# "Going Native" in Hybrid Narratives of Travel and Research:

# David Abram, Hugh Brody and Bruce Chatwin

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Pro Gradu Thesis
May 2011

Tutkielman aiheena on "going native" -teeman käsittely antropologisen tutkimustekstin ja matkakirjallisuuden välimaastoon sijoittuvissa teoksissa. "Going native" -*topos* on koloniaalisen ajan hiljattain tunnustettu lehtolapsi, jonka voidaan katsoa liittyvän moniin kulttuurissamme tuttuihin ilmiöihin. Tarkemman rajauksen jälkeen kohdeteoksiksi jäävät kolmen länsimaisen, akateemisesti koulutetun mieskirjailijan teokset, joissa kirjailijaan samaistettavat kertojat käyvät läpi kokemuksiaan alkuperäiskansojen parissa.

Kertomuksen määritelmät rajaavat usein osan "kirjallisuudeksi" kutsumastamme tekstuaalisesta taiteesta ulkopuolelleen, ja usein raja on nähty aiheelliseksi vetää sinne, missä tietyt konventiot lakkaavat hallitsemasta. Kohdeteokset kyseenalaistavat ja valottavat uudelleen useita näistä rajaavista konventioista. Työn tarkoitus on lukea kohdeteoksia kirjallisina *kertomuksina*, jotka kuitenkin sijoittuvat kerronnallisuuden ja fiktiivisyyden epäselville raja-alueille. Niiden voi nähdä vastustavan geneerisiä rajanvetoja antropologisen tutkimustekstin ja matkakirjallisuuden välillä, ja niistä voi löytää jopa romaanille tyypillistä kerrontaa. Samoin ne ylittävät fiktion ja ei-fiktion rajoja.

Kohdeteoksiksi ovat valikoituneet David Abramin *The Spell of The Sensuous*, Hugh Brodyn *Maps & Dreams* sekä Bruce Chatwinin *The Songlines*. Kolmen akateemisesti sivistyneen angloamerikkalaisen mieskirjailijan teokset asettuvat jo lähtökohdissaan jälkikoloniaalisen kritiikin tulilinjalle. Eräs läpi työn kulkeva teema onkin teosten asettaminen jälkikoloniaalisen kritiikin ja kertomusteoreettisen lähiluvun kontaktialueelle: tulisiko "going native" -ilmiötä *kirjallisuudessa* tarkastella sosiologisena tapahtumana vai pitäisikö pysytellä tekstin "sisällä" sen ilmiöitä vain tekstuaalisina ilmiöinä tarkastellen? Toisaalta: voisiko näiden ääripäiden rajaama alue olla itsessään tarkastelun arvoinen?

Tekstianalyysin työkalut tulevat pääasiassa narratologian ja uudemman kertomusteorian piiristä. Niiden avulla tutkin teosten kerronnallisia rakenteita ja ratkaisuita. Tarkoituksena ei ole kuitenkaan pitäytyä formaalissa tarkastelussa, vaan työkalujen tehtyä tehtävänsä saatuja tuloksia tulkitaan eri konteksteissa. Ne nähdään suhteessa kolonialismin ajan perintöön, ja niitä suhteutetaan antropologian ja matkakirjallisuuden konventioihin sekä muuhun länsimaiseen kirjalliseen perinteeseen.

Avainsanat: Going native, David Abram, Hugh Brody, Bruce Chatwin, kertomus, fiktio/ei-fiktio, antropologinen tutkimus, matkakirjallisuus

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# 1. Introduction

This thesis sets out to examine a phenomenon in literature tentatively called "going native". As a literary theme or *topos* this phenomenon has gone virtually unrecognized. It is, indeed, debatable whether it should be seen as a thing of its own or rather as a variant within some established genre or literary form, such as travel writing or anthropological report. The foremost aim of the first half of my thesis is, therefore, to outline the phenomenon as found in literature by linking it to larger literary and cultural contexts. This task should be a rather exciting one, but before one can begin there is another task at hand, possibly offering less in the way of scholarly delight and more in the way of straining and ultimately futile dictionary work: one has to find a way to define the concept "go native".

The second half of the thesis will be dedicated to looking at literary works authored by white academics, who may be said to have "gone native" during the process of writing – or in order to begin. The question whether it is the actual authors, the narrators constructed in their works, or the works themselves that "go native", may remain unanswered for now. I have chosen three works for close reading: *The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abram, *Maps & Dreams* by Hugh Brody and *The Songlines* by Bruce Chatwin. I wish to examine each book on its own, in

relation to the complex question of what "going native" in literature is and what it implies in terms of genre, authorship, narrative methods and structure – and also in terms of politics. Each work has its own idiosyncrasies and raises particular questions which may seem less pressing in relation to the other works. Drawing parallels and pointing out differences between the books is nevertheless going to comprise a considerable portion of my analysis.

## 1.1 Defining the "going"

One often comes across the term "go/ing native" in quotation marks or written with capital letters, as if to indicate the fact that this term does not quite belong to proper written English. Its terminological position is, indeed, unclear. Few dictionary definitions are available, most of them assigning meanings to the concept which suggest going backwards to something undesirable, such as "relapsing" in the OED. Outside dictionaries, which are by definition extremely conservative, it seems that looking at contemporary uses of the concept will provide some help. As it happens, there are also a number of readings or interpretations of the concept, which shall be considered in detail later. These readings mostly engage in a discursive play that goes on around the field of dichotomous concepts such as "white" vs. "native", "western" vs. "native", "civilized" vs. "primitive" etc. Learning the ropes of this theoretical ballgame is essential for my study, and it will be discussed as a part of the theoretical section. For now it suffices to say that there are different ways in which the concept "going native" appears in everyday use of language. For my purposes, these uses can be organized under three categories – the organizing principles being the tone of expression and whether or not the "native" actually means native, as in Native American.

First of all, the concept is often used in reference to a person of a dominant, typically colonial culture, who abandons its economic, social and technological conveniences alongside with its politics and economics, and instead sets out to find out about the ways of living of Native peoples, more often than not with hopes of eventually joining the tribe and becoming one of the natives. It seems that the western cultural imagination, guided by mass media and other such forces has located this instance of going native on the field of cultural identities and identity crises. It seems relatively safe to say that going native, in this sense of the expression, is inextricably linked to disillusionment with western society and its materialist-minded values. People who may be said to go native in this sense are doing it believing that there is a way out of our unsustainable present-day way of life. This use of the concept often conveys an overtone of condescension and derisive humor. Whenever we speak of going native in this sense we do it in a somewhat patronizing manner. Native-goers are seen as frustrated westerners who feel there is something wrong with their world and society, but who are ultimately clueless of how to properly resolve this crisis. As consequence, to put it rather harshly, they end up escaping from reality into an imaginary "native" life. Going native is often seen as the first sign of losing it. "Going native", in this sense is the starting point for my study. However, there are other uses of the expression which merit brief discussion.

The second category is close in tone to the first one but "native" is no longer understood literally. An example would look something like this:

> [H]e and Ellsworth, a sheriff, had been two of the "macho Democrat" stars of the' 06 cycle – manly men whose conservative positions on issues like abortion and gay marriage had helped them win in their Red States. Now Ellsworth was calling to congratulate his soon-to-be colleague and to say that the two should stick together in the new House. After all, he said, they both had to answer to the same kind of conservative constituents back home -- and both know they won't last long in Congress if they *go native* in D.C. "We both won; now we're both in the same boat," Ellsworth said. "We've got to remember that the people back home put us here and they can take us back out." (Darman et al. 2006, italics mine.)

Here, going native clearly means losing it. This usage of the expression covertly reinforces its derogatory connotations. Even if the "native", in this case, is not explicitly linked to nationality or race, the implications are clear. "Native" implies the loss of organization and order. The meaning of going native in the excerpt seems somewhat vague. Here, the relapse could manifest itself as selling out in the eyes of the Red States' conservative democrats – failing to do what one has set out to do due to some weakness of character, or resorting to the corrupt politics that this particular group of voters might regard as "native" to Capitol Hill.

In the third category the expression is used playfully and its meaning is visibly distanced from meanings linked to ethnicity. "Going native" makes brief and somewhat comical appearances in some recent literary works, such as in short stories by recognized contemporary authors Annie Proulx and Richard Ford in 2004 and 2006, respectively. The following is taken from Ford's story *How Was It to Be Dead?*

> She should go there and do that. Hang out. Plant little trees in little holes. *Go native*. Act married. Talk, slap, hug, giggle, groan, cry. (Ford 2006, italics mine.)

This is typical of contemporary uses of the concept: it is acknowledged that this concept, if linked explicitly to Native Americans, is politically incorrect. One indeed gets the impression that Ford's vague treatment of the expression is quite deliberate.

My study will treat the first sense of "going native" as the central one. The authors I am going to discuss never use the expression themselves, but they do go and live among native peoples of Bali, Himalayas, British Columbia and Australia. It remains, however, debatable whether "going native" is an apt description of the phenomenon this thesis takes under

discussion. Actually, the idea of "going native", with all its negative insinuations has the potential to undermine all other interpretations of literary works by western authors who write about native peoples – especially if they also write about themselves. One has been conditioned to attach the suspect label of "going native" to all attempts by white scholars to address issues which originally concern some other people than their own.

I am aware that this problem arises partly as result of terminological choices. One could choose not to use awkward expressions that draw attention to suspicious aspects of some author's literary work. However, the questions arising from the idea of "going native" are somewhat unavoidable. The concept is inextricably linked to a larger framework of problematics particularly pressing in these post/neo-colonial ages. It seems that recent decades of postcolonial awareness have made a difference. Contemporary readers might actually be somewhat predisposed to have negative attitudes towards authors who write both about native peoples and themselves. In the end, it all comes back to the basic question of who is entitled to represent whom and from which point of view.

## 1.2 Introducing the goers

Three texts written by white, academically educated male writers are going to perform as my primary sources: *The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abram, an American environmentalist, *Maps & Dreams* by Hugh Brody, an English-born Canadian anthropologist, and *Songlines* by Bruce Chatwin, a cosmopolitan Englishman and a well known travel writer. There are a number of ways to justify choosing these three books. However, they do not form a coherent or even particularly comprehensive picture of any literary field. One could fabricate a set of attributes

which would make these books appear as somehow definitive sources for white academic native-going. This is not something I wish to do. Abram, Brody and Chatwin are not the A, B and C of the "literature of going native". However, the chosen books are all similar in that they come across as hybrids of travel narrative and types of non-fictional and non-narrative writing. The phenomenon of "going native" therefore appears in a double exposure provided by the literary, narrative context on one hand, and the non-fictional or non-narrative context, on the other. I believe that reading works such as these through the theoretical framework presented in the next chapter will yield potentially illuminating perspectives to how the phenomenon of going native in literature may be outlined.

In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram, an American scholar and environmentalist (and an accomplished sleigh-of-a-hand-magician), writes about the time he spent living with various indigenous cultures on various locations around the world. The narrative unfolding in Abram's book focuses on describing the change that takes place in his mentality and spiritual awareness due to the influence of non-western ways of living and perceiving the world. Although the role of this travel narrative for Abram's book is crucial, it comprises only a small portion of it. For the most part *The Spell of the Sensuous* reads like a philosophical textbook. While Abram assumes a highly personal viewpoint while narrating his journeys, his philosophical writing is scholarly in tone and conforms to the stylistic conventions of academic writing.

The book also has a program: to sound an alarm for the state of the world, especially as concerns environmental issues. Abrams book challenges the ways of western economy and ecology by suggesting that there are other, more sustainable, ways of organizing societies. Yet Abram is no social scientist: the solution he is offering is a mental revolution. In supplying his

readers with the tools of this revolution he rummages through the teachings of phenomenological school of perceptual philosophy and goes on to examine linguistics of oral (non-literary) cultures.

Abram's scholarly and literary status is somewhat suspect, and his book is not readily fit for quick classification. Whether his book should be filed under philosophy, nature, linguistics, or new age, will be discussed later. At this point one might as well take it from author Bill McKibben, a friend of Abram's, who calls *The Spell of the Sensuous* "the best instruction manual yet for becoming fully human" (*SotS*, cover). This paper aims to find out not so much whether Abram "goes native" in his writing, but how it might be apparent in his text. What kinds of narrative measures are taken to get the point across to which audience? Further: for whom is he speaking and in whose stead?

Canadian Hugh Brody assumes a research position of an anthropologist. In 1978 he was sent by the Canadian government to northeast British Columbia where he was to work in a government-funded research of land-use and occupancy. However, Brody ended up spending a year and a half in a reserve of the Beaver tribe, taking part in the everyday life of the people. Partly, *Maps & Dreams* is a narrative about that time. Brody admits that there is an element of fiction in this narrative. For example, the names of people and places are fictitious but the events that take place in his narrative are supposedly not. This narrative is only half of *Maps & Dreams* (*Dreams*, one would have to attest, if pressed). The book is divided in two. The other part is a strictly non-fictional research report, a different, markedly less narrative text consisting of hard facts, historical documents and austere statistics. This half is written in a different language, in accordance with the rules of scientific report. Brody fragments both of these halves with a simple

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trick: bits of his travelogue make up the odd-numbered chapters of the book, the facts and statistics comprise the even-numbered chapters.

What is puzzling about how Brody positions himself as the author of the book is that there seem to be two different authors. If this sounds implausible, at least it could be said that there are two positions the author enters, and they are, at least superficially, very different. The interesting question is: do both of these authors go native or only one of them? In practice, this question is again approached by a close reading of the book?

Finally, there is *The Songlines*, the final travelogue by one of the few true celebrities among travel writers. Bruce Chatwin is by far the best known of my three authors. His work has been extensively studied, and his life has been biographized in a grand manner[1]. Published in 1987, *The Songlines* is a significant opus among Chatwin's literary work, because it sees him opening his notebooks for the public. The first half of *The Songlines* is a (pseudo-)documentary account of Chatwin's quest for the sacred songlines of Australian Aboriginals. During the second half it is revealed, through assorted entries extracted from his notebooks, that Chatwin's interest in Aboriginal songlines is at least partly rooted in his enduring obsession with the idea of man as a migratory species. Thus, Chatwin willingly admits that, among other things, his anthropological expedition is in fact a highly personal endeavour, the goal of which is to formulate his own philosophy of the human condition.

Chatwin seems to make himself an easy target for criticism. Not only is he going native in somewhat dubious setting, but also admits to be doing it in order to discover things about himself, and his own culture. Chatwin's book is also the most thoroughly literary effort of the three. Therefore, it seems that he is not too particular about maintaining the division between

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[1] Nicholas Shakespeare's *Bruce Chatwin* was published to critical acclaim in 1999.

fiction and non-fiction. Still, rather than to ask *why* he is willing to become an easy target for postcolonial criticism, the chapter devoted to *The Songlines* attempts to examine what his book actually does, and how?

It seems that the single most significant feature of these works – one which all of my primary sources share – is that parts of them consist of first-person accounts of the authors' travels, and the other parts consist of something else. The books, however, differ greatly in generic and stylistic aspects. They also introduce a wide array of different viewpoints and attitudes to, and dialogues with, the ethnographic tradition. At the same time they also explore the literary conventions of travel writing, fiction and autobiography. Therefore they also comment on many of the basic concepts of my theoretical frame.

The authors display varying amounts of self-consciousness and self-reflection as concerns their position as anthropologists, western researchers studying colonized cultures. Today's anthropological studies cannot help but be acutely aware of the weight of the past, even if the anthropologists of our time can hardly be held responsible for the crimes committed in the process of colonization. During early colonial times anthropology and conquest would often justify each other, and what seems to be going on in all three books is a continuous process of discussing the justification of studying culture from without. Apart from the explicit expressions of problems encountered in anthropological representations of other cultures, there are subtler ways in which the authors address their difficult position as researchers and writers.

## 1.3 Preview of theory

Even if the theoretical foundations and literary schematics of "going native" have been missing until very recently, as a literary phenomenon or a topic found in writing, this cultural borderline-experience is nothing new. In its different forms it can be found in literature and anthropological studies throughout the history. The phenomenon is also linked to a variety of issues that have recently been subject to academic study.

As hinted above, there have been earlier examples of academic, as well as literary, interest towards the phenomenon. While I inevitably shall be obliged to acknowledge the earlier accounts, they will not be extensively discussed. This is for the reason that pre-1900 accounts of western people going native are often little more than footnotes; others seem to be large to colossal pieces of anthropology or travel writing. Most importantly, no attempt to conceptualize what we call here "going native" is made in works from this period. One could, indeed, argue that certain degree of cultural self-reflection is necessary for such an idea to surface. In this thesis, therefore, I mostly draw from modern, 20th century anthropology, initiated by Franz Boas and carried on by Claude Lévi-Strauss and others. In the early 20th century Boas' work took to foregrounding the question of how anthropology should attempt to understand and represent cultures vastly different from one's own. Boas and those who followed him display keen awareness of the severe complications that were always present when traditional ethnographic methods were employed. Insofar as anthropology and ethnography come to question, this level

of self-awareness is the presumed *status quo*. In anthropology, nobody likes anthropologists, as shall be observed in section 2.2.

Another cultural and literary context for going native in literature is travel writing. I base my study on the groundwork laid in the 1970's. In the loosest possible sense, the origins of travel writing probably go back to the time when travel and writing were invented. Over centuries, the genre has been taken as encompassing numerous different types of texts: memoirs, epistolary writing and miscellaneous collections of notes and transcriptions, often with illustrations, from wherever western people go. Also, novels and other fictional works have frequently been classified as travel writing.

While both anthropology and travel writing of late modern and postmodern ages have been painfully aware of the syndrome of "going native", attempts to bring the phenomenon into the circle of academic study have been missing until recently. Textbooks are still few, but at least there seems to be something of a field of study in the making. From the early 1980's to the present the phenomenon of "going native" has been hiding in the sidelines of postcolonial studies.

Although "going native" is a central concept for my study, and both analysis and historical survey of the concept are going to play a part in my study, the main research task is not only to analyze the concept, but also to see how my primary sources exemplify the phenomenon *in literature*. The ultimate question concerns the writers going native and writing about it. The literary aspects of the phenomenon have to be given emphasis over the "actual going native": my analysis aims to be a literary one. I will attempt to find out how my three authors position themselves in their texts: what kind of authorship do their texts imply, what degree of consciousness do the authors display in relation to the complications of colonial/postcolonial

discourse, do they make claims of getting an fully internalized understanding of the cultures they study? Whether these questions will be answered by my primary sources is uncertain, but as long as one gets the questions right one may keep asking them over and over again. A, B and C will be followed by D, E, and F, and so on.

My theoretical frame will reach out to different directions: travel writing, anthropology, autofiction. Going native seem s quite a productive concept, then. Maybe so, but this profligacy of theoretical terminology is also a challenge to this study. Once more it has to be stressed that this thesis aims to study what is meant by going native *in literature*. Part of my theoretical discussion will work through certain concepts that will be only of marginal interest once the actual analysis of the primary sources is taken on. Before that, however, it is necessary to ask what "going native" is (in literature and otherwise), and why it has to be approached from so many angles?

To give a tentative answer to the first part of the question, it is more than a theme or a motif. As much as it is a matter of the thematic, it also heavily overlaps with issues of the rhetoric, and therefore calls attention to questions of genre, other literary conventions and structures of discourse and narration. I would have to attest that in the context of this study any story of a person simply going to live among natives would not count as a literary expression of going native. The literary works discussed here emphasize the experience in going native. In doing so, they negotiate the limits of fiction and non-fiction, narrative and non-narrative. Where these works may be read as narrative, experience is, broadly speaking, the subject of what is narrated. On the other hand, there are places where these works appear to be distinctly less narrative, or even (arguably) non-narrative. Even so, the narrative experience can be seen as the

motivation behind the non-narrative. My primary sources shift between different degrees of narrativity in different ways.

To answer the second part of the question, the copious theoretical terminology is dragged along because, for the time being, there is no ready-made frame through which one may look at the problematic of "going native". I wish to find practical tools for reading the primary sources, and therefore narratology should prove a productive approach. However, my topic is inextricably linked to colonial and post-colonial issues. Post-colonial criticism should be, then, incorporated where it is called for. It will also help address the ethical and epistemological complexities inherent in ethnography, travel writing and literary representation in general.

## 2. Context for "going native" and theoretical approaches

### 2.1. Analysing discourses – "the native" as a part of the dichotomous universe

As already shown above, "going native" is a suspect term. Yet it remains in use, possibly with even more farcical overtones than before. Consequently, we might wish to inquire what is becoming of the originally rather neutral term "native" if it keeps appearing in contexts such as following:

> We're waiting for Sequoia Crosswhite, a 30-year-old Lakota musician who works for Go Native America (GNA), a travel firm based in Sheridan, Wyo. I am part of their Wisdom Keepers tour group, here to see the High Plains from a Native American perspective, and this inauspicious HoJo is simply the most convenient spot for us to gather. I hear ankle bells, then see Crosswhite enter the breakfast room in full native dress--from beaded moccasins to porcupine quill headdress. As he sets up his turntables, I brace for a blast of ethnic kitsch. (Gardella 2008, 82.)

To be fair, this example is quite extreme. "Ethnic kitsch" is the key concept here, I believe. One could argue that in cases this blatantly overblown, no one is expected to be fooled – by accident, that is. This example, however, illustrates quite plainly why being caught "going native" is something most people would prefer to avoid.

As we can see, popular culture keeps finding recreational use for the term. "Go Native" can still be found in the name of a travel company which promises to show the customer the heartlands of America from the "Native American perspective". It is actually difficult to decide if the name is supposed to be taken seriously. As a consequence of this indeterminacy, it seems that also the substance of the concept "native" becomes more and more malleable. When one looks into the matter, a more substantial issue is revealed – one which is problematic to both native peoples and people who attempt to study them. How is one supposed to keep using the term native after this?

This problem has to do with the fact that meanings change. Native used to mean "original" or "belonging to somewhere by birth". However, when ridiculous connotations of a term proliferate as result of its everyday uses, the need to find better terms for unbiased use grows stronger. Hence, there will be academics and anthropologists who are no longer comfortable, if they ever were, with using the word native, and who will consequently state that they would prefer to use some other term. Native peoples, on the other hand, would have usually preferred to call themselves by the name *they* have given their people, instead of "native". These

differences aside, it seems quite improbable that either academics or people of the American First Nations would give their consent to the "Native American perspective" that Go Native America is providing.

The fact that we do not have to approve of false representations of native peoples such as in the above does not stop our culture from producing them. If we wish to learn from linguistic misdeeds of the past, it might be useful to scrutinize the construction of the concept "native". How did it come to this?

Postcolonial thought has theorized the formation of the other by tracing it back to the imperialist constitution of colonial culture. Such is the point expressed in the ubiquitously influential *Orientalism* by Edward Said (1979), or the "subaltern" studies by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (see especially Spivak 1999, 266–274). This basic (post)structuralist view informs our view of the formation of concepts in the discursive universe: one defines the self through the other(s). In the works of Jacques Derrida and his interpreters, among whom Spivak is definitely not the least prominent[2], the semantic processes is further complicated, since concepts are seen as infinitely mobile (See Attridge 1992, 9–10; Spivak 1999, 424). Semantic processes as reformulated by Derrida are often seen as analogous to the formation of the self and the other in postcolonial criticism (Spivak 1999, 426–427). However, Derrida was hardly a postcolonial thinker himself (see ibid., 429, 431). In Derrida, the ultimate fate of all attempts to form stable concepts is to participate in the process of their interminable mutation through rewriting – which is one of the things the Derridean *différance* is often said to imply (see e. g. Leitch 2001, 1818). The re/deconstruction of the discursive space remained influential in postcolonial studies precisely because of Derrida's interpreters. They constructed an

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[2] Spivak translated and prefaced the English edition of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976).

"affirmative" interpretation of derridean thought, also called the "setting-to-work" mode of deconstruction (Spivak 1999, 426–430).

"Setting to work" introduces a pragmatic component to the hopelessly indefinite poststructuralist semantics. The term "native" can then be easily seen as yet another discursive opposite to "western", "modern", "civilized" or some of the other terms denoting normality and the *status quo* in the western frame of reference. The native is quite simply "the other" of the western subject. The conceptual formation of the "native" is then quite readily explained by hegemonizing processes of the western discourses. However, defining a concept in this manner, as one part of a binary pair, isolates it and leaves it hanging on the fringes of the discursive space. In trying to tear this "native" apart from its western framework one will render it void of meaning. This process further marginalizes the others of the mainstream culture. There are other "others", however. Although one must be careful not to treat marginalized groups as an undifferentiated mass of otherness, drawing comparisons between marginal others might offer insights to the formation of any one of these concepts – such as the native. One reason why testing this assumption might prove useful is that so few analyses of the concept "native" are available. Furthermore, I would suggest that discussing some other "others" might also show what makes "native" a special case.

One of these concepts would have to be the "primitive", as used by Marianna Torgovnick. Torgovnick's influential study, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (1990), discusses western ideas of primitivity, especially as expressed in arts and literature, but also in psychology and anthropology. Although Torgovnick discusses some works of fiction, such as *Tarzan* novels, most of her book concentrates on writings that lay some kind of claim to

authenticity (as well as authority) and therefore participate in the great ethnographic endeavor of the western world (Torgovnick 1990, 23).

Torgovnick shows how early anthropology constructed negative ideas of the primitive to complement their western counterparts, which were then construed as positive. Over time "the primitive" began to function as another meaning-generating abstraction. Meanings could be assigned to and imposed on it. Also, it could yield to a myriad of different definitions, the only common denominator of which was the difference from the western, civilized cultural norms.

One could argue that most of the qualities found at the core of the stereotypical representations of the "native" are also found in one shape or another in the "primitive". Like "primitive, "native" can be seen as meaning "original", "natural" as well as "uncivilized" (where civilization involves technological progress and expansionist politics) and "childlike" (presupposing certain behavioral patterns and entailing innocence, with possible sexual implications). (See Torgovnick 1990, 18–20.)

There are numerous other discussions on constructing otherness besides Torgovnick's work. This issue is naturally a central one in relation to native peoples, as well as other minorities. Further insight is offered by Philip J. Deloria[3], whose book *Playing Indian* delves deep into the American urge to construct and reconstruct "indianness", among other identities. Deloria's "other", which obviously resonates with the concept of the native, is "authentic". Authenticity is, it seems, also one of the main constituent of the primitive. It is quite clearly positive in tone, and Deloria explains why:

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[3] Philip J. Deloria is Professor in the Department of History at the University of Michigan. His father, Vine Deloria Jr. (1933–2005) was a well-known Native American author, scholar and activist.

> The authentic […] is a culturally constructed category [which] serves as a way to imagine and idealize the real, the traditional and the organic in opposition to the less satisfying qualities of everyday life. The ways people construct authenticity depend upon the traumas that define *the maligned inauthentic* and upon the received heritage that has defined the authentic in the past. (Deloria 1998, 101, italics mine.)

If the like those of Torgovnick's "primitivity", also the formation of Deloria's "authenticity" is dependent on western thinking. Conversely, the construction of "the maligned inauthentic" – a purely western idea that is only supposed to portray western culture – is wholly dependent on the constructed concept of authenticity which is then projected on the native ways of life. A recursive pattern emerges.

It is of some importance to note that there is an attribute that can be assigned to both the primitive and the authentic rather easily – that of the imaginary. With the concept "native", one has to be more careful, for obvious reasons. Whereas ideas of primitivity and authenticity are quite readily seen as figments of the western imagination, but the same does not apply to the native. This is because obviously no people, population or tribe considers itself "primitive". Primitivity is an opposition and a supposition. Likewise, if authenticity is interpreted, as in Deloria, as a constructed opposite for predetermined inauthenticity, both ends of the spectrum appear as purely fictive. The native, however, can be constructed in different ways. As suggested above, one of those ways is to make it yet another thing branded by its difference from "western", civilized" etc. However, another way would be to juxtapose native with non-native, in which case the slightly dubious "nativeness" would return its etymological roots and take on meanings connected to birth and origin. This ambiguity lends a special tone to the concept "native" and all its derivatives. Although the imaginary native denotes otherness, and thus figures as a player in the western minoritizing discourse, the concept itself preserves its potential for subversion.

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Shari Huhndorf's take on going native is (justifiably) bleak because her study *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* concentrates on western representations of Native Americans. Huhndorf also acknowledges the importance of Torgovnick's study but remarks on the exclusion of Native Americans from her discussion (Huhndorf 2001, 6). Huhndorf, in contrast, studies American Indians and white Americans' appropriation of nativeness for their own ends. This is probably why Huhndorf's does not refer to Torgovnick more extensively. Methodologically, she operates roughly within the same branch of cultural studies. Also, she treats the concept "native" the same way Deloria treats "the authentic". Huhndorf asserts that the rise of going native as a phenomenon took place in the late nineteenth century and it was a way for white America to express its ambivalent stance towards the new era of modernity. She argues that representations of the native took shape "in relation to modernity's ills" (ibid, 8).

Torgovnick's elaborations of the primitivist discourse illuminate Huhndorf's theorizing of native-going, even if Huhndorf's discussion is quite specific to the American context. As long as we are discussing discourses in purely linguistic terms, I do not see a problem in using disparate concepts side by side. I think it is quite reasonable to broaden up the horizon of possibilities here since the object of this study is to see *how* white authors position themselves within their works. If, in want of a better phrasing, it should prove more fruitful or convincing to say that one of them is going "primitive" rather than "native" then why not keep that option open? The point is not only to see how writers position themselves in relation to the native people they work among, or with, but also to see what kind of discursive and narrative positions they adopt, and also: what literary conventions or means they find appropriate in entering these literary and discursive positions and in relating the(ir) native experience.

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This elaboration of my research task sheds light on an important and rather puzzling problem located on the field of ethnographical survey and travel writing, the two fields of literary native-going most relevant to this study. The process in which cultures are turned into discourse also creates distance. While critical dismantling of dichotomies evidently has a merit to it, it is an act taking place on a very abstract level. This could be one reason why some scholars still feel compelled to go out there and record the lives and experiences of different cultures. Of course, in "recording experience" one has to re-enter the universe of discourse and submit to its workings. Also, interrogations abound: whose experience is it? Who represents it and for what purposes? This contradictory state of affairs everywhere pervades white travel writing, anthropology and other types of writing that attempt to give account of native cultures. It is something that this study will attempt not to lose sight of. Then again, before we can begin to engage in the discursive skirmish, it is absolutely imperative that someone should produce some texts. This has traditionally been one of the things anthropologists and travel writers do.

## 2.2 The crises of modern anthropology and travel writing

As mentioned above, going native is not a new phenomenon. However, it is virtually impossible to say exactly how old it is. On the other hand, there is a difference between finding the first Viking who jumped ship in the time immemorial and approximating the beginnings of the so-called "tradition". Only the latter is of any consequence in this context. Common sense says that the phenomenon itself must be positively ancient but only as old as the contact between "the natives" and the people who have dubbed them the natives. Whoever found the Americas first surely brought with them the first soon-to-be-native-goers on the American continent. However,

these common-sense assumptions hardly offer any historical insight. The concept of "going native" is based on a certain understanding of other concepts. It is a historical concept itself, and has arisen in a specific historical context. Also the "native" of going native is not just any "native" but a very definite one. Chapter 2.1 placed the concept in a discursive context. This chapter will attempt to give it a historical context.

Concerning going native in North America, Shari M. Huhndorf says that it has gradually become "a cherished American tradition" during the last century (Huhndorf 2001, 2). Canadian author Margaret Atwood arrives at the same time frame by placing the phenomenon in the colonial/postcolonial -context: "In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the age of the colonial wars receded, motifs of revenge and warfare gave way to themes of nostalgia" (Atwood 2004, 53). However, saying that the tradition dates back to the end of the 19th century most definitely does not mean that going native is only a century-old phenomenon[4]. Huhndorf and Atwood are talking about the tradition. By the end of the 19th-century "going native" could be seen as a distinct, observable cultural phenomenon that could be named. Prior to this period of time there had only been certain (disturbed) individuals running into the woods (and relapsing into savagery).

As we see, there is a way to find a temporal framework for the tradition of "going native". Yet, however far back in history we trace the origins of the tradition, widespread academic and general awareness of its social and political implications and interest in its role as a form of communication between the majority and minority perspectives has emerged as recently as in the 1980's and 1990's. The pre-1980's history of "going native" is a slippery issue. It could be argued that before certain theoretical devices were introduced the term was only a derogatory

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[4] See also e.g. Deloria 1998, 96, for a discussion of E. T. Seton and the boy scouts at the turn of the century, or Huhndorf 2001, 20, where she reviews J. W. Schultz's 1907 book *My Life as an Indian*.

figure of speech. Consequently, it may be surprising to find that actually some of these devices have been around since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. When examining the history of going native I would consider the anthropological writings of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the ground zero for theories of "going native". The ideas found in writings of Franz Boas, Margaret Mead and finally Claude Lévi-Strauss provided anthropology with the component of self-consciousness that has informed all anthropological survey since.

Thus, one of the ways to approach "going native" within a field of study that actually has produced texts is to turn towards anthropology. Franz Boas and his famous legacy have argued that realistic and insightful research on any cultural group should aim at achieving a view of the culture from the inside (see e. g. Young-Ing 2001, 234). It could be argued that this process of gaining a new kind of "ethnocentric" perspective, that of the other, is a form of "going native". But then, how could one determine that one was getting the picture from within the culture? How can one represent a culture in writing in the first place? Post-structural crisis of representation hit anthropology as hard as any field of study.

Therefore, in the 1970's, anthropology went through its post-structural identity crisis. The decade saw a great many anthropologists turn into cynics. Stanley Diamond, one of the leading scholars of the primitivist branch of anthropology dismissed anthropology as a field which once was "reified as the study of man" and had become "the study of men in crises by men in crises" (Diamond 1974, 401). Kathleen Gough, who was among the first anthropologists to call out for social responsibility on the field, called the discipline a child of western imperialism (Gough 1968, 12).

Edward Said's *Orientalism*, one of the key intellectual works of the late 1970's, also made an enormous impact on the field of anthropology. Said's main argument was that European

culture built upon a deliberate juxtaposition of imaginary "Occident" and "Orient" (1979, 3).

"The Orient" was an idea with "a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that

have given it reality and presence in and for the West" (ibid., 5). Said's influential study made

"the other" and "otherness" central concepts of cultural philosophy and criticism of the day.

Questions of identity and representation also held a mirror to anthropology and showed a field of

study capable of doing great harm on both sides of the representational barrier.

After Said, it has been widely held that studying other cultures means studying it in

relation to one's own culture. This dialectic has informed practically every colonial/postcolonial

site of discursive struggle. Just to give one example, Margaret Atwood gives the phenomenon a

Canadian context by stating in 1972: "The Indians and Eskimos have rarely been considered in

and for themselves: they are usually made into projections of something in the white Canadian

psyche" (Atwood, 1972).

In the aftermath of the crisis, the 1980's saw the emergence of academic studies on native

cultures in America, and for the first time a notable increase in academic writings produced by

Native American writers. Boasian ethnocentrism may have been a step in the right direction, but

it never managed to escape the problem of representation. None of the later revisions of this

anthropological method have been any less susceptible to convincing criticism leveled at the

very possibility of studying other cultures. It never helped that ethnography always carries

implications as concerns real-world politics and moral standards. A natural response was

therefore to let the native people speak for themselves – provided that their English was good

enough and that they could rise to vocal positions within the academic world. This does sound

like some twisted variation of going native, played backwards, but what choice is there? If

anthropology is a potentially neo-colonial effort, then the only true ethnocentric perspective is that which one gets in her own culture.

In late 20th-century anthropology this complication has been alleviated. Clifford Geertz reminds us that description of culture always includes a component of interpretation (Geertz 1973, 14–16); or as one of his catchphrases goes, "anthropologists don't study villages […] they study *in* villages" (ibid., 22). In Geertz, ethnography and its methods arrive at their own liberation through self-realization. James Clifford's view on the anthropologist's work is similarly open-ended. It is seen as "a cluster of disciplinary practices through which cultural worlds are *represented* (Clifford 1999, 8). Furthermore, fieldwork is actually seen as one type of travel (ibid.). This finally enables us to treat travel writing as textual contact zones, as Mary Louise Pratt does in her influential *Imperial Eyes* (Pratt 1992, 6–7).

Back in the bleak mid-century, however, the crisis of anthropology also sent its repercussions to the literary realm. Travel writing had become a popular, bastardized version of scientific ethnography. Claude Lévi-Strauss had spearheaded the attack when he wrote, originally in 1955:

> Travel and travellers are two things I loathe – and yet here I am, all set to tell the story of my expeditions. […] [T]hat sort of book enjoys a great and, to me, inexplicable popularity. Amazonia, Africa and Tibet have invaded all our bookstalls. Travel-books, expeditionary records, and photograph-albums abound; and as they are written or compiled with an eye mainly for effect the reader has no means of estimating their value. (Lévi-Strauss 1961, 17–18.)

Lévi-Strauss' criticism is surely aimed at both anthropology and anthropologists. However, he was particularly concerned of the direction that more casual study and presentation of other cultures had taken in its romantic exoticism. Lévi-Strauss shows here that anthropology was,

even before the 1970's, showing sings of critical introspection – even if the harshest critique was reserved for travel accounts of a lesser scientific weight, those of travel writers, that is.

Contemporary literary theorists are well aware of the problematic status of travel writing. According to Casey Blanton the age of innocence has long passed for travel literature. Blanton's own contribution to the discussion (2002) concentrates on defining the genre as it exists in the (post)modern period, not as something it once may have been. The most significant progression is detected in the gradual increase of subjectivity in the relationship between the self and the world. Ever since the 18th century the role of the narrating traveller has become more central (Blanton 2002, 13, 15, 19). In the early 20th century the theme of self-exploration finally began to take over the central position formerly occupied by exploration of the world. The motivation of travel writing was also questioned by travel writers themselves, a theme that rises to a new height in the postmodern era (ibid., 25–26). This links travel narrative to both modern anthropology and autobiography. The former also progressed towards critical introspection through the first half of the century. The latter, on the other hand, is now linked to travel writing through narrative conventions: travel narrative essentially becomes a travel memoir.

## 2.3 Finding the anthropologist and the "loathsome traveller" in literary representations

In the above, the degradation of the concept "native" has been witnessed. We have also seen Claude Lévi-Strauss vilifying travel writers and anthropologists deconstructing their own trade. Are we concluding, then, that attitudes and intentions do not make a difference? It seems that whether we are conscious of it or not, the representation of other cultures in writing is bound to

do injustice to the objectified subjects under scrutiny. Authors' good intentions, furthermore, are betrayed by the innately malignant logic of discourse. This is certainly one view that prevails in, for example, Native American writing after the 1980's (see e. g. Ruffo 2001, 6–7).

Yet, there are western authors who keep going native. My analysis of Abram, Brody and Chatwin aims to find out how the problematic position of an ethno-graphing traveller or traveling ethnographer is entered and what kind of narrative methods are employed in doing so. As the title of this section implies, there are a number of ways in which authors may express their (possible) ambivalence towards their own writing. Also, there are ways to create distance between the one who tells and that which is told. As it turns out, these three authors are anything but constant in positioning themselves in relation to what is told.

"Authors" should be understood as textual constructs. My analysis will place authors within the texts and understand them as something implied by and inferred from the texts. However, maintaining that the author is a purely textual being is going to be slightly problematic. Travel writing and anthropology have traditionally made the claim that the author, usually represented by the narrator in the text, has actually undertaken the very journey the literary product describes – not only as a textual doppelganger but "in person". Provisionally it is, however, quite possible to treat authors as exclusively textual agents. Since the authors have chosen to represent themselves textually, we have to accept that it is through and in the text that we encounter the author. The only author we come to know by reading a text is the author implied by and inferred from the text, and the only agency we can detect is textual agency.

My approach to authorial presence in my primary texts may be called narratological, although I am not using the term in its French structuralist sense. French *narratologie* was conceived in the late 1960's as an attempt at a structuralist typology of narrative texts. Its

theoretical roots ran through German *erzählenstheorie* of the 1950's, and back to the Russian formalists. Structuralist narratology may have failed to produce a comprehensive, systematic picture of all things narrative. However, it managed to give rise to a sprawling, ongoing debate concerning the basic definitions of narrative and narrativity. Typically, the very plausibility of such definitions and typologies is also under discussion. During the past decades this debate has managed to produce a wide array of different, sometimes incompatible, approaches to reading and analysing texts. My narratological toolkit is eclectic, and most of its theoretical concepts are connected to Russian formalism or French structuralism only tangentially. Yet, as it is my purpose to see how the workings of texts are connected to the central themes of my research, I will allow my primary texts to determine which theories will be tested against them.

The narratologically vital question of whether or not my primary sources are narrative texts seems strangely out of place: according to any of the widely recognized definitions they both are and are not. Some light on this liminal state will be shed in later chapters. Questions of narrativity are discussed in detail under chapters 3 and 4. Likewise, theories of fictionality and non-fiction occupy a central position in chapters 4 and 5. For now, little can be said about whether my primary sources are considered fictional or non-fictional. My readings set out with the assumption that these books are traversing the border – wherever it is. Also, from the outset I am willing to admit that I expect each of these works to incorporate forms of writing both narrative and (arguably) non-narrative. These possible traversals themselves are, naturally, of great interest and will be looked at in detail.

Provisionally I will opt for David Herman's definition of narrativity. According to Herman a prototypical narrative must fulfill four conditions. First of all it must be situated in a specific discourse context or occasion of telling. Herman calls this condition *situatedness*.

Secondly, a narrative must imply a temporal sequence for events which therefore become particular events unfolding in time. This is called *event sequencing*. Thirdly, these events typically introduce a storyworld with its human or human-like agents and then introduce disequilibrium into this world. Herman calls this *worldmaking/world disruption*. Fourthly, and finally, a narrative must involve the experience of "what it's like" to inhabit this changing storyworld. Further, the experience should highlight "the pressure of events on real or imagined consciousness affected by the occurrences at issue". This is Herman's already well known category called *what it's like*. It emphasizes the basic experiential quality of narrative and stresses that the presence of some kind of humanlike consciousness is requisite for the sense of narrativity. (Herman 2009, 9, 14, 17–22.)[5] This definition provides a conveniently broad working definition, and as such, it will not be put under close scrutiny in itself. It is, however, of great interest to my study when the discussion concerns the "non-narrative" aspects of my primary sources.

The approach in my analysis is inescapably narratological, since it is via narratological theories I should be able to study how my three authors bring themselves to their respective texts. My most basic narratological premise is, that the "I", who so often speaks in travel writing and other such accounts should be referred to as the narrator, a textual agent producing the narration. According to narratologist Richard Walsh (1997, 495) "the ubiquity of the narrator" is a fundamental tenet in Gérard Genette (1980), Franz Stanzel (1984), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan

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[5] Herman's definition aspires to synthesize previously discordant views of minimum definition of narrative. To summarize this endeavor, it could be said that the first condition conforms to the views of the communicative school of narratology: Wayne Booth, Seymour Chatman and James Phelan. The second and the third condition cover some of the structuralist and formalist views, but also some of the so called "possible worlds" –theory which has its roots in the tradition of analytical philosophy and logic, and which has been brought into the sphere of literary studies by Lubomir Doležel and Marie-Laure Ryan, among others. The fourth condition addresses the cognitive branch of narratology, especially Monica Fludernik's formulations on experientiality and its cognitive parameters.

(1983) and Gerald Prince (1982) – in other words, some of the most widely studied textbooks of narratology[6]. As mentioned above, the fact that authors appear in travel writing and anthropological accounts as "themselves" complicates their status as purely textual constructs, if only slightly. Technically, or narratologically, speaking, the agent telling the story is never the author but the narrator, even if the narrator says "I" and names herself after the author inhabiting the real world (section 5.1 discusses a case in point). When reading literature, we can only infer and interpret from the text what the real-world authors mean to say, or how they think. Basically the same idea is conveyed by saying that the readers come to know the author only in so far as she is implied by and inferred from the text – via the "implicit norms" of the text, as it were (see e. g. Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 87–88). We might, therefore, look for hints of attitudes and judgments anywhere in the text that for example portray the narrator in a particular light, which we presume is not intended or even "noticed" by the narrator. In these cases we may be witnessing the presence of the ephemeral "implied author".

The idea of the implied author, is linked to how traces of authorial presence can be found in texts. In this work, on the rare occasion that the concept is brought under discussion, it should be seen as a provisional term for apparent authorial influence in the text. For my discussion the central feature of the IA is that it does not speak, as such (see e. g. Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 87; Chatman 1978, 148). The narrating voice belongs to the narrator.

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[6] One also finds that the Russian formalists of the 1910-20's used the term rather consistently. For example, Boris Eichenbaum and Viktor Shklovsky use it in their famous essays on Gogol's *The Overcoat* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, respectively (Eichenbaum 2001, 109; Shklovsky 2001, 132). However, Walsh's "ubiquity" refers not only to the self-conscious narrating acts in Sterne and others, but to the notion of the narrator as the ever-present, never-fully-absent source of all narration. When Genette, for example, defines the narratorial aspect of narrative he refers to it as *the event* of narration: "not, however, the event that is recounted, but the event that consists of someone recounting something: the act of narrating taken in itself" (Genette 1980, 26).

The prospects of seeing the IA as the source of implicit ethical judgments or attitudes as concerns the narrator begs an interesting question. Would an IA treat ironically or disapprovingly a narrator that represents the real-life-author? Sometimes she would, it seems. This phenomenon is mostly encountered in fiction where the writer may appear as one character among others. This form of literature is commonly known as autofiction, and it also seems to offer ways to place "an author" of another kind into the text. This field of problematic is particularly central to chapter 5 of this thesis.

It has been argued that autofiction might challenge the division between fiction and non-fiction (see e. g. Vilkko 2009, 18, 30, passim.). For autofiction it makes little difference whether the story is obviously fictional or seemingly autobiographical. Danish scholar Henrik Skov Nielsen addresses a well known problem which since Käte Hamburger's *Die Logic der Dichtung* (1957) has been located between the conventions of epic narration and first-person, "autobiographical" narration. In Hamburger's view an act of third-person, epic narration creates the world it refers to, so that the sentences are neither true nor false but talk about "something that only exists by virtue of the sentences". First-person narration, by contrast, required the narrated world to exist prior to the act of narration. (Nielsen 2004, 134–135.)

Hamburger was unable to forfeit her intuition of the realness of the narrative act committed by an "I" often associated explicitly with the authors name. This is part of the "autobiographical contract" that readers unwittingly sign almost on a daily basis[7]. We trust that the author who most openly lends her own name and identity to the narrator has the least to hide. When signing the "fictional contract" we are less impressionable. Postmodernist literature should

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[7] The concepts of autobiographical and fictional contracts come from French critic Philip Lejeune. According to Lejeune the defining feature of autobiography was the presupposed identity between the author, the narrator and the protagonist. (Lejeune 1982, 193). See also Chapter 6.1 below.

by now have taught us not to trust any narrators, no matter who they claim to be, but old habits die hard. We might still be particularly susceptible to read the authorial first-person voice as the author's voice.

These theoretical debates, among others, figure strongly in my analysis. However, I wish not to reduce the morally and epistemologically problematic field of going native, or the question concerning the production of anthropological knowledge, to a bunch of formulations about the narrative formalities of my primary sources. After examining the textual practices through which the discourses of going native might operate in these texts, the texts should be questioned about their politics. Similarly, once the literary analysis of different narrative methods employed (or yielded to) by these authors has been carried out, we should wish to ask the motivation behind their employment.

# 3. David Abram

## 3.1 Introduction to an "Introduction" – narrative structures in *The Spell of the Sensuous*

Judging by his perplexing book *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram is no ordinary native-goer. First of all, his book is not the ordinary story about journeying and learning, at least not in any immediately recognizable way. Abram's book begins as a travel narrative but this narrative turns out to be just a prelude. It is actually in the middle part of the book, at its "heart", as it were, where the central thesis and accompanying theories are laid bare. The middle section, again, is not a travel narrative but an inquiry into phenomenological philosophy and cognitive theories of literacy and writing. Abram returns to the travel narrative in places, but it is only in

the first chapter of the book that this narrative appears "on its own", uninfluenced by the fact that there is another, very different type of text which actually forms the larger part of the body of text. This discrepancy is something that I find one of the most distinctive features of reading Abram.

In the middle parts of his book, Abram conducts a study of the aforementioned academic fields in a scholarly manner, only adding an occasional personal flourish here and there, a practice known as writing in one's own style. While Abram makes it clear that he did go travelling among indigenous peoples native to the places he visits, the real subjects of his academic study are phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the scholars studying the relationship of oral and literary cultures, such as Eric Havelock and Walter J. Ong. None of these western thinkers are "indigenous" subjects nor do their respective accomplishments concern native or indigenous cultures. Rather, their scholarly interests lie in the roots of the European culture. Abram himself does not explicitly claim to represent in detail any indigenous belief systems or customs. He is not an anthropologist and hardly does anything unambiguously "ethnographic". How does Abram fit, then, within the framework of this study? This question takes a while to answer, but by the end of this section it should become apparent that Abram can be seen as "going native" in his book. Textual evidence of this part of Abram's literary journey might be scant, which in turn might be a quite deliberate part of his strategy as a writer.

To begin with, it is possible to argue that actually Abram's book wears its "heart" on its "sleeves", or close to them, at least. What frames the theoretical discussion is the heart of it all. Abram's theoretical framework is distinctly western and academic, yet he makes it apparent that the point of origin for the whole study is located outside theoretical frames and academic study.

This is not surprising since Abram makes no effort to conceal his outspoken environmentalism. For this, he should only be commended. He is writing for a purpose, and it is to reach beyond academic circles and rigid scientism, to address the western civilization as a whole. This is significant as it, among other things, accounts for the somewhat "popularizing" tone his survey assumes at several points. Also, it might explain why his travel narrative is so elliptical, although there are other possible explanations.

Abram's travel narrative is, indeed, elliptical, as will be discussed below. However, the book opens with a memorable scene at Bali. We see nothing elliptical here:

> Late one evening I stepped out of my little hut in the rice paddies of eastern Bali and found myself falling through space. Over my head the black sky was rippling with stars, densely clustered in some regions, almost blocking the darkness between them, and more loosely scattered in other areas, pulsing and beckoning to each other. Behind them all streamed the great river of light with its several tributaries. Yet the Milky Way churned beneath me as well, for my hut was set in the middle of a large patchwork of rice paddies, separated from each other by narrow two-foot-high dikes, and these paddies were all filled with water. […] [T]here seemed no ground in front of my feet, only the abyss of star-studded space falling away forever.
> [… ] I might have been able to reorient myself, to regain some sense of ground and gravity, were it not for a fact that confounded my senses entirely: between the constellations below and the constellations above drifted countless fireflies, their lights flickering like stars, some drifting up to join the clusters of stars overhead, others, like graceful meteors, slipping down from above to join the constellations underfoot […]. (*SotS*, 3–4.)

Beginnings always carry a special meaning (see e. g. Rabinowitz 2002, 300), even on the sole virtue of them coming first, before everything else. As Peter Brooks has suggested, beginnings also create a tension, a premonitory expectation of the end. This tension, according to Brooks, takes the form of a metaphor, meaning that the relationship between the beginning and the ending must be that of both resemblance and difference (Brooks 1992, 91). The beginning must give structure to what comes after, but the ending must also show the beginning in a changed light. Further, the basic structure of plot requires beginnings to seek out the "right" ending

(Brooks 1992, 96, 103–104).[8] To put it plainly, when Abram's book begins with a description of a scene such as the one above, we make a number of assumptions of what will follow. We expect this scene, this beginning to be justified and re-reflected by what comes after. By the time the end of the book is reached we expect to have gained a new reading of the beginning, which will be influenced by the ending itself.

Further borrowing Brooks' vocabulary, the beginning creates a desire for a narrative[9]. In Abram, however, the fulfillment of this desire is abruptly postponed indefinitely. Calling this narrative move elliptical is a gross understatement. What follows the narrative beginning is not a middle section gradually digressing towards the right ending (see e. g. Brooks 1992, 92) but what seems an utter disappearance of the whole narrative (a temporary disappearance, as the reader with the newly aroused narrative craving must hope). What follows is another beginning.

Some might say that what sets in motion at the second beginning is the heart of Abram's work. As evocative and "sensuous" as the first beginning was, its distinctively narrative qualities will be absent from much of what follows. We may find a number of reasons why the book is structured like this. The only option I find completely unthinkable is that the first beginning is somehow redundant. As suggested above, it might actually be the most significant part of the book.

Abram himself gives an explanation for organizing his book in this manner. He does it in the preface of his book. According to Gérard Genette, prefaces do not belong to the text proper

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[8] Brooks' discussion of the question of the "right" ending is too elaborate to be explained here in detail. To briefly recap, his approach is to read Freud's essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" as a metaphoric expression for the basic structure of the plot. The essay concerns the interplay of the life and death drives and partly disputes Freud's earlier thought, where the "pleasure principle" was seen as the motivating force behind human behavior as concerns desire. Brooks parallels Freud's desire with the "narrative desire" and life and death drives with the impulse to go on indefinitely and to reach the end (return to the state of pre-narrative "rest") as quickly as possible (see also Brooks 1992, ).

[9] I will look into this "desire" and its Freudian connotations in chapter 4.

but are a part of the paratext (see e.g. Lyytikäinen 1991, 148). Indeed, not everybody reads prefaces, or thinks they are meant to be read first, or at all. A book will not turn into an abridged version of itself if its preface is omitted. It is, however, in the preface of *SotS* where Abram gives his explanation for what he does. He claims that his book is structured by a number of dualities. He says that his book has two goals, and that it has been written with two audiences in mind. On one hand, Abram is aiming to provide "a set of powerful conceptual tools" to his environmentalist colleagues who are "already struggling to make sense of […] our current estrangement from the animate earth" (*SotS*, x). On the other hand, Abram wishes to provoke academics, who he thinks have remained "strangely silent in response to the rapid deterioration of wild nature". (*SotS*, x.) Here, Abram also comments on his two introductions. Even though Abram does not say it, it seems obvious that the two beginnings correspond to the two audiences. One introduction is "personal", resonating with the sympathetic audience of like-minded readers, the other "technical", aiming to convince skeptical academics.

Despite Abram's claims of a structural duality of his work, I feel compelled to side with Brooks' ideas on the importance of *the* beginning. In a sense, a book can only begin once. It is impossible not to be lured under the narrative spell of Abram's first introduction. Abram actually advises readers who "have little patience with philosophical matter" to feel free to skip the second, technical introduction but he never recommends skipping the first one to those less inclined to hear a lengthy anecdote (*SotS*, xi).

Therefore, it seems that Abram recognizes the importance of his first introduction in establishing the reader's mindset. After all, there seems to be no question which introduction should come first, and therefore it seems that their order is programmatic to the reading of the book as a whole. Likewise, this order is programmatic to Abram's argument. The first

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introduction, in a way, embeds the second one in a narrative structure. Strangely, this seems to lend the "technical" part of Abram's book a narrative quality that it would not have were it not for the framing travel narrative. As Brooks suggests: "We read the incidents of narration as 'promises and annunciations' of final coherence […]. [W]e read only those incidents and signs that can be constructed as promise and annunciation, enchained toward a construction of significance […]." (Brooks 1992, 94.) I would suggest that in reading Abram we do this even when reading the text of the technical part of his inquiry, even if by then the text has lost most of its narrativity. The narrative mindset established in the first introduction lingers on. Abram does his part in feeding the reader's narrative craving by resorting, time and time again, to language that recalls his travel narrative.

To summarize, Abram claims that his book is structurally informed by a duality of experiential narrative and scholarly writing. Yet, it could be said that it is his first introduction that structures the reading of the second introduction, as well as everything that follows. Furthermore, Abram's scholarly argument and method thus appear to be determined by his experiences among other cultures; consecution brigs forth the impression of causation.

What really bridges the gaps between fields of study as disparate as phenomenology and the linguistics of Kabbalah is precisely the attempt to communicate the primary experience in a language which carries both academic persuasiveness and a hint of the original mystery of the life-changing experience. When Abram spells out his double intentions and his assumption of two audiences, he might be somewhat overemphasizing the assumed duality of his goals. Is this to assuage his two audiences, so that both may think they will be able to read the book without making amends to either the mystical or the technical part, depending on which audience they

belong to? It is difficult to say. It seems, however that this coexistence of the scientific and the mystical poses problems to both discourses.

The problems arise when the two worldviews need to justify each other's presence in Abram's discussion. It could be said that Abram's scientific writing serves as a "translating" discourse to a personal experience, which for the virtue of it being experience, was definitely not verbalized in any philosophical or scientific language (which Abram would be the first to admit!). In order to keep the technical text grounded in the experiential, traces of the language he employed to represent his experience colour seep into his scientific discourse. There is another side to the matter, which is possibly more interesting in relation to the way Abram writes about his experience and his 'going native'.

Since the experiences related in the travel narrative must propel the whole of Abram's interdisciplinary theorizing via certain discourses of the western world, Abram seldom gives us specific information of the peoples he stays and studies with. His travel narrative is elliptical in more than one way. It is almost as if Abram feels either obliged or tempted to erase the culturally specific features of the indigenous peoples he meets. He might feel obliged to be non-specific since he might consider it inappropriate to write about sacred practices of any given native people, especially when he is applying ideas extracted from these traditions in tandem with purely western thought. On the other hand, he might feel tempted to remain elliptical, since that way the conditions that surrounded the experience that inspired the whole philosophical endeavor remains conveniently vague, which allows for vague justification for the imposition of theoretical, philosophical and scientific frameworks on an experience that originated as something these western discourses could not touch.

To scrutinize the doubts expressed above we must see how Abram creates ellipsis and other ruptures in the narrative time and space in his travel narrative, but also how experientially motivated language infiltrates the philosophical and scientific writing. The following section takes a look at how time and space bend around Abram's travel narrative, and one after that aims to finally answer the question of how the author 'goes native'.

## 3.2 The stretched spell of the sensuous

The beginning of *The Spell of the Sensuous* makes a promise of a narrative. The reader is invited to participate in this narrative, wherever possible between the long stretches of philosophical or linguistic ruminations which do get rather technical (and non-narrative) at times. The distinction between the two discourses is not always clear-cut, however. This is why reader may get drawn into the narrative not only between two bodies of perceptibly separated theoretical discussions but also in the midst of a paragraph.

In what follows I am not implying that Abram is deliberately trying to confuse the reader. Rather, I believe that this manner of writing is employed as a method of synthesis of the two discourses. However, if Abram is, indeed, attempting to create a joint language of personal experience and science, it begs the question why he was so intent on emphasizing at the beginning certain dualities that inform his work.

And yet, confusion is one way of putting it. Abram does things to the narrative texture that confound the readers' sense of who is narrating what, from where and from which time. The effects of this confusion on the reader are reinforced by the conventions of travel narrative and

fictional narrative acts in general. More specifically, it is the juxtaposition of the personal, experiential narrative and the scientific (non-)narrative that creates this effect.

These textual alterations complicate my research in at least two significant ways. First of all, it must be asked what this means in relation to the narrator, the agent who says "I" in the text. Secondly, if the temporal and spatial positions of narration shift around, we might wish to question how this affects the relationship between the narrator and the "author", as implied by the text as a whole. Then we might ask whether this implied author might give us clues of why narrative acts unfold the way they do in *SotS*.[10] The question of the narrator is central in Abram's book. As discussed in section 2.3, readers are bound by the "autobiographical contract", and therefore willing by convention to identify the speaking "I" of the text with the author. But where is the narrator in the following excerpt and from which point of view is his account of events given?

> The daily gifts of rice kept the ant colonies occupied – and, presumably, satisfied. Placed in regular, repeated locations at the corners of various structures around the compound, the offerings seemed to establish certain boundaries between the human and ant communities; by honoring this boundary with gifts, the humans apparently hoped to persuade the insects to respect the boundary and not enter the buildings.
> *Yet I remained puzzled by my hostess's assertion* that these were gifts "for the spirits." *To be sure, there has always been some confusion* between our western notion of "spirit" (which so often is defined in contrast to matter or "flesh"), and the mysterious presences to which tribal and indigenous cultures pay so much respect. I have already alluded to […] (*SotS*, 13. Italics mine.)

Here Abram is recounting how he came to understand the difference between the western and native Balinese concepts of "spirit". The narrative trick here is that first the narrator stages himself in Bali as this lengthy anecdote unfurls. He talks to locals, trying to grasp the meaning of offerings given to "household spirits". At first he struggles to understand what was the significance of the small platters of rice that were set at the corners of the buildings, and why

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[10] I still maintain that the IA does not speak. That is why the IA may only give clues of intentions.

they were mysteriously emptied during the night. He then realizes that it is the ants making use of the leftover rice, and that actually those offerings help keep the villagers' houses relatively free of ants.

However, it is what the narrator does immediately after the realization that is of most interest here. The emphasized expressions in the above excerpt are of crucial importance. As the new paragraph begins it seems that the Balinese travel narrative goes on: "Yet I remained puzzled by my hostess's assertion […]" . "My hostess" refers to the Balinese context, and "yet I remained" seems to fix this narration to the time of the travel experience, through both the use of the past tense, which is consistent with the rest of the narrative, and the "yet". After this sentence, however, time and place shifts. The text moves to a less personal level of experience and dissolves time and place by wielding the generalizing, historical "there has always been". In the former sentence we could still sense the individual mind, temporally and spatially situated, working through a conundrum it gradually comes to terms with. In the latter, however, the narrating mind is years and miles away. It has gained perspective. It has done studies on the subject. It uses language in a way that entails reading and writing (because brackets are inaudible, but also because they lend their insides a quality of an afterthought of lesser consequence, via typography, and not necessarily justified by the substance of their contents).

Is this not, however, something quite conventional? Not everybody would see anything wrong with what Abram does. Abram book is not a novel. Its quality is not measured by its narrative finesse. Is it not true that we might encounter narrative shifts like this in any book mixing narrative reminiscence and academic writing? It is true, but why change the discourse mid-paragraph?

If this was the only case of a narrative shift as described above it should not detain us any longer. However, Abram makes similar shifts all the time. The effect on the reader is at times striking, at times slight. When a change occurs in the middle of a paragraph it seems to slip unnoticed more easily. Could this be a strategy?

Rather than guess at Abram's intentions, we could attempt to better describe the situation. What the "narrative shift" introduced above actually does is create an abrupt distance between two times and places of narration. However, distance between the time of experience and the time of narration is a conventional and conventionalized aspect of first-person narrative. Narratologist Dorrit Cohn theorizes this distance in her classic textbook *Transparent Minds*. Cohn distinguishes the "experiencing self" from the "narrating self" and stresses that the variable relationship of the two along the axis of temporality is a central feature of first person retrospective narration (Cohn 1978, 145). In fiction – Cohn's province – this relationship is often foregrounded by the fact that the *narrating I* may provide judgment or comment on the past as experienced by the *experiencing I* in a way that makes the distance between the two *I*'s perceivable. This distance shows the *experiencing I* as the object and the *narrating I* as the subject (ibid., 143).

Rather than foregrounded, it seems that in Abram some measures are taken to make this distance less conspicuous. Abram could easily stress the temporal distance between "I remained puzzled by my hostess's assertion" and "[t]o be sure, there has always been some confusion". He could have marked the latter as a reflection upon the memory of the former. He could say, for example: "Later I came to realize that there has always been…" or "It is easy to see now that my puzzlement was linked to the fact that…", in which case we could clearly tell that the in the former sentence the narrating self refers to the experience of the experiencing self and therefore

is engaged in a retrospective narration (and that the locus of narration is still in Bali). Similarly, we could see that in the latter sentence the narrating self is referring to the time of narration, or at any rate to a time after the experience that is the subject matter of the narration.

Shifts in narrative time are a literary convention established since the *Iliad* which famously begins *in medias res* (as does *The Spell of the Sensuous*, incidentally). Gérard Genette affirms the conventionality of the manipulation of the narrative time. He calls temporal displacements *anachronies*. He even asserts that anachronies are more common than their rather hypothetical point of contrast – a narrative with a perfect temporal correspondence between the telling and the told. (Genette 1980, 36.) What is so remarkable about Abram's treatment of time, then?

Abram's shift from one sentence to another is temporal and spatial, but it is more than that. The degree of narrativity also changes. David Herman's conditions of narrativity are not met unless there is a way to situate the narrative act in time and place, and unless some center for its mediated experience can be found (see p. 28 above). Herman himself adds that the less a text or a discourse centers on representing "an experiencing […] consciousness, the less amenable that text or discourse will be to interpretation in narrative terms" (Herman 2009, 21). Our doubts are confirmed when we realize that there is no "I" in the narration following the shift. In fact, the very presence of a narrating agent is questionable after the pronoun disappears and the retrospective past tense transforms into the flexible and temporally vague present perfect tense. In Abram, narrativity is evidently questionable at times, but what if it resumes after a while?

The question concerning the non-narrative qualities of Abram's text should be evaded for now. At any rate, it is not necessary for our purposes to place too great an emphasis on finding narrativity everywhere in the text. Nor is it necessary to anthropomorphize the narrator too far

and require s/he/it identifies him/her/itself by saying "I" at every possible juncture. This is because the *sense* of narrativity does not disappear immediately upon a shift such as the one above unless the text marks the shift from narrative to non-narrative rather unambiguously. Abram's text does not, and that is why the narrative spell lingers on.

As shown by Cohn, Genette and others, narrative time may be manipulated within certain limits. The confusion created in Abram might be, in part, the result of the unexpected warping of temporal and spatial relations. It could, however, also be the result of transgressing another blurred borderline.

Ever since the Russian formalists, especially Boris Tomashevsky, a distinction has been drawn between the way things follow *from* each other or simply follow each other. Narrative is organized either according to sequence or consequence. Since narratives always unfold in time, and therefore something always comes after something else, the two organizing principles are often confused. Kai Mikkonen's article on travel as a metaphor for narrative asserts that Tomashevsky thought that a properly narrative text should make causal connections between events, in addition to their temporal sequencing (Mikkonen 2007, 290). Mikkonen points out that both principles of organization, temporal and causal are crucial to narrative, but sometimes difficult to tell apart. He also remarks that the reader is liable to see causality wherever there is consecution. (ibid., 291.) Mikkonen also quotes Tzvetan Todorov's claim: "the logical series is in the reader's eyes a much stronger relation than the temporal series; if the two go together, he sees only the first" (quoted in ibid., 303). In reading Abram it seems that the reader might even be willing to let the gaping temporal distance be closed by the logical proximity of two things that follow each other in the text.

Roland Barthes goes as far as to suggest that the confusion of temporal sequencing and causality is a symptom and a telltale sign of narrativity:

> Everything suggests, indeed, that the mainspring of narrative is precisely the confusion of consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read as what is *caused by*; in which case narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by Scholasticism in the formula *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* – a good motto for Destiny. (Barthes 1977, 94; italics in the original.)

Barthes may help us get to the core of strangeness in Abram's writing; only if we ask a dubious question, though. Would David Abram mind us reading his reflection on western dualism as called forth, even *caused* by his experience in the Balinese village? It may not be too far fetched to argue that Abram is trying to convince his readers that they are being brought back to the point of origin. If the real-world Bali with its fireflies and ants is one point along the cyclical circumference, the diametrically opposite point reached by following the cycle of thought, study and mental revision would be the completion of *The Spell of the Sensuous*. The readers are persuaded to come along for the rest of the cycle, back to the experiential beginnings of the movement. The problem is that the experience will never become accessible to readers. They are left with the artifact that tries to pass for experience.

We could take an associative leap from the word "Destiny" in Barthes and ask whether Abram might not actually think that the existence of his book *is* the *manifest consequence* of his experience. In contrast, we might ask whether he could be simply encouraging his readers to take the same journey, knowing that his experience and the book inhabit different cycles inaccessible to each other, but at the same time knowing how powerfully writing and reading figure in our lives.

Guessing at writers intentions certainly is a doomed enterprise, but one has to wonder. There are patterns that might yet suggest something. The story with ants, for example, is in every way a typical Abram anecdote. There are several others like it. These stories usually involve an unexpected encounter with non-human nature, which reminds the narrator that only by shedding his preconceptions is he going to be able to perceive his surroundings clearly. The story with ants is also a clever parable of what a careful anthropologist should and should not do. Abram's narrator clings on to the western, dualistic concept of "spirit" and almost fails to see half of what happens. Also, as noted earlier, the manipulation of narrative space-time is also typical of Abram's book, as is erasing the most obvious signs of the acts of manipulation. Abram might also welcome the fact that consequence and consecution are often difficult to tell apart. Even if the real authors with their intentions are locked on a trajectory that will never cross the path of the real reader, we must allow ourselves to suspect that all these features are not random and have their implications.

One feature of Abram's narrative, shockingly obvious to some readers and probably wholly unnoticeable to others is that little of his writing concerns other humans. This might not pose a problem to someone studying Abram in a philosophical or ecocritical frame of reference. Both approaches would be more than legitimate. Within the framework of going native this is going to be an enormous issue. Abram goes to Bali, Himalayas but also to "native Indian reservations" in America (*SotS*, 27). How come a few shamans are the only people the readers ever meet? Why is Abram erasing the specifics of his experience among the various indigenous peoples? His "reciprocity" with the surrounding nature is made very explicit but his interaction with other humans, inescapably essential to his experience, is strangely silenced. Again, there could be a number of reasons for this, with different implications as concerns his going native.

Furthermore, the narrative peculiarities of Abram's writing have something to do with answering the question of where all the native people are hiding, or hidden.

## 3.3 Gone Native – A sorcerer shopping for a frame of reference

As we know, the opening scene of *The Spell of the Sensuous* takes place in Bali. Fireflies are the first beings the readers encounter, but regardless of how great an impression these insects had on Abram, it was not for them he traveled to Bali. Abram was on a research grant, and the purpose of his travel was to study magic, or more specifically:

> […] the relationship between magic and medicine, first among the traditional sorcerers, or *dukuns*, of the Indonesian archipelago, and later among the *dzankris*, the traditional shamans of Nepal. One aspect of the grant was somewhat unique: I was to journey into rural Asia not outwardly as an anthropologist or academic researcher, but as a magician in my own right, in hopes of gaining a more direct access to the local sorcerers. (*SotS*, 4.)

It is not surprising then that Abram's methods are not all that ethnographical. It is surprising, however, that while Abram calls the shamans by their Indonesian and Nepalese names, respectively, he does not mention any tribe or a people by name[11]. It is difficult to determine whether this is a gesture of discretion or neglect. On one hand he might be displaying caution as concerns representing native cultures. His description of social realities of different peoples is either elliptical or simply inadequate. This could be read as an acknowledgment of the problems of ethnographic writing. Especially when it comes to describing the "religious" or "sacred" practices of a people saying less might be the more respectful way. The teachings of Carlos

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[11] Throughout the book the common designation Abram uses when talking about natives is "oral" or "indigenous". These descriptions usually accompany abroad generalizations of such peoples. It is difficult to condemn this practice, since Abram is has his reason for stressing the orality of the cultures he visits.

Castaneda heavily overshadow the type of writing which claims to represent the secret practices of indigenous shamans. Castaneda contended that he was initiated to the secrets of the Yaqui tribe native to the Mexican state of Sonora. He received his Ph.D. for an anthropologically dubious, (distinctly narrative, we might add) manuscript which was later issued as a part of the bestselling "Don Juan" series. Later it was shown that Castaneda's anthropological study was little more than a hoax, and it was not even the most elaborate of its kind[12]. Abram, on the other hand, is very careful not to describe any particular shamanistic practices. His book is not selling "native wisdom", but there is something suspicious going on.

As mentioned above, it is difficult to tell why Abram is so roundabout with his description. If this is not exclusively a gesture of respect, then how should we approach this hushed feature of Abram's narration, otherwise vividly illustrative? The questionable consequence of Abram's respectful silence as concerns specific native tribes and their customs is that it allows him to use unverifiable sources, so to speak. He can make generalizations and validate his statements with vague sources. He could therefore be accused of false representation of native cultures, if he, indeed, represented native cultures. The fact that he does not perpetrate extensive representation of the cultures he visits does not solve the problem, however. As discussed above, the powerful narrative beginning of *SotS* constitutes the initial horizon of expectations for the reader. Therefore, we could say that he presents his experiential narrative as the prime mover behind his theoretical discussion. This experience entails extensive going

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[12] For a particularly vicious assault on Castaneda see Ward Churchill's essay "Carlos Castaneda: The Greatest Hoax since Piltdown Man" (available in Churchill 1992). In addition to pointing out a startling number of inaccuracies and falsehoods in Castaneda's anthropological accounts Churchill asserts that the truly astounding thing is that no member of the committee at UCLA, who happily granted Castaneda his doctorate, had any expertise on the Yaqui. (Churchill 1992, 46–58, passim.)

native, but Abram chooses to dissolve the specifics of his life among any particular indigenous peoples.

He arrives at this faded picture by using the narrative methods discussed above. Where he slides from temporally and spatially situated, experiential narrative to the disembodied philosophical meditation, we can sense that he leaves out all the "studying among" native peoples and makes it seem as if his philosophical realizations were in fact directly caused by his immediate, personal experience, which he keenly shares with his readers. The literary outcome of this process appears thus: "The traditional or tribal shaman, I came to discern, acts as an intermediary between the human community and the larger ecological field[…]" (*SotS*, 7). Abram's narrator does not say when and where he "came to discern" this. As Barthes noted, consecution may be read as consequence; and if the writer chooses to be vague about whether what comes after *follows from* or simply *follows* an earlier event, it is surely bound to happen.

Does this mean that Abram is a neo-colonial impostor appropriating native knowledge without giving the indigenous peoples their due credit? It may not be as simple as that. Abram is not an anthropologist and his object of study is not indigenous cultures but "magic". Abram often emphasizes that he met shamans as a fellow magician, and that when the shamans, healers and sorcerers saw that he had "at least some rudimentary skill in altering the common field of perception" (*SotS*, 5) he was invited to participate in the tribal shamanism. I would suggest that Abram aims to convince readers that the interface between the indigenous shamans and him is magic. Hence, Abram pays little heed to the common tribesman. Therefore, it might be more accurate to state that Abram is "going shaman" rather than "native".

Also, by using magic as the main point of reference between himself and the other cultures he is able to arrive at ecological concerns. This, lest we forget, is the field where Abram

really strives to make a difference. The problem is that Abram deduces the grounds for his environmental thought from his experience among the natives he talks so little of. As shown above, this could make his whole discussion untenable.

As a final piece of criticism, I will suggest that Abram's elliptical and vague references to the peoples he traveled among makes his writing a potential site of some fundamental issues concerning the tradition of going native. As Abram strives to prove the assertion that "oral", "indigenous" peoples practice a more sustainable lifestyle than the "civilized" west, he is inadvertently participating in the discursive play of dichotomies. Even if calling certain cultures "oral" is not exactly misleading, and even though "indigenous" is a relatively neutral term, Abram is nevertheless veering towards the essentialising discourses of the western world. Not unlike "the primitive" in Torgovnick and "the authentic" in Deloria, "oral" and "indigenous" frequently appear solely for the purpose of marking the difference between the western, civilized world and its others:

> What was it that made possible the heightened sensitivity to extrahuman reality, the profound attentiveness to other species and to the Earth that is evidenced in so many of these cultures, and that had so altered my awareness that my senses now felt stifled and starved by the patterns of my own culture? Or, reversing the question, what had made possible the absence of this attentiveness in the modern West? For Western culture, too, has its indigenous origins. (*SotS*, 27.)

The opposition is obvious: when one reverses the question of why indigenous cultures are the way they are, one ends up with the question of why the western culture is *not* that way. The above excerpt is strangely reminiscent of what Shari Huhndorf says about going native: "Going native as a collective phenomenon […] expressed a widespread ambivalence about modernity, and it is in relation to modernity's ills that these Native representations took shape" (Huhndorf 2001, 8). Also Abram resorts to the primitivist discourse by stating that the Western culture has

"indigenous origins". Abram's redundant expression gives him away: he is using the term "indigenous" as if it meant non-industrial, non-literate, non-western and therefore "natural" and "original"[13]. If Abram sees in the oral, indigenous cultures the cure to "modernity's ills" why is his theoretical discussion revolving around the western tradition of phenomenology and linguistics? And further, if the "indigenous origins" of the western culture may contain its salvation, why is Abram not an out-and-out primitivist?

To answer these questions I would have to offer my own interpretation of Abram's position. Abram is, first and foremost, an environmentalist. He keeps his distance to the militant ecoprimitivism because he is a realist and also a philanthropist. Abram's fascination with shamanism, furthermore, can be read as a metaphor of how he sees himself. In *SotS*, Abram goes to great lengths trying to explain the shaman's position in relation to her community. Abram's main argument is that the shaman is primarily a mediator between the human and the non-human (or extrahuman) nature. In writing *SotS* Abram, too, assumes the position of a mediator. As mentioned above in passing, his technical, philosophical discourse could be seen as "translating" another discourse. Phenomenology and the cognitive linguistics of orality would then be used as a metalanguage for a language which remains inaccessible to the readers, the non-verbal language of Abram's experience.

Abram falls pray to several complications that seem to arise in ethnographical writing. We do not have to look the other way when he resorts to essentialism and appears insensitive to the differences among the myriad of disparate traditional practices and ways of thinking. However, rather than dismiss Abram as a fraudulent neo-colonist we could perhaps say that he

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[13] Etymologically and semantically "indigenous" is basically interchangeable with "native". Both refer to something that has been born where it lives.

simply fails to defy the deep-rooted western discourses built on oppositions. As far as going native is concerned, Abram needlessly eradicates the specifics of his experience among other cultures. It is, however, difficult to determine why this is done. Everything tells us that going native is definitely an apt expression for what Abram does. In *Spell of the Sensuous* it is the precondition for everything that unfolds, including his meditations on western philosophy and linguistics. We might wonder whether Abram's book would not make a more persuasive ecological argument were it not so stubbornly insisting that the experience found in the (silenced) process of going native underlies the whole discussion. Abram's somewhat uneasy claim on the duality of his work suggests that he might approve of our wondering.

Elsewhere, Abram explicitly comments on (and demonstrates) the ethnographical problem:

> It's very dangerous and wrong, really, to generalize at all about cultures that, even those in existence still today, are so different from one another, I mean, outrageously different in their beliefs, customs, ways of life, and styles of intelligence and grace. One other commonality that one finds in virtually every oral, deeply oral, culture is that not just that everything is alive, but that everything speaks. That everything has, at least potentially, the power of meaningful expression. (Abram 2004.)

This awareness is arguably missing in some of *The Spell of the Sensuous*. Then again, it is a literary work, and what is, all things considered, "dangerous and wrong", is also necessary and unavoidable in literature, where considering all things is not really an option.

## 4. Hugh Brody

There is an obvious link between the otherwise remarkably different works that are *Spell of the Sensuous* and *Maps & Dreams*. Whereas the former makes a somewhat surprising claim of

duality, which on a closer inspection proves slightly misleading, the latter is from the outset an explicitly dual enterprise. Abram's book plays on the narrative expectations founded at the narrative beginnings of his survey. These expectations guide our reading of the work as a whole. Brody, on the other hand, is quite outspoken about the double nature of his work. Like Abram, he introduces the twofold aim of his book in its preface. As with Abram, we might wonder about the relationship between a preface and the body of text that this preface prefaces. In the preface, Brody outlines the structure of his book and makes explicit his double intentions as concerns, for example, audiences. However, he also states a unified goal for his work. However, this goal seems to Brody attainable only by juggling two different approaches:

> *Maps and Dreams* presents both findings and the way in which the project was shaped by a group of Indians. It is a book of anecdotes as well as a research report, its structure being the result of an attempt to meet two different needs. The problem is one of audience; or the intimately related one of documentary devices; or an awkward tension between *a wish to maintain a sense of universal concern without losing a feeling for a particular place*. […] In the case of writings that grow from and have their significance in resistance to colonialism, the problems can be overwhelming. There is a need for scientific detail, evidence that must stand the test of scrutiny by academics and cross-examination in uncomprehending or hostile courtrooms; *yet it is also essential to bring to life unfamiliar points of view*. (*M&D*, xiii–xiv; italics mine.)

Brody says that the testimonial integrity of his work is of great importance. Yet, he also proclaims a need for a narrative. There must be a sense of "a particular place" as well as an attempt to "bring to life" different viewpoints. The latter may be understood as an establishment of experiential locus, an expression of the desire to convey "what it's like" (cf. p. 28 above).

In the totality of what needs to be said a significant role is played by things that cannot be mediated by the means of "research report or "documentary devices".  Brody also suggests here that "scientific detail" and "unfamiliar points of view" are best conveyed by two different sets of literary modes of expression: "anecdotes" and "research report", each of which addresses a

different audience. However, this is not necessarily the impression one gets from reading the book. In fact, it becomes questionable whether speaking about two separate approaches, discourses or authorial positions is justified at all.

Another point worth making about the above excerpt is that Brody addresses in it the post-colonial status of his writing. It is as if the scientific discourse addresses the real need for real action and social change, whereas the narrative discourse provides the grounds for empathy and mental reassessment of the colonial issues Native Americans still struggle with. Brody's wish to express "universal concern", seems to imply that his book could be read as not only speaking of, or for, the particular tribe he lived with, but as saying something more general about the post-colonial relations of the western cultures and the First Nations or other indigenous populations. Even so, the sense of particularity he conveys may also be seen as an attempt to pay homage to the real-world people whose uniqueness this claim to universality might otherwise undermine. David Abram's omission of particulars in his description of native lives may be interpreted as a respectful acknowledgment of the problematic of representation, but, as discussed, it could also be read otherwise. Brody, conversely, seems to strive towards recognition of this problematic by a strategy of particularization. Brody effectively acknowledges the specialty of the people he became the most intimate with, but at the same time he risks representing them, even narrativizing them: *fictionalizing* them, some might say.

## 4.1 *Maps & Dreams* in the light of theories of narrativity and fictionality

Now we must turn to the question of how Brody's work is and is not narrative. A related question will also be addressed: how the book wavers between the conventions of fictional

narrative and non-fictional non-narrative. There are two distinct concepts at play here, narrative and fiction, and they should be tentatively be seen as independent of each other

As shown above, Brody's preface hints at narrativity. As David Herman suggests, narrative should be situated in a context of telling and place its events in a sequence taking place in a world created by the narrative. It should also center on human experience. (Herman 2009, 9, 14; see also p. 28 above.) When we look at the odd-numbered chapters of *Maps & Dreams* there is no question of whether most of these conditions are fulfilled. The problem is, of course, whether we can say that the narrative makes the world in which it unfolds. We may intuitively suppose that the places and people of Brody's narrative must exist outside the text, even if their names have been changed. Otherwise Brody's narrative could be called a fabrication (one rewording of "fiction") and it would be rendered void of any testimonial power: hence the question of fictionality.

In her 1999 book *Distinction of Fiction* Dorrit Cohn claims that contrary to what deconstruction and other poststructuralist schools (arguably) argued, not all texts are "fictions". What she claims, more precisely, is that there are textual characteristics unique to narrative fiction. Fiction, according to Cohn, is most effectively understood as "nonreferential narrative". "Nonreferentiality" means that the narrative must create the narrated world. Cohn herself writes, "work of fiction itself creates the world to which it refers by referring to it" (Cohn 1999, 13). If this is our working definition of fictionality, it is evidently the case that Brody's book does not unambiguously belong to the fictional realm.

Then again, few works of fiction contain absolutely no reference to the "real world". Realist conventions have been at the paradigmatic core of representation in fiction at least since the 18th century novel. Tellingly, one of the great precursors of the modern novel, Daniel Defoe,

is best known as the author of a travel novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. *Robinson Crusoe* is strangely emblematic of the ambiguous disorderliness of literary genres, which incidentally is one of the central concerns of this thesis. In the light of literary history *Crusoe* is one of the most paradigmatic representatives of the travel novel, first-person -narrative and a "modern" novel centering on the experience of an individual. Yet the novel especially deserves to be mentioned because it makes an explicit claim of *non-fictionality* (Defoe 2000, epigraph, n. p.). Here we encounter something that is marked as both a novel and a "real" travel account in the first person: we could probably think of other, more recent examples – and will, once we diverge onto Chatwin's *Songlines.*

As long as Cohn's "nonreferentiality" is seen as a qualifying factor in deciding whether or not something is fiction, *Robinson Crusoe* is as difficult a case as any of my primary sources. Yet even David Herman's definition of narrative already entails that there should be certain humanlike agency in the narrative, which requires the storyworld to be inhabitable by such beings. Also, the condition of "what it's like" is only fulfilled if the experience is understandable as human experience. Herman's definition poses no problem to either *Crusoe* or Brody's *Maps & Dreams*. Therefore, even this basic definition of narrative thwarts the possibility of the most obstinate interpretation of "nonreferentiality".[14]

We are, then, to adopt a less rigorous view of the "nonreferential" properties of fiction. Cohn, too, is interested in cases which are not fictional in the most immediate sense. Furthermore, Cohn's distinction is just one way to approach fictionality. Richard Walsh makes an argument for a rhetoric distinction. According to Walsh, readers recognize a written piece as fictional. This

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[14] Further, the theories of "possible worlds" would argue that the term "nonreferentiality" is misleading. According to possible worlds -theory fictional utterances or statements do not refer to a world outside the text but to their referents in the "possible" world – the world of fiction. As it happens, these worlds are also created by this act of reference. (See Cohn 1999, 13; Dolezel 1998, 23.)

recognition takes place in interaction with the text, which is *offered* (and *taken* by readers) as fictional. This recognition is not dependent on formal features of the text. (Walsh 2003, 115.) Instead, it has to do with recognizing the purpose of the text in saying what it says. According to Walsh, fictional text often comes across as "exercise": of using language, of conveying a meaning etc. (ibid., 119–120).

Walsh's definition of fictionality shows Brody in a new light. Whether or not the content of his book is actually *referring* to real-world events or people is beside the point. We only have his word for it, but Brody does present his preface as a preface to a book of non-fiction. He makes it apparent that his discussion is laden with political and moral questions that effortlessly find their counterparts in the real world. For the purposes of this discussion, ideas of fictionality *per se* should not be imposed on Brody's book. However, it is still possible to observe the narrative techniques Brody uses. There are literary means that are by convention attached to fiction. If Brody uses such means, we are definitely allowed to wonder why.

Brody's odd-chapter-account takes on the form of a first-person narrative. According to Cohn the non-fictional first-person narrative is, in principle, modeled after the conventions of autobiography[15]. What this entails, in brief, is that the person narrating the account is identified with the author. This person, as a narrator, will have to act according to the conventional restrictions of knowledge posed by real world conditions. This narrator cannot be "omniscient" – present inner states and thoughts of persons other than herself. (Cohn 1999, 30, 42.)

Brody remains, for the most part, faithful to these restrictions. Yet, certain aspects of his narration do create a sense of ambivalence as concerns his epistemological standpoint in the storyworld, as one of its inhabitants. A few borderline cases apart, Brody does not transgress the

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[15]   As mentioned in chapter 2.2, modern travel writing may therefore be read as a subgenre of autobiography, at least as far as formal narrative conventions are concerned.

rules of realistic representation, but some of his narrative techniques tend to blur the borderline between realistic, autobiographical writing and possibly something quite different. These aspects of narration will be examined in the next section. Before going there two further problems concerning the divisions between narrative/non-narrative and fictional/non-fictional in *Maps & Dreams* will be taken under discussion.

The question of fictionality might be all but trivial were it not for two things. For one, why has Brody changed the names of people and places? Secondly, how should we address the fact that a large part of Brody's book consists of writing that seems obviously non-narrative and non-fictional. These two aspects combined seem to rend the two halves of the book further apart. The former aspect adds to the sense of fiction as concerns the travel narrative, whereas the latter aspect moves the other part of the book further towards the realm of non-fictional, non-narrative science report. The first aspect decreases the particularity of the narrative part and the second aspect further particularizes the research report. As result, the book may end up seeming more divided than it actually is.

To address the first aspect first, the changing of the names may, again, be interpreted as a gesture of discretion and respect toward the Native culture. Yet, we saw Brody state his "wish to maintain a sense of universal concern without losing a feeling for a particular place" (*M&D*, xiv). This wish, besides explaining Brody's adoption of two different methods of writing, could also be seen as a justification for the changing of the names. Therefore, the wish for universality would affect not only the work as a whole but also the choices made in writing the travel narrative. For example, Brody chooses to call the Indian community by the name "The Reserve". This choice, which is generalizing in its effect, might imply that many things said about this community could also be said about other Native Canadian communities. For example, when

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Brody describes the hardships and the social problems of this particular community, we get the idea that these problems are not specifically the problems of one community but of Indians everywhere in North America.

This is definitely important, since it also links the travel narrative to statistics and charts in the even-numbered chapters, which by definition cannot say anything about real-world "particulars" – an individual or specific community, for example. Therefore, on one hand the renaming of real people and places can be seen as a move that nudges the narrative towards the realm of fiction. On the other hand, however, it is a move that somewhat helps the reader to place "the Indians" in the picture provided by the statistics and histories which may reveal certain realities but cannot differentiate groups of people or individuals. As result, however, Brody's group named "The Reserve" might become a "fictional particular" (see Doležel 1998, 1). Yet this complication is less severe than it sounds.

To answer the second question about the role of the non-narrative research report, we must first take a closer look at what it reports. The even-numbered chapters detail historical developments of British Columbia: for example, the history of treaties made between the European-based government and the Indians, or the northward progression of white settlers, agriculture and, finally, multinational industries. As shown above, Brody himself calls this part of the book a "research report", and states that it is out to "present findings". While this is not the whole truth, there is no doubt that these chapters are not continuous with the first-person narrative encountered in the odd-numbered chapters. Stylistically, Brody assumes a rather neutral tone when presenting the findings of his study. He does not mind slipping in an occasional personal view on the matter at hand, nor is he overly wary of using the pronoun "I". His scientific style may be called casual, but it is scientific nonetheless. There is, therefore, a

stark contrast between any given chapter and the two chapters enveloping it. This does not mean, however, that there are no connections at all between the successive chapters. In some places these connections are more obvious than others, but it would be inaccurate to claim that Brody's book was an especially disjointed or fragmentary effort.

It might even be reasonable to ask whether the book as a whole could form a narrative, even if parts of it are, according to any available definition, non-narrative. Peter Brooks sees desire as the key to understanding narrative dynamics:

> We can, then, conceive of the reading of plot as a form of desire that carries us forward, onward, through the text. Narratives both tell of desire – typically present in some story of desire – and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification. (Brooks 2002, 132.)

The concept of narrative desire was touched on in the above analysis of Abram. It is instrumental in understanding how non-narrative can function as a part of the narrative. "Desire is always there at the start of a narrative", Brooks says (ibid). It was argued above that this could be why *The Spell of the Sensuous* sets off as an experiential narrative. This may also be why Brody is quick to assert that "it is best to begin with a story" (*M&D*, xiv). This takes place as early as halfway through the preface. The first chapter (odd-numbered chapter 1) of the text also places itself on the narrative side of the affair. Strictly speaking, the narrative about Brody's life among the Beaver tribe begins in the preface, in the sense that what is told in the preface takes place before what happens in the first chapter and acts as an anecdotal prelude to the larger body of narrative. It is a story about Brody's truck, and initial trouble in communication between Brody and the Indians. We can easily recognize this gesture of storytelling as establishing a narrative.

The question of the non-narrative even-numbered chapters remains open. How should the role of the second chapter, in which Brody outlines the history of the hunter-gatherer populations in British Columbia, be understood? Is it another beginning, then?

As the book progresses through its odd-numbered, narrative chapters, which follow each other chronologically, each picking up from where the preceding narrative chapter ended, it becomes clear that these chapters could be read as a continuous storyline covering the time Brody spent in the Reserve. The even-numbered chapters, on the other hand, do not form any similarly straightforward continuum. Actually, each of the even-numbered chapters seem to present yet another beginning since most of them introduce a new way of looking at another set of economic or social processes which are then related in a chronological manner. For example, chapter two, "Northeast British Columbia" begins thus:

> All but a very small number of prehistorians are now convinced that the American Indians came from their ancient homelands in central or northeastern Asia. […] Until recently, the experts gave the date as up to ten thousand years ago. New evidence in the form of bone implements suggest that hunting peoples of some kind have been in northwest Canada for as many as forty thousand years. (*M&D*, 14–15.)

If one is to tell the history of the population of a region, this is going as far back "to the beginning" as possible. This is definitely a beginning, but reading on, we realize that the chapter ends upon reaching the present time. This temporal structure is repeated in chapter four, titled "Hunters and Treaties". It begins at another "beginning":

> The New World was the Outer Space of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe. Travellers set off on terrifying journeys into an unknown that was already peopled, in the popular imagination of the day, with all kinds of fantastic monsters. Some of these adventurers returned with wondrous accounts of the lands and savages they had encountered. […] From the first, then, stereotypes of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas have served the interests of Europeans in their claims to and colonization of the land. (*M&D*, 49–50.)

This chapter, then, tells the history of dealings between the Indians and the white settlers – the history of treaties, as it were. Again, we begin at the beginning. This chapter is the post-contact history of imposing the colonial rule over the Native Americans. The final event discussed in this chapter is the Alaska Highway Pipeline hearing in 1979. Therefore, this chapter ends in the present time as well. Brody's "job", as we remember, was to study land-use and occupancy in Northeast British Columbia, and this project was carried out to monitor the pros and cons of the construction of this very pipeline.

It could be argued, therefore, that the even-numbered chapters do not form a continuous whole. Most of them are some kind of micro-histories, inserted between stretches of narrative. Of course, they can be said to follow one another according to a thematic organization. This really seems to be a plausible statement, but organization of this sort is not as readily perceptible as the straightforward chronological continuity of the narrative chapters. Therefore, it could be suggested that the travel narrative is the primary narrative arc of the book. Brooks would without a doubt call this arc the plot. The non-narrative parts of the book, therefore, could be called, not narrative in themselves, but parts of the narrative whole. We could see them as being "plotted" into the narrative. The next section will expand on this reading. There, it will also become apparent how Brody's case of going native is to be understood.

It should, however, be noted that the terms narrative and non-narrative are not categorically accurate as concerns, respectively, the odd-numbered and the even-numbered chapters. There are hints of narrativity in the "research report", and at times the odd-numbered chapters may be said simply to "present findings". The difference between the two discourses is evident, but there is resemblance, too.

## 4.2 The middle ground – stable narrativity amid unstable narrative structures

Brooks's discussion of narrative dynamics goes beyond the beginnings. This is how his idea of narrative desire figures the middles of narratives:

> The "dilatory space" of narrative, as Barthes calls it – the space of retard, postponement, error, and partial revelation – is the place of transformation: where the problems posed to and by initiatory desire are worked out and worked through. (Brooks 1992, 92.)

Brooks says that the process of "repetition" is central to reading the middle. In his terminology repetition functions as a "binding" which allows the divergent threads of the narrative to be handled in manageable bundles (Brooks 1992, 101).

> Repetition creates a *return* in the text, a doubling back. We cannot say whether this return is a return *to* or a return *of* […] Repetition through this ambiguity appears to suspend temporal process, or rather, to subject it to an indeterminate shuttling or oscillation that binds different moments together as a middle that might turn forward or back. […] (Ibid., 100.)

This process is what ultimately gives the narrative its form. It organizes information and guides our understanding of what is meaningful in the text:

> [R]epetition, repeat, recall, symmetry, all these journeys back in the text, returns to and returns of, that allow us to bind one textual moment to another in terms of similarity or substitution rather than mere contiguity. (Ibid., 101.)

These excerpts suggest that our understanding of narrative is a complex process, guided by both textual and readerly dynamics. Brooks is not the easiest theorist to apply to reading texts. His approach owes a great deal to psychoanalysis. His concepts of desire and repetition, among others, derive from Freudian psychology (see e. g. ibid., 92). However, Brooks attests that Freudian terminology is in fact a provisional framework for description of the dynamics of

reading (ibid., 123)[16]. It succeeds, in Brooks' view, in describing processes involved in reading narratives, so it is allowed to stand.

The basic ideas of repetition and return introduced above can be tested with the hypothesis of plotting the non-narrative into the narrative in Brody. As mentioned, when reading the book we come to realize that the even-numbered chapters of the "research report" can be viewed as separate microhistories. This allows their function to be seen in terms borrowed from Brooks's discussion of middles.

To begin with a rather large-scale example of repetition and return, we could, first of all, concentrate on the fact that the even-numbered chapters typically involve a return to a "beginning". Two examples of this were given above. Yet another can be found in chapter eight, "This New West", which charts the process of establishing a "new frontier" in the northern Canada. This frontier process, as the title suggests, is seen as analogous to the westward expansion of the western frontier in the 18$^{th}$ to 19$^{th}$ century United States. In this chapter, the sprawl of the white population, economy and industry, and its devastating effects on the Indian population are made explicit. This is already implied by the title, which therefore creates a return. This is both a return *to* an earlier stage of North American history but also a return *of* a silenced, repressed cost of the foundation of the modern America. This "return *of*" also forces us to reflect back to the preceding chapter, in which some of the social realities of the present-day Native Americans are portrayed. Chapter seven presents a homecoming of a hunting party which Brody is now part of. A drunken party ensues, stretching over one whole week. Brody tries not to be judgmental of the heavy drinking (not quite successfully), and simply tell us about the party-

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[16]    I also treat Brooks' system as a metaphorical construct. If it succeeds in describing the process of reading, it does not mean that the Brooksian model is the only model capable of describing such processes – nor does it say anything about the right-or-wrongness of the Freudian view of human psyche. (See also Brooks 1992, 90.)

spree with its ups and down. This description has an obligatory tragic ending – violence, crime and one Beaver, unable to conquer his severe alcoholism, committing suicide.

Chapter seven ends in an ultimate low note. It is impossible not to carry the effects of this narrative sequence to the following chapter which then details the process which led to the theft of the Indians lands, confinement of the natives to reserves and social turmoil, such as widespread alcoholism and extreme poverty – both of which were vividly illustrated in the preceding chapter. Chapter eight, again, ends upon reaching the present time. At the present (late 1970's to early 1980's) the foremost quarrel at the "frontier" was one concerning the northward spread of American energy industry. As we remember, this is why Brody is up there. It does not, therefore, seem a coincidence that chapter nine describes a journey of a group from the reserve to a nearby ghost town. This chapter makes explicit the contrast between the picture painted by the government and industries of what the frontier was going to be like, and what it actually is like. Promises were made of economical improvement and frisky settler communities. What we are shown, however, is a desolate little town of Fort St. John with its three bars and a Laundromat. There are Indians in the town, who live in their own ghetto, and are the poorest of the poor. Here we have another return. A return *to* the image of blooming new communities described in the preceding chapter eight, but also a return *of*. It is the return *of* the Indians to the picture offered by the state officials, and to a degree, by the statistics and numbers Brody uses, which can never make explicit what the processes described in them means in social reality.

Repetitions and returns of this kind can be found between other successive chapters. Since any given chapter, narrative or non-narrative, is caught between two chapters of the other type, these connections are made quite naturally – even instinctively. This is not to suggest that these connections are formed simply as result of the reader's ability to associate between

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unrelated details. There are also other repetitions, in a smaller scale, which might suggest that these associative processes of meaning-making are initiated in the text.

## 4.3 We, I, them, and how pronouns lost their persuasiveness

One of these textual features is Brody's use of we-narrative. Because of the topic of this thesis, it is almost too tempting to think that Brody's extensive use of we-narrative is a sign of his identification with the Indians. This is not, however the only interpretation. Actually, it could be argued that if Brody anywhere identifies with the Indians, or adopts their point of view, it is in his research report. This argument will be the main concern of the final section of this chapter.

For now, however, the theory of we-narrative will be explored further. According to most scholarly accounts of first-person plural narratives, this type of narrative is a curious mix of first-person and third-person narrative conventions and possibilities (Richardson 2006, 38, 42; Margolin 2001, 241). *We* by definition includes an *I*, the speaker, and at least one person other than the speaker. This is probably the paradigmatic case of we-narration: there is a single speaker, who may also speak about others, yet not necessarily for them (see e. g. Margolin 2001, 244). We-narrative is most conspicuously and suspiciously used in instances, where *we* seems to be able to express the contents of several minds all at once. According to Dorrit Cohn's definition of fictionality, this is a narrative property exclusive to fiction. A non-fictional narrator should not be able to access the minds of others. Yet, Brody gets caught saying: "Late into the night we were all conscious of the coldness of the wind" (*M&D*, 109). Is he, then, assuming the narrative position of a fictional narrative who can tell what others think? Probably not, but the pronoun *we* is a curious thing. It is by nature indeterminate. Richardson may be right, then, to

say that under the cover of *we* a first-person narrator can practice the third-person magic, but this does not seem to be an apt description what Brody is doing. But can one speaker say what others were "conscious about" without crossing the fiction line? To illuminate the strange indeterminacy of *we*, it is necessary to look further into the theories of plural narratives.

In his article, "Telling in the Plural" (2000), Uri Margolin manages to address the problem of "mind reading" as expressed by Richardson. Margolin attempts to arrive at the minimal definition of a "collective narrative agent". It is important to notice that Margolin, unlike Richardson, is not talking exclusively about plural narrators. Margolin's "narrative agent" *can* be the narrator, but also a group of people in the storyworld who form the experiential center or act as a protagonist. His definition of the minimal conditions for collective narrative agency is as follows. First, this agent should use "an expression designating a group of some kind". Evidently, *we* is such an expression, although it is not the only one fulfilling the condition. Second, the predicate position of the expression should express "the group's holistic attributes or collective actions". "[W]e were all conscious" can be said to fulfill this condition. Third the group should perform a thematic role in the narrative sequence. Narrative is a collective narrative, Margolin writes, "if a collective agent occupies the protagonist role." (Margolin 2000, 591.)

The difficulty resides, evidently, in determining whether the collective is in the protagonist role. Margolin is acutely aware of the potential ambiguity of collective narration. In Brody's case, where the expression *we* is used as the expression of the group, the question of consistency, or lack thereof, is central. Margolin says that collective narratives do not consist entirely of collective narration and adds that "some sections will always be focused primarily on particular individuals, whether group members or outsiders" (Margolin 2000, 594). Indeed,

despite the frequent recourse to we-narrative, it is relatively unproblematic to claim that the central consciousness in *Maps and Dreams* belongs to Brody's I-narrator. Only here and there does his travel narrative slip into we-narration.

Despite all of this, it is still possible to say that *we* can function in a protagonist position. However, this only happens on certain occasions and is a temporary state of things. As Margolin suggests *we* need not be stable (Margolin 2000, 594; see above). This position lends the first-person plural pronoun its general ambiguity – and therefore makes it difficult to say with any certainty what it does or does not do in the narrative. Tentatively, I would suggest that in Brody *we* may function as a collective narrative agent, but only under certain circumstances. The *narrative act* itself should never be assigned to a group.

The act of narration and narrative agency should indeed be separated here. It might help to think of Gérard Genette's distinction between voice and focalization. Genette shows, for example, that the centre of focalization can be internal to the storyworld (internal focalization) even if the voice belongs to a narrator who is situated "outside" or "above" the story level – in Genette's terms on a heterodiegetic level. (Genette 1980, 189–194.) While this distinction is not identical to the difference between the act of narration and narrative agency, it seems somehow analogous with it. The narrative agency need not belong to the narrator alone, although this is often the case. It seems that in Brody a speaking *I* can temporarily coexist with an experiencing and acting *we*.

In Brody, one could possibly say that the narrative agency within the storyworld (understood as a centre of consciousness and perception[17]) is, at times "plural", yet the mediating

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[17] The concept "center of consciousness" stems from a critical tradition initiated by Henry James. James's famous theoretical prefaces to his central works such as *What Maisie Knew* or *The Portrait of a Lady* are partly responsible for foregrounding questions concerning "point of view" in fiction. James spoke of both the center of consciousness

narratorial expression does not emanate from any such subject. Instead, the I-narrator lays out a schematization of the complex situation of several actions and speech acts (see also Margolin 2000, 605–606; Fludernik 1993, 398–399). Margolin describes a comparable situation as a rendering of inner life in indirect discourse. The "reporting" verbs refer to mental states of a group, but are then "followed by narratorial summary, not the characters' inner monologues" (Margolin 2000, 605). It seems that the use of pronoun *we* could be, then, interpreted as a manifestation of something as simple as narrative economy or literary style. Amit Marcus, another specialist of plural narration writes:

> The inference of other people's states of consciousness based on their speech and conduct, despite its relatively high fallibility, is not usually considered implausible or unreliable, neither in ordinary life nor in literature. A large part of the information that each of us gathers about others relies on such conjectures. (Marcus 2008a, 48.)

Marcus sees plural narration as a representation of the mental activity he describes in the above citation. Narrator's inference and summary of a group's mental actions in not seen as sinister in any way.

Going native, even on the purely linguistic level, seems not simply a question of assigning oneself into a *we*-group with a few natives. Therefore, it may be wise not to judge Brody's apparently willful self-assimilation into the group of Indians. More important questions may arise when the actions and the thematic functions of this group are put under scrutiny. It does seem, after all, that some kind of agency can be ascribed, time and time again, to a *we*-group. Furthermore, it certainly serves a thematic function.

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and point of view or "focus" as parts of the same problematic – of "how to get into the skin of the creature". (See e. g. Friedman 1955, 1163–1165.)

In determining how the appearance of *we*-narration may act as a thematic device, it is useful to recognize the special relation the narrating *I* bears to the *we*-subject. In a very limited sense, *we* indeed is the plural *I*, but it is more important that it is also a deictic marker, specifically in relation to an *I*-narrator who inhabits the storyworld. It is deictic in that it can refer to the people who, at any given moment, happen to form a group with or around the *I*. Amit Marcus has described this complexity by distinguishing between the different uses of *we* according to how they are configured in relation to *I* and others, or *them* (Marcus 2008b, 138).

Examining how the configuration between *I*, *we*, and *them* is set and reset in Brody should allow for a more comprehensive reading of his use of plural narration. First, it should be noted that Brody mostly reserves we-narration for specific occasions. The primary referent of Brody's we-narration is the party of hunters Brody gets to be part of. Following excerpt is in many ways quite typical of *Maps & Dreams*:

> On the second day *we* drove to Clay Flats, a small, open, and grassy area a little to the west of the cabin. *Atsin and Sam* hoped to find marten or lynx tracks and so decide where they might best set traps. Of course, *everyone* was on the lookout for moose. Only a mile or two from the cabin *we* spotted a magnificent bull. *The hunters* watched it for a few moments, as it browsed within easy range; then *we* continued on our way – *Joseph* had said he wanted a cow. (*M&D*, 183, italics mine.)

There are quite a few points worth examining in the above. First of all *we* appears to be the most all-inclusive term here. When necessary, the narrator uses names ("Atsin and Sam") or a less determinate collective denotation ("the hunters"). These subjects are still part of the *we*, which quite casually extends to encompass the narrator. Deviations from *we* do not seem to introduce any significant rupture to the coherence of the *we*-group since these digressions always end up returning to the same old *we*. The important exception is introduced by the appearance of the name Joseph. Joseph is the chief or the elder of the Beaver, and it seems he is almost never part

of the *we*-group. He is always given an individual voice and a place of his own as a subject in the storyworld.

A hunting party is a functional unit in that it has a specific function – to hunt. Therefore, individuality and possible conflicts of interest are backgrounded. As argued above, collective narration is always a typification, a schematic description. Therefore, certain elements will be omitted in the act of narration. Also, the hunting party is not treated as a conglomerate of cultures (Beaver and Canadian, urban and hunter) but as a social unit. It is a socially significant item on which the people of the Beaver tribe depend for their sustenance. Brody's narrative technique seems to acknowledge this importance. When hunting, Brody *is* for all intents and purposes a Beaver hunter. Elsewhere, he often makes quite explicit the cultural differences encountered in his interaction with the Indians. Also, he quite regularly portrays himself as an outsider, especially while staying within the confines of the Reserve.

This leads us deeper into the question of relations between *we*, *I* and *they*. In hunting-party-narration we see that both *I* and *they* can function as parts of the *we*-group. However there are other instances of the narrator stepping outside his allegiances, when he most pointedly assumes the role of an *I*-observer, when any group becomes a *they*. These variations allows one to see a larger system of connections that is formed throughout *Maps and Dreams*, in odd and even chapters alike.

## 4.4 Anthropological man in the middle

Pronouns may lose their persuasiveness, but they retain their distinctiveness. That is why they might offer a rather unproblematic way to draw up a system of narrative relationships in *Maps &*

*Dreams*. They would then point towards the one who speaks, the ones spoken of, the group on whose behalf one may speak, and so on. As seen above, however, there are problems, and they may come up in unexpected places. Yet even the blurry cases are simple enough when put into perspective. They form a web of references, parts of which are less perspicuous than others. Yet the referential matters of pronouns are always relatively straightforward compared to how difficult *interpretation* tends to be. Interpreting the possible point of the organization (or lack thereof) is going to be indefinitely more difficult than picking out the nodes of this web.

As suggested above, reading the authorial recourse to *we*-narration throughout the book as a sign of going native is possibly very tempting and probably erroneous. Possibles and probablys aside, it certainly is just an interpretation. It would have been a plausible one (were it not probably erroneous) – yet it is an interpretation, as is what follows here. Hopefully, what follows is not only plausible but sufficiently outspoken about being an interpretation.

When one interprets the workings of a system – here a system of pronouns and their usage – the choice of sample material is crucial. There are a few more points to be made on Brody's use of plural narration. Significantly, the next samples of narration are not from where Brody narrates hunting trips. As we saw, these sections feature the most prominent use of *we*-narration, as well as interesting contrasts created by the use of an occasional *I*-pronoun and expressions denoting *them*, in one way or another.

This mutable field of *us*, *them* and *I* is also brought to forefront elsewhere: in the beginnings of the so-called non-narrative chapters (discussed in section 4.1 above). These beginnings also tend to appear in a striking contrast with the endings of the chapters preceding them. The following examples are from the end of chapter 13 and the beginning on chapter 14,

respectively. Chapter 13 ends with a slightly wistful rumination. The Beaver return from the last hunting trip of the spring season.

> Along the road, just before we came to the entrance of the Reserve, David pointed to the willows. Their leaves had just begun to unfold and were lightly touched with the palest green. A sign of spring. But for all the Indian households of the region, the spring hunt had already ended. By the time the tourists and the sport fishermen had begun to push their way in early summer up the Midden and Quarry valleys, there would be no sign at all that Indian families had been living there only a few weeks before. (*M&D*, 229).

The immediately following chapter 14 marks the white hunters' arrival at the centre of narration:

> [...]
> Their vehicles are often conspicuous, especially as they depart for home triumphantly displaying the antlers of a fine moose [...]. Some hunters with a special sense of display, perhaps in emulation of a stag in rut, charge along the Highway with the antlers of a prize kill tied to the front of the radiator. (Ibid., 230).

It is quite typical that an even-numbered chapter begins with such a passage, one which in essence takes a *they*-group as the subject of narration. This *they*-group may consist of sport hunters (as above), first settlers of America (ibid., 49) or, why not, Indians (ibid., 4–15). Although the chapter that follows from this beginning may consist of facts and statistics, its narrative beginning links the travel narrative of the preceding odd-numbered chapter to the anthropological report of the beginning even-numbered chapter. This vacillating narrative/non-narrative -movement at the border between chapters is reminiscent of what also happens at the level of events of the text. In section 4.2, this movement was connected to the fluctuations of plotting via Peter Brooks' thinking.

It could be said, then, that also these instances of *they*-narration enter the play of returns and repetitions, which goes on between the different types of chapters and lends the book as a whole its overarching narrativity. I believe it is not incorrect to claim that the pronouns also play

their small but distinct part in the formative processes that help us construct the narrative arc we may end up calling the plot.

The pronouns are also connected to questions concerning the politics of representation, and to how going native may be understood in Brody. This becomes apparent in the climatic narrative chapter "The Hearing", in which a host of different groups of *us* and *them* attempts a dialogue. In this chapter Brody presents a heterogeneous choir of collectives, and it is quite apparent that he is struggling with his pronouns. There might be an element of empowerment in this struggle, since the narrating Brody does not conceal his bafflement at the cacophony of incompatible worldviews and arguments misunderstood by the other attendant parties. Up to this point in *Maps & Dreams* we have grown used to the cautious narrator with a keen and careful eye for the problems of representation. In "The Hearing" we have a narrator overpowered by the storm of discourses, and it is almost as if he were saying "I'm representing as fast as I can!" Not that the description of the hearing was particularly frenetic, though. The polyphony is subtle but discernible.

During the slow build-up of the chapter, the different groups of speakers gather on the reserve grounds for the hearing. There are officials from the pipeline company, the chairman, specialists, copyists, representatives of the Union of Chiefs (other Indians), and there are the people of the reserve. Several of the Beaver are named, and in an unusual gesture, the Beaver women are mentioned. The reason soon becomes clear, as almost all of these different groups talk in their turn. Brody, however, does not associate himself with any of them.

Brody's narrator takes here the role of an intermediary. He does not, however, meddle with the proceedings. He becomes the intermediary between the crisscrossing discourses of the text and the readers. He carefully details how in the hearing every act of communication fails to

be heard: how the pipeline company officials' speech is not translated into Beaver, as their business would probably be untranslatable (*M&D*, 265). Brody tells how Joseph the chief of Beaver speaks with an interpreter who renders his powerful, personal speech into a third person lament in clumsy English (ibid. 263–264). Brody then shows how after the secretaries and scribes start packing up, the Beaver announce that the feast, the real hearing, can begin. The Beaver women, who were quiet during the proceedings, as well as much of the rest of the book, start finally talking. A "magnificent" dream map is brought out, and the Indians get ready to let their side of the story be heard. However, all of the white Canadian officials fail to acknowledge that another hearing is about to take place. (Ibid., 266–269.)

Brody the narrator is listening, of course. It is quite evident that he is sympathetic towards the Beaver. In their hearing, however, he assumes the role of the outsider *I*, and simply aims to record in narration this highly unsuccessful encounter of cultures. We could say, then, that if Brody the narrator were "going native" in the most blatant, obvious manner, he might do something differently. He is no Castaneda, then, but we already knew that. When bringing "going native" into discussion, it is necessary to remember that it is literature under scrutiny. It is impossible to evaluate real Brody's real actions at the hearing, since they are beyond our grasp. This complicates all ethical judgment. We cannot even evaluate Brody's anthropological methods, since the only way to do so is to read his book first: the book which is the product of those methods and does not discuss them. And if it did, would it change anything?

The climatic narration of the hearing is where Brody's book dismantles itself. Up to this point we could read along two intersecting lines: one of narrated hunting trips and the other of statistical survey. In above chapters I have shown how these two lines leak into each other, and how their seemingly steadfast division is anything but categorical. Here the lines truly come

together. Here stride the statistics, wearing suits, while the bodily experience of hunting trips dissolves into litanies of "tortured bureaucratese". Here we also become fully aware of the narrator's position and abilities. It is he who presents all the speeches of the hearing, and he chooses to draw our attention to the failures and complexities of communication.

At the beginning of the analysis of *Maps & Dreams*, I suspected that it would be almost too easy to blame Brody for making himself one of the Indians. I was proven wrong. Oddly enough, some narratology was needed to clarify the point. At this point, on the other hand, it seems tempting to celebrate "The Hearing" as a chapter where a true polyphony of Bakhtinian proportions is arrived at[18]. Maybe this, however, is the time to turn towards skepticism.

Do the Indians have a voice in the book? No, not as themselves. But the voices are there, mediated and mediated again. In the hearing the Beaver and the white officials speak without hearing each other. Brody the author hears the discussion and wants to share it with his reader, but he can only do it by making his narrating self speak. This act of narrating is ultimately all that is carried to us. Brody might be aware of this state of affairs. When Joseph starts talking in Beaver, Brody writes: "The unfamiliarity of the sounds and the richness of his tone cast a spell over the proceedings. The absurdities and awkwardness of the event faded away. Here, at last was an Indian voice" (ibid., 263). Only, of course, there is no "Indian voice", but a transcription of a translation of an Indian voice embedded in narration. This further underscores the way *Maps & Dreams* undoes its own certainties in its seminal, final narrative act.

Similarly Brody's "going native" seems to escape our grasp. We do not know what kind of "native-going" goes on behind the text. The text, naturally, implies that Brody is a reasonable guy. He might be. His text does not resort to similarly suspicious methods as Abram's, whose

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[18] I will further discuss the possibility of Bakhtinian polyphony under Chatwin in chapter 6.

"going shaman" was very much readable on the surface structure of his text. The dilemma touched upon here will deepen further when reading the great deceiver of travel literature, Bruce Chatwin. He might not even be a reasonable guy.

## 5. Bruce Chatwin

It is true that none of my primary sources are particularly similar to each other in terms of style, genre or even subject matter. Still, *The Songlines* by the British cosmopolitan Bruce Chatwin stands out of the lot. While pursuing the line between fiction and non-fiction has been necessary in some of the discussion in preceding chapters, with Chatwin this problematic rises to a new, commanding height. Chatwin came to prominence as a travel writer, and he remains one of the best known travel writers of the late 20th century. His writing is known for its skill and accentuated "literariness". Although his best known works belong to the genre of travel writing, it is questionable whether these works are best described as non-fiction, or something quite different. According to Casey Blanton the travel book, in fact, finds in Chatwin its most perfect expression of its own uncertainties. It might be doubtful whether Chatwin's books can be identified as travel literature at all. (Blanton 2002, 95–96.)

Compared to the other authors discussed in this thesis, Chatwin has been studied quite extensively. Also, a wide variety of second-hand information concerning the author circulates the world of literature. Nicholas Shakespeare's celebrated biography is probably the most widely read story about Chatwin not written by Bruce Chatwin.

Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether the narrating character – "Bruce" – found in *The Songlines* is supposed to represent the real-world author, or whether Chatwin the author is

actually casting himself into his books as a mildly laughable (even annoying) caricature. This enquiry has another side to it. It is also questionable whether Chatwin's books are to be "trusted". Since the beginning of his literary career the author has frequently been accused of being a little too inventive. This aspect of Chatwin's work is important here because it has a considerable effect on how the problematic of "going native" will be approached.

Yet there are further aspects in the literary character of Chatwin that are positively iffy. In postcolonial context it is extremely easy to see Chatwin as a relic of the colonial Europe. He seeks out the most remote and "primitive" places and people, and writes books for an audience of European wealth and taste, one with a keen eye for intertextuality and appreciation for literary aesthetics. In *Songlines* he directly, if somewhat cursorily, addresses the question of aboriginal rights and portrays present-day social realities of the multicultural Australia. However, this seems to be no more than a secondary aim of the journey. First and foremost, Chatwin seeks to establish his own theory concerning the evolution of human civilization, and to prove that it is a basic instinct of man to migrate. More than anything else, his book is about Bruce Chatwin chasing the grand origin hidden in the elusive art of aboriginal song.

With Chatwin the problems are therefore roughly twofold: on one hand, there is the problem of "telling the truth", on the other, there is the problem of politics. Both problem areas are linked to the question of going native. The "truth", always an odd concept in literary context, matters because of the concerns of representation. Chatwin's portrayal of present-day aboriginal life is relatively free of cliches, but is any of it to be trusted? Whether true or false, are the representations done by the means of familiar images of savage nobility or noble savagery, originality and wise primitivity? How does the picture change if the represented are fictional to begin with?

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These questions are somewhat unavoidable due to the large amounts of biographical miscellany in circulation. It is a fact often stated that *The Songlines*, which is a narrative of a single journey, in fact uses several trips to Australia as its background material. Further, the character Arkady, Chatwin's guide and the most vocal source of general facts about Australia and aboriginals, appears to be fictitious. Author Salman Rushdie accompanied Chatwin on one of the journeys that would provide raw material for *The Songlines*. Rushdie's own *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) contains an essay which presents a colleague's look on how Chatwin wrote his books. Rushdie uses a paragraph to speculate on who the "real" Arkady might be, but stops himself short by asserting that "[t]he truth is, 'of course', that Bruce is Arkady as well as the character he calls Bruce" (Rushdie 1991, 233).

At the first glance, it seems quite alarming that everything "spoken" by Arkady, who is the most authoritative and vocal source of local knowledge in the book, could be read as an extension of the author's voice. This also begs further questions: are some of the other notable voices in the book extensions of Chatwin's thought? If so, Chatwin could be seen as building a barrier of voices in defense of his own thought. There is a Father Flynn (a curious namesake of the dying priest in Joyce's 'The Sisters'), an aboriginal elder who pre-emptively warns "Bruce" against some common mistakes that white men make when trying to understand the meaning of the songlines (*Sl*, 56, all of ch. 12). Also, there is a character called Kidder, who embodies the stereotypical white aboriginal rights activist, an exemplary native-goer. Kidder is revealed to be "a rich boy from Sydney" who "has a plane" (*Sl*, 44), and who is dismissed as "Big White Chief" by none other than Father Flynn himself (*Sl*, 61).

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Graham Huggan is British professor specializing in postcolonial literatures. In his book *Interdisciplinary Measures*, there is a chapter that draws a comparison between *Maps & Dreams* and *The Songlines*. Concerning *The Songlines* and its "voices", Huggan points out:

> The alternative viewpoints of Kidder and Flynn inform much of the rest of *The Songlines*: the first, a well-intentioned but misguided attempt to help the Aborigines based on a Western conception of capital gains and losses, the second an attempt to not so much recover the 'cultural property' as to discover the fundamental philosophical precept of Aboriginal people. (Huggan 2008, 146.)

I agree in that these two viewpoints are very significant, and Huggan's reading of both characters is illuminating. He does not, however, analyze these voices much further. He does say that Chatwin's book is "a polyphonic narrative" (ibid., 148), which in my opinion is debatable. Huggan says that Chatwin's polyphony is, indeed, a Western writer's rhetoric strategy to bridge the gap between his person and the culture that is still being represented by an outsider instead of being allowed a voice of its own (ibid.). My reading of Chatwin also leans towards the idea of the many voices of the book as a rhetoric strategy.

When using the term "polyphony", Huggan does not refer directly to Bakhtin[19]. It seems that Huggan is simply using the word to convey the fact that there are many voices and attempts to adopt different points of view. It is, of course, impossible to point put the exact origin of any of these voices. All is mediated by the narration governed by the leering Bruce. It seems, however, that Chatwin's multitude of voices could be read as potentially monologous.

Then again, it is literature, and this is nothing new. Incidentally, Rushdie claims that Chatwin's earlier plan for the book was to write it in the form of a Platonic dialogue (Rushdie

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[19] Bakhtinian polyphony is, indeed, a problematic concept to use. Bakhtin's view of polyphonic literature seems almost mystical in its insistence on the tangibility – "reality", as it were – of the voices and characters of the work. According to Bakhtin the voices are independent and distinct and give rise to a multitude of fully formed consciousnesses. These characters are no longer just objects of their author's word but subjects of their own word. (See Bakhtin 1991, 20–21.)

1991, 233). This provides an interesting starting point to assessing the "polyphony" of *the Songlines*. This is because Bakhtin saw the Platonic (or Socratic) dialogue as a significant predecessor of the modern dialogic novel perfected by Dostoyevsky. However, he detected a problem in the form. The form was based on the conception of truth as a dialogically formed, interpersonal category. Yet it the hands of Plato it gradually turned into a didactic form endorsing prefabricated worldviews of religious or philosophical schools. (Bakhtin 1991, 162–163.) There can be no direct comparison between Plato and Chatwin, of course. Plato wrote in the newly literate Greece, whereas Chatwin is a postmodern polymath, and definitely a post-Dostoyevskyan, even post-Bakhtinian writer. The Platonic or Socratic dialogue is however linked by analogy to the problem of voices and the truth in Chatwin. Plato never appears in his dialogues, neither as a narrator nor as a character. Yet what we call the thinking of Plato or Plato's philosophy, is drawn from these works. This supports another view of the Platonic dialogue: it can be a representation of one person's thinking, the author's.

It is in this sense, I believe, that Huggan sees Chatwin as potentially monologous. As seen above, Huggan calls the polyphony in Chatwin a "rhetoric strategy". This is something a Bakhtinian dialogue cannot allow. Bakhtin quite explicitly states that the Socratic dialogue *is not* a rhetorical genre (ibid., 161).

Let us return to Rushdie and the idea of *the Songlines* as a dialogue. We are yet to decide whether to subscribe to Huggan's view of Chatwin. Is there a "rhetoric strategy" in *the Songlines*? The answer is not a simple "Yes!" or "No!" In fact, I believe that our understanding of what the "rhetorical strategy" of the book is depends on whether we approach it as fiction or non-fiction. This idea will shortly be elaborated with Richard Walsh's concept of "rhetoric of fictionality". If Rushdie's exhilarating anecdote is to be taken seriously, and if we side with

Huggan in that there is a rhetorical goal in *the Songlines*, it seems that after all Chatwin needed

other voices besides "himself" and Arkady on which to build his argumentation.

For now, it suffices to say that everything seems to suggest that under no circumstances

should Chatwin's stories be read as non-fiction, in the sense that all of it were true. This said, the

next section will attempt to find a more refined theoretical approach to the question of fiction and

non-fiction in *The Songlines*. After that the voices and characters are put under further scrutiny.


## 5.1 Autobiography and autofiction in *The Songlines*
## – disciplined conventions and unruly content

Even though at the level of content and reference, *The Songlines* may be deemed fictional, there

is more to be said about the fiction/non-fiction -drift. As Richard Walsh suggests, the distinction

between fiction and non-fiction could be approached via other standards than the reference.

Walsh leans towards hermeneutics and says that writing can be *offered* and *taken* as fiction

(Walsh 2003, 115). How does this offering and taking happen? In answering this question, I will

concentrate on the kind of theorizing that seeks to find guidelines in determining fictionality.

This section will take a look at the theory of referentiality and the autobiographical form. After

that, the hybrid offspring of autobiography, autofiction, will be discussed. Finally, I will get back

to Richard Walsh.

In her classic *Die Logic der Dichtung* (1957) Susan Hamburger writes, controversially,

that only third-person narratives achieve the status of true fiction. The reason for denying first-

person narration the option of fictionality is ontological. Only third-person narration, produced

by a narrator outside the world of the text, creates the world to which it refers by referring to it. The world of the first-person, on the other hand, has to be preconceived since the narrator "inhabits" this world. This argument may not sound convincing today, but it says something about the genre which Hamburger saw as the paradigmatic first-person genre: the autobiography.

The history of autobiography as a literary genre is often traced back to either St. Augustine's or Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (written in 396–400 and 1782–89, respectively). Recent theories have had to synthesize the long tradition with modern understanding of narrative. One of the best known definitions for autobiography is given by Philippe Lejeune. Lejeune suggests that a pact or contract is made between the literary work and the reader. The former will respect the generic restrictions of autobiography, and the latter will suspend her disbelief as long as the pact holds. The most basic autobiographical convention is the identity between the author, the narrator and the main protagonist (Lejeune 1982, 193; see also Genette 1993, 69, 73). In contrast to the autobiographical contract, Lejeune also introduces a fictional contract, where this identity is not established, and fictionality is further marked by paratextual signals, such as the title page of a book saying "novel" (Lejeune 1982, 203–204).

Lejeune's approach is reader-oriented in that it emphasizes the role of the reader in determining the fictionality of a literary work (Lejeune 1982, 192). He is somewhat less interested in textual features of autobiography. For him, the central textual marker of the autobiography is the identity of the aforementioned narrative agents with the author. Lejeune does say, however, that autobiographical writing is referential, since this is the only way to form a true identity between a character of a book and the real-world author (ibid., 211). This gives his discussion some continuity with the structuralist narratologists such as Dorrit Cohn, to whom

fiction is strictly non-referential (Cohn 1999, 1). It also corresponds to what Susan Hamburger says about the ontological difference between 3$^{rd}$-person and 1$^{st}$-person narrating.

When discussing books like *The Songlines*, it becomes clear that Lejeune's formulation does not respond well to postmodern borderline cases. His main point, about "identity between", is strangely preoccupied with names. Lejeune's system hinges on the idea that identity is determined by proper names, which seems quite controversial. Further, he is very strict about *resemblance* not meaning *identity* (Lejeune 1982, 194, 211). Identity means unequivocal sameness. Traditional modern autobiography (a tradition beginning in 1770's according to Lejeune (ibid., 192)) may not have a problem with this. Discussing *The Songlines*, however, requires a more subtle treatment – one which takes into account that an actual identity between the author and the main protagonist is quite impossible.

The theory of autobiographical pact, as presented by Lejeune, cannot successfully account for books like *The Songlines*, and it probably is not what the theory set out to do in the first place. Yet the idea of *contracts* between the reader and the literary work is an interesting one. In Lejeune, however, the pacts are understood rather stiffly, and allow no indeterminacy. Serge Doubrovsky might have been provoked by Lejeune to write his novel *Fils* (1977), which features a narrator who bears the name of the author and narrates his own life. However, the book calls itself, what else, "a novel". Doubrovsky is also credited with coining the term "autofiction". To Doubrovsky, *Fils* was an exercise on conventions of autobiography. It sought to make discernible the indeterminate middle ground between autobiography, as defined by Lejeune, and fiction (see Vilkko 2009, 18). This is also something *The Songlines* does, although whether it is something it seeks to accomplish is questionable. Chatwin's book on one hand makes claims to the real, on the other flaunts its fictionality.

*The Songlines* also reveals a problematic core of determining identity through naming. Chatwin's "Bruce" is obviously a reference to the author, yet the referential relation between the character and the real-world author remains indeterminate. The character both is and is not Chatwin. Gérard Genette reached a similar conclusion with Proust's "Marcel" (Genette 1980, 249), which might not be completely irrelevant[20]. Genette described Proust's hero, Marcel as "neither completely [the author] nor completely someone else" (ibid., 249). In Chatwin, however, I believe similar statement would remain sensible even if the character were not named Bruce. The use of the first-person narrator, the extra-textual public figure of Chatwin as a travel author, and the inclusion of pages from the "real" Chatwin's notebooks would provide approximately the same degree of illusion of reference. Yet it seems that the character is meant to be a challenge to the very notion of a real person appearing in a literary work. Therefore, provisionally we may assume that the character both does and does not represent the author.

This ambiguity is lucidly explicated by Varpu Vilkko, who studies autofiction in her master's thesis. She writes that the narrating "I" of autofiction is a fictional construct. The narrator is a character to whom the author has lent his name and life story. (Vilkko 2009, 30.) This description suits Chatwin's "Bruce" quite well. Vilkko also paraphrases Philippe Gasparini's ideas about autofiction. For Gasparini, the autobiographical and the fictional coexist in autofiction. The final decision between the two is never made. At times, one mode might dominate, at other times the other. (See ibid.)

The framework built around the concept "autofiction" seems to provide a promising starting point to interpreting the author's apparent appearance in *The Songlines*. In the

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[20] See e. g. Shakespeare 1999, 353, where Chatwin comments on a review of *In Patagonia* which draws a comparison to Proust.

structuralist tradition, the autobiographical and fictional pacts may have been a question of either/or. This, however, may not need to detain a modern reader or writer.

Both contracts, autobiographical and fictional, are well formulated by Lejeune. They can be used to evaluate *The Songlines*, and it seems that the identity-condition both is (because of names) and is not fulfilled (because of the lingering doubt that forces the reader to hesitate between definite identity and mere resemblance). Therefore the book is both (or neither) autobiographical and fictional, which then fits Gasparini's idea of "autofiction".

Reading Chatwin as autofiction, as attractive a proposition it otherwise may seem, makes it difficult to say anything about how Chatwin "goes native" in his book. This difficulty is linked to a more general problematic that actually applies to all my primary sources. Going native in a postcolonial context is largely a question of real-world politics. Any study of going native *in literature* will have to address the fact that the actual realities of the actual world are not, as such, present in literature. One has to look at mechanics of representation of both native peoples and the author, in how s/he positions herself in the narration, or outside it. What "really happens" seems to lie outside the province of literary studies. Nowhere is this problem more acute than in Chatwin.

This problem is partly due to the ample sphere of biographical knowledge with its concerns towards what "really happened". This kind of information often seems to suggest that Chatwin was a ruthless scavenger of knowledge (see Shakespeare 1999, 410–412, 417–420). This is in stark contrast with the sensitive, if occasionally pushy Bruce in the book. He sometimes angers people but always wins back their sympathies with his unfailing rhetorical genius. To further complicate things, the authoring Chatwin, as implied in the text, seems to keep some distance to his narrator. This makes "Bruce" a candidate for the moniker "unreliable

narrator", as defined by Wayne Booth (Booth 1961, 158–159). In doing so, however, it is necessary to acknowledge the possibility of irony on the behalf of the implied author. Therefore, all the untruthful references to the real world could be explained away with either a claim to ironical treatment of source material or a plea to fictionality. Actually, Chatwin has been accused of deliberately resorting to such explanations, as if to protect his real person (see Shakespeare 1999, 419–420).

The real world aside, Chatwin's ironical treatment of his narrator also allows for ironical treatment of other characters. If "Bruce" is a caricature, why should other characters be any different? Also, if Chatwin's Australia is presented in humorous sketches, why would the complexity of aboriginal songlines be represented any differently? The memorable opening lines set the tone: "In Alice Springs – a grid of scorching streets where men in long white socks were forever getting in and out of Land Cruisers – I met a Russian who was mapping the sacred sites of the Aboriginals" (*Sl*, 1). Australia is from the outset presented as a country where every white Australian man is called Bruce and every car is a Land Cruiser. What sort of accuracy or confinement to facts can we expect elsewhere? Furthermore, the indeterminacy between autobiography and fiction makes it even harder for the reader to decide what kind of representations one can plausibly expect. Is the text a representation of real events at all, or is it just there to celebrate the author's imagination?

At the beginning of this section, Richard Walsh's thought about literary works being *offered* and *taken* as fiction was brought up. Walsh's rhetorical approach to fictionality might offer a clarifying glimpse to the disorienting hybridity of Chatwin's book. At the heart of Walsh's "rhetoric of fictionality" is the idea that fictionality is not determined on the grounds of textual markers or referentiality, but "rests upon the rhetorical use to which a narrative is put"

(Walsh 2003, 115). The narrative invokes different interpretative responses depending on whether it is presented as non-fiction or fiction. At first glimpse, all this "presenting" and "putting to rhetorical use" seem quite vague, but Walsh elaborates, and familiar ideas emerge. One of the ways in which a narrative may be presented as (non-)fictional is the so called paratext (see ibid., 115–116). The term was first used by Gérard Genette (Lyytikäinen 1991, 149, 153–154; Genette 1993, 79), and its commonplace usage refers to prefaces, title pages and other texts that are in some sense part of the book but not the actual literary work. The same idea surfaces in Lejeune, who suggests that part of the fictional contract can be fulfilled by stating, for example, "a novel" on the title page (Lejeune 1982, 203).

This is however only a small portion, if probably the most tangible, of what constitutes the process of literature being offered and taken as fiction or non-fiction. Walsh claims that the concept of mimesis was once what told fiction apart from non-fiction. In theories of mimesis, "non-fiction" is often replaced by "historiography", because in the Aristotelian tradition the dichotomy is conventionally formed between *mimesis* (the "fictional" imitation of action that poets engage in) and *historiography* (see Aristotle 1907, 35). According to Walsh, however, mimesis cannot be conceptualized as imitation anymore – because of the problems of referentiality (Walsh 2003, 113–114). Mimesis was once supposed to explain the correspondence between fiction and the real world, but the two have come to be seen as ontologically irreconcilable as illustrated by theories concerning referentiality and fictional/possible worlds (ibid.).

Walsh then turns towards another theory of mimesis, one found in the work of French philosopher Paul Ricœur. Walsh says that mimesis continues to be a relevant concept not as a description of what fiction does, but as "the interpretative basis of narrative in general" (Walsh

2003, 116). Walsh names Ricœur the most notable proponent of this line of thought. For Ricœur mimesis is not imitation but a precondition for narrativity, insofar as narrative is *configuration* (instead of imitation) of how human experience is organized into a temporal structure. The configuration is created by the author and "tested" by the reader. Both the author and the reader furthermore share a preconceived understanding of what it is to be human and experience temporality. (For a more thorough discussion of Ricœur's tripartite concept of mimesis see Walsh 2003, 116, 118; Hallila 2008, 26–28.)

This view of narrative does not differentiate between fiction and other narratives, and Walsh proposes that the difference lies not in how the narrative and reality correspond, but in which rhetorical purposes the narrative performs. Walsh suggests that fictionality may be recognized as "exercise". Fiction both "exercises" (challenges, works to develop) the reader's narrative understanding, and is an "exercise" (a putting to use, or an instance of doing something mostly for its own sake) on the part of the author. Walsh draws an analogy to physical exercise, the "rhetorical" purpose of which may not be that obvious: "when you go for a jog you may not be trying to get anywhere in particular, but you are certainly not pretending to run." (Walsh 2003, 119.)

Getting back to Chatwin, what is it that Walsh and Ricœurian mimesis contribute to the discussion here? First of all, the conflation of fiction and narrative postpones the decision between fictionality or non-fictionality of *The Songlines*. It can be said beyond slightest doubt that Chatwin's travel account is a narrative, although parts of it might, again, be deemed non-narrative (see above discussions of Abram and Brody). Therefore, the question of fictionality in Chatwin's book might be better addressed if we understand the whole of the narrative in terms of Ricœurian configuration, which we are to test. This does not have to clash with the view of

Chatwin's book as "autofiction". As shown above, autofiction is an indeterminate position between fiction and autobiography. Although it may be useful to use the two terms mark the limits of autofiction, it could be seen as something that both categories, strictly speaking, exclude. It is not a combination of the two, but something they demarcate, border on. Therefore, *The Songlines* would operate its own, unique configuration, and it is up to the reader to decide whether it is trying to get somewhere or simply driving around. How these rhetorical purposes may be extracted from the text is yet another difficult question. In the next section an attempt is made to approach representations of Aboriginals and the author/character "Bruce" in terms described above. This should shed some light on what "going native" means in Chatwin, as well as the basic dilemma of how to evaluate such positions in literature.

## 5.2 Chatwin and the truth (and a half)

Coming to terms with Chatwin the author's position in relation to the Aboriginal culture might begin with strategies outlined above. However, I believe it is more appropriate to limit this final discussion to what goes on in the narration of *The Songlines*. Literature does have its manifold connections to the real world. However, now that the book has been considered in the light provided by some of the extratextual materials, I wish to heretofore concentrate on how the voices, the representations and the narrative structures display the author and his relationship to the Aboriginal culture.

At the end of the previous section, it was suggested that the indeterminate position of *The Songlines* between fiction and non-fiction does not have to be resolved. The indeterminacy may be seen as part of the configuration of the work. Ricœur's processual view of mimesis allows the

reader a tentatively indeterminate position as well. The major part of the literary experience is *refiguration* or *transfiguration*, whereupon the reader, with her reading, tests whether the configuration can be followed (Walsh 2003, 118; see also Hallila 2008, 28).

Autofiction, on the other hand, was suggested as a possible generic denomination for Chatwin's book. While this classification might be quite apt, its only use seems to be in getting rid of the problem of referentiality. The good thing is that as a generic term autofiction is also indeterminate and does not dictate how we should approach specific representations, those of Aboriginals, for example. Here it seems inevitable that the questions of representation will have to take the center stage again. However, it is not necessary to ask whether representations be "true" or "false" in the sense of being "truthful" or "imaginary" (or, as it seems to be the case, something between the two). The question concerns the voice and point of view assumed in the act of representation.

Even though much of my theoretical frame comes from the sphere of narratology, here voices and points of view are here, for once, not to be understood as narratological concepts. The "voices" in question may be understood as "discourses". I will take my cue from Australian professor Paul Carter's critique of his compatriot, the controversial cultural studies theorist Stephen Muecke. The project which Carter criticizes resembles in some ways Chatwin's *Songlines*. Muecke carried out a project in which he, alongside with an Aboriginal storyteller Paddy Roe and a Moroccan painter Krim Benterrak, attempted to recreate the Aboriginal view of the Australian landscape.

On a closer look, *Reading the Country* proves to be quite intriguing piece of work. It deserves a short mention in this context for its resemblance to Chatwin's book. *Reading the Country* also claims to represent a multitude of voices and discourses (see Benterrak et al., 16–

17, 27–28, passim.). However, it is Muecke, another foreign academic in search of Australia, who is the primary writer of the book. Also, we are led to infer, the overall design and organization of the book is his doing (Benterrak et al., 1996, 24). Muecke also performs the narrator's task in the book and brings in a discursive and theoretical frame built upon Deleuze and Guattari's "nomadology" and an assorted *bricolage* of academic intellectualism (ibid., 18, 19). Although the book is co-credited to Benterrak "the painter" and Paddy Roe "the aborigine storyteller", it is Muecke "the writer" whose presence is the most authorial. If the book is a collage of diverse spoken and written texts, Muecke is the collagist – the bricoleur, who uses the means and materials at hand to accomplish what needs accomplishing (see Lévi-Strauss 1966, 16–18; cf. Benterrak et al., 168–170). Where Muecke comments on his role as a writer, he shows keen awareness to the complexities of transmitting the words of others. For example, he discusses the problems of transcribing Paddy Roe's oral narratives on several occasions (see e.g. ibid. 17–19, 26–27).

All such discussion is omitted in Chatwin. Whereas Muecke elaborates and analyses his apprehension towards representations, Chatwin is mostly happy to spin a smooth yarn. However, it might be unnecessary to read too much into it, politically. This is because rhetorically the two books are far apart.

Paul Carter concurred in his critique that *Reading the Country*, may have been "a valuable record of the dismantling of certain white historical myths: [however] to suppose there is a natural correspondence between this and the 'nomadic discourse' of the Aborigine is to be guilty [...] of an *imitative fallacy*". (Huggan 2008, 136, my emphasis.) What Carter (and Huggan, who cites him) mean by imitative fallacy comes rather close to what it usually means: having the writing, narration or discourse inf(l)ected by what it is describing. Here, however, the

term carries a startling resonance with the topic of my study. In fact, imitative fallacy seems to describe nothing less than one of the most prominent conceptions of what "going native" in literature is.

In Chatwin, imitative fallacy further links with the concept of "mimicry". This idea is also introduced by Huggan (ibid., 132–133). The concept of mimicry was brought to postcolonial theory by Homi Bhabha, for whom it was mostly a form of colonial parody. Bhabha's concept entailed resistance through feigned deference (see Huggan 2008, 133). In Chatwin, however, the Aboriginals are not afforded a chance to mimicry. Rather, the term applies to the discourse of Chatwin's representation. Chatwin is able to weave a web of voices and of mimicry that somehow seems to anticipate the critical arguments towards the politics of representation in the *Songlines*. The fact that this mimicry sometimes holds its pointed end towards Chatwin himself might be yet another measure of pre-emptive rhetoric.

The exemplary nodes of this web are the aforementioned Father Flynn and Kidder. The former reverses the idea of going native: the father has actually "gone Anglo". Nevertheless, he provides a subverted aboriginal voice, which tells a subverted tale of going native. This tale sees Flynn turn into a priest, and becoming more clerical than the clergy. On the other hand, Flynn may be read as mimicking the colonist religion. However, as readers of a literary work veering on the fictional, we cannot let the implied author, the implied Chatwin, go unnoticed. This is an authored representation (even mimicry) of mimicry, not mimicry as such. The voice of Father Flynn does not subvert Chatwin's discourse but functions as its constituent. If Flynn is subversive in any way, it is because his character creates parallelisms and juxtapositions between certain postcolonial *topoi*, such as "going native" and "mimicry".

The character of Kidder, on the other hand, provides a perfect scapegoat for accusations of going native. Kidder is a stereotypical native-goer: somebody with too much money and too little to do; a naïve activist who means well but does not quite grasp the implications of his endeavor. He accuses "Bruce" of meddling beyond his jurisdiction while remaining oblivious to the glaring similarities between himself and the accused. Yet again, this contrast is created in the text, not in real-world-discourses. Kidder's discourse is a part of the novel's design. He is a character, even if the character were based on a real person; his discourse is a caricature of a discourse, even if the discourse he somehow embodies could be encountered in the real world. If we are to study going native in Chatwin, we should be striving to see how everything – the discourses, the characters – adds up.

Above, it was suggested that this might be part of the strategy by means of which the author shields himself from criticism. However, here we should once more note the indeterminacy that was previously found to be a cogent factor in the generically and structurally challenging whole of this autofictional novel. Here this indeterminacy means that the web of voices needs not only conceal, but it can also reveal.

In Chatwin it might reveal a few things. The author at least seems to be sensitive to the fact that he is surrounded by individuals with their own worldviews. He is considerably less sensitive, however, when it comes to making them his own. In this sense Chatwin seems to fit more readily in the role of the "authorial" author-position of fiction than the position of a cautious ethnographer. As far as his going native is in question, it seems that the judgment greatly depends on the frame of reference in which we place Chatwin and his autofictional novel. As an ethnographical account it is inescapably flawed, especially if we choose to acknowledge the more than ample para- and extratextual evidence. However, if we instead choose to read the

book as a novel, we might feel differently. Our understanding of what was called in above subchapters a rhetoric of fictionality (after Walsh) and a configuration (after Ricœur), will also postpone our judgment. Instead of assessing statements, characters and discourses of the novel as if they were part of the world of our immediate experience, we have to take an ethical stand in relation to the work as an artistic whole.

## 5.3 Going na(rra)tive

Among the authors discussed here, Chatwin is a rather tantalizing borderline case. It almost makes sense to study Songlines as a novel centering around the "travelling ethnographer" *-topos*. Almost but not quite. As shown above, with books like Chatwin's, the concept of autofiction makes strict divisions between fiction and non-fiction redundant. Linking generic ambiguity to the Ricœurian concept of configuration, which allows (and challenges) readers to deal with narrative idiosyncrasies, provides finally a rather open frame of interpretation and reading. This does not mean that problems are solved. None of the problems are solved, in fact. Saying that a literary work operates on its own configuration is like saying "it is what it is". It is not incorrect, but it is rather uninformative.

Problematically for my topic, this also means that the truth behind the narration remains obscure. Then again, as we began to see with Brody, this obscurity does not require ostensible oddity from the literary work. The obscurity of "what really happens" is due to the ontological difference between the world of the author and the world of the literary narration (fiction or not).

Naturally, the reader may not wish to stress this discrepancy to herself. This "wishing away" has been reiterated in many words, of which the "willing suspension of disbelief" are only

the best known[21]. However, in the context of this study, it has to be noted that there are aspects of the design and rhetoric of *the Songlines* that may well be read as strategic choices that may help the reader suspend whatever needs suspending.

Some of these choices were discussed in the subchapters above. First of all, there is the seemingly autobiographical form. Here the suspension is aided by what was called "the autobiographical contract" (section 5.1). Philippe Lejeune defined "reality" as one precondition for the validity of the contract (Lejeune 1982, 211). Autobiography must narrate a real life in the real world, and it is an autobiography only because it does. The concept of autofiction brought the much needed breathing space to this tight formulation.

Second strategy of maintaining *l'effet de réel*[22] was recognized in how the narrating agent "Bruce" surrounds himself with other voices, who often dispute his ideas. This may be a strategy that aims at dismantlement of the authoritative and horrifically neo-colonial position of the narrator from the Empire, who seeks out the tribal mysteries of old. Conversely, this strategy might strive to conceal the monologist of the work. This is where Graham Huggan and Mikhail Bakhtin entered the discussion. Bakhtin saw polyphony as the defining feature of the novelistic avant-garde embodied in Dostoyevsky. For him it was a method of fictional world-making, which created characters inhabiting their own complete consciousnesses and moral universes. If Chatwin's book falls short of this, as it may, we need to remember that polyphony for Bakhtin was a poetic device – not a method of ethnographic representation.

To summarize, what goes on in Australia with the writer Bruce Chatwin and the aboriginals he meets is beyond the scope of his literary product. He may be a scavenger of

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[21] The term was coined by the English romantic poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1817, and has since begun a life of its own. (See e. g. Coleridge 2001, 677)

[22] Another term for how literature claims to represent the real world. It was coined by Roland Barthes, and he sees it as a rewording of the "referential illusion". (See Barthes 1968, especially 88–89.)

knowledge and a ruthless neo-colonist of the mind. The narrator of the novel, however, seems like yet another relatively reasonable guy. When we examine the way the narration unfolds, we begin to get the glimpse of how this absence of the real experience is gradually replaced with different narrative strategies and constructions. Chatwin's strategies and constructions are markedly novelistic. Instead of discussing if and how Chatwin "goes native", it is more useful to see how his narrative anticipates its own criticism and hides its underlying structures.  This narrative, which at the outset presents itself as a documentary travelogue, can then be said to "go na(rra)tive" in the art of the novel.


## 6. Further conclusions and the writer's metatext

It seems now that this thesis was begun a long time ago – not least because it really was. In retrospect, it is tempting to reread the progressions and meanderings of the present (or past) study as an allegory of how the writer's view of his topic, primary sources, literary theory – and probably literature itself – has changed. I will spare you the details, and will only summarize a few threads running through the work. These threads are crucial to the questions asked here and the tentative answers they may have been given.

My original research question was concerned with what is "going native" in literature. Now it seems that it could be reformulated as "what is literary 'going native'?" The most interesting discoveries were made in a close reading of the narrative properties, strategies and structures. Lest it be left unsaid, it is definitely within reason to argue that in this thesis the method and the tools used prefigure the findings. This may be true in most research.

It was concluded, again and again, that it is difficult to interpret authors and their ethics or politics on the grounds of their literary work. It may be particularly difficult when the authors appear as narrators and characters in their own work. Ethics and politics, on the other hand, are some of the underlying dilemmas in postcolonial theorizing as well as in the concept "going native" itself.

This does not mean that literature cannot have a connection to the world. It is, however, beyond the reach of this work to study exactly what this connection is. This stresses the need to reiterate the original research question. It is definitely possible to talk about "going native" as a sociopolitical phenomenon in the real world. Likewise, it is quite possible to study how this phenomenon is represented in literature. The question of this thesis, however, concerns authors "gone native" in order to write their books. The authors, however, belong to one world and the insides of their works to another. Therefore it rather comes to the question of how "going native" turns into a narrative while at the same time reconfiguring it.

David Abram's *Spell of the Sensuous* chose to exclude the experiences and voices of others while using the elliptically narrated shamanistic experience among native peoples as its foundation. This enabled the book to draw rather haphazard analogies between indigenous worldviews and the European tradition of phenomenology. Hugh Brody was more pragmatic in how he portrayed himself in relation to the Beaver people in *Maps & Dreams*. There was some identification with but also some distancing from. The curious narrative structure of his work also drew attention to itself. It was there that we encountered an overriding desire to narrate. At the same time, however, this narration implicitly worked out and questioned its narrator's ability, competence and right to narrate.

In Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines* the author's "going native" and the natives themselves were found to be hidden from view. Chatwin, by far the most "literate" of the three authors, weaved an elaborate web of fiction-tinged narrative strategies and possibly ended up revealing nothing about himself, "going native", or the natives, only of the fictional counterparts of each. He did leave an intriguing question lingering, however: can a travelogue "go novel"? Would here, then, be a true candidate for a case of "literary 'going native'"?

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