VOLUME 2 – CRITICAL STUDY

STRUCTURING TRAVEL NARRATIVE: TEXT AND PARATEXT

"Asking a writer to ponder on the process of writing smacks of asking a centipede which order it uses its legs in and then watching it fall over."

Penelope Shales-Slyne, 2017

CONTENTS

Section 1 – Introduction **4**

Section 2 – Text **7**

2.1 The Dilemma 7

2.2 The Narrative Frame 9

2.3 The Search for the Perfect Opening 15

2.4 Structuring the Text 24

2.5 Extras – Sidebars, Footnotes and Endnotes 31

Section 3 – Paratext **34**

3.1 The Paratext Puzzle 34

3.2 Opening Gambits – Titles and Sub-Titles 40

3.3 Sub-Divisions – Chapters and Chapter Headings 44

3.4 To Quote or Not to Quote – The Use of Epigraphs 54

3.5 Further Information – The Reference Sections 61

3.6 Saying Thank You – Dedications and Acknowledgements 72

3.7 A Touch of Solicitation – The Blurbs 83

Section 4 – Illustration and Epitext **86**

4.1 The Cartographic Conundrum – The Use of Maps 86

4.2 Worth a Thousand Words – The Art of Illustration 92

4.3 From Twitter to Talks – Constructing the Epitext 99

Section 5 – Conclusion **104**

Bibliography **110**

List of Illustrations and Maps

Fig 1 Outline map of Africa 90

Fig 2 New design black and white map of Africa 91

Fig 3 New design colour map of Africa 91

Fig 4 Country map of Egypt 92

Fig 5 Black and white illustration of Melissa on Alexandria Station, Egypt 99

Fig 6 Original photo of Melissa on Alexandria Station, Egypt 99

Fig 7 Original photo of Racheal on the Tazara Railway, Tanzania 99

Fig 8 Black and white illustration of Racheal on Tazara Railway, Tanzania 99

Fig 9 Black and white illustration of Victoria Falls to Bulawayo train, Zimbabwe 100

Fig 10 Original photo of Victoria Falls to Bulawayo train, Zimbabwe 100

Section 1 – Introduction

Embarking on the PhD added a critical and theoretical component to my thesis. While narrowing down research questions for discussion in this commentary, one overarching issue quickly became clear – the one which had driven me towards the PhD in the first place. How do you weave together coherently and entertainingly a story that has no simple story arc, that has multiple, seemingly unrelated elements, that covers both universal themes and day-to-day banalities, that has a disparate cast of characters, an epic timeline and geographic span?

In this commentary, I've drawn on some recent work in travel writing studies and more general literary theory, finding useful in particular the work of formalist and structuralist critics such as Gérard Genette, Roland Barthes, and reader-response theories that have built on their work. These have enabled me to examine the production of the book from a broader perspective. In the introduction to *Theories of Reading*, Karin Littau talks of the division between the way that books are viewed by cultural historians and literary theorists, the former studying the physicality of their structure, the latter concerned solely with their content. In working with reader-response, she argues that "material production impinges on meaning production" and therefore "that this object's materiality and physical organisation conditions our readings."[1] For Littau, "the study of the consumption and reception of literature within the remit of material cultures allows an insight into the ways in which technology shapes sensibilities and thinking itself."[2] This naturally pushes any critique beyond the boundaries of the text to an involvement with the finished work, the form in which it is presented to the reader, the usability of the book, and even to its cover design and marketing. The creative process is no longer the author's single-minded production of a text but a collaborative partnership with both the publishing team and the potential reader to produce the finished book, in whatever form(s) it may be published. The shaping of that product now begins

[1] Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 1.
[2] Littau, *Theories of Reading*, 6.

with the conception of the idea and not, as has customarily been the case, with the completion of the manuscript.

In order to address the issue, I have set out to explore the technical building blocks of travel writing as they inform my own creative piece, concentrating on works from the mid-nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, the period covered within my travel text. After many years working as an editor – creating text for books which are published within series – I find that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to separate the text from the completed book and the reader experience. I decided to study the techniques deployed in a representative range of travel books, analysing how other travel writers have tackled the types of challenges I was facing. For the most part I have approached these books as a practitioner looking for examples of what works successfully.

In Section 2, I discuss how theories of narrative discourse and reader response might be applicable to specific narrative and structural issues relevant to the core text, such as framing the narrative, the way to start the book, the structuring of the text and the use of footnotes and endnotes. In Sections 3 and 4, I use Genette's definitions of 'paratext' [those sections of the book outside the main text and related text beyond the book itself] as a basis for a broader exploration of the travel book, the creation of the complete object as presented to the reader.[3] These sections will discuss topics such as the role of titles and sub-titles and epigraphs, illustrations and mapping. Within these, I also consider other influences such as the role of the editor, publisher and illustrator in the final creation of the published work.

In researching the two parts of this thesis, there is a deliberate disconnect between the sources quoted within my creative piece and those referenced in the critical commentary; they are intended to fulfill different criteria. I will discuss my use of source materials and editorial choices within my creative piece further in Section 2. For the commentary, I have, for the most part, used literary research sources beyond the travel genre, in order to discuss the writing and publishing process. In the list of travel books included, I have confined my choice to those, both well- and lesser-known, who specifically identified themselves (or were identified by others) as travel

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[3] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* [1987], trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

writers. This still offered a vast array of possibilities. In choosing which of the many authors to look at in greater detail, I have included well-known exponents of the art such as Bruce Chatwin, William Dalrymple, Sven Lindqvist, Gertrude Bell, David Livingstone and Eric Newby. Paul Theroux is the one inevitably closest in comparison to my work – having written widely on train travel, including the African-based *Last Train to Zona Verde* (2013), while his 2003 book *Dark Star Safari* also follows the Cairo to Cape route, albeit in a very different fashion to my own. I have additionally chosen modern women writers, using Dervla Murphy's *Visiting Rwanda* (1998), rather than one of her better-known books, as it is about Africa and has strong historical content. Jenny Diski's *Stranger on a Train* (which pipped *Dark Star Safari* to the post in winning the Thomas Cook Award for Best Travel Book of 2003) was included both because it was set on a train and for its extraordinary introspection and hypnotic writing. Rachel Lichtenstein's *Estuary* (2016) combines transport (this time sailing) with history and reflection, although on a far narrower geographic scale, but also introduces a more intense, almost ethnographic, involvement with the traditions of the people of the outer Thames Valley. Joanna Kavenna's *The Ice Museum* (2006) and Claire Scobie's *Last Seen in Lhasa* (2012) are rare examples of more recent travel narratives by modern female writers that venture further afield. However, the strong socio-historical content of my travel text also speaks to an interdisciplinarity that takes it beyond the boundaries of any straightforward encounter between the self and other. Because of this, I have also chosen to include within my study some works, whether fiction or non-fiction, with particularly strong historical content, such as Charles Miller's classic study of the building of the Kenya-Uganda Railway, *The Lunatic Express: An Entertainment in Imperialism*.[4]

[4] Charles Miller, *The Lunatic Express: an Entertainment in Imperialism,* (London: Futura, 1977).

Section 2 – Text

2.1 The Dilemma

As a genre, narrative travel straddles many disciplines and treads an uneasy path along the boundary between the subjective and objective, the rational and romantic, fact and fiction, narrative and non-narrative. Twentieth and twenty-first century travel writing was moulded by Modernism, but was born out of the Romantic movement and, however outward facing it may have appeared at times, has never shaken off its inherited obsession with egotism and self-reflection. The travel writer, typically both author and protagonist, is asked simultaneously to be hero and observer, reflective, creative, imaginative, factual and truthful; to be memoirist and journalist, explorer and poet. Back in the 1920s, travel writer Norman Douglas summed it up neatly:

> the reader of a good travel book is entitled not only to an exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, but [also] to an interior, a sentimental or temperamental voyage which takes place side by side with the outer one.[5]

In presenting this interior voyage, modern readers typically demand that the ethically responsible travel writer now not only needs to think more carefully about what they say but about their representation of their own identity. In addition, the author of any non-fiction work has an undoubted responsibility to those they write about, past and present. As Tim Youngs said, "The fact of written representation is crucial: writing inscribes the unequal power relationship between the observer and the observed…"[6]

Satisfying all these conflicting requirements is, essentially, an impossible task and some commentators have chosen to write off the genre rather than grappling with the complexities of the new reality. Meanwhile, an increasing number of writers who have chosen to remain within it have retreated more recently from certain aspects of the challenge, choosing to write primarily about their home environment, nature, or foregrounding their interior journey. Many of the resulting books are extraordinary

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[5] Norman Douglas, *Alone* (London: Heinemann, 1940), 98.
[6] Tim Youngs ed., *Writing and Race* (London: Longman, 1997), 2.

works of literature but the consciousness that genre fashion had moved away from engagement with the issues of global history and cultures at the core of my project were at the forefront of my mind as I started writing.

I recognised within myself, a natural outsider/observer, a built-in resistance to baring my inner self in print that would be difficult to conquer. I had, reluctantly, accepted the fact that I would be the protagonist of the work but was still very unclear about how to place myself firmly at its centre. How might satisfying the demands of that "interior, a sentimental or temperamental voyage" balance with the more socio-observational material I was keen to include? Simply the process of curating and editing the material and the language I used to tell it would be a commentary on its content. Yet I would also be telling my own story and that of some of my forefathers; nothing in this story would be simple.

To this needed to be added a complex, multi-layered narrative. I was not devoid of ideas – the ideas, facts and research were piled around me. My first difficulty lay in painstakingly piecing together these fragments to tell a coherent tale. How to create a meaningful and well-balanced construction that would be both readable and navigable? How would I balance my author's presence, the reader's imagination, and draw material from a multiplicity of sources, representing hundreds of voices. Having spent my entire working life focused on reader-led publications, I am acutely aware of the role of the reader. Both guidebooks and magazines are carefully targeted at specific demographic groups and the author is given clear instruction as to both writing style and content, tailoring the level of complexity of ideas and lexicon accordingly. For the first time, I was setting the agenda, writing the book that I wanted to write and much of the advice I was receiving talked of finding my own voice and style. I found that impossible without envisioning the dialogue with my reader. Yet on this occasion, my reader was not predefined by marketing concerns; in a strange Catch-22, it would be up to me to define or create the reader with whom I wished to speak. American horror writer, Stephen King, writes for his

wife, knowing that she is his ideal reader, and remarks that "without Constant Reader, you are just a voice quacking in the void." [7]

Additionally, in writing a book that was aiming to look at the history and social history of the region, I was taking on a responsibility to the people about whom I was writing. Aware that much of the information within the book has already inevitably been pre-filtered, chiefly through the pens of colonial authority figures, as well as other writers and translators, much of my time has been spent trying to read between the lines of earlier accounts, stripping away layers of imposed prejudice, reaching, however inexpertly, for my own imperfect imagined truth. The multiplicity of voices becomes a palimpsest, a confusion of story and culture; my own only the latest layer of scribbling, snapshot of a moment in time, added to the growing heap.

As with the other chapters of this book, I have chosen to confine my analysis primarily to the formal aspects of the travel text, beginning with the creation of a reader-friendly narrative frame and the structuring of an introduction or opening chapter.

2.2 The Narrative Frame

The *Online Etymology Dictionary* describes the origins of the word 'text' as "from root PIE [Proto-Indo-European] '*teks* – to weave, to fabricate, to make; make wicker or wattle framework.'" It is a word which has evolved through many millennia and languages from Hittite and Sanskrit to Latin, Greek and German, all involving complex weaving, carpentry and creation. 'Narrative' is rooted in the Latin, *narrare*, meaning "to tell, relate, recount, explain," first used in medieval French in the fifteenth century. Yet this too has a PIE origin in the word *gnero* – "to know a narrative text then is fundamentally all about weaving together knowledge."[8] In spite of that, most of the early theoretical work on narrative concentrated on fiction rather than non-fiction. Genette was no exception, writing a book, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, based on a detailed examination of Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu (Remembrance of Things Past).*

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[7] Stephen King, *On Writing* (London: Hachette UK, 2001), 124.
[8] "Online Etymology Dictionary", https://www.etymonline.com/ (accessed 04/02/2021).

In his introduction to *Narrative Discourse*, Genette gives three distinct, related definitions of narrative as "the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events"; "the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse, and to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc."; "and the act of narrating taken in itself".[9] In broad brush strokes, traditional Western literary analysts concern themselves with the first, the written text as created by the author, and historians with the second, the original documentation on which the text may be based. For creative writers, however, it is the third – the act of narrating – the building blocks of storytelling, that are key to understanding the construction of a text.

In the late twentieth century, a new generation of theorists began to take other factors into account. Inevitably, this dissection has led to the development of a proliferation of theoretical strands of ever narrower definition, leading to the separation of genres and structures along with more fundamental discussions to do with the literariness and narrative – or non-narrative – qualities of the text. Didier Coste, in "Narrative Theory", talks of the division of human action from non-human events and plot, offering both spatial and temporal definitions as well as descriptive ways of moving the text forward (or indeed backwards) while still recognising the fundamental necessity of narrative to human expression, saying:

> Narrative discourse or communication is about the world as it changes, about things that move and people who travel and are perceived differently as they change location. It is a way of registering past and present novelty *and* imagining, simulating, planning, or calculating novelty to come, for the sake of decision-making, of action and reaction, and also to experience and ponder the pain and pleasure of being alive. [10]

[9] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980) 25–26.
[10] Didier Coste, "Narrative Theory" (Oxford Research Encyclopedia, 28/06/2017). https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.116 (accessed 03/02/2021).

That story is forever changing in the telling, even if the basic building blocks remain the same. No one performance or reading will ever be identical to the last as the interrelationship between writer and reader, actor and audience shifts in time and space. Imagination and elaboration play their part; it is virtually impossible to strip narrative back to bare fact. There has been relatively little discussion of narrative theory within travel writing to date, leaving considerable scope for further study, beyond the remit of this thesis.

Travel writing does involve human action, emotion and continuous journey. It can be simple or elaborate, from the basic statement that 'Jason caught the bus home,' to Scott's epic journey across the Antarctic ice. Yet it rarely has story arc; there are very few instances of 'because', a chain of forward-moving events or actions that create an interlinked plot with a grand dénouement. As a result, Kai Mikkonen positions travel writing clearly between narrative and non-narrative, saying that:

> Travel writing, occupying both the role of the episodic tale that fails to possess a sense of causality, and so lacks narrativity, and the role of the simple story proper, a prototype of storytelling, plays out the rival conceptions of temporal succession and causal connection and has helped to establish the approximate point of demarcation between the narrative and the non-narrative.[11]

I began with the premise that *Steel Safari* would contain four distinct narrative strands of unequal size and import: my own first-person journey; the historic account of the building of the railways; the broader socio-historical impact of their arrival; and their current/future building/rebuilding and any possible future repercussions, all to be told in the third person. Because of the nature of the material, not one of these presented a clear narrative thread; rather each was made up of a collection of loosely related fragments involving different countries, railway lines, themes, peoples and events. There was some overlapping but putting it together was more like doing a giant jigsaw than smoothly plaiting interlinked chronological strands. When,

[11] Kai Mikkonen, "The 'Narrative is Travel' Metaphor: Between Spatial Sequence and Open Consequence", *Narrative*, 15, no. 3 (2007), 286-305.

eventually, it all came together, the overall picture needed to make sense, but so did each thread. The reader should, for instance, be able to follow the story of the building of the railways or understand my journey without difficulty. The book would be lengthy and complicated, but it also needed to be readable, entertaining and coherent in order to keep the reader engaged. Finally, as a travel book, it needed to have an overarching sense of purpose, journey and story.

The first decision had to be on the overall story arc. There would be no great defining moment that would reach a crescendo two-thirds of the way through. There would be no cliffhanger at the end of a chapter. A simple narrative storyline, reliant on plot, would not work for this type of non-fiction. However, there would be plenty of events and action. The book would have a beginning, a middle and an end, in that my personal journey would start in Alexandria on the north coast of Egypt, I would travel south across Africa and eventually arrive in Cape Town, at the far southern tip of the continent in South Africa. The physical geographical journey would, to some extent, be mirrored by the personal journey. I would also need to combine the modern and historic elements of the story. Before I got this far, however, I needed to work out how to move the story forward. Should time or space provide the main axis? Should the narrative move geographically or chronologically, or should I ignore both and work thematically?

There is a significant thematic element to *Steel Safari*, with its concentration on the trains and their effect on the continent. There are also many more specific strands to investigate within the overarching themes, such as the railways' effect on colonial expansion, nationalism, war, social life and so on. It would be entirely possible to write a thematic book on the topic. While they are less common, there have been highly successful thematic travel books such as Roger Deakin's *Waterlog* in which he seeks out ideal swimming holes across the UK.[12] However, I discounted a primarily thematic approach almost immediately as it would have left little room for my personal journey or the sense of voyage inherent in train travel. It would have also required either a

[12] Roger Deakin, *Waterlog: a Swimmer's Journey Through Britain* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999).

great deal of background explanation or assumed knowledge for it to be sufficiently coherent when making thematic comment across such a broad range of time and space. For instance, talking about the role of the railways in Africa's wars would cover everything from Kitchener and the Battle of Omdurman in the Sudan through South Africa's Boer Wars, both World Wars to the Rhodesian civil war, without even touching topics such as the bitter civil war in Sudan. One chapter would be ill-equipped to make sense of such a vastly different range of material, geographically, historically and technically, and would just become confusing.

There were similar issues with tackling the book chronologically. While following the trains' story from their earliest beginning to the present would make sense in terms of the railways and would provide an opportunity for some interesting comparisons between lines, it would position the book fairly and squarely as a history book and not within the travel genre. Moreover, at times, with events happening simultaneously at opposite ends of Africa, the reader would be left skipping around the continent, trying to keep track of the complexities. So perhaps it was inevitable that while travel writing and history are natural bedfellows, and virtually all travel books contain some history, I was unable to find a single example of a travel book that followed a strictly chronological plan. The closest I came was, in reality, another thematic book, Charlie Connelly's *And Did Those Feet: Walking Through 2000 Years of British and Irish History*, a series of walks around the British Isles, used as a vehicle through which to tell the history of the islands. I return to the topic of my treatment of time within the text in Section 3.5, in the discussion of the addition of a Chronology as part of the paratext.

In the end, a geographical framework seemed to be by far the most logical and coherent solution, both allowing me to include my own journey in the book and allowing the reader to follow the action on a map. With so many different cultures and historical patterns to consider, each country and railway system can be studied independently, only cross-linking where necessary for comparative purposes. This makes the whole book far more manageable and coherent from both the writer's and readers' perspectives. It is no surprise therefore that almost every travel book ever published chooses a geographical framework. By doing the same, I was placing my work firmly within a travel writing tradition that stretches from Marco Polo's *Book of Marvels of the World* through to Paul Theroux's *Dark Star Safari*, which covers much of the same ground as I was to cover; I was all too aware of the potential comparisons.

Cecil Rhodes always talked of a Cape to Cairo railway; he was Prime Minister of the Cape when he first conceived the idea, and he was sitting drinking in the Kimberly Club in what is now South Africa when he famously drew a pencil line of the proposed route across the map. His view was from the southern end of the line, and Cape-Cairo is the alliterative name that trips off most tongues. I felt instinctively however that my journey had to head away from home, ending at the furthest point, so I had to travel from north to south, from Cairo to the Cape. Moreover, if I were to do the whole continent and the complete history of Africa's rail system, I actually had to start on Egypt's north coast in Alexandria rather than Cairo, 220 kms (137 miles) inland. Then there were other complications to consider. The route does not actually exist as a continuous line and individual tracks wander off in different directions along the way. The Kenyan line and Tanzania's Central Line are due east-west, built to try and connect the coast with the Nile, while the Tazara line heads south-west from Dar es Salaam to Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia. For practical reasons, due to seasons, visas and accommodation issues, I actually did the research in four separate journeys, starting in the middle with Kenya, before heading north to Sudan and Egypt (in that order), then back to Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, with a final trip to South Africa.

I decided to allow myself a little artistic license and stick to a simple north-south axis for ease of reference but made a mental note to myself to confess at some point along the way. This was partly for the sake of journalistic honesty, mainly because segments of the text would not make sense unless I explained. Much of the text on Sudan relies on an understanding that we were arriving from Europe and heading north towards Egypt, while the lack of trains – for a variety of reasons – plays an important part in my personal journey. By happy coincidence, starting in the north and working south also meant that the oldest railways on the continent, those in northern Egypt, would be discussed first, offering a modicum of chronological sense to the opening chapters, although this would be abandoned in fairly short order.

My basic framework was set – the book would follow the railways south geographically from Alexandria to Cape Town, country by country, allowing the timeline, themes and my personal journey to sort themselves out en route.

2.3 The Search for the Perfect Opening – Finding an Introduction

Opening any book is difficult, but surely a narrative travel book should be easy. Every journey has a beginning. But when precisely does the journey begin? As you pack your bag? As you arrive at the airport? As you land in your destination? Is it marked by a compass point – at one end of a linear journey? Or perhaps it stretches further back and begins with an idea? Or are its roots more tangled still, caught up and interwoven with other influences, childhood dreams, a mother's passion, a favourite teacher's inspiration, the first spark ignited by a sign glimpsed briefly from the passing window of a train?

Is the beginning actually the best place to start? The start of the journey might be incredibly dull or, worse still, trite. Travel editors across the world routinely reject articles that start 'As the plane came in to land…' as one of the great all-time clichés. The backstory may be just that, interesting background but not the action-packed attention-grabber you want to hook the reader on page one. Might it be better to start *in media res* with an action sequence, or with something outside the main plot, Hollywood-style, as a literary *amuse-bouche*?

In addition to the paratextual front matter such as the contents page, dedication and epigraph, discussed in Section 3, there are many different sorts of prefatory material preceding the main text such as the preface, foreword, prologue and introduction. Some of these are written by the author, some potentially by others. The fact that these terms are all synonyms and as such are frequently used interchangeably in addition to having multiple functions only adds to the confusion. So what actually is the purpose of these various preambles to the main text, how are they used and is any sort of introduction even necessary?

Most writers are desperate to attract readers. With so many choices and so much resting on whether readers will progress to the next page, it is only too easy to understand the terrible dilemma faced by civil servant, Joseph Grand, in Albert Camus' *The Plague*, who becomes obsessed with trying to write the perfect opening to his book, his manuscript eventually stretching to fifty pages of variations of a single sentence, but never progressing further.[13]

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[13] Albert Camus, *The Plague,* trans. Stuart Gilbert. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Hamish Hamilton, 1973), 88.

He is struggling to find what Flaubert called "le mot juste"[14] and Hemingway the "one true sentence" [15] and it is a terrible temptation faced by virtually every writer. Yet, in reality, much of this battle is probably wasted effort – the opening words of the main text are rarely the first encountered by the reader. By the time the reader gets to the start of the opening chapter, they will have already formed a strong preliminary impression based on the cover, the cover blurb, reviews, flipping through the pages or even discussions with friends. Some books – or editions – may have an additional introduction or preface by a person or academic of note either as endorsement or offering a detailed scholarly or expert introduction to the text. This type of prefatory material is best included within the paratext and as such is discussed, briefly, within Section 3.7. Within this section, I concentrate solely on those passages written by the authors themselves, either as an explanatory note or as an introduction to the main body of the text. In discussing how prefatory material has been used within the various travel books below, I have, in each case, used the term favoured by the author.

In *Visiting Rwanda*, Dervla Murphy offers a chronology of events, a glossary and a list of acronyms before you ever get to the prologue. Although lip service is paid to Murphy's role as writer within the narrative, the prologue is effectively a potted history lesson, giving the facts and figures of the Rwandan genocide. There is further discussion of much of this paratextual material in Section 3.5; the notable point here is that Murphy has chosen, unusually, but with good reason, to educate her readers before they embark on reading the creative text, realising that an introduction to the immensely complex history of Rwanda is essential to any further understanding of a book about the country.[16]

Both Martha Gellhorn in *Travels with Myself and Another* and Gertrude Bell in the preface of *The Desert and the Sown* begin in an almost apologetic fashion, recasting their travel books in different guises. Martha Gellhorn uses

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[14] Gustave Flaubert, "Letter V to Sainte-Beuve", *Correspondance* (Paris: Conard, 1929), 67.
[15] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (New York: Random House, 2010), 12.
[16] Dervla Murphy, *Visiting Rwanda* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998).

her introduction to explain how much she hates other people's travel stories and that this is actually a book of travel horrors.[17] Gertrude Bell

> desired to write not so much a book of travel as an account of the people whom I met or who accompanied me on my way, and to show what the world is like in which they live and how it appears to them. And since it was better that they should, as far as possible, tell their own tale, I have strung their words upon the thread of the road.[18]

She goes on, at some length, to talk about the character of the Oriental, the political conditions of the time, all with decided opinions. The gruff homily is, in many ways, the closest the reader gets throughout the book to Bell's personality, made all the more fascinating because the revelation is entirely unintentional.

In her prologue to *Looking for Transwonderland*, Noo Saro-Wiwa uses the behaviour of a group of Nigerian travellers at Gatwick Airport as the jumping off point for an exploration of her own split childhood between the UK and Nigeria, the psyche of the Nigerian people, her reactions to them and the rationale behind the book. It not only introduces her as protagonist and narrator, highlights the central dilemma at the heart of the narrative but provides a fascinating first glimpse of otherness within a familiar setting:

> Being Nigerian can be the most embarrassing of burdens. We're constantly wincing at the sight of some of our compatriots, who have committed themselves to presenting us as a nation of ruffians. Their efforts are richly rewarded at airports, where the very nature of such venues ensures that our rowdy reputation enjoys an extensive, global reach. I've always dreaded airports for that reason. They are also places where, as a Nigerian raised in England, I'm forced to watch the European and African mindsets collide in a way that equally splits my loyalty and disdain towards both.[19]

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[17] Martha Gellhorn, *Travels with Myself and Another* (London: Eland Publishing, 2002).
[18] Gertrude Bell, *The Desert and the Sown: Travels in Palestine and Syria* (New York: Dover Publications, 2012), ix.
[19] Noo Saro-Wiwa, *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* (London: Granta Books, 2012), 2.

Eric Newby, in *The Big Red Train Ride,* leaps straight in with a story, but it's a vignette of a totally different train ride twelve years earlier, the one that inspired him to make the longer journey across Siberia. His prelude stands alone, like a short story or the action sequence before the credits that presages the start of a good James Bond movie. He even begins in a taxi racing down an icy Nevski Prospekt towards Leningrad station and mentions caviar in the second paragraph. It could come straight out of a Cold War thriller. Not only does it grip the reader's attention but marks the book out as a page-turner, easily readable and highly entertaining.[20]

William Dalrymple takes the same approach in *The City of Djinns,* jumping back to an encounter during his teenage years to explain his passion for the city of Delhi and the underlying theme of his book:

> Delhi, said Pir Sadr-ud-Din, was a city of djinns. Though it had been burned by invaders time and time again, millennium after millennium, still the city was rebuilt;… The reason for this, said Sadr-ud-Din, was that the djinns loved Delhi so much they could never bear to see it empty or deserted…In Delhi, I knew I had found a theme for a book…[21]

While, at first glance, all these usages may seem different – the history, the apologia, the retrospective, the psychology, the anecdote – they all have one thing in common: they are being used in a specific fashion to explain the core values that lie at the heart of the book to follow. The prologue or preface signals what it is that has driven the author to write the book, the road they have trodden (metaphorical or literal) or what is most important about the pages that lie before you. The preface doesn't need to be a road map but it needs to offer some understanding as to what is to follow and inspire the reader sufficiently for them to wish to read on.

What about those who skip straight to Chapter One? In *Eothen*, Alexander Kinglake chooses to begin with a detailed description of crossing

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[20] Eric Newby, *The Big Red Train Ride.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
[21] William Dalrymple, *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 9.

the border between European and Ottoman lands in Serbia, heavily quarantined and divided by religion and the terror of plague:

> Of the men that bustled around me in the streets of Semlin there was not, perhaps, one who had ever gone down to look upon the stranger race dwelling under the walls of that opposite castle. It is the plague, and the dread of the plague, that divide the one people from the other. All coming and going stands forbidden by the terrors of the yellow flag. If you dare to break the laws of quarantine, you will be tried with military haste; the court will scream out your sentence to you from a tribunal some fifty yards off; the priest, instead of whispering to you the sweet hopes of religion, will console you a duelling distance; and after that you will find yourself carefully shot, and carelessly buried in the ground of the lazaretto.[22]

It is, almost exactly, the nineteenth-century equivalent of Noo Saro-Wiwa's sojourn at Heathrow, graphically marking the transition between two cultures. It also has extraordinary resonance still today. On reaching Ottoman territory, Kinglake too takes time to ruminate on the gulf between the two cultures, using what is at times a very funny and, by modern standards, deeply politically incorrect, conversation between a Pasha and a traveller through a less than successful interpreter to illustrate the point.

Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* starts with a very short chapter (only four pages) heading back in time to his grandmother's dining room and his discovery of a piece of brontosaurus skin from Patagonia. It was an image to fire the imagination of any self-respecting boy:

> This particular brontosaurus had lived in Patagonia, a country in South America, at the far end of the world. Thousands of years before, it had fallen into a glacier, travelled down a mountain in a prison of blue ice, and arrived in perfect condition at the bottom. Here, my grandmother's cousin, Charley Milward the Sailor, found it.…The Charley Milward of my imagination was a god

[22] Alexander William Kinglake, *Eothen* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), 2.

> among men – tall, silent and strong, with black mutton-chop whiskers and fierce blue eyes.[23]

Even when the brontosaurus turns out to be a giant sloth and the skin is thrown away, the desire to visit Patagonia never quite vanishes. Chatwin doesn't choose to call this an introduction but in every other respect he has used this opening chapter in exactly the same way as Eric Newby does in *The Big Red Train Ride*, delving back into the past to explain the present journey.

In *Jupiter's Travels,* Ted Simon also starts with a short opening chapter, not labelled as an introduction, choosing instead simply to call it "Jupiter". He begins *in media res*, leaping straight into the action of the present journey, selecting a seminal moment with which to hook the reader – in this case the chance encounter on a road in India which led to his invitation to a wedding and Simon's being named Jupiter by the visionary father of the bride. He then goes back and really starts the journey at the beginning of the next chapter with the words "Officially the journey began at 6 pm on Saturday the sixth of October 1973."[24]

Paul Theroux also chooses to write a very short first chapter in *Dark Star Safari*. He too time-shifts, in this case, jumping forward a year, choosing to step outside the action to speak as a writer, from his desk, and looking retrospectively at his journey, why he had chosen to make it and the reactions of others to his departure:

> Everyone always available at any time in the totally accessible world seemed to me pure horror…The whole point of my leaving was to escape the stuff – to be out of touch…
>
> Africa is one of the last great places on earth a person can vanish into. I wanted that. [25]

In his later return to Africa, *The Last Train to Zona Verde*, Theroux writes a longer first chapter and chooses, like Ted Simon, to start with action

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[23] Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia* (London: Vintage, 2005), 1-2.
[24] Ted Simon, *Jupiter's Travels* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 17.
[25] Paul Theroux, *Dark Star Safari: Overland from Cairo to Cape Town* (London: Penguin, 2003), 4.

from the core of the journey. The opening sequence is a hunting expedition with the San people which widens into a history of the San. By the end of the chapter, Theroux is back on familiar introductory territory, explaining why he has chosen to do the journey and how it links up with his previous books. He talks of one last 'valedictory' trip, following in the footsteps of writers such as Waugh, Conrad, Hemingway and Naipaul:

> You might expect people to say, "Go home, old man." But no – in general, Africa turns no one away.
> And so, this greenest continent, would seem the perfect landscape for a valedictory trip, a way of paying respects to the natural world and to the violated Eden of our origins.[26]

Yet again, in all these instances, whatever they are called, Chapter One is, to all intents and purposes, an introduction.

In my own quest for the perfect opening, it had become obvious that there is no one clear path. Whatever I chose to call it, the opening section would need to herald, to some degree, what was to come. I had already tried Theroux's retrospective approach with less than satisfactory results. My first attempt at an opening section was written – and set – in France, reading about Africa and hearing the news of the Westgate Mall attack in Kenya. My supervisor simply suggested I read some others; I did.

The apologia was not for me. Although *Steel Safari* is a hybrid, mixing history with travel and reminiscence, I saw absolutely no reason to trumpet either my motivation for embarking on the project or any literary purpose of the book in advance. Nor did I need to give any detailed history in the introduction in order to make the book comprehensible. My relationship with Africa and the gestation for this particular journey was long and complex but I had no personal 'brontosaurus' moment. This would not make a gripping page-turning start to the book, so far better to let it be discovered slowly along the way. Having decided on a basically geographical structure for the book, with each main chapter roughly following a

[26] Paul Theroux, *The Last Train to Zona Verde: Overland from Cape Town to Angola* (Penguin, 2013), 11.

country, I did like the idea of a preface rather than launching straight into Chapter One. I felt that this would offer the opportunity to step outside the main narrative and take a broad-brush approach, setting the scene for the transcontinental scope of the book before concentrating on each of the component countries. The question was how to focus it.

The answer, when it came, arrived through pure serendipity, in the form of a chance meeting with a fellow student, now Dr Jeremy Solnick, originally from South Africa.

"I've got a book on South African railway poetry you could have a look at," he said, over coffee. *Stimela: Railway Poems of South Africa* is a small, esoteric collection filled with off-beat gems. Editor Laurence Wright's introduction to the collection focused on the history of "Shosholoza", a rhythmic Ndebele chant that has become one of the most famous songs in world music since it was taken up and roared across stadia during both the Rugby and Football World Cups in South Africa.[27] I had had no idea that it began on the railways, a gang workers' song later taken up by workers heading to the mines in South Africa. Its words are all about steam trains and journeys. It was a song of Africa and politics that grew to become an anthem. As I made my journey across Africa in 2010, during the build-up towards the South African World Cup, with the continent in a fever of excitement about the prospect, my introduction had just fallen into my lap. It is short. Its tone and voice are different to that of the main body of the book. It sets the scene without spelling things out. It introduces Africa, me and the railways. It places me physically on the metaphorical starting blocks. I have called it Forward. *Shosholoza* means 'go forward' – and of course, it is a foreword.

Forward

"Shosholoza
Kule ... Zontaba
Stimela siphume South Africa
(Go forward, Go forward
from those mountains

[27] Laurence Wright et al. (ed), *Stimela: Railway Poems of South Africa* (South Africa: Echoing Green Press, 2008), 1.

> on this train from South Africa)
> The roar of a Rugby World Cup stadium, a picture of Nelson Mandela in a Springbok shirt dancing in the Cape Town sun in 1995, the South African crowd at last united in sporting triumph “*Shosholoza, Shosholoza*.” The strident yowl of the vuvuzelas is yet to join the howl of victory being thrown around the crowd. That belongs to another great sporting moment – football’s “Africa” World Cup. And that is still in the future.
> Shosholoza. Go forward. For now, it’s February 2010 and at the moment, I am still in the far north, on the edge of Africa, in Alexandria, the continent stretches out before me and South Africa is still a thousand adventures away. (Vol 1, p. 5)

Having written a simple introduction to this Critical Study, a decision was taken, in collaboration with my supervisor, at the very last minute, while compiling the final draft of the complete thesis, to split the introductory Section 1 in two. The first half, which offers a general background to the whole project, has become a Preface to both sections of the PhD, leaving the second half to introduce the Critical Study, focussing more closely on the literary aspects of the text.

2.4 Structuring the Text

My Forward was intentionally densely written, closely packed with images. It would be impossible for me to sustain that style throughout the book and almost impossible for the reader. There would be no shading, no easy moments of light relief. French philosopher Roland Barthes, in his famous essay on *The Death of the Author*, dismisses the authority of the author-figure, saying that

> a text is made up of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that is with the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author.[28]

In 1973, he talks in *S/Z* of the differences between "writerly" and "readerly" texts. He is dismissive of writerly texts, calling them "poetry without the poem, the essay without the dissertation, writing without style, production without product, structuration without structure" while he considers any readerly texts as "classic texts".[29] In his article on the metaphor of travel as narrative, Kia Mikkonen describes their relationship thus:

> …the travel story enables a double reading of the same world: the world as it seen and the world as it is narrated. The world as narrated involves the idea that the retelling of a journey is always a traveler's translation of a space that could be revisited or of an experience that could be relived.[30]

As stated previously in both this Section and the Introduction, the text becomes a dance between the author and the reader that requires rhythm and shade, waves of anticipation and room to relax. I wanted my book to have waltzes and mazurkas and disco, moments of quiet solitude and hopefully laugh-out-loud surprises. My actual narrative in Chapter One opens very

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[28] Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 148.
[29] Roland Barthes, *S-Z,* trans. Richard Miller (London: Cape), 1975, 4-5.
[30] Mikkonen, "The 'Narrative is Travel' Metaphor", 300.

deliberately with a lighthearted verbatim conversation Mark and I had in an Alexandrian café on Africa's Mediterranean coast.

"'I am 28 years old. I need a wife.' Ginger Mohamed paused and waved his fork at me. 'I'd like to marry an English wife. Can you find me an English wife?'" (Vol 1, p10). The anecdote sets the scene both literally and metaphorically for my (our) trip through Africa, placing us at the beginning of our journey and introducing my partner, Mark, as an inexperienced traveller. The Mohameds, like a number of other people we met en route, have been given nicknames. The political situation in Egypt and several other countries on our route is vastly different now to when we travelled and I felt it prudent to disguise or partially disguise the identities of certain people we met along the way. Only those with specific jobs with whom we arranged government level interviews, friends and family, or public figures have been left with their identities unobscured.

By starting with dialogue, I was also setting what was to become a common pattern for the rest of the book, although I did not realise it until I was at least halfway through it. I did write notes, but as I said in the Introduction, my main method of recording both my own thoughts and those of others around me was on audio. This provided me with a wealth of recorded material including transcripts of many conversations. I was able to reproduce the exact cadence of people's speech, complete with their hesitations and figures of speech. I could hear as they cut across each other and, above all, the background noise, from traffic to wind or water, bird song or the clatter of plates was extraordinarily evocative as I listened back to each, often rather bad, recording and cherry-picked the moments I wanted to include. Many of the conversations were snippets that ended up showing unexpected gulfs between our cultures. One of my personal favourites was the day that I met the site guard at the Royal City in Meroe:

> From nowhere, an elderly man falls into step beside me.
> "Salaam Aleikum."
> "Aleikum, Salaam." We exchange greetings courteously. There is a pause. He continues in English.
> "What is your job?" No one ever asks where you are from in Sudan. That's a tourist question and there are no tourists. Every foreigner here is here with a purpose – oil worker, NGO or archeologist.
> "I'm a historian. I'm writing a book." He nods thoughtfully and there is another pause.

> “Do you have a PhD?” Somewhat taken aback, I choke back a laugh and confess gravely that I do not.
> “A Master’s?” No again. By this stage, I am feeling definitely inferior and there’s a distinct gleam in his eye as he lands the killer blow.
> “I know many people with PhDs. I know Dr Derek Welsby of the British Museum. Do you know him?” And once again, I fall painfully short and have been found out. As I write this however, I am halfway through my PhD, have just ordered a book by Dr Welsby and maybe one day, I’ll be able to go back to Meroe with my head held high and answer “yes”.
> (Vol 1, p72)

Back in Alexandria, the scene is also set physically with the description of the café itself: “…The thick bead screens were equally efficient at blocking flies, sunlight and fresh air. The room smelled of heat and cooking oil, grilled meat and dust, onion and lemon.” (Vol 1, p11). Physical description is a fundamental of travel writing but has to be balanced carefully. You need to create a sense of place, but too much and the action grinds to a halt. We could stay in the small, dark café but that would be a very different book indeed, one perhaps written by one of the many literary giants such as Lawrence Durrell who wandered the alleys of the city in the 1930s, writing his vast *Alexandria Quartet*. Mine, however, is a book about movement, about journey, about history and about transport and we need to get outdoors into the African sun and find some trains. I deliberately cut short the scene and we head out into the streets in search of the Alexandrian trams, the oldest surviving train system on the continent, in one of the most ancient cities in Africa, founded by Alexander the Great in the 5th century BCE.

As my canvas expands onto the broad arc of the Art Deco esplanade, the storytelling becomes slightly more formal, slipping slowly into the third person, with fewer personal observations and more straight narrative, fairly liberally scattered with short quotations, allowing me to digress away from my own journey to discuss the fading city herself, the history of the Alexandrian Library, and the many great writers from EM Forster to Maguib Mahfouz who have made this their home for a while.

> One day, while riding on the blue Ramleh tram – a much prettier affair in those days, with wooden shutters and gingerbread scrolling around the roof – a beautiful young Egyptian conductor, Mohamed el Adl caught his [Forster's] eye. He pursued the young man determinedly, riding the rails at all hours of the day and night to continue the conversation and at one point even risking him his job. Finally Mohamed agreed to meet him "Any time any place any hour" and their friendship blossomed into a true love affair. It proved to be one of the defining moments in Forster's life. Forster returned to England and El Adl died tragically young, in 1922, but he was never forgotten. A couple of years later, inspired by a rereading of their letters, Forster began writing *A Passage to India* as a memorial to Mohamed, basing the extraordinary character of Dr Aziz on his lost Egyptian love.
> (Vol 1, p16)

This section on Forster's complex relationship with El Adl introduces the complex relationship between Britain and Africa which became so fundamental both to my own life and global politics. As the chapter continues, it reverts to a more personal reflection about the city ending the section thus:

> I tried to peer forward. On this peaceful day in 2010, Alexandria seemed as if she could look forward not perhaps to palaces and potentates but to a plentiful future of mass-market timeshare and tourists.
>
> I was wrong. By the following year, her streets were ablaze and the tourists had vanished. In the years that were to follow, the jolly Alexandrian trams were to be bombed and burned. Alexandria's immediate future, at least, did indeed seem dubious. We all knew that there were problems but none of us foresaw the Arab Spring that afternoon. (Vol 1, p17)

Even this foreshadows what turned out to be one of the recurrent themes of the book, my constant efforts to juggle the chronology of events, anchoring the text firmly in 2010 but looking backwards as far as Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and forwards to the creation of new Chinese-built railways during the writing process after my return home.

This kind of meandering story structure allowed me to create a clear narrative thread, while still allowing me to sidle off down interesting side alleys, to explore the world around me, to backtrack through history while keeping the whole flowing

forward. It is a form of shaggy dog storytelling which manifests in a multitude of forms, is beloved of travel writers and stand-up comedians, and is clearly defined in Jack Hart's *Storycraft* – the explanatory narrative:

> The attraction… lies in a structural element unique to modern explanatory narrative. The writer follows an action line just as if he were writing a true story… But every once in a while… the writer stops the action… he goes off on a little exploration of the subject, an abstract explanation that gives depth and meaning to what the reader's been witnessing in the narrative.[31]

The explanatory narrative, Hart explains, begins with a basic story structure but for the structure to work successfully, it is insufficient simply to follow a route. "You need to follow a person or a thing." Narrative plot sequences are interleaved by digressions. The examples he gives are of investigative journalism and, in particular, a story about the life cycle of the French fry from field to table.

Frequently, within travel writing the narrative and explanation are closely interwoven, using a variety of different narrative techniques, to bind them seamlessly. Bruce Chatwin weaves background information through the main narrative, even using the brief dialogue as a way of adding biographical detail in this segment from Chapter 16 of *In Patagonia*:

> The Bahai Institute of Trevelin consisted of one short, very black and very muscular negro from Bolivia and six students from the University of Teheran, only one of whom was present.
>
> "All men," the Bolivian sniggered. "All very religious."
>
> He was making a makeshift spinner from a tin can and wanted to go fishing in the lake. The Persian was dousing himself in the shower.
>
> The Persians had come to Patagonia as missionaries for their world religion. They had plenty of money and

[31] Jack Hart, *Storycraft: the Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, 186.

> had stuffed the place with the trappings of middle-class Teheran…[32]

The text forms a daisy chain of words and images. We learn in the first sentence that those present are from Bolivia and Teheran; all come from the Bahai Institute. In the next, Bolivia and religion are both mentioned again. Further on we read that the Persians are missionaries, bringing Teheran to Patagonia. Yet in the middle of this seamless link, the text swerves away from the story to tell us that the outsider – the black and very muscular negro from Bolivia, the only one described physically – is planning to go fishing, a non sequitur that adds colour but has absolutely no other relevance.

William Dalrymple creates even more deliberate divisions in *City of Djinns*, sub-dividing his chapters with spacers in the shape of a small elephant to mark abrupt shifts in subject or pace such as this example in Chapter Four (using an asterisk in place of the small elephant):

> In the meantime, Olivia and I enjoyed the new-leaf, clean-shaven, fresh-smelling Balvinder and the novel sensation of riding in a taxi that didn't reek of brewery.
> Two days after I returned from Karachi, I called Balvinder and asked him to take me up to Coronation Park.
> *
> When I first came to Delhi I had expected to find much that was familiar. I knew that India had been influenced by England since the Elizabethan period and that the country had been forcibly shackled to Britain, first in the form of the East India Company, then the British Crown, for nearly 200 years.[33]

There is little I consciously borrowed from other travel writers when it came to textual style but one thing I did adopt, with many thanks to William Dalrymple, was this use of line breaks, substituting the small elephant with a gif of a steam train. It not only allowed me to divide the text into more manageable chunks but offered a neat solution to one of the fundamental dilemmas which had led me towards a PhD in the

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[32] Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia*, London: Vintage, 2005, 42.
[33] Dalrymple, *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi,* London: Harper Perennial, 2005, 70.

first place – how to thread together a complex narrative of many strands. Of all the 'travel' writers working today (and I use the quotation marks advisedly as he is much more than this) Dalrymple is the one who is probably most heavily invested in history. His clear separation of the strands of his text showed me the way to do the same. While I have woven some small historic comment into my own journey, I have used both single line breaks and the steam train gif to delineate clearly separate sections and a change of topic, moving from place to place, or shifting the chronology from my own 2010 story to the past, or indeed, at times the future as the following extract demonstrates.

> Beside the road are two old men with donkeys laden with firewood. Beany Man wants to go shopping. I have no idea whether the old men had intended the firewood for themselves, but this negotiation was only ever going to end one way. They are also incredibly photogenic so in spite of being in the presence of the police, I get out my camera and start taking pictures. No one seems to mind so I move round to include Beany Man – and finally get an acknowledgement of my presence. I assume it will be to shut me down but I have a quick brainwave, gesture to his head and say "nice hat" with my best being-nice-to-policemen smile. Vanity overpowers all. While the old men load their wood into the boot of the car, he simply can't resist drawing himself up to his full height, puffing out his chest and posing for his portrait. Game, set and match to me. A stupidly small victory and one that he never knew about, but take your victories where you can.
>
>
>
> Over the years there were numerous skirmishes between the Egyptian Army and the Ansar but, on the whole, the British were content to leave the Mahdists alone and concentrate on tightening their grip on the far bigger trading prize of Egypt. The Mahdi himself had died, probably of typhus, in 1885, only six months after the death of Gordon, leaving his newly formed territories to be consolidated by the most powerful of his Khalifas. Abdullah ibn Muhammed became an autocratic dictator with imperial ambitions of his own. From his capital in Omdurman, he set about subduing the renegade tribes, gradually bending the whole of Sudan to his will through a potent blend of payments, punishments and religious devotion. The new state lived in a ferment of perpetual internal and external warfare, demanding ever higher taxes and a plentiful supply of new slave soldiers. Within a few

> years, fields began to be neglected, harvests were failing,
> herds were slaughtered and much of the country began to
> suffer terribly from famine.
> (Vol 1, p87)

This shows clearly not only the change from first to third person narrative but the move to a more formal tone and register in the historic segments of the text. There was one further editorial element which I employed, borrowed from my years as a guidebook writer, the use of sidebars, discussed further in Section 2.5.

2.5 Sidebars, footnotes and endnotes

This sub-section should probably be in Section 3 with the Paratext; sidebars and footnotes are additional to the main text. It was also evident from the outset that, while *Steel Safari* is commercial book, it has involved a great deal of research and I was quoting from a wide variety of sources, all of which should be acknowledged. I needed to tackle the thorny issue of footnotes, endnotes and bibliographies. What information should go where? After much soul-searching, I decided to include discussion of them in Section 2 with the main text, as I felt that the links were so strong that it made logical sense to keep them linked together. The information needs to remain intertwined for it to have any meaning or use for the reader.

I started by thinking about the purpose of footnotes, endnotes, sidebars and other marginalia. The first is obviously simply to provide provenance for information or quotations. According to Umberto Eco, some feel that “a book with copious notes exhibits erudite snobbism, and often represents an attempt to pull the wool over the reader’s eyes.”[34]

The use of footnotes and endnotes would potentially be very different in the two sections of my PhD. The Critical Study, as a clearly academic text, would simply follow university guidelines, with footnotes on the page, in Chicago style. Within the Creative Text, however, my early instinct was to keep the number of references to a minimum so as not to make the text appear too academic and formal. I did not wish to break the reader’s attention more often than necessary. However, I did still want to

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[34] Umberto Eco et al., *How to Write a Thesis,* Boston: MIT Press, 2015, 167.

make sure that anyone interested would be able to track down quotations or follow through on historical research if they were interested to go further.

In addition to citing references, the footnote has also been widely used as a home for additional explanatory text which might break the flow of the main text, such as biographical material on a character or an author's or editor's comment. Could I make the footnotes more entertaining, thus avoiding the irritation factor? The supreme example of complex marginalia is JJ Abrams and Doug Dorst's *S* which uses multiple colours and fonts to create a complete second "handwritten" storyline in the margins of a supposedly found book.[35] In their case, they create a third tier of fictional ephemera, from postcards to paper napkins tucked into the book, all loaded with textual reference. Each level of the book can be read on its own but the different levels inter-react to take the reader on a multi-sensory voyage of discovery that borrows heavily from video gaming. James Russell Clark, in his article *On the Fine Art of the Footnote*, talks about Abrams and Dorst along with various other writers who use footnotes and marginalia not just to reference the text but as an integral part of the creative whole, citing David Wallace Foster, who, in *Infinite Jest*, effectively writes a complete chapter as endnotes and in other works uses the footnotes not for reference but for a meta-commentary on the text. At the end of his article, Russell Clark says:

> More than a trick, footnotes can be a *technique*… they can be used to comment on a narrative or create a new one, to overlap separate narratives… and to dig into difficult parts of who we are. Footnotes, in other words, no longer merely support the story; now they can *be* the story.[36]

There were strong echoes of travel in some elements of Abrams and Dorst's book, but how would a similar treatment translate into the travel genre? As I began to research, I discovered to my astonishment that footnotes and endnotes are virtually unknown within commercial travel writing, giving me

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[35] Jeffrey Abrams, Doug Dorst, *S* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2013).

[36] Jonathan Russell Clark, "On the Fine Art of the Footnote," *Literary Hub* (3 Jun 2015): https://lithub.com/the-fine-art-of-the-footnote/ (accessed 10 Oct 2015).

no comparative material with which to work; bibliographies and the index are discussed in Section 3.5. I still believe that there is room in the market for a travel book to be created in this fashion but it would have to be conceived in its full complexity from first planning, not have its structure pinned around it halfway through. Any system I used would need to be discreet. As this wasn't an academic work, I didn't need to reference every point of research within the text, although everything should be included within the final bibliography. However, I would need to reference any direct quotations and decided to do that by using endnotes, which would be gathered together at the end of the book, listed by chapter. This would leave the pages of the text clear.

As I worked my way through the main structure of my own creative text, I found ways to knit together my four main narrative strands in a logical and readable fashion. While delving ever more deeply into historical research, I kept finding extraordinary anecdotes which refused to fit into the standard narrative. They were fascinating titbits, such as the fact that the boy who stood on the burning deck was real: he was the son of the captain of Napoleon's flagship at the Battle of the Nile. The battle was in the book, and I dearly wanted to include this snippet but the boy had no direct relevance to the main text. The battle itself was out on a limb as it was fought in 1798, long before the invention of the railways. I had justified its inclusion to provide background context for the Anglo-French rivalry which led to the early industrialisation and colonisation of Egypt. Nevertheless, I found the story of the boy interesting and wanted to include him as a footnote. I tried it out but the moment the footnote appeared, the reader's image of the page became instantly more formal and less user-friendly. I needed to think again. My mind returned to my time as a guidebook writer when we included a number of additional interesting, linked, but off-piste comments as boxes, sidebars or even handwritten marginalia. I tried the same text in a separate text box with a smaller typeface and unjustified print, set to the side of the main page. That worked visually and I have continued throughout the book to include similar short passages of additional information covering everything from the Berlin Conference or conditions of slavery in the Sudan. These boxed sidebars have the added benefit of helping to break up the page, although, as with illustrations (discussed in Section 4), it is extremely difficult to peg them to the correct place in the text in digital editions, when the reader is in control of the typeface and size.

3. PARATEXT

3.1 The Paratext Puzzle

Whether the author has actually been killed as Barthes suggests or has merely formed a symbiotic relationship with the reader, it has become increasingly clear that the act of creation within the writing/reading relationship is not one-sided. As a writer, I may choose to say what I like but if I have any sense, I will take account of readers' understanding and comfort in the way I present what I say. It is of course impossible to satisfy everyone; not all readers respond in the same way. An autistic colleague prefers to read on coloured paper or on e-books in which she can alter the size and colour of the font. However before reaching such degrees of personalisation, there are more general accommodations to be considered. If the typeface is too cramped, the layout too confusing, or the chapter titles annoying, readers will simply give up; the book will be abandoned to languish unopened. As noted previously, a working career as an editor and publisher has also ensured that I consider the whole book, not just the text within the creative process. To me, *Steel Safari* therefore has always been a book project, not just a text, and one in which I have been keenly aware of the end readers. This necessitates consideration not just of the text but of the paratext.

First developed into a coherent literary concept by French academic, Gérard Genette, paratext is the term used for all those elements of the book that surround the main flow of information or story. These can be many, varied, intricately complex and critical to the success or failure of the book from a commercial or reader's perspective. It is perhaps surprising then that the subject has been studied so little and that, to date, Genette remains one of a handful of truly authoritative sources on the topic, although his work is beginning to come under scrutiny in the digital age. To my knowledge, there has been little previous work undertaken on the paratext of travel literature.

In the introduction to his seminal work, *Paratexts*, Genette describes how the various additions, from contents to illustrations, are used to "present" the core text: "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a

boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold…"[37] He gives paratext greater importance than had hitherto been attached to it, quoting Philippe LeJeune, who describes it as "the fringe of the printed text which, in reality, controls the whole reading of the text".[38]

Placing paratext in a temporal context, Genette posits that:

> The ways and means of the paratext change continually, depending on period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition, with varying degrees of pressure, sometimes widely varying: it is an acknowledged fact that our "media" age has seen the proliferation of a type of discourse around texts that was unknown in the classical world and a fortiori in antiquity and the Middle Ages, when texts often circulated in an almost raw condition, in the form of manuscripts devoid of any formula of presentation.[39]

He goes on to separate paratext into two broad categories: the peritext, which consists of those written elements which are parcelled up with the text itself; and the epitext, the surrounding lectures, interviews, letters, musings and other communications on the work by the author and author's representatives taking place in a wider context. Unauthorised writings on a text by other parties, unrelated to the author or publisher, are not commonly included within the definition of epitext.[40] Genette differentiates too between authorial, editorial and third party paratext, separating out the responsibilities for different roles.[41] For instance, the author will be in charge of writing the introduction, the publisher for creating the cover and title verso (typically home to information such as the copyright statement and publisher's details), and in some works there may be an additional preface or introduction by a different writer, either discursive or as endorsement. Most importantly, perhaps, he discusses the impact of the paratext on the text and the reader, suggesting that it can be a powerful influence. For instance, the mention of a literary prize in the cover blurb

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[37] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation,* trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.
[38] Genette, *Paratexts*, 2; Philippe LeJeune, *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 199)7, 45.
[39] Genette, *Paratexts*, 3.
[40] Genette, *Paratexts*, 5.
[41] Genette, *Paratexts*, 9.

can sway a potential reader in their decision as to whether to buy the book, thus potentially having a greater effect on sales than the quality of the text itself.[42]

Using the example of the name or even its placement and applying it to my own career within travel writing, it is easy to demonstrate the potential impact of paratextual decisions. As a guidebook writer, I am used to my books being sold by series title with my name appearing in very small letters on the front cover (if I am lucky), hidden on the title verso, or even at the end of the book. In practical terms, this means that the author receives no public recognition, however successful the book, which has an onward implication in career prospects. It can have more immediate financial effects as well. Most guidebook writers are paid via a flat fee, so do not receive royalties, but in the UK are entitled to receive ongoing payments via PLR (Public Lending Rights – micro-payments for library borrowings) and ALCS (Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society – which covers payments for photocopying). However, these require the author to be named on the title page and a name-check at the end of the book is insufficient. As a couple of the books which I have authored for popular series have been translated into over a dozen languages and run into multiple editions, they have sold upwards of a million copies, so this difference can have a considerable financial impact (although nothing like that of a royalties system).

Genette was writing at a time when the electronic revolution was in its infancy. If paratext was growing in importance then, its role has evolved rapidly over the ensuing decades as new platforms open up and the role of visuals, endorsements and easy access lists becomes ever more crucial to the relationship between author and reader. The author and/or publisher no longer has to consider publication in a single format but in paperback, hardback, braille and large print editions and audio books. In addition, they will be looking at a variety of flexible electronic forms, suitable for reading on a variety of e-readers.[43] This affects the entire reading process but has perhaps the biggest impact on the paratext which needs completely rethinking and augmenting to take account of the many new functions available to the reader.

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[42] Genette, *Paratexts*, 7.

[43] For the purposes of this thesis, e-reader denotes the device, not the person reading from the device.

Ellen McCracken talks of the need for a fundamental redefinition of the role of paratexts which:

> can no longer be studied as singular fixed objects. They exist temporally and spatially within particular dynamic viewing practices. It is therefore useful to focus on the centrifugal and centripetal motion to which they invite readers who use portable electronic devices. If one conceives of the principal verbal literary text as the center, one can identify exterior and interior pathways leading readers both away from and more deeply into the words at hand.[44]

Users of e-readers have far more control of their own reading experience, with the many tools available allowing them, for example, to change the size and font of the text (thereby also altering the pagination, rendering the traditional index obsolete); check dictionary definitions and footnotes via hyperlinked text; highlight, cut and share meaningful passages; and connect freely to relevant research or their favourite author's website. Originally a useful adjunct, the contents page, now residing in its own swipe right column available at all times, becomes an essential navigation tool.

Yet this world of infinite possibility can place constraints upon the text and the author's freedom to shape the paratext. The use of formed text such as poetry, illustration and mapping that require anchoring to the text becomes problematic as the words are shifted and altered at will. In her article on "Noses in Books: Orientation, Immersion and Paratext", Cynthia Northcutt Malone talks of the "Beginning" of the e-book which is not the same as the front cover of the print edition. Click on the book icon on a Kindle, for instance, and you will usually be delivered direct to the start of the main text. "Readers who wish to enter the book as they would a printed book — through cover, half title, title page, verso, dedication, epigraph, etc.— must summon those elements by swiping backward from that 'Beginning'."[45]

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[44] Ellen McCracken, "Expanding Genette's Epitext/Peritext Model for Transitional Electronic Literature: Centrifugal and Centripetal Vectors on Kindles and Ipads," *Narrative* 21, no. 1 (2013), 105-24.

[45] Cynthia Northcutt Malone, "Noses in Books: Orientation, Immersion, and Paratext," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 40, no. 1 (2015), 17-28.

As a result, she suggests, readers are less likely to remember the name of a book or author read on an e-reader while carefully chosen textual elements such as the epigraph or even the foreword may be lost to the reader who does not make this effort. Meanwhile McCracken also talks of the blurring of the line between peritext and epitext, citing as one example the creation of popular highlights by Amazon which effectively mark the text as it is being read by group-inspired marginalia.[46] However subtle the underlining of a sentence, its mere presence inevitably imposes its will upon the reading experience, the highlighted passages gaining celebrity status at the expense of their overlooked neighbours as more readers join the group.

In 2017, a joint project by the Open University and the University of Surrey began a major study aimed at bringing this same electronic wizardry to the printed page via smart paper – paper with embedded electronic sensors and chips.[47] Taking the concept of digital interactivity far beyond the option of scanning a QR code with a smart phone, this would allow the reader of a print book to move seamlessly between hyperlinked text, photographs or maps on the printed page and digital content on their phone or other electronic gadget. The following year, the first major trial began, based around the travel industry, in conjunction with travel guide publishers, Bradt Travel Guides.[48]

Travel was an obvious starting point. It is perhaps most true of all in formulaic series such as travel guides that text is regarded simply as a single component of a complex whole with the illustrations, maps, lists, indices and other paratextual elements of equal importance. A printed guide is still practical for sightseeing given the short battery life of smart phones, intermittent access to the internet when on the move, and the greater ease of browsing afforded by paper. A well-produced guide also has the benefit of offering expertly curated and updated information that can be relied on as trustworthy. It can also show you options you may have never considered –

[46] McCracken, " Expanding Genette's Epitext/Peritext Model", 108.
[47] Emma Burnett, "Revolutionising Paper Technology." Open University: http://www.open.ac.uk/researchcentres/osrc/news/revolutionising-paper-technology (02/06/2017; accessed 11/07/2018).
[48] Bradt Guides, "Recruitment of Research Participants for Next Generation Paper Project.": https://www.bradtguides.com/next-gen-paper-research (accessed 11/07/18).

something more difficult in the search-oriented world of the web. Yet paper is limited in scope and depth. The use of smart paper and the ability to link directly to the websites of museums, attractions, hotels and restaurants combines the benefits of the paper guide with all the flexibility and breadth of e-publishing and the web, greatly enhancing its value and removing its limitations at a stroke. Bridging the current gap between the carefully curated world of the researched guidebook and the amorphous spread of the marketing driven internet, it also has immense financial potential, offering the options for click-through monetisation familiar to web billionaires.

Within the more rarefied world of narrative travel, the possibilities of new technology are perhaps not quite so obvious but offer many of the same potential informational advantages while also presenting the reader with the structural and search capabilities already familiar with e-readers, such as pop-up footnotes, definitions and referencing. As with e-books, authors are able to interlink their texts for marketing purposes. Beyond this, however, smart paper also opens up new avenues of creative potential such as the use of audio-visual, cartography, film, interviews and artworks linked to the long-form text: the book itself, the surrounding peritext and the epitext begin to work together as part of a dynamic and ultimately interactive, multi-disciplinary project that potentially engages writer and reader and, in the case of non-fiction, the subject in an ongoing creative dialogue.

This blurring of the boundaries between the text, peritext and epitext makes it essential that clear thought is given to the detailed longterm planning from the start. It is impossible to plan every detail in advance but careful consideration of the paratext and the physical readability of the text in a variety of formats should become an integral part of the initial conception and planning of a book. In these days of social media, a savvy author should also consider these aspects of the epitext from the outset. What belongs in the book and what is better placed on the website, Twitter or left to the lecture circuit?

Narrative travel may borrow freely from the techniques of fiction but it is firmly rooted in the traditions of non-fiction. It may regard the rules as flexible but it rarely ignores them completely. In addition to the essentials at the front of the book, such as the cover, title page, title verso (which holds all the legal and publisher's information), author's name and contents page, a narrative travel book may also contain – though they are less usual – a glossary, chronology, bibliography or index.

Then there are the acknowledgements, the preface, the dedication, the author's biography and any sales material for other books – or perhaps quotations of reviews by other writers. It might have epigraphs, footnotes and/or endnotes and possibly even sidebars and marginalia and at least one map, and may well use additional illustrations. Beyond the book itself is the world of press releases, lectures and social media. The rest of this section will look at how I formulated my further decisions, based upon how each of these categories is commonly handled within the travel genre, and examine what we can learn from what is present and what is absent. I shall also detail what I have decided to leave out and why I have left some decisions for the future.

3.2 Opening Gambits – Titles and Sub-Titles

The ultimate name of the book is probably a marketing decision and may well be made by the publisher, with everyone from the PR department to sales reps having their say before the final version is chosen. However, to my mind, it would have been unthinkable to hand over responsibility and leave my project nameless for years while living with it so closely. I chose carefully and gave *Steel Safari* its identity virtually from the moment of its conception. While I know that any eventual publisher may wish to change it, I should be extremely sorry to see it go and would fight hard to keep what appears to me to embody all that is contained within the text.

So what purpose does the title have? Beyond simply naming the book, it may or may not speak directly to the subject within its pages, but it should entice the reader to explore further. In his essay "Structure and Functions of the Title in Literature" Genette gives a short historic background to the use of titles, explaining that their use and positioning was largely driven by technology.[49] The title would sit right at the end of a Roman scroll with the title page only coming into being with the invention of the printed book around 1475. The addition of the title to the front cover had to wait until the nineteenth

[49] Gérard Genette, "Structure and Functions of the Title in Literature", *Critical Inquiry*, 14, no. 4 (1988), 699.

century. Wherever it was positioned, however, its primary function was and still remains as a way of searching – in computer-speak, it is a vital component of the book's keywords.

In his article, "What's in a Book Title?", Tim Moore shows that shorter titles are better than long, humour may entertain but doesn't necessarily draw in more readers and that, if you are too specific, that may again detract from the market. The title should fulfill two main criteria: it needs to stimulate an emotional response and provide information about who and what is contained within the book.[50] On top of this, it must be clear and simple, easy to say out loud (word of mouth is probably the single most powerful sales tool), memorable and reasonably short. If it is deliberately long (the 'Long Title'), it should be possible to shorten it. For instance, Jonas Jonasson's *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared* is commonly known as *The 100 Year Old Man*.[51] In the digital age, non-fiction author, Joanna Penn, takes the lessons far further with a masterclass on how to ensure your title attracts readers online, with clearly defined principles of marketing and Search Engine Optimisation overriding romance in the hunt for a bestseller. She cites the example of changing the title of her first book from *How to Enjoy Your Job or Fine a New One* to *Career Change* simply because there were ten times as many searches for 'career change'; the result – a bestselling book.[52]

There are some titles that are entirely self-explanatory, known in the trade as 'spoiler titles'; FC Selous' *A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa* tells you exactly what to expect.[53] A reader picking up Eric Newby's *The Big Red Train Ride* might reasonably think it had something to do with trains; Newby has additionally used a double pun in that the train across Siberia is both big (with a huge engine and many carriages) and a very long journey, and red (both in colour and Soviet at his time of travel).[54] Hunter S.

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[50] Tim Moore, *What's in a Book Title?* FT Press (2007).
Moore, Tim. "Academic Clickbait: The Arcane Art of Research Article Titling." *Australian Universities' Review*..62/1 (25 Feb 2020; accessed 12 Mar 2021): *http://www.nteu.org.au/article/Academic-clickbait%3A-The-arcane-art-of-research-article-titling-%28AUR-62-01%29-21821*.
[51] Jonas Jonasson, *The Hundred-Year-old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared*, (London: Abacus, 2015).
[52] Joanne Penn. "Decide on the Title of Your Non-Fiction Book." (Accessed 12 Mar 2021).
[53] Frederick Courteney Selous, *A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa, Etc.,* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1890).
[54] Eric Newby, *The Big Red Train Ride* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is more enigmatic but is sufficiently intriguing to draw in the reader and does give some clues, situating the book geographically and offering a clear suggestion that it may not be happy family reading.

It isn't easy to fulfill Moore's criteria, however, and many use a subtitle to help. This allows the freedom to choose the short, punchy, creative title, while still adding information, separated either by a colon or a line space. Genette describes the separation of subtitles into two functional categories – the more imaginative "secondary title" and the more practical "generic interpretation", although he does recognise that both elements are frequently contained within the same sub-title.[55] Within the travel genre, the subtitle is often used to locate the book geographically or specify the method of transport, a practical application of generic interpretation. For instance, Gertrude Bell, in borrowing and adapting her poetic main title, *The Desert and the Sown*, from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, to set the scene in the desert, follows this with the prosaic sub-title *Travels in Palestine and Syria*, which not only locates the action but anchors the book firmly within its genre. Rachel Lichtenstein sub-titles *Estuary, Out from London to the Sea*, offering both a generic title and secondary reinforcement of the geographical and maritime nature of her work; the reader is left in no doubt about her topic.

Robert Macfarlane's *The Old Ways* has a short title with a double meaning of tradition and path which brilliantly encapsulates the work to follow, followed by the simple generic sub-title, *A Journey on Foot*, again ensuring readers will know that this is about travelling and walking. Jenny Diski's *Stranger on a Train* is sub-titled *Daydreaming and Smoking Around America with Interruptions,* balancing both the generic geographical descriptor with the secondary moody interpretation of the book to come. Joanna Kavenna's *The Ice Museum* offers a suggestion of cold places but no further clues in the main title, making up for it with the sub-title *In Search of the Lost Land of Thule*. Claire Scobie spells things out in detail using a geographical marker in her title *Last Seen in Lhasa*, underlining the location and placing the genre within the lengthy sub-title *The Story of an Extraordinary Friend in*

55 Genette, "Structure and Functions", 694.

Modern Tibet. In *Dark Star Safari*, Paul Theroux chooses not to use a sub-title, allowing the association of the "Dark Continent" and "Safari" to speak to the African connection. By the time he wrote the follow-up, however, he selected a far more blatant title and sub-title: *The Last Train to Zona Verde: Overland from Cape Town to Angola*. Now we have the full geographic title and the presence of the train; there can be no mistaking what this book is about.

In choosing to call my book *Steel Safari*, I, like Theroux, wanted to use an African word in the title to give it a sense of place, twinning it with steel as a reference to the railway tracks. The word "safari" is typically associated in western minds with wildlife holidays, but its original Swahili meaning is simply "journey". My partner, who is a steam train aficionado, pointed out quite correctly that I should have iron rather than steel, but the sibilant sound offers a tantalising swish of the tail of the Iron Snake, as the early railway was known to the Kenyans. The alliterative quality of the double "s" also helps make the name, *Steel Safari*, both easy to say and to remember. Finally, the use of steel suggests something of the future as well as the past, encompassing the new Chinese involvement in Africa's railways. In meeting all of Moore's criteria, I hope that the name will survive the publication process.

By contrast, the sub-title has already changed along the way and may well change again. When I first conceived the project, my original sub-title was *How the Railways Made Modern Africa*, focusing the book heavily on the historical and social impact of the railways and relying totally on the main title to speak to any personal involvement and sense of journey. This altered when I embarked on my PhD. My supervisor, Professor Peter Hulme, worked hard during the early stages of my proposal to shift my thought patterns from those of a historian towards a more literary framework. He was the one who declared, against my better judgement at the time, that the sub-title had to go, and accepted my new offering, *Cairo to Cape Town by Train (Where Possible).* This became the working subtitle of my PhD and, by extension, the subtitle of the book. Combining both secondary and generic elements, it fulfilled many of the relevant criteria, placing the book clearly within the travel genre, as a book about trains and geographically, along the Cairo to Cape route. It also shifts the emphasis to my personal journey and explains, before the reader opens a page, that there will be breaks along the way – this isn't a continuous narrative.

However, there were and are still issues. Technically it is untrue, although I am prepared to forgive it that, as Alexandria to Cape Town isn't nearly as alliterative and

the famous Cape to Cairo route always did start on the coast. More seriously, the new version removes all trace of the crucial historic/social components of the book. If I were to achieve the perfectly balanced subtitle, I would like to restore some nod towards including them as well. To date, neither version perfectly reflects the full physical, historical and emotional sense of the journey and to find one that combines such a range of demands in so few words is a tall order. The search is ongoing and as yet, I have not come up with an alternative which encompasses everything in my ideal solution. For now, the decision on what to subtitle the book is one that I am content to leave and take in conjunction with my eventual publisher.

Over the years, the focus of the critical element of my PhD shifted away from the content towards the structure of the creative work and it became increasingly clear that using the same sub-title for the overall thesis would no longer be viable. The PhD as a whole has been given a simple straightforward title, with each of its two volumes receiving a dedicated title which reflects its scope more accurately. The thesis, as a whole, is therefore now simply called *Steel Safari: Travel Writing and Critical Study* while the commentary is entitled *Structuring Travel Narrative: Text and Paratext*. The book (the creative work) remains, for the present, *Steel Safari: Cairo to Cape Town by Train (Where Possible).*

3.3 Sub-Divisions – Chapters and Chapter Headings

In long-form prose, the usual method of sub-division is by the use of chapters. If the overall title and story arc set the style of the book, the chapters and sections provide its skeleton, the structure which gives it shape and texture, and, once divided, each of these needs some sort of header and/or subtitle. Get this wrong and the book becomes a formless and confusing mess. The structure needs to match the subject and the style, to ease the passage of the reader and encourage them to keep reading.

Chapters are useful devices for authors, allowing them to group or change topics or even switch the narrator’s voice, to jump around in time or space, to offer different perspectives. They are also essential to readers, acting as punctuation and offering them time to pause, whether for reflection or a cup of tea. We’ve been using chapters for some 2,000 years to divide knowledge or

punctuate a plot. Initially the divisions were random, based simply on convenient length. One of the first supposedly to think about meaning in the groupings was Stephen Langton in his seminal thirteenth-century edition of the Bible. Their use in novels dates from the seventeenth century. Today, they've become so routine and commonplace that we rarely stop to think about how we use them or whether there is a better way of doing so. In his article for the *New Yorker*, "The Chapter: A History", Nicholas Dames states: "Prose writers work in chapters with far less self-awareness than poets work in stanzas or composers in movements."[56] They have become part of the underlying structure of literature that few notice but prove essential to the fabric of the creation. In his conclusion, Dames lyrically states that:

> Like the momentary lifting of a pianist's fingers while a chord still resonates, the classic novelistic chapter evokes time by dwelling in a pause rather than a strong ending. We feel time in the novel by marking it out into bits, but only bits that have no strong shape, that fade or blur into one another in the recollection. The greatest practitioners of the chapter have preferred to cast their divisions as fleeting caesuras with lingering aftereffects, scarcely memorable in their specifics but tenacious in the feeling they evoke.

The chapter then, for all its importance, is a structural tool, a useful scaffold that is carefully crafted to be insignificant, and it has done its job so successfully that it is rarely noticed or commented upon. However there have been writers who have deliberately chosen not to use chapters while others have explored their creative possibilities. Marilynne Robinson ignores traditional chapters in favour of section breaks with a couple of lines of white space in *Home* while Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin* is written as a series of letters, following an epistolary tradition dating back to the seventeenth century. In *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night,* Mark Haddon uses only prime numbers for his chapter numbering system, in line with the preferences of his central character, while Stephen King's *The Running Man* numbers the 101 chapters backwards as a countdown.

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[56] Nicholas Dames, "The Chapter: A History", *The New Yorker*: https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/chapter-history (29/10/2014; accessed 10/10/2015).

BS Johnson's novel, *The Unfortunates,* has twenty-seven separately bound chapters in a box; other than the first and last, the rest can be read in any order. With changing fashion, has what was once a navigation tool become a plaything? Postmodern and poststructuralist influences have seen an increase in the willingness of authors to experiment with foregrounding these structural building blocks but the vast majority of authors, particularly within non-fiction, still use a fairly traditional chapter structure, as will be shown below. Ultimately, whatever system is chosen, the most important thing is that the reader should be able to navigate the book in accordance with the author's intentions.

In recent years, with the advent of the internet, there has been a tendency to break up the text far more than previously within chapters as the attention-span for long-form writing shrinks. Within journalism, it is now considered unusual to use blocks of more than two to three hundred words (the average maximum word count of a computer screen) without a sub-head, and this is continuing to shrink. There are numerous ongoing studies showing that the use of computers is rewiring the way our brains transmit knowledge. While people continue to argue about many of the results, there seems to be a general trend towards saying that computer usage makes us better at multi-tasking and skimming for surface information but less focused and less able to commit to in-depth discussion.[57] Authors who continue to write on complex issues without breaking up their text into manageable blocks may find they lose younger readers whose brains are simply not trained to read continuous long-form text. A modern book chapter may still be anything up to ten thousand words long but it is highly likely to have anything up to twenty discrete sub-sections.

Having decided on a chapter breakdown, the author, possibly in conjunction with the publisher, is faced with the decision of how to label them – should they have a simple numeral or have the words "Chapter Seven"

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[57] K Yuan et al., "Microstructure Abnormalities in Adolescents with Internet Addiction Disorder," PLOS ONE, 6, no. 6 (2011): e20708.

written out in full? Should each chapter have a title and if so, of what variety? Should there be an epigraph, an illustration or an accompanying map? These last questions are dealt with in later sections – for now, the discussion will focus on the concept of the chapter title. In "Scaffolding Not Provided", an analysis of David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, John Mullan suggests:

> Once chapter or book headings were not just hints to the reader as you went along, they were elements in some overall description of the narrative that a reader could sample in advance… Few novels with chapter headings now do so, as if a prefatory list of chapter numbers and titles would make too evident the author's calculation of his or her design.[58]

Cloud Atlas itself, a complicated novel that interweaves six separate narratives, uses unnumbered headings that describe the contents within the chapter: "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", "Letters from Zedelghem" and so on, further breaking up the text within each chapter with line spaces, as dated diary entries, letters, interviews and other varied voices and structural forms.[59]

Within travel literature, chapter design has generally remained relatively traditional, but there are still many variations. The simplest system is to use chapter numbers with no titles and some choose to do this, but most use some sort of chapter header. In *Desert Divers*, the first book in *Saharan Journeys*, Sven Lindqvist divides the book into six sections of varied length (27pp, 16pp and so on). The first four are named geographically: "To Tarfaya", "To Smara"… while the last two titles veer off to focus on people, "The Well-Divers"… Within this basic structure, he subdivides the book numerically into sub-sections ranging from a paragraph to a couple of pages, with no further textual headers, the numbers continuing to count up from chapter to chapter. It is logical, easily navigable and sparse. The author promises nothing to the reader who must trust that the unknown journey ahead will be worth their effort.[60]

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58 John Mullan, "Scaffolding Not Provided." *The Guardian*): https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/apr/09/fiction.davidmitchell (09/04/2005; accessed 10/10/2015).
59 David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008).
60 Sven Lindqvist, *Saharan Journey,* trans. Joan Tate (London: Granta, 2012).

In *Stranger on a Train*, Jenny Diski breaks the book into two parts, "Journey One" and "Journey Two", with relatively few, fairly long chapters (generally about thirty-five pages), providing names but no numbers. Nor does she offer a contents page. Too logical a structure would not be in keeping with the meandering flow of the daydreams that she highlights in the book's sub-title (discussed earlier). As it is, the reader has to drift along with her, the chapter headers giving no clue as to their contents: "Only the Lonely", "Expending Nerve Force"….[61] Joanna Kavenna does offer a contents page in *The Ice Museum*, which has eleven chapters varying in length from eight to twenty pages. However she uses no numbers while her sensory chapter titles – "Silence", "Purity", "Ice Hearts", "Prophets", speak both to the world of snow and ice through which she is travelling and to a spiritual quality within her journey.[62] Rachel Lichtenstein divides *Estuary* into twenty-four chapters plus an introduction and epilogue, with the chapters further divided into three uneven parts: "Part 1 – Outbound" has four chapters; "Part 2 – Encounters" has twenty; "Part 3 – The Outer Reaches" has three. Each has a specific purpose with Part 1 effectively providing background, Parts 2 and 3 describing different expeditions set "some years apart". As chapter headings she uses simple numerals and short headers relating to the text, varying between ships' names, people, events and places within the chapters such as "Southend is the Pier", "MT Kent", "Wrecked on the Intertidal Zone" or "Graves Enders".[63]

Dervla Murphy, in *Visiting Rwanda*, divides the book into ten chapters, using chapter numbers and names which offer some clues as to the topic – "3. A Disappearance and a Party", "5. Into the Great Unplanned", further sub-dividing each by the use of dates, effectively turning the whole book into an extended diary.[64] By contrast, in *Dark Star Safari*, Paul Theroux provides a clear literary route map using twenty-three chapters of varying length with titles that combine topic and geography such as "The Dervishes of Omdurman"

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[61] Jenny Diski, *Stranger on a Train* (London: Virago, 2002).
[62] Joanna Kavenna, *The Ice Museum: In Search of the Lost Land of Thule* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2006).
[63] Rachel Lichtenstein, *Estuary: Out From London to the Sea* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2016).
[64] Murphy, *Visiting Rwanda*.

and "The Bush Border Bus to Johannesburg", labelled with both the word "Chapter" and the numeral.

A century before, David Livingstone would have recognised the basic structure of Theroux's book instantly, but fashions in chapter openings were very different then. Rather than a simple heading, a lavish amount of information was frequently provided under simple chapter numbers, effectively offering a detailed narrative précis of the chapter to come. During the first half of the nineteenth century, many people could read, but fewer could write. Books were expensive, with novels typically sold as three-volume editions and people gathering together for communal readings. Several things conspired to change reading practices from the middle of the century. One was the arrival of the railways. With people on the move, publishers were quick to cash in. George Routledge brought out a one-shilling "Railway library" of books designed for reading on trains, known as "yellow jackets" while WH Smith set up their first station bookshop in 1848 and sponsored a series of two-shilling reprints of bestselling novels to stock the shelves.[65] In 1870, the Education Act offered free compulsory education for all for the first time, raising literacy rates. The biggest influence on chapter design however was the emergence from the 1840s onwards of the "penny weeklies", serialised books published over an extended period, sometimes lasting up to four years.[66] Dickens was by far the most famous exponent of this format, allowing access to his work by the mass market. Structurally, the novel became as episodic as the modern soap opera, each chapter of a uniform length, ending on a cliffhanger to keep people reading and, crucially, with chapter openings that gave you an idea of what was to come. A new sales pitch was required for each chapter. It was a style which spread across the publishing world into all genres. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discover whether these extended headers were written by the author, editor or publisher or at which stage in the publication process they were added, but this is a typical example from Livingstone's *Missionary Travels and Researches*:

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[65] John Mullan, "Railways in Victorian Fiction." *The British Library*: http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/railways-in-victorian-fiction#sthash.uT2pAdO9.dpuf (accessed 23/04/2018).
[66] Charlotte Barrett, "Victorian Publishing History." *Great Writers Inspire* writersinspire.org: https://www.writersinspire.org/people/charlotte-barrett (2018; accessed 15/08/2018).

> Chapter 3.
> Departure from Kolobeng, 1st June, 1849—Companions—Our Route— Abundance of Grass—Serotli, a Fountain in the Desert—Mode of digging Wells—The Eland—Animals of the Desert—The Hyaena—The Chief Sekomi—Dangers—The wandering Guide—Cross Purposes—Slow Progress—Want of Water—Capture of a Bushwoman—The Salt-pan at Nchokotsa—The Mirage—Reach the River Zouga—The Quakers of Africa—Discovery of Lake Ngami, 1st August, 1849—Its Extent—Small Depth of Water—Position as the Reservoir of a great River System—The Bamangwato and their Chief—Desire to visit Sebituane, the Chief of the Makololo—Refusal of Lechulatebe to furnish us with Guides—Resolve to return to the Cape—The Banks of the Zouga—Pitfalls—Trees of the District—Elephants—New Species of Antelope—Fish in the Zouga.[67]

This type of summary can be extremely useful when researching as it allows those bored or in a hurry to skip through and find the bits that interest them but does it act as a trailer or a spoiler? Either way, it's a style of chapter header that went out of fashion along with serialisation and the advent of Modernism's more stripped-back style and was little seen once the twentieth century got underway. Interestingly, however, it has recently re-emerged in slightly differing forms. Hunter S. Thompson divided *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* into two parts, each with between twelve and fourteen chapters, their headings using a summary of the action, in far shorter form, as in the chapter title: "The Seizure of $300 from a Pig Woman in Beverly Hills".[68] This time, the title becomes a highly entertaining mini-story, the perfect teaser that ensures the reader wants to find out more.

More recently, in *The Old Ways*, Robert Macfarlane combines several styles of chapter header. He first divides the book into four parts – each named and geographically located, for example "Part I: Tracking (England)" before sub-dividing each part into chapters. He further divides the chapters on

[67] David Livingstone et al., *Missionary Travels and Researches,* "David Livingstone Collection, 5-in-1 [Illustrated]: (Missions Classics Book 4)," Kindle ed., 2012, 948.
[68] Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2014), 11.

occasion by the use of line breaks within the chapters to denote a change of direction within the text. Each chapter is headed by the landscape within – “Water”, “Silt”, “Chalk” etc., with some being used more than once. The real information comes within the sub-titles where he returns to the Victorian practice of the summary, but this time concentrating not on the narrative but on the elements of the landscape and the ideas engendered by its traverse.

> 3
> Chalk
> An exultation of skylarks — Solid geology — Chalk dreams — The earliest paths — Departure — The accident — Bone for chalk — Path as direction of the spirit — Apocalypse & lockdown — A skylark’s egg — Blind roads & shadow-sites — Aerial photography as resurrection — The long-barrow sleeping place — Trench art — A ghost sense of stride — The wallabies of Buckinghamshire — An illusion of infinity — Late-day light — A strange collection of votaries.[69]

While Livingstone perhaps gives away too much of the plot, Macfarlane’s use of language sets the senses tingling. There is no external hand here; its more poetic summary has clearly been constructed by the author as part of the initial creative process and is integral to the composition as a whole. Yet in a book that is effectively made up of a sequence of separate journeys, the chapter summary still acts within the original Victorian spirit of serialisation in that it whets the appetite for what is to come with its balanced collection of imaginative secondary imagery (“shadow-spirits”, the “strange collection of votaries”) and the more prosaic generic pointers (“the accident”, “the wallabies of Buckinghamshire”).

Having decided on a north-south geographical approach to *Steel Safari*, my initial instinct was to use an extremely simple chapter breakdown with an introduction and one chapter per country, using line breaks where necessary within the chapters. A brief consideration led to the rejection of more experimental forms as the material

[69] Robert Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin, 2013), 35.

itself is so complex that simplicity of structure and navigation is paramount to enable the reader to navigate the ideas and the book as easily as possible.

I was only halfway through writing the first draft of Chapter 1 when I realised that having a single chapter per country was unrealistic. The section on Alexandria was simply too long and convoluted to sit within the same chapter as the rest of Egypt; I was also dealing with two distinct railway systems, the Alexandria tram and the building of the mainline. The two stories needed a different telling. Above all, I realised I had to allow myself greater fluidity to vary chapter lengths as I wrote, starting anew when the text warranted it. The end result has been that I have written chapters as I felt they were dictated by the natural rhythm of the story. Some chapters have as few as 4000 words, others as many as 10,000. I have however never changed country mid-chapter.

I made the further decision to sub-divide the book into three sections: Part 1 would include Egypt and Sudan; Part 2, the East African Railways and the Tazara; and Part 3 Rhodes' Railways. Common themes and geography made sense of the divisions. The Egyptian and Sudanese railways were essentially desert railways, built either under the auspices or in reaction to the end of Ottoman/Mamluk control of the region. The East African railways all travel mainly east–west rather than north–south, reaching inland from what was the Swahili coast. While each was built by a different power (the British, the Germans and the Chinese), the overarching imperative behind all three was trade; in all three cases it was carefully wrapped in philanthropy. The final grouping was Rhodes' Railways, the lines that powered their way north from the Cape of Good Hope, unabashed symbols of colonial expansionism, the dreams of imperial glory halted by the outbreak of World War One.

There was one more very pragmatic reason for the further split into three parts – the additional headings make the creation of search menus infinitely more manageable when dealing with any digital version of the book (see below).

Early researches also led me towards another complication. The Cairo to Cape route is one of the great historic travel paths of the world and the railway is only one of the means by which people have chosen to travel, from Stella Court Treatt who drove it (and filmed it along the way) in 1926 to the world's first passenger jet service in the 1950s or Thomas Cook's first package

tour along the route. Within the text, too, there was information that was simply too interesting to leave out but was a digression too far. In New Orleans, they have a word *lagniappe* that means a little something extra given gratuitously, similar to the British 'baker's dozen'. My time as a guidebook writer has given me a great fondness for the literary *lagniappe*, the snippets of extraneous information which naturally find their home in the guidebook sidebar. These were the parts of a guide with a smile and personality. I kept finding wonderful stories, from the opening of the Cairo opera house (timed for the opening of the Suez Canal) to the text of General Gordon's obituary, that got in the way of the main narrative thread but which nevertheless added real depth and colour to its telling. I desperately wanted to get them in to the book, but needed to find a way to do so.

I eventually settled on two different techniques. The first was the idea of interleaving some chapters with shorter interstices of no more than two pages. This has enabled me to tell slightly longer stories, from a potted history of the Court Treatts' expedition, to an extract of text such as Thomas Cook's description of the opening of the Suez Canal, or even write about a geographical feature such as the Great Rift Valley, a profound influence on rail construction across several countries. The visual presentation of these interstices will become part of the eventual design process, but I currently envisage the use of a different font to differentiate them from the body text, allowing those readers who wish to skip them or leave them for later to do so.

For shorter additional material within the body of the chapter, I decided to borrow from the guidebook and include occasional sidebars rather than the more usual footnote. These were discussed in Section 2.5.

My next decision was how to label the different parts and chapters. Of the various styles of header that I had found during my research, the one that most appealed to me would be hybrid Hunter S. Thompson with a touch of old colonial: "In Which Mark Passed Out in the Midday Sun" or "In Which We Violated". However, with this journey, I felt there was a genuine need to give the reader some sort of geographical location, so a place marker was necessary. I also have a sneaking liking for epigraphs (the reasons for which are discussed in the following sub-section) and wished to use them. To have both amusing chapter sub-titles and epigraphs would have been gilding the lily. Reluctantly the titles had to make way for sensible generic place-based chapter names and simple numbers, with the journey separated into three parts – "The Desert Railways (Egypt and Sudan)"; "The Swahili Coast (Kenya,

Tanzania and the Tazara Railway)"; and "Rhodes' Railway (Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa)".

3.4 To Quote or Not to Quote – The Use of Epigraphs

A quotation, proverb, poem, motto or saying, the epigraph is designed to speak to the overall concept of the work to follow, be it a book, chapter, poem, or article. Deriving from the Greek word "epigraphein" meaning "write on", the use of the epigraph began in the seventeenth century but really came into its own in the eighteenth as both education and the availability of printed books began to spread beyond the narrowest fringes of the elite. The epigraph or quotation from a known work was a type of easily understood literary signpost, scattered liberally across all forms of written work from political polemic to musical scores. Rosemary Aherne, author/editor of the compendium, *The Art of the Epigraph*, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, offers the theory that epigraphs are "an act of literary semaphore" that can say as much about the author's personality as the content of the book to follow.[70] Gérard Genette expands on this, seeing the use of the epigraph as a type of territorial marking, a way of positioning the author firmly within their preferred tradition and intellectual framework.[71]

Authors undoubtedly enjoy the process of selecting suitable tidbits to link their texts and whet the readers' appetite. Aherne describes it as "an author's reward to herself for years of labor and doubt occasionally relieved by feeble hope (otherwise known as writing a novel)." But what does this beloved plaything offer to the reader? In his *Guardian* blog, "Epigraph: opening possibilities", Toby Lichtig states that:

> A good epigraph should be more than mere adornment. Better to think of it as a lens – or a sucker punch. Indeed, the very presence of an epigraph can make us question

[70] Rosemary Ahern, "But First, a Few Choice Words." *The Wall Street Journal*, 02/11/2012: https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204840504578086901810157018 (accessed 15/09/2015).
[71] Genette, *Paratexts*, 144-60.

> what lies before us. Playful or authoritative, omnipotent or
> throwaway, it acts as a kind of shadowy third figure,
> somewhere between the author and the audience.[72]

While many deliberately court this voice (or chorus, if more than one epigraph is used), it is this presence to which some object. In "Do Epigraphs Matter?", her review of Aherne's book, Rachel Sagner Buurma notes that: "epigraphs make us pause and notice the transition from the world to the work, from life to the novel. They slow us down—which is why we often skip them."[73] Detractors believe that the work should be sufficiently powerful to speak for itself and that any extraneous material simply gets in the way. It needs to be chosen wisely and positioned perfectly. This is not always the case.

The epigraph is frequently taken from an illustrious writer or philosopher, providing the opportunity to link a work vicariously to that of an admired predecessor. At the height of their popularity, writers and publishers often considered it more important to seed their works with grandiose scraps of poetry by recognised names than for the epigraphs to have any direct relevance to the text, in hopes perhaps of a small touch of reflected glory. Genette cites the case of Walter Scott who claimed to create all his epigraphs from memory and, when devoid of ideas, make them up, resulting in quotations and attributions that are highly suspect at best, with little or no context.[74] He was not the only one.

Writers from George Eliot to Terry Pratchett and Stephen King have also been known to indulge in weaving fictional epigraphs into the fabric of their creations. Perhaps one of the most famous examples of this is the epigraph which opens F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*:

> Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;
> If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,
> Till she cry "Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover,

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[72] Toby Lichtig, "Epigraphs: Opening Possibilities," *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2010/mar/30/epigraphs-toby-lichtig (30/03/2010; accessed 15/09/2015).

[73] Rachel Sagner Buurma, "Do Epigraphs Matter?" *The New Republic*: https://newrepublic.com/article/110640/art-epigraph-how-great-books-begin-rosemary-ahern (06/12/2012; accessed 15/09/2015).

[74] Genette, *Paratexts*, 147.

I must have you!" —

Thomas Parke D'Invilliers[75]

The quotation is entirely fictitious but its author is given spurious authenticity by his appearance as a character in another of Fitzgerald's books, *This Side of Paradise*.[76]

Modernism typically stripped this paratextual frill from the chapter headings of twentieth-century literature although the scene-setting epigraph at the start of the book has remained intact. Once again, their use is beginning to return in a more sparing and carefully targeted form. The effectiveness of the modern epigraph is dependent not only on its suitability but its context.[77] While people are still using the words of admired predecessors, the concept of the chapter-heading epigraph has changed to become more of a signpost to the contents of the chapter with quotations borrowed from an enormous variety of sources, from monuments to song lyrics, newspaper reports, Facebook entries and nursery rhymes. Some authors choose very deliberately to theme them. For instance, in *Career of Evil*, a crime novel set around faded rock legends, Robert Galbraith (JK Rowling writing under a pseudonym) chooses to use lyrics from 1970s rock band Blue Oyster Cult as epigraphs throughout the book.[78]

Amongst travel writers, epigraphs are not universally used. There are no finely penned poetic lines at the start of Noo Saro-Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland*, Dervla Murphy's *Visiting Rwanda* or William Dalrymple's *City of the Djinns*. However relatively few writers can completely resist their lure. Robert Macfarlane chose to start *The Old Ways* with a quotation from an admired predecessor on physical memory:

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[75] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (London: Penguin, 2005).
[76] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (London: Penguin, 2010).
[77] Genette, *Paratexts*, 177.
[78] Robert Galbraith, *Career of Evil: Cormoran Strike Book 3* (London: Sphere, 2015).

> All things are engaged in writing their history … Not a foot steps into the snow, or along the ground, but prints in characters more or less lasting, a map of its march. The ground is all memoranda and signatures; and every object covered over with hints. In nature, this self-registration is incessant, and the narrative is the print of the seal.
>
> Ralph Waldo Emerson (1850)[79]

Sven Lindqvist uses two big names and grand themes at the start of *Desert Divers*:

> All is included in transformation. You too are subordinate to change, even destruction. So too is the entire universe.
>
> Marcus Aurelius

and

> The journey is a door through which one goes out of the known reality and steps into another, unexplored reality, resembling a dream.
>
> Maupassant[80]

In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Hunter S. Thompson chooses Dr Johnson: "He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man".[81] Eric Newby's *The Big Red Train Ride* begins with these words: "'When the trains stop, that will be the end' (Lenin, during the Civil War)".[82] In *The Desert and The Sown*, Gertrude Bell chooses "'He deems the Wild the sweetest of friends, and travels on where travels above him the Mother of all the clustered stars' *(Ta'abata Sharran).*"[83]

These all, in their different ways, offer the writers the opportunity to encapsulate the core themes of their work in a few short lines. It becomes instantly clear that Macfarlane is concerned with the physical landscape, Lindqvist with the process of journey and its transformative effect while Thompson is focused on the

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[79] Macfarlane, *The Old Ways*, 5.
[80] Lindqvist, *Saharan Journey*, vii.
[81] Thompson, *Fear and Loathing*, iii.
[82] Newby, *The Big Red Train Ride*, vi.
[83] Bell, *The Desert and the Sown*, v.

inner journey. Newby and Bell's offerings are perhaps the finest of all. Newby references Russia through its author, the subject of the book – trains, the sense of voyage across Siberia to the end of the continent and, in a different, more sentimental reading of its meaning, announces his passion for train travel. Bell takes us instantly into her passionate love of the wilderness but her choice of author also speaks volumes. Sharran, a pre-Islamic Arab poet was renowned as a wanderer, a chivalric brigand who wrote of the Bedouin life. There can be no doubt that the redoubtable Gertrude saw him as a kindred spirit.

The use of epigraphs within chapter headers is rare within modern travel books and, interestingly, the only samples I found were used by women writers. The numbers were too small to create a working hypothesis but it would interesting to do further research on the topic and find out if there genuinely is a gender divide and if so what causes it. Are women more open to sharing their platform or are they less confident and so in greater need of others' words to bolster their own? Joanna Kavenna uses a fairly lengthy quotation or stanza of poetry as an epigraph at the start of each chapter or section of *The Ice Museum*. Her classical collection of writers includes luminaries such as Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. However, with each of the quoted works referencing Thule, they are clearly carefully chosen and targeted to tie in with the book. Rachel Lichtenstein also themes her quotations in *Estuary*, each relating to the sea, with many coming from a single source; the four chapters in Part 1, for instance are all from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

It was an easy decision for me to use epigraphs in *Steel Safari*. Given the wide range of voices within the main text, the use of epigraphs at the start of each chapter seemed to be a natural extension. However, while most other travel writers have chosen to use one or two quotations at the start and none within chapter headers, I reversed this decision. As the foreword begins and is based upon song lyrics (see Section 2.3), this effectively acts as an extended epigraph, rendering any further addition unnecessary.

With some chapters, I have been spoiled for choice; with others, it has been more difficult to find the correct pairing and the first attempt has not always been entirely successful. I found what seemed a perfect epigraph with which to open Chapter 1 on Egypt:

> Egypt is henceforth part of Europe, not of Africa.
>
> (The Khedive, Ismail, Speech at the Opening of the Suez Canal, 1869).

The problem was that once I started writing, I split the chapter in two and the section on the opening of the Suez Canal went into Chapter 2, leaving Alexandria bare. My first instinct was to look at Cavafy's poems on Alexandria but in all the various and astonishingly different translations of his work I read, none had any lines with correct short, pithy quality to qualify. Nor could I find anything suitable by EM Forster or Lawrence Durrell, the writers that feature within the chapter. Eventually, heading back into history, I discovered Hypatia of Alexandria, an early Greek mathematician, philosopher and astronomer, who taught at the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria until she came to a sticky end, flayed alive by an early Christian mob.

> Reserve your right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all.
>
> Hypatia of Alexandria (b. c.350-70 AD, d. 415 AD).

I loved the fact that, as a woman, she was a teacher and scientist at such an early date. Her untimely and gruesome death at the hands of the mob sadly offered me journalistic possibilities for a sidebar. I was willing to overlook the fact that the quotation itself, while profound, had next to nothing to do with the content of the chapter to come. The idea of thinking was hopefully pertinent to the work as a whole, although it would be setting both me and my readers a challenge from the start. Hypatia eventually lost her place in the book however to a far less illustrious comment in Lindsey Davis' *Alexandria*, one of her series of impeccably researched historical whodunnits. While on holiday in Egypt with his family, her hero, ancient Roman detective, Didius Falco, notes:

> We gazed at the Caesarium, and felt the pang of standing next to history. (Trust me; it is extremely similar to the pang of badly wanting a sit-down and a drink of cold water).

Lindsey Davis, Alexandria[84]

The excerpt captured the tone of *Steel Safari* far more accurately than Hypatia had done. Tempering my addiction to history with a healthy dose of flippancy seemed to be an excellent way to set the tone for readers and remind myself to keep it light should I be tempted to get bogged down in too much historical detail. Reluctantly, Hypatia and her words of wisdom had to go.

As the book progressed, I headed chapters with excerpts of poems, old and new, travellers' letters, local proverbs and speeches. For instance, at the start of the Cairo chapter, which opens over breakfast at our hotel, I found this quotation from an earlier traveller:

> One cannot find the comforts of an English breakfast at Cairo.
>
> John Carne, Letters from the East, 1830

In Chapter 5, which includes my visit to Atbara in northern Sudan, I used a short extract of a poem by the poet whose work I discuss later within the chapter:

> I am Atbara
> The colour of iron in flame…
>
> Untitled poem by Al-Hajj 'Abd al-Rahman, poet, railway worker and trade union leader.

In an act of pure serendipity, while I was writing, one of our department creative writing lecturers, Professor Christopher McCully, published a poetry collection, *Serengeti Songs*, which included a poem about the building of the railway line across the national park. He has kindly permitted me to use a short section as the header of the first chapter on Tanzania:

> We told ourselves it was to make way

[84] Lindsey Davis, *Alexandria* (London: Arrow, 2010),18.

> for the railhead, but the railhead
> was never built. Eleven boxes of rivets
> rusted under the fever trees.
> ….several hundred thousand black rhinos…
>
> "Black Rhino", Chris McCully, *Serengeti Songs*.[85]

There is one further epigraph I added later, this time as an introduction to the Critical Study. As I struggled to write, my sister's succinct appraisal of my efforts seemed to sum up the process of reflective commentary only too well:

> "Asking a writer to ponder on the process of writing
> smacks of asking a centipede which order it uses its legs in
> and then watching it fall over!"
> Penelope Shales-Slyne, 2017. [86]

These epigraphs may well be overlooked by many readers and I have to accept that their presence may annoy a few as an unnecessary frill. Yet, as Aherne suggests, the process of selecting them became a secret treat to myself and, I like to think, a little extra gift for those like me who choose to read every word. These small, scattered nuggets may offer a quick glimpse of a different world, an alternative point of view and even tips for future reading.

3.5 Further Information – The Reference Sections

Next to consider is a collection of paratextual elements that are almost entirely utilitarian, designed to provide further information for the reader: the contents page, glossary, chronology, bibliography (which works hand-in-glove with the footnotes and endnotes, discussed in Section 2.5) and index. While all are certainly not necessary in all books, the inclusion of paratextual aids and a degree of thought in their design can show an awareness by authors, both of potential difficulties for readers and of external authority in the manuscript's research. In leaving a trail of breadcrumbs for fellow

[85] Chris McCully, *Serengeti Songs* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2016).
[86] Penelope Shales-Slyne, personal correspondence, 2017.

travellers to follow in their reading of the text, authors offer guidance and potential shortcuts for those who wish to browse or flip backwards and forwards, they signpost and provide solutions to difficult hurdles, and they map the path which they themselves have trodden along their writing journey.

Within this sub-section, I discuss their purpose, look at their usage by other authors, particularly within the travel genre, before discussing my own use of reference material, particularly within my creative work. As with my chapter plan for *Steel Safari*, I have based my decisions about these linking paratextual elements primarily on utility rather than any possible creative potential. With each, I have asked whether it is a necessary underpinning to the complex narrative structure, whether it adds to the reader's understanding and navigation of the text and if so, how best it may be framed to ensure its greatest effectiveness.

Other than the contents page, most of these elements are more associated with academic disciplines and are rarely included within the travel genre. There are exceptions however. Dervla Murphy's *Visiting Rwanda* uses both a chronology and glossaries of key local terms and acronyms (both within the front matter) in a book that is as much about the history of the country and the genocide as it is about her own travels. Rachel Lichtenstein's *Estuary* gives a glossary of sailing terminology at the back of a book which is about life both on and around the River Thames. Claire Scobie's *Last Seen in Lhasa* includes not only a glossary of Tibetan terms and a bibliography but citations and a note to readers on Tibetan names and pronunciation. Noo Saro-Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* has a section named "Sources" within which are listed only two – a website and a film, although it must be assumed that others were consulted along the way. Sven Lindqvist offers short "Notes" (a selected bibliography) at the end of each of the two books which make up *Saharan Journey* while William Dalrymple offers a glossary, selected chapter-by-chapter bibliography and index at the back of *City of Djinns*. None of the rest of the books selected for study within this thesis include any of these elements, a surprising lack considering the clear evidence within the text that many have used written source material.

Even more astonishing is the fact that these useful features are found so rarely within works of popular history. Although both are highly regarded and

well-researched, neither Thomas Pakenham's *The Boer War* nor Jan Morris' *Heaven's Command (Pax Britannica)* has a bibliography, although both have indices.[87] Tucked into the Acknowledgements section of *The Boer War* is a long list of thanks to various archives and families who opened up collections of original documents (see also Section 3.6), but nowhere is there the citations list of those documents that would make the book invaluable to future scholars. Pakenham does however include a detailed chronology, for his general readers, and a list of picture sources.[88] In *The Lunatic Express*, Charles Miller gives extensive chapter notes and a relatively limited bibliography, prefacing them with the disclaimer that "While this book can make no pretense to scholarship, a certain amount of research was necessary in writing it."[89]

The contents page is ubiquitous, common to virtually every book published. Within print editions, it is typically situated, or at least started, on the first right hand page after the title page (recto), for ease of reference and maximum visibility. It usually consists of a list of chapter numbers, names and the page number on which each chapter starts. Some may also include lengthier sub-heads. If maps and illustrations are used, there may be separate contents lists detailing their pagination. Within e-books there may well be two contents lists. The first will be the full contents list in its traditional setting; whether or not the reader ever sees this depends on their decision to swipe left and explore the front matter (see Section 2.1). The second is the navigation bar, called up from anywhere within the book by swiping right. The ability of readers to manipulate text within e-books has meant that pagination has been rendered virtually obsolete, as has the ability to flick through the pages to find your place within a book. The navigation bar/contents page has become the main search engine of the e-book, with hotlinks to chapter headings and a search box that allows full search capability by word, phrase or location (a digital numbering system that has largely replaced pagination within e-books). Some books, such as Joanna Kavenna's *The Ice Museum*, have few enough chapters to fit them all neatly into one page. In *The Desert and The Sown*, the twenty-four chapters are accessed via scrolling the

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[87] Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993); Jan Morris, *Heaven's Command: An Imperial Progress* (Pax Britannica Book 1) (London: Faber & Faber, 2010).
[88] Pakenham, *The Boer War,* 291–304.
[89] Miller, *The Lunatic Express*, 595.

navigation bar. In *Tracks*, by Robyn Davidson, however, while the main contents page has links to every chapter, the navigation bar only includes the section headings. *Estuary* gets around this by using a secondary drop-down menu under each part heading. If authors wish to ensure that their work is fully navigable, planning within the constraints of the technology could ultimately affect the structure of the text.

There may be legitimate reasons not to make life quite so easy for the reader. In Section 3.2, I talked briefly of writers such as Marilynne Robinson and BS Johnson who choose to play with the traditional chapter structure. In Johnson's case, a traditional contents page for a set of stand-alone chapters designed to be read in any order would only cause confusion, although perhaps a simple chapter list could have enabled readers to check that they had not left any out. However, neither of them offers any contents page; Johnson simply labels the first and last chapter and offers an author's note with an instruction on how to read the book. *The Unfortunates* was eventually published in a Kindle edition in 2019 and, unusually, the e-publishing form has the effect of restricting the reader's choice of a random shuffle. Johnson died in 1973, leaving us to speculate on how his fertile experimental imagination would have interacted with electronic publishing. Technology has long provided the option to shuffle tracks on CDs or cards in online games; the same system could easily be used to randomise chapters. For travel writers Jenny Diski and Sven Lindqvist, whose works are more meditative in nature, laying out answers would lessen the impact of the reader's own journey of exploration. As mentioned in 3.2, Diski eschews the contents page altogether while Lindqvist, whose numbering structure within the text is highly logical, only provides the barest minimum within the contents page itself.

Given my stated aim to make life as easy as possible for readers, a well-structured contents page within my creative work is essential. Mine follows the divisions of the book, with the introduction followed by three parts, each subdivided into chapters, followed by the epilogue. Paratextual elements such as the chronology, bibliography and acknowledgements are listed after the main text. The contents page is followed by a separate listing for maps and illustrations. The decision to divide the main body of the book into three parts was made chiefly for creative reasons but partly for the pragmatic digital

search. The shortened contents page will fit neatly in full onto the screen of any e-reader, offering a secondary drop-down menu within each part, similar to that used within *Estuary*. The book becomes instantly more accessible, there is less danger of crafted paratextual elements being ignored, and readers can browse more easily, fact-checking between sections should they wish to do so.

This quest for clarity manifested in my treatment of the contents page of the Critical Study as well as that of the Creative Work. As the thesis as a whole is such a large work and made up of two disparate documents, I have chosen to create one very short overarching Contents page, with separate detailed contents pages for Volumes 1 (Creative) and II (Critical). Within the Critical Study, I have chosen to break the work into sections and sub-sections, all clearly labelled within the contents page, and to number each 1, 2.1, 2.2 and so on. The Creative Work is broken down into chapters and any cross-referencing is by chapter and page number. This offers a highly practical, distinctive, rapid and easy way of cross-referencing and navigating the framework I am using for the whole thesis.

Normally situated within the front matter, glossaries are used in many books on railways, offering easy reference guides to engineering terminology or the many acronyms that make up company names. They are also frequently seen in books with strong foreign links, providing quick translations of local language or jargon. For instance, many books on East Africa will include Swahili terms such as *askari* (a security guard) or *mzungu* (the local name for a white person) within a glossary, as both are in common usage amongst the local Anglophone population but may not be understood by new incomers or readers. In principle therefore, there should be a strong case for including a glossary in a book about trains set in a variety of foreign countries. There are precedents for their use within the travel genre, such as those quoted above.

After due consideration, I felt a glossary would be unnecessary. While the book is about trains, it is not primarily about their engineering. The very few local or technical words included are simply not used sufficiently frequently to require definition and readers should easily be able to keep up with the few acronyms and technical terms used within the text. It is a simple matter to put a very occasional definition into brackets if necessary, as demonstrated in the previous paragraph. In terms of local languages, the whole route was, for much of its existence, part of the

British Empire, and English is still very widely spoken. In all the countries south of the Sahara, which have many native languages, it remains the common language of higher education and government although there have been some recent calls for the promotion of Swahili to take its place. Moreover, the route and, therefore, the text moves continuously between cultural groupings, so no one lexical collection would be specific to more than a few chapters (in the case of Arabic or Swahili words).

The same could not be said when I turned my attention to the idea of adding a chronology. The book is heavily based on historical events and, as stated in Section 2.1, I made the decision at the start to structure it geographically, which means that the timeline wanders freely. This potentially makes it difficult for interested readers to keep track of what is happening when, both within each country and across the span of the continent.

Historical list making, a natural function of administration, began in earnest within the governments of ancient Greece and Rome. The first template for future chronologies was created by fourth-century-CE Christian theologian, Eusebius of Caesarea, whose aim was to compare the timelines of Jewish and Christian religious texts and place them within the context of world history. The creation of a chronology is seemingly simple. At its most basic it is a timeline of historic events. The chronology's true function is far more sophisticated, however, offering the possibility of selection and comparison, of the visual patterning of complex interactions. Eusebius based his *Chronicle* on a third-century *Hexipla*:

> a six-column polyglot Bible that another Christian scholar, Origen, had compiled… By lining up the original Hebrew, word for word, with other columns that provided a Greek transliteration and four different Greek translations, Origen enabled Christian readers to see where their Greek Bible … differed from the Hebrew Bible… It provided the critical rows and columns – formats that had been much harder to use in rolls [that] provided Eusebius… with a simple device for processing complex information. Nineteen parallel columns, one to a nation, traced the rise and fall of the ancient Assyrians, Egyptians, and Persians,

> as well as the Greeks and the Romans, who still ruled the world.[90]

Designed to be both informational and visual from the first, graphic representation played a key role within the formatting of a chronology, with every pen stroke and space carefully considered. In 1474, Werner Rolevinck, creator of the bestselling *Fasciculus temporum* (Bundle of Dates) wrote:

> It cost me much hard work to lay out the lines of the Assyrian and Roman history from various sources. Accordingly I ask anyone who decides to copy this work to pay close attention to the spaces and the numbers that correspond to them, and make them no longer or smaller than in the model. Otherwise his work will go to waste.[91]

Many chronologies are creations of beauty, magnificent works of art from the medieval tree of life to modern stone monuments. In 1570, cartographer Abraham Ortelius merged the worlds of cartography and chronography for the first time with his *Theatrum orbis terrarium* (Theatre of the world), opening the way to historical maps and atlases which situate the timeline geographically as well as historically.[92]

> Yet although it was created as a creature of exactitude, designed to promote broader understanding and ease of reference, the chronology has long been open to controversy and fabrication, used for propaganda through the ages. The expertise of chronologists in placing the Biblical timeline within a more extensive world history drew condemnations for heresy when their work threw Biblical authority into question; the answer of some chroniclers was to fictionalise their material. The same was true of those creating genealogies for the great ruling houses of Europe who managed to remove some of the less salubrious episodes of family history while claiming ancestry back to the ancient heroes – or even the gods, a tradition that dates back to writings of Homer and Virgil.[93]

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[90] Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton, *Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 26.
[91] Rosenberg and Grafton, *Cartographies of Time*, 40.
[92] Rosenberg and Grafton, *Cartographies of Time*, 126.
[93] Rosenberg and Grafton, *Cartographies of Time*, 44.

The addition of a chronology to a book appears at first glance to be a relatively straightforward task. Its inclusion provides an easy frame of reference, offering the opportunity to track the movement of key players, allowing readers to recap events described within the main body of the text and make instant connections between those events and their repercussions. The text can be explored from a different perspective, as readers piece together the jigsaw. Entries within the *Steel Safari* chronology for 1898, for instance, show that at virtually the same time as Kitchener was fighting the Battle of Omdurman in the Sudan, John Henry Patterson was battling man-eating lions in Tsavo (Kenya) and further south the ever-modest Cecil Rhodes was humbly allowing his new colonies to be named Rhodesia. By 1899, the busy Kitchener was in South Africa, fighting the Boer War. Churchill, having cut his military teeth at Omdurman, also arrived in South Africa in 1899 as a reporter, making headlines when captured by the Boers, just down the railway tracks from where the young Gandhi was working for the ambulance corps. (See Vol 1, p.171) These events and people are all within the text but within different chapters, in different countries and would not necessarily be connected by the reader unless placed together in the timeline. The vast majority of the dates required are contained within the text, so it becomes a matter of trawling through and pulling them out into a list.

The selection and fine-tuning of items to be included within the chronology acts as a handy backstop for the text itself, a check as to whether an important moment should have been included and additional text is required or whether it is sufficient to mark its passing within the chronology. Once ordered, there is a secondary task of evaluating which key markers might be missing both in global terms and in terms of the creative work. For instance, dates such as the death of Queen Victoria or the outbreak of World War One may not have been mentioned specifically within the text but would have had great bearing on the events within the book. Their familiarity also acts as useful pegs for readers who may be less knowledgeable about African history. There are also less familiar, “fuzzier” markers that should be included in order to assist the rebalancing of the historic record which has inevitably been written, to date, by the imperial powers. It is only in very recent years that

scholars have begun to place Africa's indigenous history within the chronology of conquest.

As with the editing of any historical material (including the main text), this addition or subtraction of material from the final version, of necessity, crafts a tailored, subjective view of history and that, by definition, becomes a political act. It is not the job of the chronology within the back matter to be comprehensive, or even objective, but to work with and support the main text. Yet its role must be to clarify not skew the historical record. The author must, therefore, take carefully considered responsibility not only for what they choose to put into their chronology but what they choose to omit.

Given the complexity of the material I am covering within *Steel Safari*, the inclusion of a chronology is useful. At present, it is constructed simply, based on the premise discussed above that it follows the material contained within the chapters of the main text. However, there are possibilities for a more comprehensive digital reworking of the material based on a timeline which I discuss in more detail in Section 4.3.

The bibliography is thought to date back, in a structural and scientific form, to the second century BCE when Kallimachos, head librarian at the Alexandrian Library compiled the *Pinakes*, a carefully classified catalogue of 120 scrolls.[94] An essential tool to any academic, numerous books have been written on the bibliographic process and its subdivisions, such as the differences between enumerative (content) and descriptive (physical) bibliography and smaller sub-divisions such as the uses of citation (those texts referred to within the text) and bibliography (any and all texts which may have been consulted within the research process). It is not the purpose of this thesis to cover familiar ground but to look at why this stalwart of the academic world is rarely assured a place within any travel or other trade book. In choosing to map the transparency of their research, authors show themselves to be prepared to admit that they are not all-knowing godlike figures, but people who have worked diligently, treading in and building on the footsteps of others. Not only does the

[94] Rudolf Blum, *Kallimachos. The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography*, trans. Hans H. Wellisch (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

bibliography thank those whose work you have used (see also Section 3.6, below) but it becomes a record of the writing process as surely as the map charts the progress of the journey itself. For readers who wish to study in greater detail, it is an invaluable source of further reading and perhaps, most crucially of all, it helps establish the author's credibility as someone who has done their homework.

It is notable that few travel books included within this study do include bibliographies and citations. In choosing not to acknowledge research, authors are in danger of gathering a pretence of authority beyond that to which they have a justifiable claim – that bogus sense of blind entitlement and determination to prove their particular journey unique and unprecedented for which travel writers, who are rarely short of opinions, have received such a bad press from postcolonial reviewers. Those that do reference their research are almost all more recent publications. This may perhaps be a sign of travel writers adapting to the demands of the postcolonial world, and the realisation that it is necessary to acknowledge those around us on our writer's journey, although it may simply be the case that more writers are now also academics. Yet again, this may have a gendered element, with writers such as Chatwin contrasting sharply with those such as Claire Scobie whose book, *Last Seen in Lhasa*, is centred on friendship and is, as pointed out earlier, one of the few with a significant bibliography. Further research on a much wider range of books would be needed to form a proper conclusion.

There may, however, also be more pragmatic reasons for the lack of a bibliography. An article by Doreen Carvajal, written in 2000, during the relatively early days of the electronic revolution, pinpoints some of the various options and difficulties offered by the new technology as publishers sought to save paper and provide a more user-friendly product by moving informational paratext, such as the bibliography, online. With some of the bibliographies quoted in the article running to 78 and even 100 pages, their removal represented a significant financial saving. The prospect raised widely differing concerns amongst writers, with some worrying about a potential loss of credibility should readers fail to connect to the online bibliography, while

others raised the potential loss of the bibliography itself due to technical error and its dislocation from the text.[95]

As *Steel Safari* is being written as part of a PhD, it has, of necessity, both detailed citations and bibliography in place at this point. Citations for quotations have been created as endnotes, with all placed, chapter by chapter, at the back of the book. Additional books consulted have been included within a separate comprehensive bibliography, listed alphabetically by author. Research for the Critical Study and for the Creative Work are listed separately at the end of each volume (see also Section 2.5). The question then remains as to whether this Creative Work, complete with its attendant referencing, is handed on unchanged for the published trade work. This is probably a decision that will eventually be taken with the publisher and may alter in different editions, and according to whether it is published in print, hardback or paperback, digitally, in foreign editions or reprints. While the citations list would remain the same, my inclination for commercial publication is to weed the bibliography into a more selective list of Further Reading, removing the smaller articles and more esoteric works while leaving a broad range of options for next stage of exploration by the general reader. I would also break it into more manageable chunks, by country and theme, for greater ease of reference.

The index is traditionally the last element of the book. A more detailed navigation tool than the contents page, it offers the print reader a way to search within the text by topic. Traditionally, indexing was a skilled but thankless job done by someone other than the author or editor, requiring immense patience and an eye for fine detail, creating long alphabetic lists manually and searching manuscripts for each and every page reference. The arrival of the computer changed things dramatically with its ability to shuffle lists into alphabetic order and above all, to search text. There is still skill involved in creating a good index, in knowing which words to catalogue, how much detail to include and how to cross-reference within the index itself (for instance trains, rail and railways). People tend to search for these indiscriminately so a good index will allow the connection to be made. However, within a book such as

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[95] Doreen Carvajal, "The Book's in Print, But Its Bibliography Lives in Cyberspace," *The New York Times*: https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/29/books/the-book-s-in-print-but-its-bibliography-lives-in-cyberspace.html (29/05/2009; accessed 14/06/2018).

Steel Safari, with so many references to trains, rail and railways, there would be such a vast number of page references as to render the search useless. Therefore the indexer would need to add a list of further sub-references to sections such as Egyptian Railways, Desert Railway, Tazara Railway and so forth. To map this correctly requires knowledge of how people read and research and carefully patterned construction of the index to mirror their requirements. Within the digital world of e-publishing, the index has largely been rendered obsolete by the computer's search function, although this does not make allowances for the overly broad search such as that detailed above and relies on the searcher selecting down to a manageable level for themselves. Trade books tend to have done away with the index in the electronic form; academic and other specialist texts have retained the index to date, with references hotlinked to entries rather than page numbers.

As stated above, only one of the travel books within my study collection, *City of Djinns*, includes an index. I should like to include one as I find them useful. However while a word list created now would remain relevant, any pagination would be almost instantly obsolete. At this stage, in terms of sheer practicality, it needs to be something that I leave for my eventual publisher to create.

3.6 Saying Thank You – Dedications and Acknowledgements

According to Genette, the use of dedications is thought to stretch back to ancient Rome, although it may well be older still, with works typically offered to an admired teacher or public figure, or, most frequently, the patron who supported the author while they wrote.[96] It could be lucrative – Shakespeare is thought to have made a healthy £1,000 for two particularly flattering referrals to the Earl of Southampton.[97] Some were simple, some extravagant dedicatory epistles. Others, such as Virgil's towering paean of praise to Caesar at the end of *The Aeneid* or Shakespeare's suite of sonnets to his mysterious "Dark Lady", inspired the creative work itself, with the muse or

[96] Genette, *Paratexts,* 117

[97] Tim Dowling, "This Book is Dedicated to… Who Exactly?" *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/21/news.comment (21/06/2007; accessed 25/09/2018).

patron built into the fabric of the text. Until the end of the eighteenth century, when a lawsuit by Beaumarchais introduced the concept of author's royalties, these dedications were an essential part of the author's financial survival kit.[98] Genette discusses a novel written in 1666, *Le Roman Bourgeois* (The Bourgeois Novel) by Furetière, in which the author creates an imaginary text, in four volumes and seventy-four chapters, entirely dedicated to the examination of the dedication and how much praise is worth;[99] it was a subject that was quite obviously not only of great importance but satirised within the writing community which resented its reliance upon this pecuniary fawning.

Relative financial freedom saw the dedication wither and, in many cases, die, only to reappear in truncated form as authors hoped to curry favour with the new emperors or political elite. Where it survived, it usually shrank to a simple name-check, sometimes even using anonymous initials and came to rest within the front matter of the book, generally hovering somewhere between the title page, the epigraph (if there is one) and the contents page. The dedication wasn't (and isn't) written in stone. Famously, Beethoven changed the dedication of his *Eroica Symphony*, initially written for Napoleon as First Consul, on hearing that Bonaparte had made himself Emperor, giving it instead the rather sad memorial inscription "to celebrate the memory of a great man."[100] There have been numerous cases of alteration. Nor has the dedication been immune to satire or fictionalisation. Sir Walter Scott, not content with paraphrasing his epigraphs (see Section 3.3 above), had a habit of dedicating some of his books to fictional characters such as the Reverend Dryasdust, a member of the Antiquarian Society who is honoured at the start of *Ivanhoe*.[101]

Dedications in recent years have reappeared but tend to be short and often cryptic to those not in the know – simply naming the recipient or offering a personalised message. As such, they can offer a small, unguarded glimpse into the private world of a public figure. And some do stray beyond the norms, their words attracting attention. Start reading about these tiny snippets and it's like entering a

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[98] Genette, *Paratexts*, 119.
[99] Genette, *Paratexts,* 120.
[100] Christopher T. George, "The Eroica Riddle: Did Napoleon Remain Beethoven's "hero?", *Napoleonic Scholarship*, 1, no. 2: https://www.napoleon-series.org/ins/scholarship98/c_eroica.html (December 1998; accessed 25/02/2021).
[101] Genette, *Paratexts*, 134.

secret, coded world, a source of endless fascination for those who long to know about the person behind the words. In 1990, Bloomsbury published the *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Dedications*,[102] while newspapers and literary blogs continue to collect finer examples for round-up features ranging from the funny to the bitter, the cute to the caustic. BuzzFeed's collection turned up this offering from comedian Frankie Boyle: "To all my enemies,/I will destroy you" in *My Shit Life So Far*[103] while Bored Panda's selection included Kendare Blake's dedication in *Mortal Gods (The Goddess War)*: "For the students of Lyon Township High School in Illinois. Because that kid in the back row asked."[104] Lemony Snicket's series of thirteen dedications to Beatrice, across the *Series of Unfortunate Events*, read together like the most heartbreaking (and funny) of love poems, beginning: "To Beatrice/darling, dearest, dead" (*The Bad Beginning: Book the First*).[105] Lemony Snicket is the pen name of US author, Daniel Handler, but also the protagonist of the books; Beatrice was the fictional dead fiancée of the fictional Lemony. In an entertaining article in *The Guardian*, author Tim Dowling describes the pressure placed on him by his wife to dedicate his book to her and his efforts to find a way to do so while still making it witty, only to find his efforts foiled by an over-eager copy-editor (it all worked out with the paperback edition with the addition of a pair of brackets).[106] In an article in *The New York Times*, Edwin Dowell describes the battle between author Arthur Hailey, who refused to write any dedications, saying "I always told my wife that dedicating a book is like making love in public" and his wife, who eventually wrote her own book and dedicated it to

[102] Adrian Room (compiler), *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Dedications* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990).
[103] Frankie Boyle, "26 Of The Greatest Book Dedications You Will Ever Read": https://www.buzzfeed.com/jzebarrow/the-27-greatest-book-dedications-you-will-ever-rea-mvjw (*Buzzfeed*, 19/06/2014; accessed 08/03/2021).
[104] Inga Korolkovaite, "57 Times Writers Took Book Dedications To Another Level": https://www.boredpanda.com/creative-book-dedications/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic (*Bored Panda,* 2018; accessed 08/03/2021).
[105] Lauren Passell, "The 25 Best Dedications Ever Written" (*B&N* Reads, 01/10/2013): https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/the-25-best-author-acknowledgements-ever-written/ (accessed 08/03/2021).
[106] Dowling, "This Book is Dedicated to… Who Exactly?".

Arthur in an effort to make him change his mind.[107] Even the absence of a dedication can be telling. With this topic on my mind, I recently asked a friend who had just completed a book whether she was going to dedicate it to anyone. "Good God, no! Why should I? I wrote this for myself, not for anyone else. Why should I give it to them?" she replied – and gave me permission to use her words anonymously.

There is perhaps also one more story to tell. The days of the single patron may be over but with publishing deals increasingly insecure, readers are increasingly gaining greater direct power in their relationships with writers desperate to fund themselves and seeking new ways to commodify their work. Some have auctioned off the dedication page and hidden dedications are increasingly common within the realm of fiction as authors hold "name a character" competitions amongst fans and crowd-funders who can either choose to immortalise themselves or offer the character as a present.[108] The option may even be put to good use. For instance, in 2014, author George RR Martin auctioned off two characters in *A Song of Fire and Ice* – one male, one female – for US$20,000 each. The winners could choose their status and were guaranteed a gruesome death of their choice within the book! Proceeds went to a wolf sanctuary in Santa Fe.[109] Such tempting options however are not available to those who work within non-fiction, however creative it may be.

There are few surprises in the use of dedications amongst travel writers. Paul Theroux takes the simple route, dedicating *Dark Star Safari* "For my mother, Anne Dittami Theroux on her ninety-first birthday" while *Last Train to Zona Verde* is "To Albert and Freddy, Sylvia and Enzo, with love from Grandpa." Eric Newby adds a twist within his dedication in *The Big Red Train Ride* "To the People of Siberia,/who have to live there", making a joke yet simultaneously acknowledging the appalling hardships faced by the Siberians. In *The Desert and The Sown*, Gertrude Bell anonymises her dedication but comments on her choice: "To A.C.L. who knows the

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[107] Edwin McDowell, "To Those Who Read Book Dedications," *The New York Times*: https://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/06/books/to-those-who-read-book-dedications.html (06/09/1982; accessed 25/09/2018).
[108] "Last Chance: Book Dedication for Sale." *Bleeding Heart Libertarians*: https://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/2015/02/book-dedication-for-sale (2015; accessed 25/09/2018).
[109] Aaron Couch, "George R.R. Martin Will Kill Contest Winner in Future Book for $20,000 (Video)." *Hollywood Reporter* : https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/george-rr-martin-contest-winner-709769 (06/06/2014; accessed 24/09/2018).

heart of the East." Rachel Lichtenstein and Noo Saro-Wiwa both dedicate their books to friends who have died, Joanna Kavenna and Claire Scobie to their parents. Ted Simon, Sven Lindqvist, Jenny Diski and Bruce Chatwin chose not to offer any dedication within the books studied for this thesis. I can hear Newby's voice clearly in his words; he would have enjoyed writing them. Theroux, a man who seems to relish and play on his reputation for being grumpy, briefly shows the softer underbelly of the tiger. Bell, who gives so little of herself away in her public writings, gives no more here.

Although I have published numerous books previously, in only one (my first) did I have the editorial freedom to write a dedication. The *Discovery Guide to Zimbabwe* was first published in 1985 as the first full guidebook to the country to be written after the handover to majority rule. Deciding the dedication was easy: "To my parents, with thanks for introducing me to Africa." It is a selection and sentiment which would still be equally relevant today but the decision is now more difficult. I have not only written a book, *Steel Safari*, but a PhD thesis, both of which may carry a dedication. Should either have one, or none? Should they have the same one or should they be different?

My father died in 2013, just as I was embarking on the process of writing this book, and one of my great sorrows is that he will never read it. He, after all, was one of only two members of our family actually born in Africa (in Egypt, in 1931); the other is my brother, born in Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, in 1970. Until I read the dedications by Rachel and Noo, I had not thought of the idea of dedicating the book *in memoriam*. However my mother is still alive, was one of my earliest English teachers and has been a staunch supporter of the project at every stage, both mentally and practically, helping to fund my PhD. Then there is my partner, Mark, who again has not only been a stalwart support but travelled with me and has uncomplainingly allowed me to make use of him within the text. My old friend, Judy, sadly died partway through my PhD, generously leaving me a bequest which helped pay my fees. Finally and incredibly importantly, I have to thank the neuro-surgical unit at Queen's Hospital, Romford and the Oncology Team at Colchester General Hospital who have, quite literally, kept me alive long enough to submit my PhD – something I had definitely not factored into my plans when I started. I may end

up with a very long and heartfelt dedication page. This has, without doubt, been a team effort.

Acknowledgements sit together with the dedication as offering recognition and thanks but while the dedication is generally part of the front matter, the acknowledgements, which can be anything from half a page to several pages long, are frequently confined to the back of the book. As a dedicated bibliophile, I read them avidly, both for their insights into the author's personal life and the behind-the-scenes reality that created the work. However, I had always thought that I was one of the few and that, like the credits at the end of the movie, they effectively scrolled past at lightning speed while the readers were putting on their metaphorical coats. It was with some astonishment therefore that I realised how many admit to poring over them while others are enraged by their effusiveness, their lack of literary quality and relationship with the text. Genette ignores the topic completely which is perhaps not so surprising as *Paratexts*, while written in the 1980s, is based largely on a study of nineteenth and early twentieth century literature. In 2006, history professor Claire Potter, while finishing her own book and exercised by the need to write acknowledgements, delved into the history of their use within academia, discovering that they were virtually unused before 1945, began to become more elaborate in the 1960s and really only flourished from the 1980s onwards. She suggests that the increasing number of conferences attended by early career academics created a far wider circle of networking and critique leading to the necessity for further thanks but wonders at the "reality TV" content of some of the "endless, gushy… declarations of love" and suggests that the move to the back of the book might have been a deliberate ploy by embarrassed editors hoping to hide their worst excesses from the world.[110]

Not all acknowledgements are loving, however; some authors use the pages as the opportunity for a little blunt speaking or even an outright rant. In 1973, US student, Denis Wood, later to become a distinguished academic, wrote a stinging four-page acknowledgements section at the start of his dissertation *I Don't Want To But I Will: The Genesis of Geographic Knowledge: A Real-Time Developmental Study of*

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[110] Claire Potter, "Giving Thanks: An Essay on Acknowledgements." *The Chronicle*: https://www.chronicle.com/blognetwork/tenuredradical/2006/11/giving-thanks-grumpy-essay-on/ (22/11/2006; accessed 25/06/2018).

Adolescent Images of Novel Environments. He had obviously had a hard time with his supervisions as the first page is a diatribe about his advisors and how worthless they had made him feel:

> One of these sources of critical energy is a little more than somewhat negative: it is, in fact, almost overwhelmingly crushing. You see, for some, the writer of a dissertation is a nobody, a dummy, a nigger, a dust-rag, a toy to be advised (kicked), aided (kneed), supported (tackled), constructively criticized (mutilated) by anyone who has already written a dissertation… the general effect is to make the student feel entirely incompetent, a vacuous nudnik and an academic peon.[111]

More recently an article in the *Times Higher Education* turned up what they claimed might be the best acknowledgement ever by Brendan Pietsch, assistant professor of religious studies at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan, in his book, *Dispensational Modernism:*

> I blame all of you. Writing this book has been an exercise in sustained suffering. The casual reader may, perhaps, exempt herself from excessive guilt, but for those of you who have played the larger role in prolonging my agonies with your encouragement and support, well…you know who you are, and you owe me.

The article goes on to say that the author, astounded by the publicity he had received, felt that the comment had done wonders for his sales.[112]

The progression towards longer and more effusive acknowledgements is mirrored and amplified within trade publishing, and was fired into a literary frenzy in 2012 by the publication of a book by Sheryl Sandberg entitled *Lean In*. According to Noreen Malone, writing in *The New Republic*, “Sandberg’s seven-and-a-half page section, for instance, thanks more than 140 people for contributing to her 172 page book. She doesn’t just thank her superagent, she

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[111] Denis Wood, “I Don’t Want to, But I Will.” *Dissertation*: https://makingmaps.net/2012/03/27/denis-woods-dissertation-i-dont-want-to-but-i-will-pdf/ (1973; accessed 25/09/2018).
[112] Scott Jaschik, “Is This the Best Book Acknowledgement Ever?” *Times Higher Education*: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/best-book-acknowledgement-ever (12/01/2006; accessed 03/10/2018).

thanks her superagent's boss…" The article goes on to suggest that "The large body count, along with the accompanying exegeses of just how each person helped, makes *Lean On* seem a more appropriate title." Malone is particularly scathing about the number of celebrities name-checked along the way for their publicity value, and the politics at play – who is mentioned, who is left out – and whether potential reviewers could be nobbled, or ruled out of contention, by effusive thanks.[113] The *New Yorker* takes up the refrain with the added complaint about the quality of the writing, saying "these afterwords are often so garrulously narcissistic and strewn with clichés. The most radical experimentalist adheres to the most mindless acknowledgments-page formula; the most stinging social critic suddenly becomes Sally Field winning an Oscar." Again, social events and networking are suggested as a potential reason for the outbreak of indulgence but in this case, the suggestion is that the trend towards longer acknowledgements may be due to cutbacks within publishers' budgets. "One publishing world insider reminded me that book parties have been severely scaled back in recent years, and so a thank you in the acknowledgements can take the place of a few free drinks and a short speech for the assembled guests."[114] It will be interesting to see how the 'new normal' of Coronavirus lockdown culture affects this in the longer-term future.

There is an underlying recognition in all of these discussions that while the acknowledgements section exists as a way to thank those who have genuinely been of help and support, these pages, for good or ill, also have a wider and more pragmatic role within the complex network of career-building, profile-raising, door-opening, and path-smoothing that greases any commercial undertaking.

Within the world of "commercial" travel writing in which I have lived for most of my working life, there is a very hard-headed symbiotic relationship between the creatives (writers, photographers, editors, broadcasters, bloggers and so forth) and the industry (travel companies, tourist offices and PRs). Much as many frown upon the practice of sponsorship or press trips, travel is expensive and frequently complicated.

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[113] Noreen Malone, "Thank You to the Author's Many Many Important Friends," *The New Republic*: https://newrepublic.com/article/112578/what-sheryl-sandbergs-acknowledgments-reveals (07/03/2007; accessed 25/09/2018).
[114] Sam Sacks, "Against Acknowledgements," *The New Yorker*: https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/against-acknowledgments (24/08/2012; accessed 25/09/2018).

Without the active assistance of the tourism industry and PR companies, realistically, there would be no travel magazines, travel pages in newspapers, and few travel blogs. The creative practitioners earn a relative pittance for their words, would not have the time, resources or contacts to make the necessary connections and arrangements for themselves. They simply could not afford to travel were it not for the provision of free travel and accommodation, aid with research, entrances to venues, and would not have the necessary information or access to set up appointments, get assistance obtaining visas, for example. The relationship between travel writers and the travel industry is similar to that between theatres or restaurants and critics. At its best, it works effectively to ensure that the writer achieves their aims without hindrance and is able to concentrate on producing editorially independent material which critiques the product fairly. At its worst, it is wide open to abuse on both sides, to the detriment of the reader who is presented by thinly disguised, ill-researched and biased marketing blurbs. The lines have become increasingly blurred since the arrival of the internet and the resulting decline of print media, with direct payment often made to the writer by the marketing organisation; even then, cleverer practitioners recognise the worth of allowing a good journalist/writer freedom of expression as the resulting article has more clout and a longer shelf-life.

The real payback for the facilities offered on a press trip is usually not the words of the article but the fact box and product name-check at the end. Beyond that, an additional name-check for the PR company involved ensures that happy ongoing relationships are maintained. Scale this up to the production of a travel book and many of the same relationships remain in play. Very few travel books are produced without organisational input from outside sources, be they tourist offices or tourism companies, PR companies, or NGOs. Significant commissions, such as the National Geographic article which funded Robyn Davidson's journey in *Tracks*, or the various documentaries on Tibet produced by Claire Scobie while writing *Last Seen in Lhasa*, allow writers access to their destination to research their "real" project. There may well also be other funding in the form of grants, such as the Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship which provided the core of the travelling money for my own research trips. In addition, these books are non-fiction; the writer is walking

into the lives of others, using them and their words. It would obviously be both impossible and irrelevant to list every person met along the journey but it seems only courteous to acknowledge a debt to their generosity in sharing their world, their knowledge and even in some cases, their homes.

If they thank no one else, most writers do thank their editorial team. This is only logical. Having spent much of my working life straddling the fence, as both editor and writer, I have seen at first hand the difference a good editor can make to a manuscript (and the damage that can be inflicted by a bad one). I have also seen how easy it is for writers to receive a reputation for awkwardness which translates instantly into lost jobs. Protecting ongoing relationships makes practical sense.

Despite all this some travel writers manage to produce such short lists. Eric Newby's acknowledgements in *The Big Red Train Ride* take up barely half a page (within the front matter) and while he mentions his librarian, no one he meets along the journey is included. Bruce Chatwin acknowledges only one person in *In Patagonia*, but she is tucked into the sources section, with thanks for giving him access to her father's papers (although he apparently did not have permission to copy them). Again, no other assistance or hospitality is acknowledged. Ted Simon includes no acknowledgements in *Jupiter's Travels*, a book singularly lacking in paratext, nor does Paul Theroux in *Dark Star Safari*. Many readers may simply not notice, but others might well question both their sense of generosity and their research methods.

Joanna Kavenna lists many people who helped her with editing, research and fact-checking as well as her family in the acknowledgements section of *The Ice Museum*. Interestingly and unusually, Jenny Diski offers no acknowledgements to editors or publishers in her brief half-page section, although she does acknowledge those publications in which segments of the text have appeared previously as articles. She concentrates instead on thanking some of those travelling companions who feature strongly within the book. In *Last Seen in Lhasa*, Claire Scobie ends her extensive list of thanks across both Australia and Tibet, with a special mention of Ani, her friend and travelling companion at the heart of her book, but also includes a general thanks to "all those Tibetan people who've assisted and supported my journeys – in ways both

seen and unseen – and who, often at personal risk, translated for me, travelled with me and entrusted me."[115]

There are the glimmerings here of some intriguing possibilities, such as, once again, a gender divide, within the use of the acknowledgements. However, other factors such as the date of publication and the additional occupation of the author may well come into play here (those who are commercial writers are perhaps more likely to understand the power of the namecheck). So too may the hand of the publisher who may discourage lengthy acknowledgements – at least in print editions – on the pragmatic grounds that they are a waste of paper. The arrival of e-publishing has freed the acknowledgements, along with so many other aspects of the paratext, from spatial constraint, leaving the author to be as generously long-winded as they wish to be at zero additional cost. To get round the issue with print, it has even been suggested that the acknowledgements (along with other aspects of the paratext) might be removed from the book altogether and placed within the epitext, on an accompanying website. This however would seem to defeat the aims of the section, which rely on linked publicity for the benefactor.

As a good middle-class English woman, culturally conditioned to say thank you far more frequently than is probably required, a conditioning compounded by a convent education, I cannot imagine not paying my debts. As with the dedication, the double project – book and thesis – has resulted in additional acknowledgements. In this case, however, I feel that the two should be merged in perpetuity as the process of doing the PhD and the writing of the book were inextricably bound together. Therefore the Acknowledgements section for both Critical Study and Creative Work sits at the front of the Creative Work.

I do not feel that this is the right work in which to get overly clever, so in these, as in other elements, I have written the Acknowledgements in a straightforward fashion and have included all those who have been of significant assistance to the project, whether in Africa, in funding my research or writing, in my studies and in my personal life. Once I have a publishing

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[115] Scobie, *Last Seen in Lhasa*, 244.

team, they will be added. I have also written short segments of commentary on why I have included people. That way, the curious have the opportunity to have a good rummage around in the inner workings of the project and hopefully, if any of those mentioned do read the book, they will know that their contributions have been appreciated.

This adds up to a significant number of people. To take the Egypt chapters alone as an example: at the time we went to Egypt, while the situation was less politically sensitive than it is at present, Mubarak was still in power; there had been significant attacks on tourists by al-Qaeda; and the status of independent travellers was insecure. To gain access to railway officials and even to travel on the day train from Cairo to Aswan required official permission. I was also on an extremely tight budget which limited the amount of time available to me in each place. If I were to do the job I wanted, the only way to do so was to treat my travels less as an exploration and more as an organised research trip. For that, I needed the Egyptian State Tourist Office, then headed up by the formidable Mr Khaled Ramy, who went on to become Egypt's Minister of Tourism for a time. He arranged hotels in Alexandria, Cairo and Aswan, provided a car, an itinerary and of course, the two Mohameds – drivers, guides (and bodyguards) who took us around, looked after us and entertained us, offering real insights in Egyptian culture as we went. Press accreditation was arranged for me by the Foreign Press Centre and Egyptian Railways and the Alexandrian Tram System opened their doors and spoke to me at length. There are similar lists for each country. As mentioned earlier within this Critical Study, I have changed some names within the Creative Work; to then offer their real names within the Acknowledgements would be unhelpful. I hope they will know who they are, if they ever get to see the text. The real trick is to keep the list down to manageable proportions, heartfelt but with proper British middle-class reserve, starting of course with my dog, who is deeply jealous of the computer, and whose incessant barking accompanies every word I try to write…

3.7 A Touch of Solicitation – The Blurbs

The final peritextual category contains those additional pages designed primarily to solicit sales or reputation – illustrations and mapping are discussed separately in Section 4. It includes the endorsements or positive quotations from reviews from this or previous works by the same author; the author's biography; the

cover blurb (or about this book pop-up in the case of e-books); and above all, the power preface or foreword by a significant sponsor.

Crucially, many of these will be the work of or at least involve significant input from people other than the author, and, while the main body of the text and much of the paratext controlled by the author remains largely unchanged between different editions, many of these elements will alter completely with every new edition and even possibly with each new reprint. The author may be asked to produce a draft of the cover blurb and their biography, but the final version will be a communal effort, vetted and honed by their agent, editor, publisher and the marketing department – and those of any co-publishers. The pithy endorsements may have been canvassed from the writer's colleagues but are more likely to have been solicited by the publisher or agent from amongst their own contacts or clients or, in the case of a second edition or second book, drawn from previous reviews. Only in the case of the preface or foreword is there likely to be significant link between the author and the writer of the preface. Even then, this may not be a personal connection but a shared understanding or interest in a common cause or, in the case of an anniversary edition, an expertise on the life or work of the writer of the main text.

Other than the basics, the quantity of additional marketing material included within a book may be governed by extremely practical reasons. Not only do the author and publisher want to sell more books but they may also be looking to fill blank pages. Books are typically printed in multiples of sixteen or thirty-two printed pages. If the first run of proofs comes in with one page over, the author may well be asked to make cuts to save the cost of the additional form of paper and there will be no frills. Should the final count fall in the middle of the form, however, there will potentially be five or six pages to fill – and that is where the marketing team can go to town with recommendations, competitions and other enticements. Within e-books, there are no such constraints and each of these categories typically gets its own link within the contents list. On Kindle, every book ends automatically on an Amazon sales page with further books by the same author and recommendations based on their work.

Crucially however, these are all elements which are decided at a later stage in the publication process. It is simply not possible to ask someone to endorse or critique a product which does not yet exist. While noting their existence and their potentially profound effect on the reader's involvement with the book, as none of these categories have major significance to the initial construction of the core text, I do not propose to discuss them further within the scope of this thesis.

SECTION 4 – ILLUSTRATION AND EPITEXT

4.1 The Cartographic Conundrum – The Use of Maps

Maps are everywhere, as sketches, satellite images and elaborate works of art; they are so ubiquitous that, if asked, few would probably realise quite how dependent on them we are, particularly in this age of Google and satnav. Yet they are not just tools, they fire our sense of adventure and imagination. Explorers pore over maps to plan their next adventure, and writers from Robert Louis Stephenson to JRR Tolkien create elaborate maps as they build the worlds in which to tell their tales. As a historian of exploration, Huw Lewis-Jones says:

> All maps are the products of the human imagination. They are scripts of thought and reasoning and embody all manner of storytelling; each line, shape and symbol has a purpose, a value, a direction and a significance for those who create the maps and for all who interpret them. And in remembering those maps, perhaps many years later, the lines gather new meanings as they run through our minds.[116]

Perhaps more than any other document, maps straddle the boundaries between art and science, imagination and authority. A map is a place of dreams and dragons, it marks the spot of buried treasure but it also offers the weary traveller a survival guide and lays down the exact boundaries of ownership or influence. It is a totem of immense power and one that has always fascinated humanity. But maps are indeed products of the human imagination and, like the chronology, discussed in Section 3.5, come complete with human frailties. The map can find you but can get you lost, can quite literally win you a kingdom or lose you half your land. A carelessly inked line an inch too far to the left or an ill-considered ruler-straight slash through the middle of an ancient tribal kingdom has led to many a feud and bloody war. The Sudanese have

[116] Huw Lewis-Jones, *The Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2018), 20.

been paying the price for British mapping ever since we first became embroiled with the country, the repercussions still unresolved. Malachy Tallack's book, *The Un-Discovered Islands*, painstakingly tracks down, rearranges or erases quantities of islands around the world that have been proved either to be in the wrong place, to be fables or simply made up by glory-seeking explorers.[117] Supposedly discovered by a whaling ship in 1876, Sandy Island in the Coral Sea was dutifully marked on all maps until it was definitively wiped out of existence in 2012.

There is simply not the space, within the scope of this thesis, to discuss the full complexity of maps and their influence in detail, so I shall just look at how they are used within travel books. Open most narrative travel books and one of the first things you will see is a fairly simple map, locating the book geographically and, frequently, marking the route of the author's journey. More usually than not hand drawn, its visual directness allows the reader to jump straight into the story as surely as Mary Poppins and the Banks children jumped through a chalk drawing on a pavement into the world of magic beyond. In *Last Seen in Lhasa*, Claire Scobie includes a single, stripped-back map of Tibet, with an inset of the Pemako region, showing the routes of her two journeys, although unusually this is placed right at the end of the book. Paul Theroux's *Dark Star Safari* and Robyn Davidson's *Tracks* both start with the single route map and even Jenny Diski's *Stranger on a Train*, which breaks so many other boundaries, observes this genre convention. Sven Lindqvist has a map of North Africa, without a route, at the start of *Saharan Journey*. Only Noo Saro-Wiwa fails to include a single map in *Looking for Transwonderland*. Joanna Kavenna's *The Ice Museum* starts with a single map of the Arctic Circle, centred on the North Pole, but she has gone further; scattered throughout the book are simple geographical maps of the countries the author visits on her journey.

In *Steel Safari*, I am telling three main stories simultaneously – my own journey down through Africa, the life of the railways along the Cairo to Cape Town route, and the broader historic story of the continent, as influenced by the arrival of the rail network. This is all set across a lengthy timeframe, against an evolving political background. As I have emphasised in previous sections, one of my aims within my

[117] Malachy Tallack, *The Un-Discovered Islands: An Archipelago of Myths and Mysteries, Phantoms and Fakes* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2016).

approach to structure has been to provide a clear framework to help readers navigate this complex narrative. This extends past the text itself to the use of visual representations, including maps. Given the labyrinthine nature of the material, I wanted, again, to borrow something from my background as a guidebook writer and go beyond the use of a single map at the start of the book. In a typical guidebook, each new region or walking route starts with a map or small route map, which may be a full page, created in 3D glory by publishers such as Dorling Kindersley, which have built their reputation on the magnificence of their mapping, or may be a simple inset sketch map. Typically, the issues in their production have been both copyright and cost; cartography is a specialist skill and the base material is fiercely protected. As with so many other aspects of publishing, modern technology has revolutionised map making.

In order to create the maps for *Steel Safari*, I enlisted the aid of a friend and colleague, Dr Steph Driver, who is skilled both as a graphic artist and as a computer programmer. We found creative commons sources from the internet and older maps no longer in copyright; each was cross-checked for accuracy against at least two other sources. A political map of Africa[118] containing only the outlines of the continent and the country boundaries was traced by hand, using an Apple pencil with an iPad Pro in Inkpad, to create a base map over which we are then adding layers. The map with all its layers has been created in vectors. This means that the saved electronic version is not actually an image but a set of instructions on how to draw an image, which is drawn afresh each time the file is opened. Therefore, unlike a more traditional image, the individual parts of the drawing can be reproduced, manipulated in numerous different ways and resized as required without any loss of quality. While keeping the original map intact, it is also entirely possible to manipulate the design – creating, for instance, maps which look hand-drawn and annotated. It also allows us to use the same base map to zoom in, effectively creating more detailed maps of individual countries or regions. The illustration below shows the first stages of creating a more hand-drawn look or the book. The overlays

[118] https://geology.com/world/cia-africa-map.shtml (accessed 28 October 2021).

here are done on a semi-opaque paper but can be drawn on a completely transparent film to ensure total clarity.

Fig 1 Outline map showing Africa with major rivers and lakes, with country boundaries overlaying it.

Using a book called *The Art of Cartographics* as inspiration, we looked at a wide variety of design options, deciding eventually against the hand-drawn version and creating instead a simple, highly decorative style which can be translated into clear blocks in both black and white and colour.[119]

Each layer contains different information. For instance, one layer houses the original routes of the Cairo-Cape railways, another the rail map as it exists today, a third the projected route of the new Chinese developments, a fourth my own journey. These can be viewed separately or added together in combination to create different maps. Any number of layers and any level of detail can be added although the end use must be taken into consideration – how will the user be able to manipulate them or, if they are incorporated into a print map, will the detail be visible within the scale of the final printed version? Within each region or country, it is possible to add both geographical and thematic elements. For instance, on the map of Egypt (see next page)

[119] Jasmine Desclaux-Salachas, *The Art of Cartographics* (London: Goodman, 2017).

we show the topographical landmarks such as the line of the Nile Valley, canals and the Aswan High Dam alongside the railways, major cities, roads and rivers.

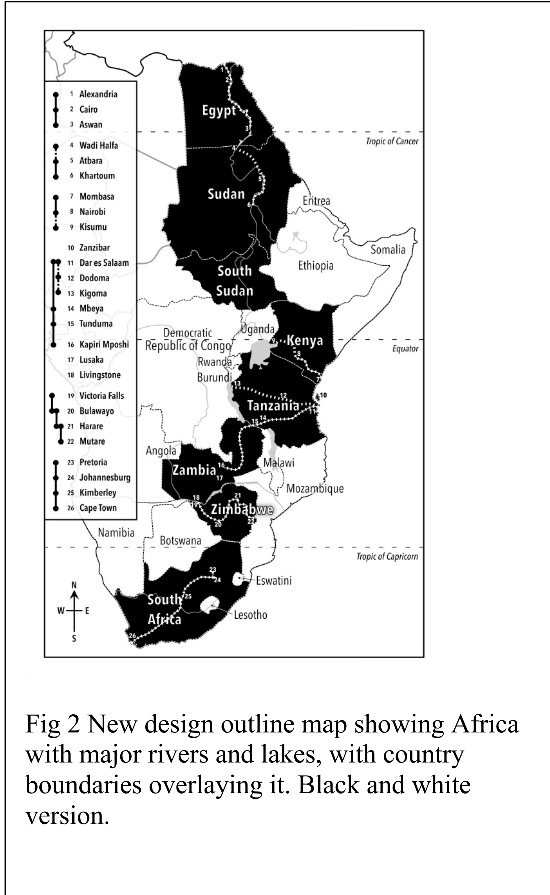

Fig 2 New design outline map showing Africa with major rivers and lakes, with country boundaries overlaying it. Black and white version.

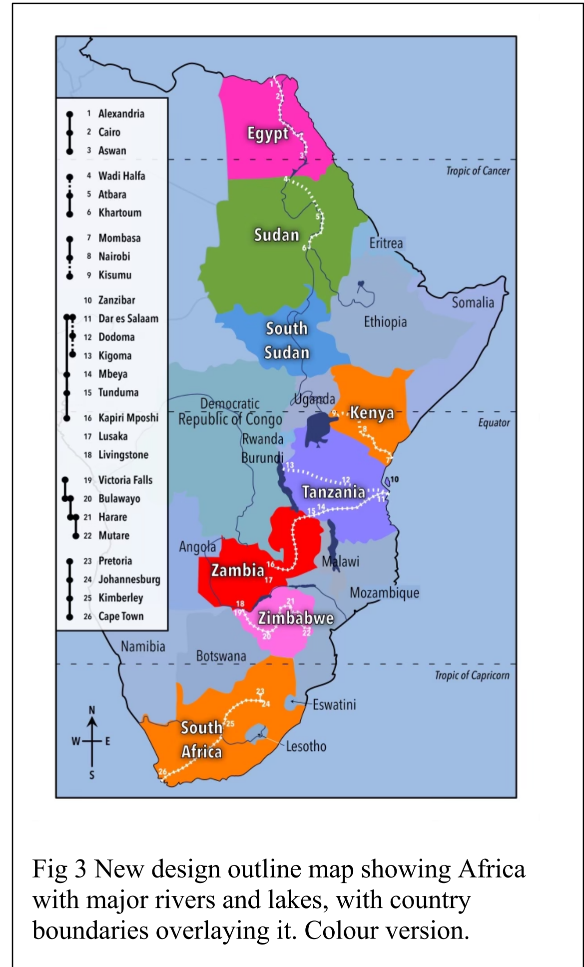

Fig 3 New design outline map showing Africa with major rivers and lakes, with country boundaries overlaying it. Colour version.

Fig 4 Country map of Egypt © Steph Driver

The layers can be superimposed to create printable versions of both continental and country maps for use within the book. This has allowed me to place maps at the start of each new country in the Creative Work, showing readers the routes of individual railway lines, to show how the route of the original line differs from the line as it exists today – or is planned in its next incarnation.

In addition to the print maps, we are planning to create an electronic version, to be housed on my *Steel Safari* blog, which is already in existence, set up for the original trip in 2010. With mapping in both print and electronic editions of the book controlled by the author/publisher and limited in scope, this offers considerably more opportunity for geographical exploration of the text, with the reader firmly in control. I talk further about how the interactive map will be used below, in Section 4.3.

4.2 Worth a Thousand Words? – The Art of Illustration

Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* is generally regarded as the world's first illustrated travel book. A guide for pilgrims to the Holy Land, it ran to twelve editions between 1486 and 1522 along with various text-only and foreign-language editions. The illustrations, by Erhard Reuwich of Utrecht, show many of the world's most important cities from Venice to Cairo along with woodcuts of the Saracens and other peoples met along the way. Its visual immediacy brought a thrilling new dimension to travel writing as the known world in all its astonishing variety was brought home, through the printed page, to the armchair traveller. It was, by any standards, a medieval bestseller.[120] Nevertheless the exorbitant cost of printing heavily restricted the use of images for centuries.

Then, in 1798, Bavarian playwright, Alois Senefelder, invented lithography. He discovered that by drawing on a limestone slab with a greasy crayon that repelled ink, a perfect likeness of his original work could be reproduced exactly again and again. During a lifetime of experimentation, he went on to realise that by using special paper and ink, he could transfer a much more refined image to the stone and was able to layer his inks, thereby creating exquisitely detailed coloured images.[121] His invention opened the door to the mass production of illustrated books and, eventually, to photolithography. The new techniques arrived as colonial expansion across the globe ushered in images of exotic new worlds, brought back from their travels by explorers and soldiers, missionaries and traders.

Travel writing and illustration were linked from the very beginning. Expeditions travelled with artists – and in time, photographers – on their crews. Conrad Martens boarded *HMS Beagle* in 1833, creating a magnificently atmospheric series of watercolours; his sketchbooks have now been digitised

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[120] Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam*: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/338300 (1486, web accessed 27/03/2017).
[121] "The History of Lithography", University of Houston: https://web.tech.uh.edu/digitalmedia/materials/3350/History_of_Litho.pdf (accessed 23/09/18).

and are available online.[122] Geographer and explorer, Alexander von Humboldt, visited Louis Daguerre at his studio in 1838, as the official geographer of the *Académie des Sciences*, to assess his new invention (the earliest commonly available photographic process) before it was announced to the world. Only weeks after its grand unveiling, in November 1839, two separate travellers, Joly de Lotbinière and Frederic Goupil-Fesquet, had already set up their tripods in front of the Sphinx. Lotbinière's photographs were published in some of the world's earliest photographic travel books.[123] Sometime later, 1910–13, Scott's ill-fated expedition to the Antarctic took a photographer, Herbert Ponting, while his chief scientific officer, Dr Edward Wilson, doubled as a talented watercolourist.[124]

Illustration was expensive. In *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts*, Leila Koivunen estimates that it could be as much as a third of the total cost of publication and quotes the following example: "Josiah Whymper (1813-1903), for instance, was paid £258 for producing thirty-five wood engravings for Livingstone's *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi* (1865). This means the average cost per picture was over seven pounds."[125] The equivalent value today would be over £22,000 in total.[126] Nevertheless it was deemed worth it because the pictures were considered by both the publishers and the authors to have considerable selling power. Koivunen also quotes MD Allen's short biography of Henry Morton Stanley in which he says "illustrations… of exotic people and places, of native tools and artifacts such as the king's 'great pipe', certainly helped make Stanley's books best-sellers."[127]

Over the years since, the partnership of text and illustration in travel books has remained strong but it has inevitably changed with technology and fashion. The arrival

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[122] "Hms Beagle Sketchbooks Added to Cambridge Digital Library." *Press Release*: https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/hms-beagle-sketchbooks-added-to-cambridge-digital-library (05/01/2015; accessed 23/09/2018).
[123] John Hannavy, ed., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
[124] Scott Polar Research Institute, "Exhibition Reunites Artworks From Captain Scott's Final Expedition – a Century on." *Press Release*: https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/exhibition-reunites-artworks-from-captain-scotts-final-expedition-a-century-on (01/08/2016; accessed 21/09/2018).
[125] Leila Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (London: Routledge, 2008), 112.
[126] https://www.moneysorter.co.uk/calculator_inflation2.html.
[127] Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa*, 113, quoting MD Allen, "Henry Morton Stanley", *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol: 189 American Travel Writers, 1850-1915*, ed. Donald Ross and James S. Schramer (Detroit: Gale Research, 1998).

of the paperback and colour photography also saw the arrival of two-tiered publication – an original hardback, often more highly illustrated and using colour, to be followed six months to a year later by the paperback, which usually made do with black and white line drawings and one or two insert sets of photos, printed on a separate sheet. The travel book market separated into distinct sections, cheaper black and white editions (hardback and paperback) and glossy full-colour productions, led by their illustrations, including guidebooks and photographic coffee table books. These remained hugely expensive to produce; the cost of creating a new 300–400pp full colour guidebook for a series such as Dorling Kindersley or Insight Guides could run to several hundred thousand pounds and required international co-edition funding. It was only in the late 1990s that computer technology drove down the cost of printing, just in time for the arrival of the internet and digital technology to change travel publishing forever.

These days, the overwhelming availability of visual material produced by digital cameras, video and the internet has swamped illustrated print publishing in travel. Travel was one of the earliest adopters of digital technology and illustration has moved primarily online, to the realm of e-publishing, mixed media galleries and tablet technology. Illustrated guides do continue to be produced, but many series have gone out of publication and most titles are simply revisions of existing editions; few new books are being created. High quality photographic books are still being produced in limited print runs, often as art books, while the production of art books has become more inventive as people experiment with new forms of literature, resulting in complete new sub-genres such as the graphic travelogue, pioneered by Guy Delisle with works such as *Chroniques de Jérusalem* and *Shenzhen: A Travelogue from China.*[128]

In the twenty-first century, the combination of austerity and technology has turned the wheel and redivided the mass of information, communication and creativity. Long-form narrative is becoming its own distinct sub-genre

[128] Guy Delisle, *Chroniques De Jérusalem* (Paris: Hachette, 2011); Guy Delisle, *Shenzhen: A Travelogue from China* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019).

with the idea of reading for pleasure coming back into its own, but as part of a greater patchwork. The long-form narrative travel book is once again being regarded as something to be read, not viewed. Most travel narratives now confine themselves to cover photos and a few explanatory maps. In fact, at the time of writing, it was extremely difficult to find any illustrated narrative travel books although they do still exist in varying forms.

William Dalrymple's *City of Djinns*, published in 1993, uses pictorial design features throughout the text, such as the small elephant, already mentioned, used to break text and the same small black and white icon of a sun god within each chapter heading. There are also occasional simple black and white line drawings by artist, Olivia Fraser, scattered through the text. Claire Scobie's *Last Seen in Lhasa* alternates small black and white sketch icons of the red lily she set out to find and the Tibetan temple dog in her chapter headings; other than that, there are no illustrations. The original edition of Robyn Davidson's, *Tracks*, had no illustrations, although her relationship with *National Geographic* photographer, Rick Smolan, became a major riff running through the book. Published separately in the magazine, Smolan's photographs formed a key part of the epitext but remained outside the publication itself. The two creative endeavours only came together with the fortieth anniversary electronic edition, with a set of Smolan's plates published at the back of the book.[129] It is a similar story with Robert Macfarlane's *Silt*, for which he travelled with photographer, David Quentin; photos are used only in a special e-book edition, along with an afterword by the photographer.[130]

Possibly the truest representation of the classic form is Rachel Lichtenstein's *Estuary*, which uses black and white photos scattered throughout the text, some her own, some belonging to photographers, James Price and Simon Fowler, who accompanied many of her explorations, some sourced from archives. The photographs are generally simple, giving them a graphic, almost geometric quality which harmonises with the text. It is a style of illustration also seen earlier in WG Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* (1995) in which the black and white photos are simply dropped into the text.

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[129] Robyn Davidson, *Tracks* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).
[130] Robert Macfarlane, *Silt* (London: Penguin, Kindle ed., 2013).

Crossing the Congo – Over Land and Water in a Hard Place takes the concept of the illustrated narrative book far further, alternating text with black and white and colour photography and colour maps; unusually, it gives equal cover billing to the writer, Mike Martin, researcher and medic Chloe Baker, and photographer Charlie Hatch-Barnwell, who made the expedition together.[131] Whilst admirable in its aims, the book has a somewhat old-fashioned air, possibly because so many similar expeditionary books crossed my desk in the 1980s but also due to the format which does the photography no favours. The size, paper and print quality are simply not good enough to compete with the high gloss of magazines and coffee table books and the luminosity of online viewing; the world has moved on and this hybrid has run its course.

There have also been a number of beautifully illustrated thematic books which nibble at the subject of travel rather than engaging with destination and journey, such as *The Un-Discovered Islands: An Archipelago of Myths and Mysteries, Phantoms and Fakes* by Malachy Tallack, which was designed specifically as an illustrated manuscript, with magnificent paintings by Katie Scott, standing out from the crowd for its rarity value. The *Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands*, edited by Huw Lewis-Jones, is only one of a clutch of beautiful books to engage with the concept of the atlas while world food and wildlife continue to attract readers, both in illustrative and photographic forms.

I took a camera with me on my journeys and now have an extensive archive of publishable quality photos directly related to this project. As I was already juggling a laptop, camera and sound recorder (I also came home with around 30 hours of sound recordings), I made a conscious decision not to shoot video; this would have proved too complex to manage technically. While many historic photos and illustrations are available online and are now out of copyright, I have also taken careful notes of contacts that will give me access to archive photography and mapping held in railway museums and archives in

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[131] Mike Martin, Chloe Baker, and Charlie Hatch-Barnwell, *Crossing the Congo: Over Land and Water in a Hard Place* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2016).

all the various countries I visited, broadening my options for potential source material, should I wish to do a fully illustrated version of the book at some point in the future.

At the very least, the published version of *Steel Safari* will require a cover design and possibly an author photo. I have deliberately chosen not to engage with detailed discussion of cover design within this thesis and do not propose to do anything about its creation myself, other than to comment on any potential designs proffered by my eventual publisher. The creation of cover art is a highly skilled visual craft for which I have no aptitude and I hope that I am sufficiently professional to know when I need to bring in others with greater expertise than my own. In terms of author photos, I am fortunate in that I know many professional photographers.

Beyond this, my initial intention was not to illustrate the book but to let the words speak for themselves. Having seen the effectiveness of the use of the black and white illustration within *Estuary* and *City of Djinns*, and during my work with Dr Driver on the mapping, my views shifted and while no definitive solution is offered for the final published work, a decision which must be taken in conjunction with the publisher, the creative work in this thesis is presented with limited black and white artwork and photography. As with the use of train icons and sidebars and the use of interstices, these help break up the text and add variety to the reading experience.

The basis for both has been my own photographs and archival images, photographic and illustrative. With my own photographs, I have converted the originals to black and white with a slightly warmer tone superimposed to ensure that the harder-edged modern photography blends with the older, often slightly faded images.

Three of my photographs were selected, each representing one of the regions into which the book is divided, and from these, Dr Driver has created computer-generated black-and-white drawings which will sit at the start of each Part. The first is of me boarding the train in Alexandria at the start of the journey; the second of Rachael, my travelling companion on the Tazara railway; the third of the Victoria Falls to Bulawayo train (shown below).

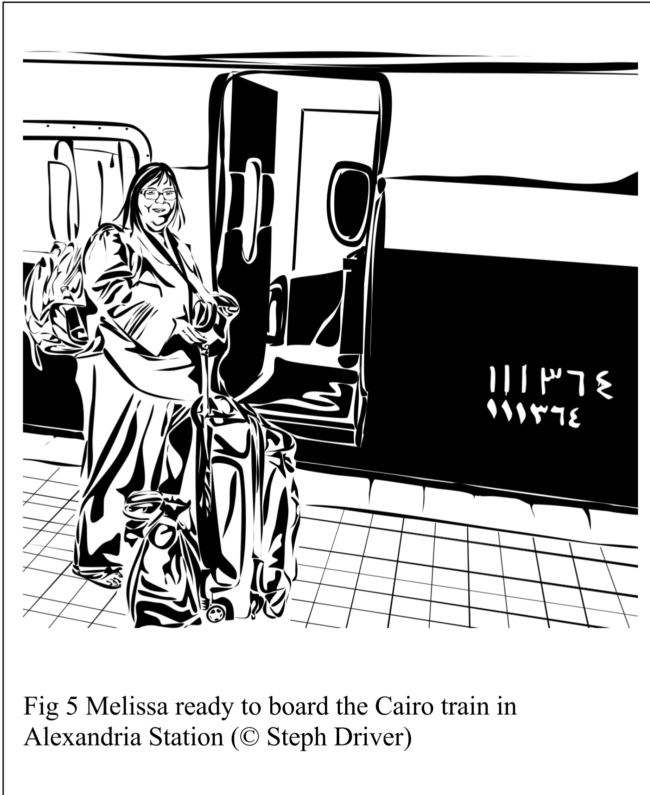

Fig 5 Melissa ready to board the Cairo train in Alexandria Station (© Steph Driver)

Fig 6 Melissa ready to board the train in Alexandria Station.

Fig 7 Racheal, my cabin mate on the Tazara Railway © Melissa Shales

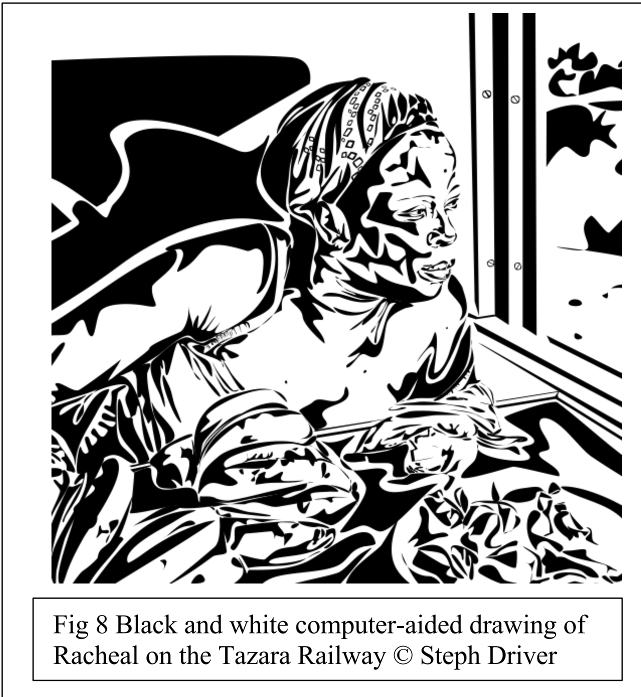

Fig 8 Black and white computer-aided drawing of Racheal on the Tazara Railway © Steph Driver

Fig 9 Black and white computer-aided drawing of Victoria Falls to Bulawayo train © Steph Driver

Fig 10 Original photograph of Victoria Falls to Bulawayo train © Melissa Shales

Dr Driver has redrawn these photographs using the same techniques she employed with the maps. Where the maps had soft geographical curves contrasting with the straight lines of the human-defined political borders, these pictures contrast the curves and shadows of the natural world (such as people) with the straight lines of the human-engineered structures (such as trains). As stated earlier, however, imagery, whether illustration or photography, creates a far stronger relationship with travel online. It offers great potential for linking the relatively sparse illustration of a long-form narrative text with its more lush multimedia epitext. It should come as no surprise these days that the use of blogs and websites, social media, the lectures and talks, the radio and TV appearances, all showing dazzling pictures of the intrepid author in action, can still make or break sales as surely as Livingstone's woodcuts. In my final section, I talk in more detail about the integrated planning of the epitext, both creatively and from a marketing perspective.

4.3 From Twitter to Talks – Constructing the Epitext

As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, particularly within Section 3, the relationship between the text, paratext and epitext has become increasingly blurred

since the arrival of the digital book and the internet as readers are offered the ability to move freely between them at the touch of a finger or a voice command. In Section 3.1, I discussed the current development of smart paper and its potential for travel publishing; in Sections 3.1, 2.5 and 3.6, I talked about the existing use of electronic footnotes and referencing within e-publishing and the desire amongst some publishers to move sections such as the acknowledgements and bibliography away from the main text to a related and hotlinked website.

There is also far wider creative potential available in the relationship between the text and epitext however. In Section 3.3, I wrote about Charles Dickens' serialisation of his books for the penny weeklies, part of the great expansion of popular fiction in the mid-nineteenth century. Using multi-media technology, it is possible to create hugely imaginative non-fiction projects online, both as stand-alone projects and linked to printed works. Although not travel in its usual context, the *World of Dante* website is an extraordinary achievement headed by a team of academics from the University of Virginia, which uses visuals, sound and words to explore both Dante's visionary journey through hell, purgatory and heaven, and the many and various works of art, music and literature which it has inspired across the centuries.[132] It offers options simply unavailable on the printed page such as the ability to hear the strength of the *terza rima* rhyme scheme developed by Dante and used throughout the poem. Its detailed timeline interlinks Dante's own life with historic events and offers pop-up boxes for further information. It even offers a search function of the entire text with a reference database of characters, creatures and deities. It has been the work of years with contributions by many but it is an aspirational template showing what is possible with a complex topic. On a more travel-related topic, Parks Canada have an excellent multi-media website detailing the relatively recent rediscovery and ongoing investigations surrounding the Franklin Expedition.[133] This is only one example of many other similar projects linked to historic and educational

[132] World of Dante, http://www.worldofdante.org/inferno1.html (accessed 18/09/2018).
[133] The Franklin Expedition, https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/franklin/mission2017 (accessed 24/09/2018).

projects across the globe that have been created very successfully in recent years, notably to celebrate the end of World War 1 and the Suffrage Movement in 2018. The British Library's version, linked around a timeline of the Suffrage Movement, doesn't use audio or film, but does interweave the history of the movement, along with biographies and a wealth of other information, using materials held within the library as the focal points.[134]

In Section 4.1, I talked about the creation of dual-purpose mapping for *Steel Safari*, adaptable for use both within the book and on the blog. While the print version will be static, online we will be able to offer the reader/viewer the opportunity, via electronic toggles, to control the map for themselves, to build and remove layers and gain far greater visual understanding of how the railways and the various elements of the book link together. For instance, reader/viewers will be able to overlay and compare the old and new railway networks, see how each slotted into the major empires along the routes or browse more detailed route maps by country.

Within the Section 3.5 on chronology, I also talked briefly about the visual potential of timelines. It has not been possible before submission, but at some point, we may be able to create a simplified digital version of the chronology visually within the layers of the maps. For instance, on the South African map we can pinpoint those key historic moments, in both time and place, showing how close Churchill, Kitchener and Gandhi were in South Africa during the Boer War in 1899 (as discussed in Section 3.2). In the longer term, Dr Driver and I are talking about the potential for also using both the map and the text as a base for a much more detailed graphic, interactive, chronological representation of the project which would, again, run online. This would not be a digital version of the book text but a multi-media reimagining using small sections of the original book text and much of the same research, designed to work in tandem with the book.

In this full-blown version, we would be able to use source original film footage, use my own and other audio and photography, and build in the possibility for interactivity – for instance, allowing existing and former railway workers to add their own reminiscences via text and vlog, students and school children to write creatively,

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[134] The Suffrage Movement https://www.bl.uk/votes-for-women/articles/womens-suffrage-timeline (accessed 24/09/2018).

add art and poetry, linking the people of the railways in the various countries through which they travel. To create this however would take significant time and resources, so would need a separate source of post-doctoral funding.

Meantime, the epitext also plays a crucial role in the marketing of the book. According to an International Publishers Association report published in 2020, the UK alone published 188,000 new and revised books in the trade and education sectors in 2018 (the latest year for which there are statistics).[135] This vast number, although considerably down on previous years, equates to around 21.46 every hour and equivalent to roughly 2806 books per million inhabitants. The average Briton reads between one and five books a year. It is no wonder that only a handful of titles go on to become significant sellers. However good the manuscript, the author has to stand out from the crowd, to be noticed by agents and publishers and, above all, by the buying public. They have to prove themselves saleable. Becoming an author is rarely a way to ensure financial success and failure is virtually guaranteed unless the epitext is planned along with the text itself.

While it is impossible to preplan every stage of a future process, the canny would-be author will start building contacts and relevant social media presence from first concept, carefully constructing not only a prospective readership but a willing sales force who will help pass on the all-important online reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations, creating opportunities for signings and talks. Bestselling travel writer, Charlie Connelly, works hard on his website and blog, www.charlieconnelly.com, and the associated social media feeds such as Twitter and Facebook feeds and his recent podcast, *Coastal Stories*, to ensure that the content is fresh, funny and entertaining, keeping his followers engaged, ensuring bookings for readings and talks and a ready market for the next book.[136]

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[135] International Publishers Association Report, https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_1064_2019.pdf (accessed 25/01/2021).
[136] Coastal Stories, https://audioboom.com/channels/5013138 (accessed 25/01/2021).

From my point of view, much of this work is thankfully already in train. As a working travel writer, I have already built a broad-based network of contacts before embarking on this current project. This includes a well-established business-related social media structure consisting primarily of Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook, together with blogs and a biographical website. Alongside this, membership of various key networking organisations such as the British Guild of Travel Writers and the Society of Authors and Fellowships of the Royal Geographical Society and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, along with various other journalistic and academic groups online, can be called upon when required. Because the topic of my book involves Africa, trains and, in part, my childhood home country of Zimbabwe, further networks of train lovers, Africans and African expats and even old school friends become highly relevant.

When travelling for *Steel Safari*, I was conscious that I was not only researching for the book but needed to produce material to support a broad range of supporting journalism. This was partly for the longer-term aims of the book and partly to satisfy the shorter-term goals of financial need and publicity for the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. Before leaving, I set up a blog, www.steel-safari.co.uk, which I wrote up occasionally along with my Twitter feed. The photos and sound recordings I brought home have already been used in various ways, for travel articles, online articles, blogs and radio. I will continue to produce these up to and beyond publication, keeping the project alive. Initially however, my concentration has had to remain on the creation of the text itself. There comes a time when it is no longer possible to continue fiddling with the bread and you need to concentrate on the jam in the sandwich.

Section 5 – Conclusion

It is January 2021, nearly twelve years since I first conceived the idea for *Steel Safari*, the book which forms part of this PhD. I am shielding; have just been out for my permitted daily walk with the dogs; and I am finally sitting down to write the conclusion of my critical study. It has taken an absurdly long time for it to come to fruition and life has changed dramatically in the process, not just for me but for humanity. During the last year, the Coronavirus pandemic has swept stealthily into our lives. Work stopped abruptly and instead of travelling, colleagues spend their days in front of Netflix, home-schooling and Zoom, wondering when and if borders will reopen, vaccines will be delivered and the turmoil of Donald Trump, the referendum and Brexit will subside. Travel writing, like the rest of the travel industry, has been decimated by politics and pandemics. Attempting to recreate my travels at the present moment would be virtually unthinkable.

When I began to plan my trip across Africa, my route led through a series of countries ruled by some of the world's most notorious dictators – Egypt's General Mubarak; Sudan's Brigadier-General Omar al-Bashir, wanted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for war crimes and genocide; and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe. All three have since been overthrown. Mubarak and Mugabe are dead while Bashir's trial by the ICC began and was adjourned in 2020. Shortly after my trips came the upheaval of the Arab Spring, followed soon after by Sudan splitting in two. None of this unfortunately has led to a more stable environment along the route, even if the effects of the pandemic are not taken into consideration. Even Sudan's token efforts towards transitioning into a more peaceful democracy seem to be floundering. As it became increasingly obvious that I would not be able to turn the book around and produce a finished manuscript within a couple of years of getting home, these swirling events began to impinge on my writing process, complicating an already tangled chronology still further. My trip, far from being the end point of the timeline initially envisaged, became a fulcrum between two very different grand projects. I realised that it was necessary to project further ahead to include something of the effect of the new Chinese

developments on the continent. I also needed to include an extended continually shifting present – the time actually spent writing the book. The year of travel in 2010 became an anchor, the 12:00 on the clock, forever both in and out of time.

I wanted the creative text to be entertaining, to read like a story but still have authority, without the stolid gravitas of formal history books. My aim, throughout, was not to tell a comprehensive history of the rail route but to build up an overall understanding of the many different aspects that went to make up its enormous impact. The writing became an exercise in balance and selection. The process of threading the narrative together, structuring the text to offer light and shade and finding the correct register of tone and vocabulary, was key. Alongside interweaving my own journey and the historical segments, I chose therefore to concentrate more closely on the trams and the global politics of the early railways in Egypt, the slave trade and the war in Sudan and the growth of tourism in Kenya. One early reader of the draft manuscript read the short segment on the Hotel Windsor in the Cairo chapter and commented that he would like to know more about Egypt during World War II. There was, of course, plenty I could have written. However, the railways were really not as crucial to the war effort there as they were elsewhere and I knew that there would be more on the trains at war in later chapters such as those on Sudan, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It was simply more important to talk about the early European colonial expansion and the role of the global superpowers, to set the framework for the industrialisation of Africa. It was for the same reason that I found myself having to stretch back to the arrival of Napoleon, long before the invention of the railway, to set the context of the colonial rivalry between France and the UK which became such a crucial factor in what was to follow.

The Creative Work was conceived in part as a way of testing my mettle as a writer, to see how I would survive outside the framework of the formulaic. I knew that it would stretch me but had no inkling at the start quite how difficult or rewarding it would be. The project became a process of constant editing, distilling and refining. The overarching theme never altered but while both the Critical Study and the Creative Work began as all-encompassing topics, the endless task of the last six years has been one of pruning and cutting. Unbounded by the parameters of an imposed publisher's format, I had to learn to discipline myself about when to stop. The rigours of guidebook writing, which are governed by tight word counts, helped me with rough self-imposed maximums; no country to have more than three chapters, no chapter to

be over about 8,000 words. I knew that unless I kept to that type of limit, I would spend the rest of my life writing an unpublishable tome of several thousand pages, worthy of James Michener.

As mentioned in the Introduction to this Critical Study, I had done considerable research on most of the countries along the route before conceiving the concept for *Steel Safari*. Yet even this paled into insignificance beside the forensic examination required for a project of this breadth and depth. Although the text is guided throughout by the railways, it is essential to have a far broader understanding of social, political and historical realities of each country over a span of a couple of hundred years. The birth and growth of the railway was so fundamentally bound into the social fabric and landscape that it was impossible to understand the railway's history and social impact without its broader context. This too had to be threaded through the narrative. The more research I did, inevitably the more there was to do. Adding to my dilemma was the fact that academics in places such as Egypt, Kenya, China and South Africa have more recently started researching the history of their own countries, using resources in languages other than English. Papers and books are gradually being published more widely but I became aware of a great deal more information available in Arabic, Chinese, Swahili and even German that was inaccessible to me because of time, finance and my lack of linguistic ability. I was fortunate to have some help from colleagues with translation of a few key texts but the archival research could easily have become a lifetime's study.

As my research progressed, I moved beyond the obvious to discover ever deeper and more subtle links such as the rise of poetry in northern Sudan, inspired by the local railway magazine; the Chinese teaching Tanzanian workers Mandarin railway work songs; the creation of a railway mission in South Africa; and above all, the immensely powerful familial and political networks created by the multi-generational railway family across the entire continent. It has created a bond reminiscent only of the military and carried down to younger generations even if they no longer live in Africa or have anything to do with the railways themselves. Being a railway child makes them a member of the clan. Conversely, in an era of rapid expansion which lasted little more than a single lifetime, the same handful of people kept on cropping

up across the length and breadth of Africa, the powerbrokers and politicians, plutocrats, generals and engineers who oversaw this rapid expansion. It became an eye-opening exercise in the power of the few. Only by joining the dots across borders and centuries have I been able to explore the overwhelming effect both the people and their machines have wrought – and continue to impose – on the continent. Perhaps most fascinating of all was the chance that led me to create this book just at the moment when the Chinese chose to move into Africa in their thousands, creating the largest recreation of railway building since the nineteenth century. There are, without doubt, a new set of powerbrokers and politicians, plutocrats, generals and engineers, most of them sadly nameless to me at present, who are responsible for masterminding this new network and I can only hope that someone is documenting their work, their sagas and will one day write their story.

In addition to the Creative Work, I had to write the Critical Study, which was initially introduced to me by my supervisor, in one of our very earliest discussions, as a 'reflection' on my life as a travel writer. My first attempts came back with a gently polite suggestion that they should not be 'that reflective' as I struggled to find my academic voice. I looked back, in writing this, to my first proposed contents page of headers. As now, it had five sections, but it had 44 sub-sections and effectively covered absolutely every aspect of travel writing ever thought of. Each topic could in itself effectively have been at least one full PhD. The breakthrough eventually came, about halfway through the process, when I gathered up the courage to ask if I could throw away about 15,000 hard-fought but not very good words, tear up my plan and narrow down the argument within my critical study to what had originally been only one part of one section. My board thankfully agreed (or agreed thankfully) and I finally felt as if I had clear direction. My focus would, from now on, remain solely on the form and structure of the text, the paratext and epitext surrounding it. Even that has proved to have contained considerably more material than could fit within the word count permitted for this Critical Study.

I came from a relatively rare position, as a professional practitioner, both writer and editor, and an academic student of travel writing. As a result of my long working career, for me the form and function of a book, the interaction of author, reader and subject are as intertwined as a sculptor and their block of marble; they need to grow together organically. Writing about paratext came more easily to me, therefore. It

seemed obvious that they would form part of the creative process from the start. I found it increasingly strange that so few of my colleagues thought about the scaffolding of their text until relatively near the end of their project or that very little had been written on the topic, particularly within travel writing. If ever a genre was designed for paratextual critique, travel is surely an obvious candidate with so many of the broader aspects of the discipline driven by formula and the text moulded into the spaces left by illustrations and cartography. In seeking to understand how my own creative process, forged by constructing formulaic, highly illustrated guidebooks, differed from that of my colleagues and peers, I had found my way to a piece of original academic research which potentially links together with various commercial and literary strands of travel writing.

Rather than using tried and tested books on travel writing, I chose to concentrate my theoretical texts more heavily around the works of French theorists, Gérard Genette and Roland Barthes, who were pioneers in the fields of paratext and reader response respectively, applying their work to travel writing for the first time. I deliberately included travel writers such as Joanna Kavenna and Claire Scobie for comparison not only for the quality of their writing but because they are part of a rare breed, post-war living female travel writers – my peer group. As I wound my way through the sections and sub-sections on text, paratext and epitext, analysing the work of a wide variety of writers, discussing the theoretical framework constructed around the different building materials from chapter headings to footnotes, I looked not only at the experience from the point of view of the author but that of the editor, publisher and reader. Moreover, I discussed in some detail the differences between print and digital publishing and the potential for greater interactivity that continues to grow with every new technological advance. At each stage, I used both the theoretical and the work of others as a comparative springboard back to my own creative decision-making, effectively describing the working process of a travel writer in formulating the structure of their book. This is, of necessity, unique to me and my working methods; each author will choose their own path. There is a great deal more for others to say in the future should they wish to take the theoretical discussion further.

Travel, in its various different guises, counts for a huge amount of publishing yet it has, to date, lacked experimentation in its approaches to imaginative crossover projects. Given its romantic nature, it is surprising that the mass market has mainly relied instead (very successfully on the whole) on the lure of dream-inducing photography and clichéd adjectives. The lengthy Covid lockdown, which is currently shredding the economy of the travel industry, will hold back the possibility of greater imagination of approach for the moment. Yet, surprisingly, narrative travel literature is thriving as grounded travellers, desperate for vicarious experience, return to the printed page and travels of the mind. There are the first green shoots appearing of a move back towards a broader range of topics, beyond the nature writing that has dominated the last two decades. The Black Lives Matter movement has led to a series of interesting and at times hard-hitting debates and publishers are looking for emerging writers from global backgrounds with fresh perspectives. All are agreed that the world will never be the same again. Travel writers, if they are to re-emerge, blinking into the sunlight, will have to adapt to a very different world. Hopefully it will be a world of dialogue and discussion between all and we can look forward to reading books by Arab, African and Chinese travel writers backpacking round Europe, even if we have to read them in translation.

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