

Travel and Unsettlement: Freud on Vacation

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The task of constituting a formalistic approach to travel writing was largely abandoned in the early 1980s; in this chapter I argue that the project might yet illuminate some discursive operations of the travel text. Perhaps I am imagining, or simplistically constructing, unrealised past potentialities. Nevertheless, I want to reappraise the travel text as a site of distress and unravelling that is neither necessarily nor adequately explained by post-colonialisms. In reconsidering travel formally, I also examine anthropological traces and relate them to an unsettled negotiation of subjectivity; an unravelling of value and sense. This approach, I contend, is no less totalising than much post-colonial work, which in any case seems to read travel either as a version of Freud's 'instinct of destruction' – an aggressive agency that destroys the ecology of otherness – or an eroticisation of the foreign, desire without normal limits, which terminates in rape and exploitation on personal and cultural scales.

Ultimately, what I suggest is that a formalist approach to travel is not at all inconsistent with the political objectives of post-colonial readings. In discussing the historical divergence of formal and post-colonial perspectives on travel, from around 1978, and by examining how both new historicist and post-colonial criticisms retain a concern with formalist operations, I want to redirect attention back to the neurotic unknowingness of the travelling euro-subject in a broadly political fashion.

I argue that the formal basis of the travel genre is in the structure of rites of passage, originally schematised by Arnold van Gennep. In travel, the *territorial* passage from one zone to another, the border crossing, represents a critical moment for the identity of the mobile subject. The territorial passage is accompanied by – or even metaphoric of – another movement; the shift from 'seeing with one's own eyes' to discerning the meaning of what is seen. The travel text always supplements the insufficient act of 'witnessing' with epistemological reflection; a process which exposes fundamental morbidities in the ideologies of 'movement' and 'settlement'.

In the end, this is a form of unresolved and unsatisfactory ascesis, whereby the attempt to revise and supplant a pre-existent culture with the travelling-eye-view is not merely a partial but a complete evacuation of the self – an emptying of subjectivity, recognising that the traveller's action of wavering between worlds is potentially annihilating. The 'art of travel' is not, straightforwardly, about the inscription of power over otherness; rather, it is underscored by an anxious sense that to travel is to 'be nowhere'.

The critical perspectives on travel literature that post-colonial readings have produced, the cultural and political specificities which (too often superficially) characterise studies of travel and empire, rely on a generally unarticulated formalism. As a matter of fact, the strategies in new historicist and post-colonial critiques of travel writing can be read in formalist terms, which in turn stress the cultural operations of travel in the construction of a universalised knowledge. At the risk of further universalising the travel genre, and of clinging to an inhibitive retro-methodology, it is worth briefly noting the institutional contest, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, which prepared for and put in place the markers of post-colonial readings and eclipsed (or absorbed) the nascent, formalist approach to travel.

Today, as we have seen in the Introduction, it is virtually impossible to consider travel writing outside the frame of post-colonialism. In many cases now, travel is regarded as a sub-story of the grand narrative of imperialism; in others, travel is the key operation, in language and fact, that makes the colonial adventure possible. This somewhat monocular view, which itself seeks to explain the one-eyedness of eurocentric representations, is underscored by what I would call an environmental concern for the humanist mindscape – 'look how we have blighted worlds of otherness'. (And in so doing, parenthetically observe how we have polluted our own intellectual streams of consciousness.)

Historically, the revival of critical interest in travel writing was coincident with the rise of post-colonial theory. Both, in their own different ways, were directed at the recuperation of marginal books which were either stylistically or culturally 'left out' of canons. Early texts which catalysed the study of the travel book and the related narratives of imperialism began to attract attention in the mid-1970s: there was Michel Butor's widely cited article 'Travel and Writing' in *Mosaic* (1974), and Brian Street's *The Savage in Literature* (1975). At a more important moment of converging interests – and anticipating future critical divergences – Edward Said's hugely influential *Orientalism* appeared in the same year, 1978, as Charles L. Batten's *Pleasurable Instruction* (a much-used analysis of the formal properties of the travel genre) and Nelson Graburn's suggestive article 'Tourism: The Sacred Journey'. Mary Louise Pratt also tells us

that the impetus for her important work on travel and transculturation began in 1978, in a Stanford course co-taught with Rina Berunayor (Pratt 1992: xi).

The paperback reissue of out-of-copyright travel classics, the first-time journeys of the Theroux and Chatwins, the tentative steps towards a poetics of travel and the foundations of post-colonial criticism were happening simultaneously. The development of these intersecting interests was unsurprising. Travel writing is one of the main archives for investigating colonising processes, providing rich source material on the formations of western subjectivities out of the encounter with imagined others. The travel book can also expose transactions of cultural and political power; a power supposedly always purchased at the expense of those imagined others who constitute the zone called 'elsewhere'.

As fresh readings of the imperialist bookshelf offered themselves for curricularisation, renewed attention was also paid to travel – in Paul Fussell's *Abroad* (1980), Philip Dodd's *The Art of Travel* (1982), Percy G. Adams's *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (1983) and Bill Buford's first travel special-number of *Granta* (1984). In 1984, as Buford penned an editorial celebrating the cult of movement and mythicising the pathologically mobile Bruce Chatwin, the University of Essex hosted a landmark conference that recast the paradigm for reading travel and contact. Under the rubric 'Europe and Its Others', the University of Essex conference in Colchester was removed by a mere forty miles from Buford's Cambridge base. It was a striking demonstration of the proximity of, and distance between, post-colonial theory and the simplistic generic appreciation of travel writing's cultural freedoms.

Travel writing was set to be claimed by either formalism or post-colonialism, and the claims of the post-colonial announced an institutional gravity that could never be matched by trivially 'literary' considerations. After all, the effort to dismantle the ideological apparatuses of imperialism is grander and more challenging than a critique of localised issues; to understand the perverse psychology of orientalising on a big scale is more compelling than knowing why a seasoned traveller-snob like Evelyn Waugh hated tourists. 'The word "tourist" seems naturally to suggest haste and compulsion', Waugh wrote in *Labels*, 'one sheds not wholly derisive tears for these poor scraps of humanity thus trapped and mangled in the machinery of uplift' (Waugh 1930: 44–5). As a rhetorical gesture, this is a formulaic, much-repeated prejudice in the travel genre – a formal demarcation of the identity of the genuine, heroic traveller from the tripper bound by a fixed itinerary. Nevertheless, it takes little critical extension to see in this rhetorical performance an immediate political point: a patrician revulsion at the clamorous order of mass modernity, and a class neurosis

over shifting, mobile lines of subjectivity. This is a crisis precipitated by travel and contact within the western subject, whose low others are not always defined in colonial terms.

Where generic readings of travel could be characterised as introspectively 'academic' or narrowly author-based, post-colonialisms signalled a mode of relevance to worldly affairs; a promise for that loose baggy monster 'The Humanities' to reinvent itself, and to identify its social utility under the institutional pressures of economic rationalism. Mary Louise Pratt polemicalised this, incandescently, in the Preface to *Imperial Eyes*: 'This is a book marked by the global realignments and ideological upheavals that began in the 1980s and continue in the present. It was begun during the anguish of the Reagan-Thatcher years, when demystifying imperialism seemed more urgent than ever, and also more hopeless.' It was a time, too, when 'intense institutional struggles ... over undergraduate humanities curricula' defined the university work-face (Pratt 1992: xi). Set beside such promises and pressures, a book like Fussell's *Abroad*, the first to attempt a drawing-together of strands into something like a contemporary theory of travel writing, was destined to be judged an academic exercise, providing little political gain. The post-structural turn, away from formalisms, systems and complacent humanisms, seemed to suggest important new functions and social relevances for the art of reading.

The disentanglement of recent critical idioms from more traditional academic practices was not, however, complete or conclusive. In a very perceptive review of Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions*, Greg Manning has suggested how new historicisms – and, I would maintain, post-colonialisms – retain significant elements of formal academic practice and humanist concern. For Manning, they hover between 'a basically structuralist interest in systemic relations [and] a profound suspicion of systems' (Manning 1993: 1). One might argue that these impulses were successive rather than co-existent in Greenblatt's work, which progressively moves away from a model of culture as text (with corresponding homologies between, for example, mercantile expansion and Marlovian drama), towards an ethical, even theological, concern with alterity. Manning's parting point, however, remains telling:

In an age which is trying, however clumsily, to establish post-colonial possibilities for representation, whereby the West might at last stop trampling on the rights of the other, one can see why Greenblatt should be so drawn to the promise of decency. For all the complexity of his analyses, one can only wish things were that simple. (Manning 1993: 84)

Pursuing that argument, there is a revealing moment in the marvellous *Marvelous Possessions* where Greenblatt withdraws briefly from historical

complexities to consider the specularly of imperial ownership and the assimilation of otherness to European culture. In so doing, Greenblatt refers to 'the primal act of witnessing around which virtually the entire discourse of travel is constructed'. He continues: 'Everything in the European dream of possession rests on witnessing understood as a form of significant and representative seeing' (Greenblatt 1991: 122). Greenblatt moves on to a discussion of Herodotus (a name claimed equally by historiography, anthropology and sociology) as a founder; an original instrumentality in the discursive shaping of travel writing. By returning to this point of origin and father-figure, and by sliding from 'virtually the entire' to 'everything', Greenblatt momentarily exposes the powerful, residual formalism which underscores much contemporary critical work on travel writing. This particularly tendentious rhetorical slide has, too, a corollary in the new historicist strategy of arguing from the margins of history through key exemplary anecdotes. The anecdote has an ethical, didactic – almost theological – function; it is a fable from which a whole 'fabulised' eurocentric view of other worlds may be extrapolated.

To speak of a discourse configured around a 'primal act' suggests, furthermore, an interest in genre theory which is itself bound up in a search for foundational speech-acts; the quest for a Lévi-Strauss-like homology, where deed becomes word and word is deed, and a 'significant and representative' expressive mode is realised. For Greenblatt, seeing is not merely seeing: it is, in this context, 'witnessing' – an act implying a special social function and gravity. In many ways this is entirely consistent with slightly earlier work on travel writing which, in turn, looked back to critical principles set forth by mythicists like Northrop Frye, to whom a trip was never a trip but always a quest. ('It is part of the critic's business', Frye wrote, 'to show how all literary genres are derived from the quest-myth' [Frye 1957: 105].) Greenblatt's primal speech-act remains marked by the *Genre* connection; his 'witnessing' has an ethico-theological ring, as well as a highly formal sense of the fundamental, Frye-like mythic connections of reading, writing and journeying. The mobile intellect of the travel text serves as the basic exemplum of 'reading and writing culture', suggesting a durable formal homology. This reminds me, in fact, of the structural relation – an inflection of Frye – proposed by Michel Butor:

there is (at least) the path of the eye from sign to sign, like all sorts of itineraries which can often, but not always, be grossly simplified as the progression along a line from a point of departure to a point of arrival ... The very complex 'words' which are the great sites will be linked by the traveller in a sentence ... [if] travel leads to the composition of a book, this is because in writing a book one is engaged in the act of travelling. (Butor 1994: 3, 15)

In a second revealing moment, this time from Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*, there is a summary discussion of the contiguity, or simultaneity, of travel writing about the non-European world and travels within Europe. Pratt is addressing the application of a centre-periphery trope to different travelling situations; situations apparently discrete in time, geography and cultural context. She writes:

Readers of European travel books about Europe have pointed out that many of the conventions and writing strategies I associate here with imperial expansionism characterize travel writing about Europe as well. As I suggest at several points in the discussion, when that is so, related dynamics of power and appropriation are likely to be found at work as well. The discourses that legitimate bourgeois authority and delegitimate peasant and subsistence lifeways, for example, can be expected to do this ideological work within Europe as well as in southern Africa or Argentina. (Pratt 1992: 10)

While there is no real objection to the commonplace that imbalanced power relations grounded in nation, race, class or gender are potentially analogous, comments like Pratt's are recognisably problematic. This is particularly so in respect of *Imperial Eyes* – a book about 'witnessing', once again – which takes as its objectives the disunification, the heterogenisation and the rhetorical hybridisation of travel writing. In a somewhat contradictory instant of cross-troping, Pratt reverts to the impulsive globalism which stalks post-colonial theorising. Regarding travel writing as a discourse, a particular configuration of knowledge and experience, post-colonial theories tend to privilege certain inarguably othered territorial contacts: in Africa, the Caribbean, India, the Middle East and, sometimes, South America. But what begins as a limited discursive shaping of travel, located in key places at key times in imperialist history, becomes a vast allegory of knowledge *only*; a reflexive metropolitan epistemology, ultimately, that discovers instances of centralism and oppression structurally-encoded in 'our' cultural history. 'Empire' becomes the ur-myth of 'Literature', the fundamental pattern of the canon and its relation to non-canonical textual others. Post-colonial theories have relied upon a poetics of travel which might not necessarily account for the broader field: what, for example, did it mean *specifically* for a Briton to visit Iceland or Sardinia, take the Grand Tour through France to Italy or, indeed, to explore the extremities of the rural United Kingdom? In these situations it is sometimes quite appropriate, but too often theoretically expedient, to find an imperialising psychology – if not an actual imperial project – at work. The common dynamic of the centre-periphery, employed so effectively in much post-colonial debate, effortlessly reveals parallels in the dominative assumptions of such different texts as Defoe's *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Dickens's

Pictures from Italy and Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana*. To apply a critical trope in this way, however, amounts to something close to high structuralism, whereby situations remote from each other in time, geography and cultural context are brought together in a single and splendidly coherent intellectual field. In terms of scholarship, that kind of cross-troping is at best a short-hand and, at worst, an evasion of historical engagement: to sniff out a colonising tendency in travels to Capri (which, if one reads them, are frequently by homosexuals dodging the law) because it seems to appear synchronically in the Cape of Good Hope (land of the missionary, freebooter and official administrator) is a highly problematic matter.

Greenblatt, again, is instructive here in exposing the simple, formal mapping involved; a mapping to which the subjects of critical attention and the critics themselves are prone:

The discoverer sees only a fragment and then imagines the rest in the act of appropriation. The supplement that imagination brings to vision expands the perceptual field, encompassing the distant hills and valleys or the whole of an island or an entire continent, and the bit that has actually been seen becomes by metonymy a representation of the whole. That representation is in turn conveyed, reported to an audience elsewhere, and seeing turns into witnessing. (Greenblatt 1991: 122)

This reflexively describes a critical process, not a thoroughly surveyed historical actuality. It reveals a belief in formalised poetics – or, put another way, it celebrates the heroic-intellectual quest to 'explain everything' by knowing and arguing from 'a bit'. 'Seeing', for Greenblatt, becomes 'witnessing'; a kind of religio-legislative omniscience, or omni-science. Likewise, Pratt's John Barrow, lead-player in her article 'Scratches on the Face of the Country', is a representative seer whose identity is critically cast in the type of the Romance Hero. Barrow is 'a kind of collective moving eye' (Pratt 1985: 123) whose visions, along with Livingstone and others, tend to an Edenic or pre-Adamic recuperation of the desolate-foreign. Mr Barrow revivifies and fertilises the African wasteland, making it ripe for imperial exploitation. As both Representative Man and super-annuated Romance Hero, Mr Barrow and his colleagues-in-colonisation come to exemplify a paradigm for the acquisition of knowledge – an epistemological violence, in short, whereby 'information-producing travel accounts' are singularly directed to 'expanding the capitalist world system' (p. 125).

By implication, a formalist or generic reading of travel might readily be considered as cooperative with that expansionist mind-set. Pratt duly discerns a particular critical mode that effectively stresses the poetics of

travel and the constitution of the western bourgeois subject: 'an esthetic or literary vein of scholarship has developed, in which travel accounts, usually by famous literary figures, are studied in the artistic and intellectual dimensions and with reference to European existential dilemmas' (Pratt 1992: 10). This dismissively implies that a 'literary' reading is primarily concerned with issues of subjectivity, to the exclusion of political engagement or, indeed, any broader ideological referent.

To examine the limits of this suggestion, we can turn back to the events of 1978. That year, as germinal post-colonial texts and travel studies appeared, anthropologist Nelson Graburn published an article titled 'Tourism: The Sacred Journey'. Briefly, Graburn argued that the modern experience of travel 'has antecedents and equivalents in other seemingly more purposeful institutions such as medieval student travel, the Crusades, and European and Asian pilgrimage circuits'. Alluding to the co-etymology of 'travel' and 'travail' (first codified by Samuel Johnson in his 1755 *Dictionary*) Graburn claimed that even 'sanctioned recreation' was 'often a kind of "hard work", especially in the rites-of-passage or self-testing types of tourism such as those of youthful travelers' (Graburn 1978: 17). What made Graburn's view anthropologically possible was an appraisal of travel as a key action, theorised in anthropology early this century and forcefully rephrased in the 'myth-ritual school' of literary criticism – a critical mode shadowed by archetypalists like Jung and Joseph Campbell.

The theory, as Graburn's phrase 'rites-of-passage' suggests, came from an anthropological moment that was proto-structuralist. Arnold van Gennep's far-reaching, early twentieth-century observations on passage rites, originally published in 1909, revealed that border-crossings and territorial passages represented a significant variant of the change-of-status scenario. The term 'rites of passage' is often used now as if it constituted a single ritual practice, whereas van Gennep detailed it closely, subclassifying 'rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation'. He noted: 'These three subcategories are not developed to the same extent by all peoples or in every ceremonial pattern' (van Gennep 1960: 11). However, if one form of ceremony involved all three types of rite, balanced as equally important constitutive elements, that case would be of peculiar interest; and van Gennep discovered such a case in the territorial passage – 'the magico-religious aspect of crossing frontiers' (p. 15).

Employing a sacred–profane dichotomy like his contemporary Durkheim, van Gennep detailed the demarcation of special zones and the implications of entering them. Of particular interest are his comments on 'neutral zones'. The neutral zone is open and available – like the blank space of 'Darkest Africa', perhaps – and surrounded by 'sacred zones' which are already culturally claimed and encoded:

The neutral zones are ordinarily deserts, marshes, and most frequently virgin forests where everyone has full rights to travel and hunt. Because of the pivoting of sacredness, the territories on either side of the neutral zone are sacred to whoever is in the zone, but the zone, in turn, is sacred for the inhabitants of the adjacent territories. Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds. (van Gennep 1960: 18)

In post-colonial terms, this immediately suggests a dominant–inferior relation; the mobile possibility of exploitation via the sacralisation, or enchantment, of emptiness. The border-crossing into a neutral zone, however, involves an inversion of value systems: not a lack of identity but a shifting identity, for both landscape and traveller. Landscape and traveller are sites of indeterminacy, so that travel is *not* the simple inscription of an established meaning over a neutralised, identityless other. The travelling subject, wavering between two worlds, is by no means the self-assured colonist; rather, that subject is poised to split and unravel. The process of transition, and its associated liminal rites, were always anthropologically theorised as modes of 'unsettlement' rather than transcendence or occupation. And rather than constructing the world from glimpsed fragments – the intellectual motive-force in Greenblatt's 'primal act of witnessing' – travel and border-crossing signify a geographic and psychic disunification, anticipating a potential confusion of established order whereby disunification becomes cultural dysfunction. Dennis Porter provides a useful gloss on this point:

If, as anthropologists have long since taught us, borders of all kinds are perceived as dangerous as well as exciting places, and are associated with taboos, this is no less true of territorial borders ... something of such an attitude no doubt contributes to the frequent ambivalence to be found in so many works of travel literature [where] the notions of guilt and duty are almost as important as desire and transgression. The acknowledgment of law and obligation, resistance to them and a pervasive sense of guilt, recur with a symptomatic frequency. (D. Porter 1991: 9)

These waverings and psychic conflicts are symptomatic not only of a threatened dismemberment of the individual subject, but also of a whole ideological system – as terms like 'duty', 'law' and 'obligation' imply. In travel, the bourgeois subject is involved in a fundamentally reflexive confrontation with the unsustainable values of 'home'. As Porter, again, notes: 'most forms of travel at least cater to desire: they seem to promise or allow us to fantasize the satisfaction of drives that for one reason or another is denied us at home' (D. Porter 1991: 9). This conclusively underlines

Porter's argument that the desire in travel 'derives from Freud's notion of the libido as updated by Lacan; it embodies the notion of a dynamic but obscure energy within a human subject that insists on satisfactions of a kind the world of objects cannot supply' (p. 8).

As a subject who 'wavers between two worlds', the traveller always finds such satisfactions blocked or out of reach. Moving through a neutral zone, the identity and significance of which is contingent on what is outside it, the traveller can never realize the 'dream of possession'. In contrast, the preferred travel narrative of new historicist and post-colonial criticisms is based on the idea of possession and the ready inscription of stable 'home-values' on the blank page of otherness. This, in turn, assumes a politics of continuity and 'settlement', whereby the border-crossing is unproblematic and the traveller is a confident representative of the paternalist lore of home. Consequently, the travel text's descriptive economies and taxonomies objectify the world; the act of witnessing, as Greenblatt argues with reference to Michel de Certeau, is the foundational rhetorical device which fabricates and accredits the travel text as a recorded understanding of otherness (Greenblatt 1991: 126). With the world thus rendered in concrete terms, as a series of objects under inspection by the travelling gaze, the desires of euro-expansionism can be satisfied.

However, as Meaghan Morris reminds us, the act of witnessing, constituted in both the narrative and descriptive travelogue, must also – and more importantly – be understood as an event that confounds desire. In a critique of the Australian travel writer Ernestine Hill ('an imperialist, a white supremacist and a patriot'), Morris notes a powerful sense of derealisation which impedes the 'dream of possession':

on the one hand there is something vital about the travel-writer's quest to describe human life ('catch it while you can'), yet on the other, something morbid, even 'doomed', about description. It is an assumption shared by many classic accounts of literary realism, and also by theories of the visual media as a vast descriptive regime for destroying (and for Baudrillard, replacing) 'reality'. (Morris 1988: 172)

What Morris analyses, precisely, is the confusion and unsettlement of a subjectivity that might normally be viewed as centred – imperialist, supremacist, patriotic, unrepentantly and unreflexively chauvinistic. Morris's reading sees the traveller wavering between two worlds: one of the concrete, of the objective, of desire satisfied through the written record of possession; the other is a world of frustration and derealisation, populated by mirages, spectres and ghosts, where the fantasies of possessing and occupying the other – of knowing, with any certainty – simply vanish.

Morris's argument is grounded as much in psychoanalysis as it is in

structuralist or formalist procedures, and, as a means of suggesting how the act of witnessing (with the para-legislative certitudes that implies) might be displaced as the basic formal principle of the travel genre, I turn to Freud's essay 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis'. This essay, dramatising a sophisticated, self-interrogative travelling consciousness in disarray, articulates the doomed ghastliness of 'realising' with which Morris is concerned, as well as the unsettled conflicts of desire and obligation discussed by Dennis Porter. Furthermore, Freud foregrounds the impossibility of extending the known into the zone of 'elsewhere'; that is, he questions the travel experience as a means of simple superimposition or reinscription. There is no continuity in the identity of the travelling subject, and definitely no power to possess or to specularise 'elsewhere' on predetermined conditions.

Writing 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis', Freud was like any travel writer: recollecting, reconstructing, reflecting critically and morally on the lesson of the journey. Freud wrote the essay in 1936, as a festschrift 'Open Letter to Romain Rolland on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday', and in it he recalls an incident which occurred in 1904. And, like any travel text, Freud's essay attempts to bring the immediacy of a past event into a relation with the order and sense of the present; an intellectual operation that, in Freud's case at least, modifies 'the primal act of witnessing' by cross-examining the authenticity of the witness.

Briefly, at the level of narrative, Sigmund was on holiday with his brother. The Freuds travelled to Trieste with the intention of proceeding to Corfu, but were persuaded that Athens would be a more convenient, realisable destination. Freud confesses to a childhood desire to see Athens, but the change of itinerary brings depression, rather than elation. Subsequently, arriving on the Acropolis, Freud finds himself stricken by doubt and a feeling of unreality.

Freud seems to be writing, consciously, against modernist inflections of the rites of passage motif, inflections which mythicised territorial passage as heroic quest. This modernist adjustment of van Gennep's passage rites culminated in the work of Jungians or archetypalists like Joseph Campbell and Northrop Frye. Campbell, particularly, came to regard the figure of 'the hero' as imbricated in 'a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage', with the passage from 'the world of common day' into a supernaturalised region of desire and 'wonder' as a test of the hero's decisiveness and majesty (Joseph Campbell 1949: 30). Freud plays with this idea, noting that the travel impulse is grounded in the poverty, limitations and obstructive pressures of 'the world of common day':

My longing to travel was no doubt also the expression of a wish to escape from that pressure, like the force which drives so many adolescent children to run away from home. I had long seen clearly that a great part of the pleasure of travel lies in the fulfilment of these early wishes – that it is rooted, that is, in dissatisfaction with home and family. When first one catches sight of the sea, crosses the ocean and experiences as realities cities and lands which for so long had been distant, unattainable things of desire – one feels oneself like a hero who has performed deeds of improbable greatness. (Freud 1973: 247)

As a sign of the extent to which Freud writes against the impossibly heroic pretensions of mythicism, 'A Disturbance of Memory' is bracketed by a characterisation of the travel writer as baffled, aged and attenuated. Near the beginning of the essay, Freud describes himself as a man whose 'powers of production are at an end ... an impoverished creature, who has "seen better days"'. He concludes by reiterating this view: 'I myself have grown old and stand in need of forbearance and can travel no more' (Freud 1973: 239, 248). If this has some of the 'morbidly' referred to by Meaghan Morris – with Freud as Ancient Mariner, doomed to retell his tale – it also suggests an acute, critical awareness of the problems of 'witnessing' and 'describing'. In an important sense of 'morbidly', the inverted commas on 'seen better days' signify more than a lapse into vernacular; there is an ironic hint that the illusion of 'seeing better' ('witnessing') is mitigated by unsettlement. After all, Freud avers, 'this incident on the Acropolis [has] troubled me so often' (p. 248), and the very unheroic travelling subject can be neither imaginative nor material coloniser of foreign ground. It is, in fact, a split subject, whose desires are confounded in the moment of 'witnessing', or 'seeing better':

When, finally, on the afternoon after our arrival, I stood on the Acropolis and cast my eyes around upon the landscape, a surprising thought suddenly entered my mind: 'So all this really *does* exist, just as we learnt at school!' To describe the situation more accurately, the person who gave expression to the remark was divided, far more sharply than was usually noticeable, from another person who took cognizance of the remark; and both were astonished, though not by the same thing. The first behaved as though he were obliged, under the impact of an unequivocal observation, to believe in something the reality of which had hitherto seemed doubtful ... The second person, on the other hand, was justifiably astonished, because he had been unaware that the real existence of Athens, the Acropolis, and the landscape around it had ever been objects of doubt. What he had been expecting was rather some expression of delight or admiration. (Freud 1973: 241)

With his desire thus frustrated by a world of doubtful objects, and his identity split and confused in the instant of 'witnessing', Freud begins a complex reflection on doubt and displacement. His negotiations with distortions of memory and belief – whether he had or had not doubted the actuality of distant places, the foreign – culminates in a 'feeling of derealisation' ('What I see here is not real') which is itself linked to the unsettled passage from seeing to knowing. Eventually, Freud's examination of the depression, doubts and distortions of memory in his Acropolis experience comes to rest in a discussion of transgression and guilt:

It must be that a sense of guilt was attached to the satisfaction in having gone such a long way: there was something about it that was wrong, that from earliest times had been forbidden. It was something to do with a child's criticism of his father ... as though the essence of success was to have got further than one's father, and as though to excel one's father was still something forbidden. (Freud 1973: 247)

Crossing into territory beyond the reach of the father, beyond the limits of value and sense which characterise home, the traveller wavers – suspended, caught by duties and desires which are irreconcilable. Far from being an occasion for the reinscription of paternal lore, or for a performance of heroic witnessing, travel reveals an emptiness in the belief-system that stands behind the travelling subject. As Freud added: 'The very theme of Athens and the Acropolis in itself contained evidence of the son's superiority. Our father had been in business, and Athens could not have meant much to him. Thus what interfered with our enjoyment of the journey to Athens was a feeling of *filial piety*' (pp. 247–8). For any traveller, home is that which is always necessarily 'in the past', and for Freud travel diminishes that past but can never supply a satisfactory resolution of desire 'in the present'.

Freud's essay contains, or dramatises, a kind of liminal passage rite; a border-crossing from the original event of 'seeing' to an eventual 'knowing'. On one level, Freud's provisional conclusions, his reading of the travel experience, are directed to authenticate the epic science of psychology – a magico-scientific rather than magico-religious wavering. On another, however, what is finally known is that the territorial passage – in its dual senses of 'actual travel' and intellectual movement – is a critical unsettling of belief and value. For Freud, travel exposes potentialities for splitting, contradiction and loss of touch with 'the real'. Formally read in this way, the attempt to master the travel experience and to occupy the terrain of otherness is fundamentally morbid; obstructive of desire and destructive of subjective unity.

Instead of searching out the obvious moments of oppression, arrogance

and self-assured chauvinism in the travel text, post-colonial critiques might also focus on the points of unravelling, conflict and uncertainty in the travelling subject. By formally examining the 'unsettlement' of the western subject, we are not necessarily committed to an introspective aesthetic project – deplored by Marie Louise Pratt – that privileges European existential dilemmas and is, therefore, depoliticised and simply formal. New historicist and post-colonial readings themselves depend on formalist tropes and manoeuvres; upon the understanding that formal literary structures, narrative patterns, primal speech-acts and textual claims to validity have a demonstrable relation to 'trampling on the rights of the other'. To employ an alternative point of formalist reference – not 'witnessing' as a mark of imperialising power, but the unsettlement that redefines first-sight in the movement from 'seeing' to 'knowing' – might supply alternative terms for reading texts which seem to legitimise the ideology of occupation and settlement.

3

Argonauts of Western Pessimism, Clifford's Malinowski

John Hutnyk

Part 1

'The institutionalisation of fieldwork in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be understood within a larger history of "travel"' (Clifford 1997: 64). As James Clifford retells the founding narrative, prior to Malinowski's 1915–19 adventures in the South Seas, anthropologists stayed at home. Only with the professionalisation of the discipline – and keeping science strictly separate from colonial administration (they liked to think) – did anthropologists begin to move (Stagl and Pinney 1996: 122).

Famously, much has been said about rhetorical fabrications in Malinowski, and elaborate commentary is given over to photographs of him in the Pacific, his tent on the beach, himself in his tent; Clifford sees the tent as an icon of 'deep' fieldwork. But he would also have it that Malinowski travels, that he was a 'displaced person' (Clifford 1988: 95) and 'ship-wrecked' (p. 10). The reference here is to the English language difficulties of a Polish migrant, but by association the nautical tone deposits the 'founding' father-figure of fieldwork in a South Sea Island scene. Big reputations have been made in this potlatch of metaphor – Clifford himself came to fame editing the agenda-setting text *Writing Culture* with George Marcus (Clifford and Marcus 1986), and much attention to the ways of writing has enriched ethnography and extended the discipline. In the process, however, Malinowski has become a cartoon character. Good to think with, conjured here and there, turned every which way and moved about at will, he struts the Trobriand beach frightening postgraduate students with a year stuck in a tent reading trashy novels. As a rite of passage and ritual incantation, reading Malinowski has become, via Clifford and others, overdetermined. It is important to note that the circumstances of the paradigmatic deep fieldwork scene are more mobile than is often glossed. Malinowski moved back and forth between several islands, between the islands and Australia, and between the villages and the huts of traders,