway's misogyny is on full display in these stories; authentic manhood the only desirable way to be in the world—and Francis Macomber's life is short, because he's only really alive in that brief period when he's happily a real man—but women, these terrible creatures who aren't men at all, hate and mistrust true masculinity and seek to destroy it. A struggle for masculinity is therefore a struggle against the woman who seeks to frustrate it.

But in this respect, the contrast with Roosevelt is easy: the absence of women from Roosevelt's text is more or less its constitutive element. You go to Africa, if you are Roosevelt, to penetrate its jungles, to bond and become one with the other men, to roam over the virgin land, to put your bullets in the bodies of your prey and so forth, but it's very important that the feminine be present without any actual females. In this way, while Hemingway is antagonistic to women who represent his frustrations—and brings them along for that reason—Roosevelt's unfrustrated manhood not only has no need for a feminine antagonist, but his mono-gendered world view requires only the aura of the feminine in the landscape as backdrop for his performance of manhood. In response to his manhood, the landscape takes on certain feminine characteristics, but an actual woman would only get in the way. Hemingway includes them, for precisely this reason, to register why the landscape is not responding to his non-manhood in the way it should. The land was not, as it should be, properly virgin and fertile.

If Roosevelt was the real thing, Hemingway was a performance of the real thing. Or, to take it a step farther, Roosevelt performed authenticity, while Hemingway performed the performance of authenticity; if the reader was meant to understand the Roosevelt was exactly what he was supposed to be, the reader of what Thomas Strychacz has called "Hemingway's Theaters of Masculinity" is meant to understand the fiction's fictionality; without the performance, there is no masculinity, but if "trophies promise to stabilize a process of manhood-fashioning that is always subject to the unsettling scrutiny of others," then this dependence "turn[s] male authority and autonomy into parodies of themselves."<sup>16</sup>

If Hemingway still enjoyed being a stud and a brute and a pig, after all, his Africa writing is filled with conscious acknowledgments that cruelty to women and African is a function of his own "meanness." This is particularly clear in *Green Hills of Africa*, but even in "Macomber" there are traces of Wilson's doubt as he rationalizes his small hypocrisy—sleeping with his employer's wife and then despising her for it—and in "Snows," the protagonist directly acknowledges that his cruelty to his wife is a way of staving off fear. Hemingway understood and explored the façade that was his own performance of manhood, and he could do so, in part, because he had Roosevelt to measure himself against, and to find himself wanting.

The Tarzan franchise represents another direction that the safari took after Roosevelt, precisely because, unlike Theodore Roosevelt, Tarzan is not real. Edgar Rice Burroughs was inspired to create the character by reading about Roosevelt's safari, but while Hemingway would fail to emulate Roosevelt in reality, Burroughs would simply write the fantasy. Indeed, in 1912, he wrote to the editor of *All-Story*—where *Tarzan of the Apes* had first been published—and suggested that he was, as he put it, "especially adapted to the building of the 'damphool' species of

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Strychacz, *Hemingway's Theaters of Masculinity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 175.

narrative” (a term which the *Routledge Dictionary of Historical Slang* glosses as “a DAMNED fool: coll. n. and adj.: from, resp., ca 1880 and ca 1895.”). Burroughs knew that his creation was a creation, and a fantastical one at that, and if his own nature—the manner in which he was “adapted”—tended to predispose him to create fantastical stories, he did not take them as seriously as Roosevelt took himself. In 1909, Roosevelt’s big game safari was the first of many repetitions, but *as* repetitions, they would also make it the last: after Roosevelt, you could imitate the great white hunter, but you could not *be* him. As a younger man, Edgar Rice Burroughs had wanted to be Theodore Roosevelt; he had even applied to join the Rough Riders in 1898, though his application was rejected. But by 1912, a reality principle had interposed itself between himself and Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was now a story, to be read about in newspapers and reflected into the medium of fantasy. Indeed, Burroughs was so directly influenced by Roosevelt’s big game safari that he copied the mistaken notion that there were tigers in Africa into his first novel (which had also been widely misreported about Roosevelt’s safari). But while he took it as his responsibility, as novelist, to correct the record when it came to Africa—since the absence of tigers was a fact, the second edition of *Tarzan of the Apes* corrected the error—the impossibility of Tarzan himself was something Burroughs freely admitted, even pointed out. “I do not believe that any human infant or child, unprotected by adults of its own species, could survive a fortnight in such an African environment,” he would later write; “if he did, he would develop into a cunning, cowardly beast, as he would have to spend most of his waking hours fleeing for his life...Tarzan is purely the product of my imagination...merely an interesting experiment in the mental laboratory which we call imagination.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, if Roosevelt’s life was “the story of a small boy who read about great men and decided he wanted to be like them,” then Burroughs’ hero was the great man who could be read about, but not truly emulated.

Tarzan succeeded, to an extent that it is difficult to fully appreciate. *Green Hills of Africa* failed. Unlike Burroughs—who would never go to Africa, only write about it—Hemingway would not only emulate Roosevelt by going on safari in 1933, but he made that imitation quite explicit, going so far as to employ Philip Percival, who had been one of Roosevelt’s guides in 1909. Like Roosevelt, Hemingway’s game safari was an extension of the hunting he had done on the American frontier—which he was reminded of, repeatedly—and again, like Roosevelt, he used the African game frontier to stage a performance of masculinity. As his son, Patrick Hemingway, would recall:

“What struck Philip Percival...was how much Ernest Hemingway reminded him, when they first met, of the Roosevelt he had guided more than twenty years earlier on the Kapiti plains of Kenya. Both Hemingway and Roosevelt had taken up the challenge of reaching and maintaining themselves at a professional level of physical fitness through the sport of boxing, not just as an end in itself but as a necessary condition for mixing with men who lived by the performance of their bodies as well as their minds. Neither Roosevelt nor Hemingway ever hesitated to take up any man’s physical challenge, though it did sometimes require them to take off their glasses.”

Hunting was a family affair, for the Hemingways; in the introduction to the collection *Hemingway on Hunting*, Sean Hemingway echoed his uncle in connecting their common ancestor to a Rooseveltian legacy. He also described his grandfather’s deep reverence for *his*

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<sup>17</sup> Hermann Hagedom, *The Boys’ Life of Theodore Roosevelt* (Harper and Bros., 1922), 1.

grandfather, Anson Hemingway, a civil war veteran and a pioneer-hunter in his youth, noting that Anson would give the eleven-year old Ernest his first gun, as well as take him hunting in 1909 (in the brief “hunter’s chronology,” in fact, the first two dates given to represent Hemingway’s development as a hunter are Roosevelt’s safari and the gift of a gun from his grandfather, both in 1909). But like Roosevelt, Anson Hemingway had lived in another era, another world, another time; when he had hunted and become a man, the American frontier was not yet an object of nostalgia. In his present, it was.

It was therefore Theodore Roosevelt who represented a means of accessing and reviving that past, by his living example. As Sean Hemingway goes on to recall, “The elder [Anson] Hemingway had come West in a covered wagon when he himself was a boy and had later fought in the Civil War as a volunteer in the Illinois infantry regiment” and “Ernest’s father told of his own hunting exploits as a young man, tracking and shooting bear in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina,”

“But for any young boy growing up in the first two decades of the twentieth century, it was Theodore Roosevelt—western rancher and huntsman, President of the United States, and later African hunter and South American explorer—who inspired the imagination and fueled the desire to explore and hunt in the great outdoors. Young Hemingway identified with much of Teddy Roosevelt’s hunting prowess, enthusiasm, and determination. In 1910, when Roosevelt came to Oak Park on a whistle-stop tour after his African safari of the previous year, Ernest, in his own little khaki safari outfit, was standing alongside his grandfather Anson, cheering on the great African hunter and Rough Rider of San Juan Hill. More than any other individual in his time, Roosevelt opened the African frontier to the imagination of America’s youths.”

For his son and grandson, then, hunting represents generational continuity, even reproductive futurity; as Patrick would lament,

“If kids don’t have access to parents who love to fish and hunt and who are willing to take the time to share the fun with their young families, it will be much harder for boys and girls to become competent as adults in either of these pastimes...I hope these two Hemingway books will inspire as many families as possible to hunt and fish and to stay together.”

Of course, as Patrick Hemingway notes elsewhere, his own hunting and fishing experiences with his father were somewhat limited, his father having left his second wife when their Patrick was twelve; if his lament over “kids without access to parents who love to fish and hunt” is a well-worn sentiment, it takes on a certain poignancy in that context. For Patrick, instead, his father’s legacy would be primarily mediated through the literary, becoming manager of Ernest Hemingway’s literary estate in the 1970’s. *Hemingway on Hunting* is part of this generational transmission: when Patrick Hemingway gave Sean Hemingway the task of compiling a book of Hemingway’s hunting writings—with introductions from both father and son—this father-son hunting collaboration not only echoed past father-son hunting expeditions, but performed that past’s recreation in the present, through the practice of writing. For Burroughs, writing allowed the fantasy of a return to the primitive frontier experience of a Rooseveltian past which could not be recovered in life; for Hemingway’s son and grandson, the

literary text enabled that fantasy to index the continuity of the past into the present, again, mediated by Roosevelt.

For Hemingway, however, attempting to repeat the past was something he did precisely to demonstrate that it could not be done, except in literature, reality's aesthetic surplus: the opening scene in *Green Hills of Africa* is a tableau in which the pure natural African wilderness—the communion between hunter and hunted—is interrupted by a truck, which frightens the game, and brings to Roosevelt the driver, a German who knows Hemingway as the poet he was when he wrote "Roosevelt," writing for a German magazine in the 1920's. It is a fantastical coincidence, a marvelous and strange occurrence... and proof that there is no escape from civilization. That particular poem is not mentioned—and it did not appear in *Querschnitt*, the magazine they discuss—but the moment of post-war disillusionment is the same, the foreclosure in which fantasy was killed by modernity.

The African safari survived Roosevelt, then, in the fantasy of superhuman physicality represented by Tarzan, and in the reality of the material's failure to live up to that ideal, the failure of fantasy to be real. Hemingway's Rooseveltian physicality—his ability to will his body to new heights—is taken, by his children, to make him the Papa they remember and revere, to connect the generations. But for Hemingway himself, the white body is radically insufficient; in a climactic passage, he moves from a reflection on a missed shot to his desire to live in the "good country" of Africa that would be thwarted by economics. "It took an Indian to make money from sisal," as Hemingway lamented; "[y]our cattle would die and you would get no price for your coffee." The white man could not make the best type of frontiersman, as Roosevelt had believed; for Hemingway, it was a foregone conclusion that the "cheap races" would win.

In 1909, Roosevelt had been living in a sense of white futurity that would not obtain, but whose failure he would not live to see. In 1910, therefore, he could still anticipate that East Africa's white future would be nothing but unbounded potential. For Hemingway, however, two decades later, it would be clear that imperial hegemony, racial hierarchy, and the economic solvency of the settler project were all under a kind of siege that Roosevelt had never known, and could not know. There were never enough white settlers to make Kenya into the white man's country they had desired, and while they would hang on to their impossible dream for as long as they could, the forces that would eventually lead to decolonization in the 1960's had, by 1933, already made that dream of an apartheid state in the white highlands a fast receding mirage.

Instead, Hemingway sought to take pleasure in pure form, in the rituals of white supremacy that, however deprived of their object, still spoke back to their disavowed origins. He could no longer desire a "white man's country," but in describing the "good country" which Africa could, still, briefly, be for him, "white men's" is the omitted element which signified all the more clearly for being eliminated. Hemingway's "iceberg principle," after all, was that

"If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing."

Or as he put it in *A Moveable Feast*, "You could omit anything if you knew that you omitted and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more

than they understood.”<sup>18</sup> Hemingway’s use of omission contrasts sharply with the ever more extravagant prose styles of his Parisian contemporaries; instead of modernist elaboration, he went in the opposite direction stripping away the “rhetoric” to approach a prose that was so simple as to become real. In *Green Hills of Africa*, in fact, Hemingway spends an inordinate amount of time discussing Parisian literary society and his literary vocation, exactly to make that contrast clear: by making fun of its decadence, precisely by unfavorably comparing it to the true and good feeling of shooting a kudu in Africa—so true there is nothing to say about it—he reminds us that he, Hemingway, is the truly vital writer.

Like the white man’s country of Kenya, however, *Green Hills of Africa* was a failure. In the brief forward, Hemingway suggested that he had “attempted to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month’s action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of the imagination.” The critics mostly agreed that it could not. Immediately after its publication, Granville Hicks called it “the dullest book I have read since Anthony Adverse,” and wrote that while “[t]here are perhaps ten pages that are interesting...[t]he rest of the book is just plain dull. Hunting is probably exciting to do; it is not exciting to read about.” Bernard DeVoto wrote that “long parts of it are dull,” that it “is not exactly a poor book, but it is certainly far from a good one.” And Edmund Wilson delivered the coup de grace, finding the book to be the “only really weak book he has written” and “the only book I have ever read which makes Africa and its animals seem dull.”

Tarzan, by contrast, would survive and thrive. And while Hemingway has often become popularly synonymous with a martial and racial masculinity that *we* are presumed to have put behind us—a figure whose modernist reputation, like Joseph Conrad’s, is colored by the problem of his bigotry, or at least is inseparable from the accusation—Tarzan remains and endures, perhaps because he is only a story for children and dampools, or escapist entertainment. He remains real, and potent, because he never pretends to be anything but a fantasy.

As I have argued in “Tarzan’s White Flights: Terrorism and Fantasy before and after the Airplane” the most popular and iconic image of Tarzan—a white man swinging on vines through a primordial jungle canopy—is not only an image that’s been copied and imitated so many times as to have been stripped of the novelty that originally made it worth imitating, but the process by which it has been placed into circulation, especially as it was adapted for cinema, has naturalized (by decontextualizing) the racial narrative which the image crystallized:

“as the white skinned *ubermensch* flying above Africa, he surveys it, commands it, transcends it, and thereby figures and naturalizes both man’s supercession of the animal and the white man’s dominance of the African...in the succeeding century, as Tarzan’s progeny have come to represent an utterly conventional genre tradition, we tend to forget both how novel the idea of a man who could fly originally was and how tied that image was to originally racialized narratives of (white) man’s transcendence of the merely (African) animal and earthly. Just as the original 1912 novel glosses Tarzan’s name as “white-skin,” the character as a whole is legible only as whiteness was being differentiated from Africa: against the backdrop of an intuitively social Darwinist understanding of race—a Malthusian war of all against all for resources and future reproductive options—*Tarzan of the Apes* first and foremost represented the broad

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<sup>18</sup> Aaron Bady, “Tarzan’s White Flights: Terrorism and Fantasy before and after the Airplane,” *American Literature* 83: 2 (June 2011).

societal fear that the white races might be in decline because of civilization's effeminizing and emasculating effect on white men (an anxiety which Burroughs demonstrates by frequent "meanwhile-back-in-London" comparisons between Tarzan and his over-civilized cousin). And as a fantasy of white virility, Tarzan also performed the solution, a particular variation on the kind of back-to-the frontier war with nature that Burroughs' own hero Theodore Roosevelt vigorously advocated, the "strenuous life" that would re-establish the white race's global dominance."<sup>19</sup>

As I argue, there, the invention of the airplane not only blurred the distinction between fantasy and science—since scientific consensus established powered air flight to be impossible—but as flight became the miracle of the age, it was a miraculous fantasy encumbered by fantasies of white supremacy. And just as the real power of flight was, for Burroughs' Tarzan, the fantastic terror it allowed him to create in those who, lacking reason, could not comprehend it, savage terror was the basis of military calculations on the use of the airplane from the very beginning. Burroughs began writing his first Tarzan novel only a month after the first bomb was dropped from a powered airplane onto a colonial native uprising, Italian Lieutenant Cavotti's raid on the oases of Tagiura and Ain Zara outside of Tripoli. Pre-WWI aerial bombardment was exclusively and explicitly a system of white on black colonial governance; as Sven Lindqvist has exhaustively demonstrates, for example, while a variety of technologies—like poison gas, dum dum bullets, and aerial bombardment—were, from their invention, judged to be too fearful to use on civilized populations (especially civilian populations), they *were* used, consistently and with a scientific interest in the results, on native peoples judged to be rebellious.<sup>20</sup> What the post-Weissmuller Tarzan allowed viewers to forget, I argue, was that Tarzan's use of flight—and the physical perfection of his Adonis-like white body—made him into a "terror-god." Tarzan terrorizes Africans, and his ability to "rise" above the jungle made him the natural king of Africa, precisely because—above and unseen—he rules through terror.

Tarzan's flight, however, gave him access to another kind of terror and dominance, one mediated by pleasure, rather than racial order and hierarchy: Tarzan is a rapist. In the theatrical trailer for the 1932 film *Tarzan the Ape-Man*, after all, the sequence of images, text, and voice-over collectively give the unmistakable impression not only that Tarzan rapes Jane but that she enjoys it. The first part of the trailer shows Tarzan swinging through the jungle on a barely disguised trapeze, then alighting onto a high tree branch where he spies something off camera that catches his intense interest. After a cut, we see the image of Tarzan holding Jane with the phrase "to seize what he adores!" completing a sentence that began "Tarzan, the Ape Man, knows only the law of the jungle." Another cut, and we see Tarzan carrying an apparently unconscious Jane into his jungle nest high in the trees, limp and passive. The next cut shows Jane terrified, attempting some kind of futile resistance to Tarzan's advances; as he drags her by one arm into the cave-like warren; as he clutches at her in a decidedly un-gentlemanly manner, she is seen struggling and slapping him ineffectually as she screams "Let me go! Let me go!" An instant later, however, we are reassured by the sight of a delighted-looking Jane, affectionately clinging to Tarzan while the title cards proclaim first "Many women would delight in living like Eve--" and then completing the thought with "if they found the right Adam!" After another cut, we see her lying under the wordless Tarzan, apparently reflecting to herself on what has just

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<sup>19</sup> Bady, (2011).

<sup>20</sup> Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing* (New York: The New Press, 2000).

happened (and with a deeply satisfied look on her face). “Better not think too much about that,” she says. “Not a bit afraid. Not a bit sorry.”

The trailer itself is deceptively edited; Tarzan does not actually rape Jane in the film—as certainly as there are no tigers in Africa, there is no rape in the film—even though the trailer is crafted to give the impression that he does. Yet in the trailer, “rape” is the only way to make a coherent narrative out of an otherwise disconnected sequence of images and dialogue. We can intuit it—in a sense, we cannot help but do so—but nothing is shown which might upset a viewer’s sensibility. The trailer offers plausible deniability, allowing us to know violence without actually showing it to us. More than that, it only shows us what is already there: if we “see” the rape in that scene, it’s because we knew without knowing.

As a rape fantasy, then, the trailer structures a very particular form of desire: that violently seizing and possessing a woman by force can count as “ador[ing]” her and can produce her adoration in turn, the fantasy of a rape that is not rape, without fear, guilt, or consequence. And yet it is also still rape: Jane’s struggles and Tarzan’s force could have been excluded, but they were not. It is exactly the point that we see the violence of violence, just before we also see its erasure. And it is just as much to the point that we do not see what we do not see.

As Elliott Prasse-Freeman and Sayres Rudy have observed, cinematic trailers tend to represent “the real” of a film in a very particular sense: as a narrative form the marketing trailer internalizes and expresses the totality of the social, political, institutional, and even technological pressures on cinematic production.<sup>21</sup> Because it expresses the filmmakers’ sense of the popular audience towards which the film is oriented—an audience whose desires the film hopes to mirror, flatter, satisfy, and profit from (more than to challenge, shape, or create)—the trailer is both a privileged form, and a unique site of insight into the way a film “thinks.” In fact, a trailer might also *create* meaning, in the way that facial expressions not only reflect and reveal underlying mental processes, but also reflect back onto them, producing and reinforcing the emotions which they apparently represent. A trailer like this one might anticipate an audience’s desire, but it also teaches audiences how to anticipate and desire the movie they had not yet seen, the terms in which to read it.

In this way, if Burroughs’ Tarzan tests and proves a thesis about racial hierarchy and masculine dominance—and a “law of the jungle” which derives both from “nature”—Hollywood’s Tarzan would not only be uninterested in any such thesis—to a remarkable extent—but the character would be structured by its flight *away* from the entire complex of issues, the need for plausible deniability. In other words, I would suggest that Hollywood’s Tarzan doesn’t assume, prove, and/or naturalize the violence of white male possessiveness, as

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<sup>21</sup> As they usefully observe, “Trailers are the best representation of how film-industry elites perceive and shape popular tastes. In the YouTube era, the trailer is all the more influential because it frames our anticipation and memory of a film. The trailers that precede movies distill their plot, magnify their effects, and raise expectations with speedy cuts, fleeting images, and seductive suggestions, setting up what to watch for and how to remember it... Since trailers sell movies (or trick people into first-weekend viewings), movies as cultural signifiers start with their first trailers. The trailer may be seen as “the real” of the cultural production of cinematic experience, a mode of direct access to the ideology and political economy of filmmaking. It reduces to excess what it ostensibly represents, the film itself.” Elliott Prasse-Freeman and Sayres Rudy, “Batman Occupied,” *The New Inquiry*, July 19, 2012. <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/batman-occupied/>

most literary critics take the function of Burroughs' novels to be. Instead, the Tarzan who would swing into popular consciousness in the person of Johnny Weissmuller represented a response to Burroughs, and an attempt to rehabilitate the character for an audience that could no longer so innocently enjoy the kind of savage id he expressed. To call it a "critique" of Burroughs would be to imply a political consciousness and intention that is not really in evidence, of course; if the movie "thinks," it thinks through its desire for the Tarzan it can no longer enjoy without guilt, no longer so easily take for granted. MGM would actually employ African advisers to ensure that their portrayals of African tribes looked authentically "African" but would not be recognizably specific to any one particular tribe or ethnicity, precisely to ensure that their offensive portrayals of "natives" would not be offensive to any *particular* group of Africans. But this imperative to mitigate the film's offensiveness—to salvage the core of the character while abandoning the rest—defines the work of the character in his cinematic iterations. The Weissmuller Tarzan represents the effort to escape from the Tarzan that Burroughs had written, the desire to enjoy a spectacle whose pleasures had become uncomfortably mixed, fraught with politics, and therefore unavailable for thoughtless consumption.

Put differently, the Hollywood Tarzan recovers the innocence of the character precisely as those aspects of the character became guiltier pleasures than they had originally been, and for that reason needed to be excised. In this sense, I would suggest, the trailer for *Tarzan the Ape-Man* is not only about a desire for rape—an African fantasy for violent sex, or for sexualized domination of Africa; it also registers an engagement with the *problem* of a character who is inextricable from violent sex, the desire to license a form of desire that now requires a license, and a structure of feeling that suddenly and abruptly must be naturalized (as opposed to easily signifying as natural).

In this sense, while the simplest reading of the trailer would be that women really want to be raped—a fact, like the absence of Tigers in Africa, and a fact which some "law of the jungle" might explain—articulating the statement in these terms reveals their incompatibility: rape and a desire for non-consensual sex are irreconcilably different things. The latter is not rape but the performance of it; if "women really want to be raped," what they really want is not the reality, but its appearance, since sex cannot be non-consensual if the partner wants it. One can want the *appearance* of non-desire, perhaps, but to desire non-desire is an incoherent and impossible contradiction.

This logical problem does not arise, of course, unless women have consciousness, the point at which point "consent" becomes possible. And Burroughs' Jane is a "Victorian" in the sense that her consciousness literally disappears during and in anticipation of sex; her mind not only goes blank in the face of sexual experience—and she prefers suicide to rape—but she is, in this sense, literally incapable of consenting. As a function of her innocence and virtue, therefore, she cannot know what sex is, desire it, or even be aware of it; because she *is* virtuous and good, she does not. And so, Burroughs' Jane could never utter the words "Not a bit afraid. Not a bit sorry." She could never negate her fear of a thing she could never conceptualize; she could not pronounce her lack of shame for something she cannot experience. Nor could she be raped: if one cannot consent at all, rape and sex are literally indistinguishable. For Burroughs, therefore, the important distinction is between a gentleman and a scoundrel, between the man who protects (and controls) and the man who attacks and spoils, a choice located in the mind of a man who can choose. Jane's mind is the mirror image of this choice; if he is capable of both, her capability for the one disconnects the other: unconscious of sex, she is conscious only of un-sex.

The Jane played by Maureen O'Sullivan, by contrast—especially in the pre-code

films—is a very different woman than the plantation Belle which Burroughs wrote. Rather than a pure function of fetishized feminine virginity—who can function as Eve to Tarzan’s Adam because she has no knowledge of sex—O’Sullivan’s Jane turns out to be a woman of the world, a high-society New Yorker whose understanding of sexual economy—and sexual duress—is quite basic to her character’s consciousness: she wants to have sex with Tarzan precisely because she is not an innocent, because he is not a rapist, and because she knows the difference. Because she is thoroughly conscious of the manner in which feminine sexuality functions as a commodity for masculine possession in New York, she wants to be possessed by Tarzan, in the jungle, because sex is *not* a possession there. In fact, the starting point for reading the way *Tarzan the Ape-Man* and *Tarzan and His Mate* re-imagine the character is the fact that Jane—not Tarzan—is the main character, the audience stand-in, and the perspective from which Tarzan is found. Her choice between Africa or Civilization defines the two films, and her fate—as sexual consciousness or sexual commodity—describes the stakes of that question: is it better to be a sexual possession, and a kept woman, or to be on one’s own, free in the jungle?

In a sense, the trailer puts the rape back into a movie which does not actually contain it; in the Weissmuller films, the aggressive males who wish to possess Jane are always, inevitable, white men from Europe and America, and Tarzan is her defender: they come to Africa to seize ivory, gold, and Jane, but Tarzan foils them and breaks their guns. The trailer misleads us into thinking we are seeing something more like Burroughs’ Tarzan, whose violence is possessive and lustful. But at the same time, it is Jane who glosses the scene, whose voice and consciousness speak rape into existence even while denying that it has occurred. Even as a rape fantasy, the trailer is structured by the need to defuse and rationalize the violence which it invokes.

The first two Weissmuller films define one end of the spectrum through which Tarzan’s character has been experienced over the course of the 20th century. Burroughs’ Tarzan marks the other end, the position from which those films departed and the gravitational force of the Author which has repeatedly pulled the franchise back from that moment of feminist consciousness, in a series of returns and revivals of the “original” Tarzan which inevitably re-discover Tarzan the rapist. The third Weissmuller Tarzan film, for example, violently re-orient the narrative back onto Tarzan himself, not only aggressively sidelining Jane but trying to kill her off, precisely because of what she has come to represent in the series: the consciousness of power’s object, the subjectivity of the violated. But this consciousness never quite disappears. Audiences would not allow the studio to get rid of Jane—forcing a last minute re-write—but more importantly, the presence of what she represented would mark the series from that point on. The series could no longer be unconscious of the consciousness of violence’s object: if it was to enjoy its violence, it had to explain, rationalize, and legitimize. For this reason, “rape” is the franchise’s ideological soft spot, the desire which it both enables but also must disavow, the contradiction it cannot resolve but spends all its energy mediating.

After all, violence and love are opposing absolutes: the total reduction of the other to its unknowable externality and the total identification with the other, a failure to distinguish between the other and the self. What, then, to make of a desire to both love and kill? The violent expression of love, or the loving expression of violence? The problem doesn’t arise if the love-object lacks consciousness; just as one can kill bare-life without consequence, an unconscious mind cannot be raped. But even Jane’s statement that she is not sorry, is not afraid—as commentary on her experience of sex—represents the possibility which the first Burroughs novel categorically expunges, and which later films will work to prevent themselves

from imagining. The animating problem of the franchise, then, is a desire which is split by its object, lust which cannot be love because of its expression as violence (or which cannot be violence because of its expression as love).

It is not coincidental that the same dynamic structures Theodore Roosevelt's peculiar relationship with animals, Africans, and his son. When the epigram to *African Game Trails* declares that "He loved the great game as if he were their father," the intuitive fit between these notions is part of the story he wishes to tell—in which the violent swathe he cuts across the landscape is actually a loving, conservationist violence—but this is also an utterly strange and unsettling way to describe what he was doing, a strangeness which his critics enjoyed exposing and caricaturing.

Roosevelt carefully argues that killing a predator was a conservationist act because he needed to explain away and imbue with productive meaning the obvious pleasure he took in it (just as sex becomes respectable when a child rather than an orgasm is the outcome); his critics would show that his orgiastic killing spree was just that. More to the point, however, could predatory violence ever be the vector along which parental affection is expressed without troubling the coherence of the metaphor? The bizarreness of a phrase like "He loved the great game like he was its father" cannot be fully imagined away, especially since Roosevelt and his son Kermit were essentially on a glorified father-son picnic. If hunting was an expression of fatherly love, could Kermit be quite sure that he, too, would not be hunted in turn? Why wouldn't love expressed as violence turn into infanticide.

There are no women in Roosevelt's safari, of course, except for the extent to which femininity is displaced onto the virgin land, the future domesticity of the settler republic, and onto the animals into whose bodies he ecstatically fires his bullets. Roosevelt's utopian space is a homosocial happy hunting grounds, composed by its distance from the homestead where his wife keeps the home fires burning. But the Tarzan franchise has Jane, an actual woman. Indeed, though it had more to do with the constraints under which the studio operated than any particular narrative vision, the two Tarzan films which jump-started the franchise in the 1930's—*Tarzan the Ape-Man* and *Tarzan and his Mate*—are actually movies about Jane. She finds Tarzan, hers is the narrative point of view through which the discovery is staged, and the subjective dilemma of both films is her choice between bourgeois respectability in civilization and sexual pleasure in the jungle. But these films are both the exception that proves the rule and define the transcendence of the self which the other films strive for. It is precisely because those films are *not* about rape, in fact, that the trailer must re-edit the plot to produce it as such.

After all, Tarzan's relationship with Jane is always vexed in the franchise, much more vexed than the language of "Adam and Eve" can ever allow. Even Burroughs' first novel struggles with what to do with her. *Tarzan of the Apes* should have been a romance, after all, but it very surprisingly isn't: after rescuing Jane from danger, Tarzan chooses not to claim her as his bride, out of a "noble act of self-renunciation" which both stems from his ignorance of his parentage and yet actually demonstrates his human lineage. The second novel will solve the problem, of course, and bring the two together, but at this point, domestic bliss becomes the problem which must be solved if the series is to continue. Jane is the "happily ever after" which must be evaded, the settled resolution which makes further narrative unnecessary. As Tarzan became a *serial* narrative, therefore—over the course of two dozen novels, twice as many films, and variations across almost every form of media—authors and producers will work to invent reasons to free Tarzan from the clutches of Jane's domesticity, to find new reasons for him to "light out for the territories" ahead of the civilizing domesticity which threatens him.

In *Tarzan Finds a Son!*, for example, Jane “takes a spear” as a way of opening up new plot possibilities in future movies. This plot turn also expresses the particular form of misogyny which resents man’s dependence on woman for reproduction: not only does Tarzan “find” a son in the same film which kills off his wife, but Tarzan’s son “boy” simply falls from the sky (quite literally). Jane does not even die in childbirth; she has no particular role in the creation of children, but she is also made superfluous after Tarzan finds a son. *Tarzan Finds a Son!* was an effort to reorient the franchise away from the heterosocial drama of the first two films—the rather compelling and comparatively sophisticated *Tarzan the Ape-Man* and *Tarzan and his Mate*—towards a homosocial boy’s adventure. As an aging Johnny Weissmuller inhabited a more fatherly role, “Boy” would continue to serve as audience stand-in for the franchise’s youthful audiences. And in quite explicit terms, the studio wished to kill off Jane to free Tarzan for new romantic conquests; the aftermath of a successful romance was not conducive to the kind of narrative that could be profitable.

Audience outrage forced the studio to change the ending of *Tarzan Finds a Son!*, inventing a miraculous recovery for Jane from wounds that were clearly staged to be mortal. Jane’s reprieve would simply make it necessary to invent reasons for Tarzan to leave his domestic bliss, where he could have quasi-romantic liaisons with a variety of jungle maidens, romances which were usually both suggestive and chaste. This was probably the better solution for the studio anyway: while enjoying a variety of guilt-free dalliances—since they were always latent and almost never consummated—Tarzan could also remain faithful to Jane, who stayed at home. Space solved the problem of the “Virgin and Whore” binary: he could enjoy sexualized encounters with a series of women “out there,” while retaining the Wife-Mother at home. Promiscuous cad, family man, father, and older brother, Tarzan is the personification of having his great African cake and eating it too.