Travelling writing, writing travelling: the text as journey, the journey as text

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PART FIVE

TERMINUS
CONCLUSION

'I wish I were rich enough to endow a prize for the sensible traveler: 10,000 pounds for the first man to cover Marco Polo's outward route reading three fresh books a week, and another 10,000 pounds if he drinks a bottle of wine a day as well.'

Robert Byron
The Road to Oxiana

'There is no theory that is not a fragment, carefully prepared, of some autobiography.'

Paul Valery
"... Not Twice Into The Same River"

'The lonely sail in the distance
vanished at last beyond the blue sky,
and I could see only the river
flowing along the border of heaven.'

Li Po

One does not step twice into the same river. In reviewing the flux of the foregoing material, I notice that, already, significances have shifted like sandbars, some connections have ebbed and new ones emerged. Consequently, my summation of the material will not attempt to hold that flow into a glaciated synopsis of what has already been said; instead I will scan for those ideas and images which seem to me the most interesting and energetic islands among its stream. To extend the metaphor, like islands, these outcrops of significance (for me, at least) will not necessarily be chained to each other. However, I will undertake this survey of them (under the italicised rubrics of their various chapter headings) within the formal framework of aims of the paper, as outlined in the Introduction.

Aim (1) To survey a broad range of commentary which has been written about travel narratives and allied literary forms.

The journey as text: In travelling the writing which writes the travelling I took on the ideas of 'the text as a journey' and 'the journey as text,' finding deep within our culture (as 'People of the Book') that there are semantic resonances of this metaphoric equation: in Judeo-Christian religious terminology, 'the Law' equates with 'the Way' and 'the Word'; in Islam, II-Rah. 'The Way' was adopted by Sufi mystics to denote 'the Way to God.' Thus, we have: the word as the way (the road as the code) - or, the text as the journey (the code as the road).

Despite well-founded contemporary suspicion of 'essentialist' theories on the relativistic doings of humans, 'the journey' appears as one of the touchstones of the human cultural arena. The root
metaphor of human imaginative experience, it has been proposed, is the figure of time rendered as space. Employing this trope of 'life as a journey,' literary journeys take us deeply into the centre of instinctive imaginative life. Borges too declared that 'good metaphors,' like comparing time to a road, are effective because they correspond to something 'essential.' The travel book, says Raban, in its simulation of the journey's fits and starts, rehearses life's own fragmentation. The journey motif may or may not be 'essential,' but nevertheless, journey narrative art rehearses (and rehashes) life, while life initiates (and imitates) art. The recurrent notion is of life as a journey towards meaning.

In the 20th century, successful travel books effect a mediation between two dimensions: individual physical things and universal significance. The travel book authenticates itself in 'actualities' - while simultaneously reaching towards the opposite, to the generic convention that the travelling shall assume a metaphysical, psychological, artistic - i.e., ethical - meaning: 'A travel book is like a poem in giving universal significance to a local texture.' (Fussell)

The written journey assumes at least three dimensions: the events, what the narrator makes of them and the resultant text. However, Meaghan Morris sees a reiterated 19th century aesthetic cliché still functioning: it disavows 'the effects that journalism produces in the real that it reports,' and ensures 'that writing can be guaranteed a perpetual, impossible quest' - for perfect description, full story, living characters. The travel writer's textual burden then is a double-barrelled myth of pristineness - the fresh eye must drive the fresh pen.

Spengemann reminds us that reality does not precede experience, but consists in the 'endless dialogue between the mind and the objects of experience, actual or imagined.' Life initiates art, especially when 'travel is a literary experiment that the writer conducts on himself.' (Raban) Towards the end of his journey, the Sufi dervish becomes the Way not the wayfarer - a place over which something is passing. (But, does a travel writer ever achieve this degree of absorption?)
Conclusion

Aspects of travel writing: While travel writing is seen as generically androgenous and 'the beggar of literary forms,' borrowing from the memoir, reportage and the novel, it is pre-eminently a first person narrative, authenticated by lived experience. The literary journey may be more about time than place, or time as place, or psychological space: the journey can readily be used as a metaphor for the passage of time or for penetration into different levels of consciousness.

The eyes of the reader 'travel' the lines of print and the reader is 'guided' by the writer as his imagination 'escapes' his own world. In reading a travel book, 'the reader becomes doubly a traveller, moving from beginning to end of the book while touring along with the literary traveller.' (Butor) The writer exhibits himself as physically more free than the reader; thus every such book is an implicit celebration of freedom. The traveller as surrogate, and the reader as vicarious traveller, form a complementary role set. Readers are in transit between polarities that are spatial and temporal resonances of past, present, and future: 'we embark upon our own infinite metaphorical quests for the elusive castle of reality.' (Kalter)

Elements of fact and fiction at times blur in travel-writing, and some commentators have called for the 'genre' to be seen simply as 'text' or 'imaginative writing.' Beyond these critical strategies, what precipitates out is that travel writing these days is principally about first-person lived experience within the context of a journey. It is presented as the biography of a journey, and not as the novel of a journey.

An incomplete history of travel writing: Pilgrimage was the most characteristic form of exotic travel during the early Middle Ages. In it was a linked ontology of the physical world and the epistemology of the world-viewer: this world had 'had its being in God's unchanging mind' - but the one which Columbus discovered 'was centered squarely in the explorer's changing awareness of it.' (Spengemann) By the 19th century, both literature and American travel-writing had taken up a position 'upon the moving horizon, from which the world appeared not simply to grow but continually
to change its essential form and meaning.' Travel writing had progressed from an impersonal affirmation of beliefs to a way for the traveller to extract meaning from his experiences for his own understanding of the world and the self created by his travels. Despite this onto-/epistemological evolution, the narration-description duality has remained remarkably stable in travel writing, as has the ordering - narration superordinate, description subordinate.

Romanticism saw the quête du moi or 'pursuit of the self' surface as almost an imperative within travel writing, with the tendency for emphasis to be shifted away from the external goal of the quest toward the process of questing itself. Gautier 'codified the journey of initiation as artistic, ontological experience.')(Berben) In this interior world, heroic deeds can still be performed; and even modern man can ascribe to heroic status. In the poetry of Whitman journeying is affirmed as an end in itself; he rejoices in the endlessness of the road; for him, journeying may itself, as process, be the Truth.

However, with Edith Wharton, the hero has become significantly 'modern,' with the narrator who journeys through her travel books being a learned pilgrim who possesses formidable knowledge of secular and aesthetic matters. Byron's The Road to Oxiana, 'as if obsessed with frontiers and fragmentations,' is seen as writing 'truly of its era,' an 'expression of a thoroughly modernist sensibility, a portrait of an accidental man adrift between frontiers.' (Raban) With Jack Kerouac's novel the questing hero finds that he cannot reach transcendentally noble goals, or formulate goals at all. The quest becomes absorbed into the pattern, or nonpattern, of wandering, the journey of the lost hero. This pattern crosses-over into non-fiction writing.

Travelling: Travel has an ontological aspect, an affirmation of existence or being; it represents the 'essential marginality of human existence.' (Hassan) Travel (and travel writing) are ways of negotiating difference, the self and Other, thus the travel account is an emblem of the world in which we live. 'Travel is a search for unhomeliness:' to travel is to deliberately orientate oneself badly in
Conclusion

one's environment and thereby to open oneself to the odd and the uncanny.

Tourism was preceded by travel, and travel by exploration, though all now occur concurrently. Each is roughly assignable to its own historical age: 'exploration belongs to the Renaissance, travel to the bourgeois age, tourism to our proletarian moment.' (Fussell) Travel is also a way of visiting other centuries, to journey out of the fixed time of the familiar and into the Other - to reinstate oneself to another (original?) time (or self?) by removing to another place. The deeply etched nostalgia for places to be 'other' than they are is 'a feature of the progress of modernity': for moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be in other historical periods and cultures. Modernity ever looks back at an older order by which it can validate, contrarily, its own inauthenticity - and then travels towards it.

The healing power of a quest into the symbolic wilderness (or Otherness) equates to the shamanic journey, which is often performed in service of the larger society as well as that of the individual shaman. The return with the fruits of the journey still has its social function in the dissemination of these messages. Modern thought seeks its Self in its Other, in the exotic, Asia, the Middle East, pre-literate peoples: the Other is experienced as a purification of Self. (Sontag) From the shamanic vision quest onwards, self-discovery through a complex, arduous search for an Absolute Other is a basic theme of our civilization.

*Travellers:* The traveller is the one who is always leaving - and arriving, but always elsewhere, never home. At home, s/he is no longer the traveller. At its most fundamental, the term 'traveller' will be understood as a 'living person, moving from birth to death.' (Sassoon)

The adventurer might seem to be the idealised traveller (and human being): self-actualizing, spontaneous, competent in both nature and culture, courageous, etc. The theme of his journey as test and ordeal is universal in romance and mythology and its 'adventure is the principle of a symbolic fable.' (Zweig) The Nietzschean adventurer contends with the eternal recurrence of the
moment and with the self; in this 'self-overcoming,' the métier of the modern adventurer is seen as a spiritual vocation. Adventure is no longer a form of travel literature, but of autobiography. The mysteries into which the adventurer advances at the risk of his life will flow out of his inward madness. In this new perception they will transform geography into revelation. This two-lane way of autobiography and physical adventure strives towards psychological liberation. The explorer goes to the frontiers of ordered living, to the breaking point of bodily strength and moral suffering. There is a danger of slipping beyond the pale and never returning, or a possibility of drawing from the ocean of unexploited forces a personal power, by which he can hope to modify an otherwise unchangeable social order. (Levi-Strauss)

The tourist might be defined as a fantasist equipped temporarily with unaccustomed power; and also may be the last great exponent of amateur travel writing. Tourism's pilgrimages are the modern, secular equivalent to the annual sequences of festivals of traditional, God-fearing societies. For Westerners, tourism is an ideal model of life because it is 'sacred in the sense of being exciting, renewing, and inherently self-fulfilling.' The travel writer may then, in some manner, function as a 'priest' or guide to these 'religious' attractions.

Travel writers: There is no essence or stable set of characteristics to the écrivain-voyageur - other than the tautologies of 'travelling' and 'writing.' As the traveller who returns to tell, he may function as a kind of vicarious shaman to his readers: 'The shaman interprets his trance experience as a journey to the spirit world. His skill lies in his ability to enter the magic countries, and then return. ... Only the shaman knows how to go, and then come home.' (Zweig) The travel writer 'comes home' symbolically and literally in the form of his own journey narrative, having crossed successfully, albeit temporarily, the spatial-temporal-cultural bridge from This-Present-Here to Other-Past-There. 'Our modern Marco Polos bring back the moral spices of which our society feels an increasing need as it is conscious of sinking further into boredom, but that this time they take the form of photographs, books and traveller's tales.' (Levi-Strauss)

318
Aim (2) To consider a number of constituent discourses within travel writing.

The Diary: The link between the diary or journal, and the subsequent narrative of a journey lies in the prior similarities which are shared between the open-ended forms of the diary and the journey itself. Each is a loose progression, not necessarily cohesive, of segments or episodes, and the only order is in the successiveness of the events and of the narrative entries. Today we think of the diary as a periodic, private notebook in which the diarist writes down intimate details, introspective assessments and descriptions of events, although, historically, it was not always such a 'for my eyes only' document. For Gide the modern journal was no longer regarded as the vehicle of an unproblematic sincerity but, as a site of conflict, specifically between spontaneity and reflection, and hence also writing.

Even when travel writing is executed predominantly in the first person, there is no longer an assumption that this is the diarist's singular, unmodifiable, 'true' voice, the only one available to the author. With intercalated narration, the hero is possibly divided into two heroes, the one narrated and the other narrating. 'Where the heroes, recorded and recording, are not at bottom two heroes but one complex one, the two events can be different to the point of irreconcilability.' (Abbott) There may also be a formal separation between the 'story' and the 'discourse' by juxtaposing first- and third-person narratives.

Autobiography: 'Autobiography is the essential act of self-witness.' 'Travel and autobiography are essential and primary forms of literature.' (Hassan) The self and the life, complexly intertwined, take on form in the autobiographical, assume shape and image, and endlessly reflect that image between themselves. Spengemann proposes three kinds of autobiography: historical, philosophical and poetic. A travel account is not primarily an autobiography, however, at times it may demonstrate aspects of all three, and particularly the third kind, 'enactment,' in which the writer attempts to mobilise an imaginative recreation of the journey instead of presenting a recollection of events.
'It is the writer's intervention that structures the terrain where his life is lived and gives it its ultimate shape, so that the landscape is truly, 'a state of the soul.' (Gusdorf) The writer may appear as a 'decentered subject,' 'layered, multi-textured, uncompleted,' which bears 'imprints of both conscious and unconscious experience.' (Rowley)

The Other: Every system is constructed around what it prohibits as Other to its own 'proper' business. This repressed residue - madness, holiness, the abject, the erotic - does not disappear; it returns somewhere in the identity of every object and subject. Apprehending Otherness inheres in the act of observation, not in fixing it in discourse. 'At very best, we can recognize that alterity is ineluctable, a function of consciousness itself.' (Hassan) Otherness inhabits language and consciousness: it is the way identity (sameness) both makes and unmakes itself: it is a radical conceit of the mind (Hassan) The 'fetishization and relentless celebration' of Otherness of other cultures may be an ominous trend (as in the spectacularization of anthropology - or travel writing) whereby the 'textualization' and 'culturization' of societies occur regardless of history. This appropriation and translation of the world cannot easily be distinguished from the process of empire, said Said.

The desert, as a topographic Other, is used in all great religions as a metaphor for calm and for spiritual peace. It comes to represent a place in which the conditioned Self may both annihilate itself and, experiencing the unconditioned Other, re-emerge as a 'truer' Self. The modernist experience of displacement is Self and Other as a sequence of encounters, the stable identity of each at issue. There is no unified culture to be represented, no whole self able to interpret a place. This leaves only a recognition of the 'seductive ... movement of the narrator's own insatiable desire for disclosure.' (Segalen) One place is everywhere. And moreover, the Savage Mind is immanent in us all. 'Au fond, ce n'est ni l'Europe, ni la Chine que je suis venu chercher ici, mais une vision de la Chine.' (Segalen) The Other, then, is a construction of desire, and an ephemeron of signs.
Exoticism: The desire for the exotic, which is always colourful, violent, sexual, spectacular, overwhelms and suppresses the quotidian - which frequently is not. The horizon of the exotic continually recedes - from a centre which is everywhere, and whose perimeter is thus nowhere, in the 'forever unsatisfied quest for diversity which constitutes the intimate body and subjectivity of the traveller.' (Clifford) Tourism's romance with the exotic is the culmination of a dream 'to play out the repressed desire to become the primitive.' (Cohen)

Books about travel to exotic places have always opposed an 'us' to a 'them.' Desire in travel reflects 'the erotic upsurge that shapes all wanderlust,' the 'desire for the Other, the one who is different in the place which is different.' (Hassan) Nostalgia for the lost exotic may motivate journeys to those 'grievously poor countries' experienced as a trip backward in time and an exposure to the 'simplicities, pieties and materially spartan life of an earlier age.' 'The more the Aborigines are exterminated, the more the West becomes nostalgic for them.' (Baudrillard) At worst, bourgeois vicariousness; at best, a positive opportunity for experiencing alternative values, means and ways.

The Quest: 'Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality.' (Frye) The quest is a 'literary mimesis of the subjective experience of becoming,' which parallels the two fixed points in life - birth and death - with its own commencement and successful conclusion. 'The goal of the quest is deeply involved with the self-realisation of the hero, who proves and finds himself in the course of his journey.' The quest is primarily a journey of aspiration rather than rejection: it involves tests and revelations; its goal is both radically uncertain and significant. The geography of the quest, even in the outward quest for a 'real' object, is a patterned, emblematic landscape presented in terms of its essential, affective quality rather than its perceived components.

The 'monomyth' adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit: a separation from the world, a
penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return. The hero's passage is fundamentally inwards - 'into depths where obscure resistances are overcome, and long lost powers are revivified, to be made available for the transfiguration of the world.' (Campbell) The hero's quest is a shamanic journey, symbolically undertaken for the redemption of his own community or culture: 'It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse.' (Campbell) The individual is on a quest of self-initiation, necessitated by the dissolving of 'the social structuring of the unconscious,' obliging him to go within to find new forms which then become the boon for himself and the wider society.

The modern quest hero's psychological isolation is an expansion of the physical situation of the traditional hero. The author and reader share the knowledge that the protagonist cannot merely endure a journey, complete a quest, and return to the the social world for a heroic welcome. He is alone before and after his journey, and his isolation is a static quality.

The double quest novel consists of a two-levelled search: external and internal, concrete and abstract. The metaphoric quest operates as 'a basically internal search for something abstract - usually knowledge of the self.' (Kalter) An added dimension is that the alternative quest can itself conceal still deeper levels, such as 'the narrative quest,' in which the author/narrator/protagonist seeks 'a way to reflect or construct reality within the form of a literary journey, or the act of writing the novel.' In turn, this involves the reader's engagement in negotiating the very construction of the writing - and the representation of reality. Since the unconscious codes of both mythology and the quest have been partly broken in 20th century thought, perhaps the 'master narrative' quest survives in the shadow of its telling as a 'servant' narrative, in the employ of modern thought's own quest-to-power over signification itself. As before, there is a cross-over between fiction and non-fiction journey accounts.

Aim (3) To discuss a sample of 20th Century Australian travel narratives with reference to the above discourses and to the 'double
quest' narrative.

The Australian journey: The interior zone of suspension and exclusion called the Outback, became (and has remained) a spatial analogue and symbolic ground for the temporal and spiritual quest: initial loss/void and ultimate restitution/plenitude coexist within the structure of its mythic possibilities. But here, often, 'the black becomes the conscience of Western narcissism: too much romance with insufficiency ... disadvantage ... breathless pursuit of the "primitive" with its exotic promise ... that will make alienated white people "whole".' (Alexander)

We need not expect that travel accounts present an unmediated, 'real' version of the world: the account must be seen within the context of its historic (generic, cultural and authorial) determinants. The literary territory of the early explorer-authors is 'somewhere between documentary and fiction.' Their quests are after 'undefined but alluring goals,' which nevertheless are enacted 'in actual historical time, across a real geographical landscape.' (Gibson) Space is transformed symbolically into a place - a space with a history. And, the namer inscribes his passage permanently on the world, making a metaphorical word-place by which he asserts his own place in history. (Carter) In spatial history, travelling becomes inseparable from story-telling.

Each journey account is in part a dialogue with previous accounts, a modifier and a commentator on them. By the 1930s, the Outback had moved from being an unknown zone of promise, exclusion and suspension to a knowable one, amenable to a program of development and population increase. Travel literature of that time, and later, asserts that the unique quality of Australia resides in the rural landscape and, by opposition, not in the cities.

Antarctic Days with Mawson is a book of several eras, the early and mid-late 20th century, as well as something of the late 19th century. As part of an institutional quest (for territory and knowledge) Fletcher is the documenting scientist, not the self-documentor: a 'double quest' reading of his text cannot be supported. The expedition itself is the hero of this quest, not any individual.
Conclusion

The constituent discourses of diary, autobiography and the Other are present as residual traces only, and do not motivate either the action of the expedition nor the perceptions of the narrator. The journey is through an exotic terrain, but the exoticism is only coincidental to the objectives of expedition and narration. The book is about questing, but the nominated discourses do not strongly support its quest narrative, whereas others do, such as imperialism, scientific method, documentary realism, comradeship, etc.

North-West by North depicts mobility (with a geographic goal) and an exotic liberty (with an aesthetic, self-inscriptive, 'personal growth' goal). In Birtles' account, the inner and outer quests of the author are clearly linked: the cathartic functions of a diary with strong autobiographical content are major elements of the narrative. The Other and the exotic are present, but function only as background discourses to the quests, although the Other of the author's unconscious is constantly present.

Birtles is one hero (author-hero, or subject-hero); her shipmate Sven is another (object-hero). In reporting upon her journey (a condition of transgressions) she reports back from the frontiers of the unknown to the urban, domestic centre. Similarly, the quest is in two planes, to geographic and emotional extremes, from both of which she must return safely. She recuperates her emotional-psychological wholeness by means of writing: she is the shaman in the initiatory stage of self-healing, and then in the subsequent role of messenger (narrator) from the Other World.

These Are My People: The object-heroes are the 'people' of the title and the terrain; the subject-hero is the author. The former do not quest in the journeying sense, the latter does - in search of information, contact, copy, tales of place. In the narrative of his outer quest, discourses of autobiography, the exotic and the Other have varying but lesser importances than that of the diary (as implicit primary source). There is not a personal inner quest motivated or supported by these discourses, although there is an abstract, aesthetic search (for 'fundamentals,' roots, 'fair dinkumness').
Marshall attempts to 'preserve' the rural culture in the service of those who cannot witness it. His voyage is a metaphor for their separation. If separation can be seen as wounding, his voyage is also a metaphor for healing. He journeys to carry something of the rural purity from its source to the needing peripheries.

Dust on My Shoes: The hero is the author; his fellow hero (object-hero) is his travelling companion, Marchand. These picaros adventure on our behalf through an Oriental Otherworld of colour, corruption, friends, foes, opportunities and death. They stand for European liberty, mobility, action, competence and adventure. Pinney nominates no specific object to this journey, nor is an inner search suggested: his ramblings may be seen as an existential end in themselves. He is not a quester; the goal of his journey is open and diffuse, for the road itself and not for its end.

The book does not refer to his diary, but as a discourse, it may be said that all of it is diary-sourced. Autobiography is present, though not in the sense of a review which gives significance to events in the author's life beyond those of the book. Their journey through the Otherworld progresses from West to East, through geographical space as cultural time, encountering an increasingly older, more primitive, more 'authentic' Other, and eventually the Absolute Other, death. Exotic elements (bazaars, street girls, wars, headhunters) form a major discourse in this book, and all are generic functions of 'A Journey to Exotica.' In this quest for perennial departure, the discourses of diary and autobiography are implicit, while those of the Other and the exotic are explicit.

There is no attention drawn to matters of text or representation. As a documentary-realist text there is little which provokes a re-negotiation of meaning and text. Pinney, who returns from beyond the threshold of the underworld (the river) plays the psychopomp to his readers; his tale is the vicarious life or boon snatched from beyond.

Journey Among Men has subject-heroes (the authors), object-heroes (the 'men' of the title) and an 'establishing hero' (the remote landscape). The outer search is for a form of inner search, which is for reportage of the unique authenticity of the land, as expressed in
anecdotes and scientific observations.

These contiguous goals (within a single quest) are strongly supported by diary primary material, but very little by a self-referential diary discourse; they are mobilised by a sense of the exotic, but not by autobiographical content; the Other which is 'present' is in a glimpse of Aboriginality and of the 'essence' of the land. These discourses support a portrait of a place more than of a journey quest. The journey is the incidental, enabling activity, the vehicle of the narrative, not its point.

Tracks In this work the quest motif is the principal narrative and meaning-structuring device, and is present in a full 'double quest' aspect. The hero-author, Davidson journeys through a traditional three stage quest narrative structure in pursuit of a finite, geographic goal and an internal, metaphoric one of personal liberation. The nominated discourses (diary, autobiography, Other and the exotic) are all strongly deployed, and foregrounded as such, in support of Davidson's telling of her quest/s.

The Log of the White Wog The author's anti-heroic quest remains incomplete. Ho allows the inner and outer quests to blurr - the external objective often lacks definition, while the internal one always does. The work just ends. The Road goes on.

In a dialectic between the mundane and the metaphysical, the diary and autobiographical discourses are emphasised and give ample rein to these sides of the author/narrator. (Here too, autobiography is not applied as a lamp which casts light upon events in the author's life beyond those of the book.) The Other and the exotic overlap, and are emphasised: in striving for the latter, the former seems always out of reach. Each propels both the narrative and the participants through their journey. No closure upon either quest is attained: it may be impossible to describe (or conclude?) a modern double quest, because the quester always changes the 'quested.'

Aim (4) To apply to the sample texts the following questions:

(From here on I will refer to the table, Seven Australian

326
travel narratives: discourses and quests. [page 327b] The category 'subject-hero' refers to the author, the agent of his/her own subjective inscription; 'object-hero' refers to an external agent (single, multiple or place) who/which is an object of the author's inscription. These categories may also be thought of as, respectively, primary and secondary heroes. There is a third category, which again might be a single, collective or place hero, but its 'hero status' is implicit only, and its attribution is parenthesised, 'suspended' in my judgement.)

Who are the heroes? The heroes vary from text to text, ranging from the collective, institutional hero of the BANZARE expedition, to the classic solo quester of Tracks. In three instances, I propose that the author is not the primary hero (subject-hero), with that attribute being displaced by a collective hero, or to the dispersed collective of 'People' or 'Men' of the lands visited. In these cases (Antarctic Days, These Are My People, Journey Among Men), the author may be seen as the 'inscribing' hero, even an aesthetic hero, and in that sense he is questing for insights, data and text; but he is not the traditional primary hero whose journey doings and achievements are the focus and the structure of the narrative events. In two cases, the 'People' and 'Men' whom I have proposed as the work's heroes are that by dint of who they are, rather than by what they do in functioning in a journey quest. I note that the three books whose primary, author heroes I have placed in 'suspension' - Antarctic Days, These Are My People, Journey Among Men - are those whose journey enterprise have a clearly outward-oriented, supra-personal agenda (respectively, for science, patriotism and development). The other four works have subject-heroes whose activities are essentially self-oriented; their journeys are personal (even super-personal), and they are the self-representing, reward-seeking heroes of their own quests.

All works in the sample have secondary (or 'object') heroes. In the cases of North-West by North, Dust on My Shoes and The Log, the object-hero - who is the author's companion - might also be seen as 'hero's helper' in the terms of a Souriau/Propp/Todorov model, although I do not pursue this analysis. In two cases, it is the land itself, the Australian Outback, which is a form of abstract,
### Seven Australian travel narratives: discourses and quests

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hero/Subject</th>
<th>Object-hero</th>
<th>Discourses</th>
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<th>Internal Quest</th>
<th>Narr. Quest</th>
<th>Reader Quest</th>
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<td><em>Dust on My Shoes</em></td>
<td>Marchand</td>
<td></td>
<td>**</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Journey Among Men</em></td>
<td>'Men'</td>
<td>land</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>'Circumnavig.'</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Spirit of</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tracks</em></td>
<td>land</td>
<td>(Abs)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>By camel to</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Self-change,</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Log of the White Wog</em></td>
<td>Cranc</td>
<td></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Point-to-pt.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Liberty,</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**
- * minimal importance
- ** moderate
- *** strong
- ( ) implicit interpretation

**Reader Negot? Reader must actively negotiate meaning and text?**
- Res? Resolved?
- Narr. Quest Narrative Quest?
action-less hero (or 'establishing hero' as I call it in one instance.)

What do they stand for? As with the variety of their hero natures, the heroes of this sample stand for a range of values. They are all European Australians of the middle class (even if in flight from these 'givens') who have the individual and class capacity to be at large, often among others who do not have, or do not exercise, that option. (In a world which is concurrently colonial and post-colonial they generally stand for interaction between the two, and the mobility of the former over the latter.) As travellers, they embody physical liberty; they are 'socially mobile' transgressors who breach real and/or abstract lines of distinction and convention. As writers they stand as self-reporting agents of self-transformation and preservation, or, as agents of social transformation and preservation who report back (via, e.g. news of the Pole, the 'People,' the land) to a paying audience on their (usually) successful undertakings. In this they are professional, surrogate, communicating, pilgrim-adventurers to their domestic peers.

Individually, they may represent art, science, maleness, femaleness, physical courage, emotional fortitude, self-indulgence, self-examination, and so on, but these attributes seem to gravitate to service either solo goals (even if undertaken in company, as in Birtles' case), or collective societal goals (as in the books by Fletcher, A. Marshall and J. Marshall-Drysdale), but not a combination of the two. Yet, ultimately their stories all have a strong similarity, being about 'the marvellous journey, the one formula that is never exhausted.' (Frye)

What are they doing here? What they stand for (above) is also what they do. Beyond the specifics of their various travels and travails, and whatever their ulterior motives, 'the texts bespeak that conflict between mythic expectation and mundane fact which has become one of the generic foci of travel writing.' (Campbell) Mythically, mundanely, the traveller is the one who leaves - who is 'away,' to liberation, to the rehearsal of larger life, its births and endings. (Pascal says 'Motion is life.') Joseph Campbell interprets this challenge at the macro or societal level as one which must be
met by each individual.

It is axiomatic that the traveller-writer returns (somewhere), to write. These seven authors fit the simple model of leave-travel-return-write, (their reintegration is through the adventure's coda of writing) which is represented in Campbell's classic (or mythic) quest schema as

Stage One: separation or departure
Stage Two: trials and victories of initiation
Stage Three: return and reintegration with society

In the applied (or 'mundane') sense, and less in the abstract, they are, gathering information (Fletcher, Marshall-Drysdale); testing themselves against environmental hazards (Fletcher, Birtles, Pinney, Davidson, Ho); testing themselves against psychological barriers (Birtles, Davidson, Ho); engaged in an aim beyond personal reward (Fletcher, A. Marshall, J. Marshall-Drysdale); and in a quest for text (all but Fletcher and Ho, and much later, they too).

*What is the nature and object of the outer search?* It is often not possible to clearly separate the inner from the outer, and the nature from the object, of a search. 'For Proust, any journey is a journey into the self, any knowledge is self-knowledge, any discovery, self-discovery.' (Hirsch) If journeying is a form of knowing, each of the selected texts has as its object a form (or several) of 'objective' knowledge, be it of: scientific information, new territory, environmental and cultural extremes, psychological make-up, anecdotes, folkways, the operation of the vehicle (boat, car, camel), representation (text, image), and transcending these sub-categories, of the greater external goal and its extremes.

Predominantly, the outer searches are ostensibly orientated towards a geographic locus (Mac-Robertson Land, Singapore, 'the Mallee,' 'east,' the Kimberley, Indian Ocean, 'north/south/etc of the border') which may or may not be specific or ultimate. The nature of the search is, fundamentally, in movement, through geographic space and cultural time, via a variety of vehicles; inherent in these searches is the activity of monitoring and recording events of the passage, which in turn may effect the nature of the search and the nature of the searcher (*vide* Tracks, North-West *by* North, The Log).
The boon sought ranges from impersonal, institutional, national benefits, through aesthetic productions (sketches, poems, photographs, books) and a general sort of yea-saying 'at-largeness,' to a broad physical and cultural competence, and even just survival. For all the outward-focussing of this aspect of the quest, when it reaches the stage (page) of representation, these travel narratives do not document anything specifically 'Indian,' 'Outback,' 'Aboriginal' or 'Mexican,' but an 'intercultural frontier' or 'an interstitial subculture.' (Brettell) In this sense, the object of the outer search then is also internalised, subjectivised.

What is the nature and object of the inner search? The inner search may swing between the great poles of life and death; or, more mundanely, even appear to be absent. I have argued that in Antarctic Days, These Are My People, Dust on My Shoes and Journey Among Men, there is no superordinate 'inner search' operation which the writer is conducting upon his self-in-motion. I have attributed certain abstractions to some of the texts as standing for inner searches. Specifically, these are 'emotional survival' (Birtles), 'spirit of place' (A. Marshall, J. Marshall-Drysdale, Davidson), 'adventurous existence' (Pinney) and 'self-change/liberty' (Davidson, Ho). While these attributions can be justified, they are not the only inner searches which might be attributed to the works - or in the only terminology by which those searches might be described. It is worth noting that two of the works which I have nominated as having less personal, but institutional and national benefits, are nevertheless firmly focussed upon an abstract dimension of that national territory. They are These Are My People and Journey Among Men, both of which I see as strongly concerned with 'spirit of place,' and perhaps not co-incidentally, being so in the service of a timely national agenda of, respectively, war-time morale and peace-time development. This might be seen as an 'altruistic' quest - even though there are then difficulties with the subsequently suggested opposition of 'altruism vs selfish.' All quests are ultimately 'selfish,' in being in some way also self-serving.

With others, specifically the later travellers Davidson and Ho (but also with Birtles), in their inner search for stability in/of the self (against the backdrop of the deliberately engaged instability of
the external world), there is neither a sense of 'altruism' nor of a collective or expanded beneficiary of their journeys. (Even though, retrospectively, what they have done and written may prove of inspiration/entertainment/information to readers.) They dwell in a super-personal world, if not in 'an age of epistemological malaise, where public truth and accepted value have broken down, [and] the self remains the only viable locus for our search for meaning and order.' (Hirsch)

*Are the various goals achieved?* 'They change their climate, not their soul, who rush across the sea.' said Horace, more than 2000 years ago. All our sample authors indeed did change their climates, from Polar freeze to Equatorial melt. At a closer focus, they each attained the external goals which I have construed as implicit or explicit in their text. All the projects were completed, with the exception of Birtles and crew aborting their mission at an intermediate point, and not at its ultimate destination, London; and of Ho, who achieves intermediate goals (hitching around Australia, sailing to America, Colombia, etc), but who, in not setting an ultimate goal, reaches only a loose end.

T. S. Elliot wrote that '... the journey not the arrival matters' (and like an old saw, its teeth get blunter with each application), but, it bears mentioning that had any of these authors been un-successful in his/her quest (sunk in Newcastle, turned back at Baghdad, stuck in Alice, repatriated from Cuernavaca), and had there been no 'arrival,' there would be far less chance of a book, and certainly, not of one which retrospectively describes the gaining of the goal/s which it has nominated (the *post hoc* self-fulfilling goals?). Thus, it should come as no surprise that all the external goals were reached; by definition, failures are generally selected out of this travelling-writing-publishing journey to market.

The road seems a *tabula rasa* for the embarking voyager, promising liberty from the old, and from the old self. But the internal quest for this is a more difficult slate to read, both for the traveller and the reviewer of that traveller's account. Some of the internal quests which I have nominated for the works may be as much projections of my own reading as they are anything which can
be interpreted in the work. Thus, my tabulations of the success, or even existence/absence (vide Fletcher, Pinney) of the internal quest are tenuous. Perhaps the best, though vastly general, thing which might be said of each traveller and his search is (again) Elliot's:

'We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.'

With the exception of Antarctic Days and The Log, all the books achieve final textual/narrative closure through some meditative comment which echoes the inner aspect of the journey, the author or 'the place.' This place is the still point in their world of movement; it contains the triune of journey, self and location. In knowing 'the place for the first time,' or at least in knowing it afresh, there is implied a new knowledge of the self.

*Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality? I have earlier discussed the idea of 'the text as journey' (and there would be some interest in studying 'the text as journey-organizing principle') as read at the metaphoric level, but this is quite different to grappling with the signifiers of the represented journey and making them too travel beyond their transparent complacency and 'given' complicity. In 'the narrative quest,' the author/narrator/protagonist seeks '... a way to transcribe, reflect or construct reality within the form of a literary journey, or the act of writing the novel.' (Kalter:147) In turn, this involves the reader's engagement, in terms of negotiating not only meaning, but the very construction of the writing - and thus, the representation of reality. However, none of the selected authors, except Ho, 'rounds' upon her/his own words and questions how they carry the world.

It has been said that the writer's real home is in language. Thus, we might add that the traveller-writer carries his home with him. However, there seems to be a reluctance to draw attention to this 'home' and its language-window on the world, as though to become too self-conscious of this frame would be to distract from the view beyond the window. Travel writing might carry a bi-focal
vision, of the inner and the outer. It generally does not seem to want a tri-focal vision, of subject, object and sign. It is perhaps in this, travel literature's lack of semiotic (as opposed to authorial) self-consciousness (despite such developments in other areas of literature), that some of its appeal lies: an apparently linguistically uncomplicated, theoretically unconfounded, transparent window. It is said ('sawed') that the journey not the arrival matters, but travellers, writers, publishers, books and readers obdurately, conservatively still seem to insist on arriving; so too, the venerable travel book may prove itself to be resistant to too much self-deconstruction. 'The act of perception in art is an end in itself and must be prolonged.' writes Viktor Shlovsky. 'In art, it is our experience of the process of construction that counts, not the finished product.' (in Scholes,'74:84) This may well be; but in the art of travel writing, it seems that the process of travelling is the one of preference for readers, and counts more than the processing of the process.

Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text? It follows from the above comments that, in this sample, with the exception of Jack Ho's work, the reader is not required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text. Ho toys with 'the narrative of movement and the movement of narrative,' contrasting conventional techniques with interpositions of diary and polyvocal content. He engages the possibility that 'The human subject is as much a construction of its texts as the objects it once sought to master. Writing mediates subject and object so that the terms become interchangeable.' (Lee & Muecke,'90:388) In this use of feedback and foldback signal, he disrupts the probabilities of closure. Signals run on; his lack of overall quest resolution is mirrored in his lack of narrative closure.

Aim (5a) To discuss the overall sample in terms of the proposition that the nominated constituent discourses cluster around the 'quest' as both theme and structuring device.

The diary: The three books with the strongest sense of personal interior focus and quest, viz. North-West by North, Tracks and The Log (each with an abstract principle of growth/
Conclusion

change/liberation), are those which draw most attention to their own diary discourse as a contributing, meaning-structuring element in their quest. While in these books the conventional ordering of 'narration superordinate, description subordinate,' is sustained, in two others, it comes close to being reversed. Antarctic Days and Journey Among Men are as diary-based (I assume) as any of the others, but their excision of author's personal referencing results in the diary not being significant, in explicit content or form, to the quest. To say 'description superordinate, narration subordinate' is not accurate, because in both instances, the merging of the two is such that the narration also describes while description drives the narration.

Autobiography: Autobiographical discourse, as a cognitive-frame by which the author gives significance to the wider events of his life and to understanding him as an individual, does not generally operate in this sample. Autobiographical cues are present, and strongly so, but usually only in reference to the comparatively narrow time-frame of the book's events (e.g. in Pinney's book). Again, it is the three works with the strongest sense of interior quest (North-West by North, Tracks and The Log) which draw most attention to their autobiographical discourse as content and motivation in their quest. In Antarctic Days, These Are My People, and Journey Among Men, autobiography does not significantly operate to inform the quest.

The Other: Alterity, says Hassan, is not merely cultural, a matter of colour, or so-called race; nor of any simple category, for the past can be Other, as can nature or a foreign landscape. Above all, it can be spiritual, "... a quest for the enigma of being, for something numinous or strange. Thus every journey whispers quest or pilgrimage." ('90a:412) In my sample, the four most recent works draw most strongly upon the Other; for the other three it is a discourse of less importance.

Exoticism: ('I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote ... to sail forbidden seas, and land on barbarous coasts.' Ishmael) Again, in the four most recent works, there is a strong emphasis upon the exotic, and in the other three it is a discourse of
less importance. Where it operates emphatically, the exotic contributes to the motivation for the external quest, and operates as a point of contrast or reference for the internal quest. Modern thought, we have noted, seeks its Self in its Other, in the exotic, the remote and the pre-literate. The exotic is not synonymous with the Other, but the relationship between the two, in this set, points to an alignment in which the self does seek identity or authenticity in the Other; and, not surprisingly, for the traveller, that Other is found in far, if not exotic places.

Overall, the above four discourses are focussed towards the 'meta-discourse' of the quest in its various aspects. Predictably, they do so in different manners and to different degrees or 'densities.' The Diary is present as both residual form and content; autobiography principally as content, and to a lesser extent as a motivation to the inner quest; Other and exoticism contribute both content and motivation to the quest (inwards and outwards) but not form.

The grid in the figure Seven Australian travel narratives: discourses and quests (page 327b) indicates the approximate presence of the discourses (as I perceive them) in the works, and this presence is indicated by asterisks. The quantification is meant to be only for the purposes of a broad, comparative indication. Adding the columns, the respective discourses give cumulative counts of

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>diary</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autobiography</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exoticism</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, without claiming any statistical validity, but rather, an impression, the counts suggest relativities in the overall presence of the nominated constituent discourses in the sample. In summary, it may be said that the 'quest' is both theme and structuring device ('a metaphor or archetypal pattern') in all the books of this sample; and the nominated constituent discourses do cluster around that quest (that is, they are clearly linked to it) but they do so from case to case, and discourse to discourse, with differing proximity and
relevance.

Aim (5b) To discuss the overall sample in terms of the proposition that the quest has two dimensions, inner and outer, both of which supported by the constituent discourses.

The discourses overlap each other (especially the diary-autobiography, and Other-exotic pairings) and are present in varying density. By now, it is clear that all books embody a narrative of the external quest. With all but Antarctic Days, the outer and inner quests are inextricably linked, even though some authors may give more emphasis to the former (Pinney) and others to the latter (Ho), or spread the emphasis to both (Birtles, Davidson). It is not possible at this level to specify within any given text to what extent one discourse operates to support the external quest, while another operates to support the internal.

It can only be said that in the four books which concentrate most upon the individual, the author, as solo traveller, there is apparently a stronger deployment of all the nominated discourses than in the other three books. Dust on My Shoes, The Log and Tracks are essentially about one person's journey (regardless of other companions and helpers). I would argue the same for Birtles in North-West by North: she is travelling 'psychologically solo,' in the company of four others. The other three books are all concerned with agendas which I have argued can be seen as supra-personal. By again comparing the counts of discourse asterisks, but this time on a horizontal axis, the following picture emerges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antarctic Days</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West by North</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These Are My People</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust on My Shoes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey Among Men</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Log</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 'solo' (personal, or super-personal) quests are most strongly supported by the nominated discourses; and the 'group/collective' (supra-personal) quests are less strongly supported. This is not surprising, insofar as the four discourses are
all focussed (or focussable) upon interiority, self-reflection and identity. A different set of discourses (e.g. concerning history, science, nature, nation, architecture, etc.) might possibly invert the above weighting of 'discourse support' for the quest.

In summary, it is clear that the majority of quests do have two identifiable dimensions, both of which are supported by the constituent discourses, but again, from case to case with differing intensity.

**Additional observations**

As stated in the Introduction, I have not erected a preferred theoretical framework through which to view this small set of texts and, as they do not represent a significant longitudinal sample, any patterns observed or conclusions drawn will not be presented as firm deductions about Australian travel literature in general. ('I propose ... a new science ... strictly tied to literature, concerned with human travel ... "Iterology".' wrote Michael Butor. This model of ratiocination is not yet with us.) Nevertheless, I shall identify *ad hoc* some of the patterns which appear in this set:

- Solo travellers (or those in small, loosely-bonded groups) tend to emphasise the inner quest, although not to the extent of outweighing the outer journey.

- Travellers with a personal, rather than supra-personal, external goal (e.g. Birtles, Davidson, Ho) tend to emphasise the inner quest, but again, not to the extent of outweighing the outer journey; they do so particularly via the devices of autobiographical reflexivity and diary-related representation.

- Over time - and most noticeably, since WWII - the exotic and the Other have come to assume greater importance as elements in both inner and outer dimensions of the quest. Overall, they are marginally more evident than other discourses.

- In the two works by women, there is a greater emphasis (and honesty?) than in those by men, upon the emotional
orientation of the author, as distinct from (but not instead of) a concrete or abstract goal-orientation.

- 'Failure' at a quest goal, inner or outer, is rarely written - perhaps because of the retrospective re-construction of goals and 'selves' or authorial personas, or perhaps through the selecting-out by editorial mediation or self-censorship. 'Lack' at outset and 'plentitude' at conclusion still seem to be generic imperatives of journey narratives.

- A clearly defined external objective does not mediate against an equally strong set of internal discourses, and vice versa.

- There are broad, sequentially-evolved cultural models of the Romantic, modern and postmodern person which, like labels, may attach to these travellers. (Very simply put, Romantic here connotes intensity of individual experience, aesthetic or poetic motivation, a journey to the self. Modern connotes individuality, proficiency, dualism, economy, progress, 'the tradition of the new' [Rosenburg], and the author as subject of his own representation. Postmodern connotes pastiche, façade, irony, deconstruction, doubt, and the reader [also] as the subject.) Birtles, for instance, might be seen as a Romantic and a modern, Fletcher as a modern, and so on. An author in this set is generally not exclusively of only one category, nor is the historical period of writing necessarily a clue to the dominant aesthetic model. Most of these traveller-authors seem to occupy multiple models. Pinney is 'Romantic,' but he is also 'modern,' as is Davidson. In Ho 'ontogeny replicates phylogeny,' insofar as he is at different times within the text, a Romantic, a modern and a postmodern subject/object; he is the 'New Romantic' of his journey and the 'neuromantic' of his text. For the contemporary travel writer, labels are not mutually exclusive; instead they circulate among and subsume each other. Like luggage stickers on suitcase, they have authority only as long as that leg of the written journey lasts, thereafter they are traces of a travelled past.

- Travel writing's generic characteristics of inter alia sexual exchanges, life-threatening scrapes, survival, liberty, constraint, visual adjectives, high emotion, low places and so on recur among
these books. In addition to these topoi, among those works with a strong, single-journey narrative trajectory (that is, all but Journey Among Men and The Log), for all the detailed differences between location, incident, perspective and style of writing, there is evidence of a repetition of homologies. These recurrent references and tropes (which may appear in varying internal order, without disrupting the overall structure) include:

- anomaly
- arrivals
- artefacts and art
- colourful characters
- conflict
- contingency
- emotional crises
- curious folkways
- departures
- humour
- lyrical reflection
- peculiar folkways and mores
- physical infirmity
- opponents
- romance (of self/with another)
- striking scenery
- threat
- wildlife

The traveller, the writer as shaman

'This time, though, I climbed because I wanted to prove a point. I wanted to do it so I could come back and tell people why we are like we are, to tell people [to] keep working because we are all wonderful and humanity has been incredibly courageous to come as far as it has. It has been such a tremendous battle and we have been criticised so much from within ourselves, which has made us very bitter and twisted. It is an incredibly difficult world we have to grow up in.'

Tim Macartney-Snape, after his second Everest ascent
In an epic eight-year journey (1528-36), marooned Spanish Conquistador Alvaro Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and three companions, walking barefoot and naked, became the first Europeans to cross the American continent, having started from near Galveston on the Gulf of Mexico. In the account written to his King, the Naufragios ('Shipwrecks') of 1542, Cabeza de Vaca tells an extraordinary story of how he and his companions underwent a dramatic transmogrification to become healers of the Indians amongst whom they passed. This spontaneous self-initiation into shamanic power came after the stripping away (through privation, pain and dislocation) of all they had held absolute about their identity: 'To understand what it means to have nothing, one must have nothing.' (in Long,39:21) 'The worst lay in parting little by little with the thoughts that clothe the soul of a European, and most of all with the idea that a man attains strength through dirk and dagger ...' (ibid:32) Thereafter, the capacity to heal the Indians of afflictions, not by medicine but the intercession or transmission of some power they could not understand, was their only strength - but what a strength - in the world. 'To be more than I thought I was - a sensation utterly new to me...' (ibid:34) They struggled towards the Spanish settlements of the west and were finally found, albeit by slavers in search of Indians.

This narrative (as reworked by poet Haniel Long in The Marvellous Adventure of Cabeza de Vaca) is perhaps the most dramatic rendition in historical literature of the European traveller as shaman. 'The power of maintaining life in others lives within each of us, and from each of us does it recede when unused.' (ibid:20) he wrote. 'Being Europeans, we thought we had given away to doctors and priests our ability to heal. But here it was, still in our possession ...we were more than we thought we were.' (ibid:33) (my emphasis) Long writes of Cabeza de Vaca that '... at a certain point he ceases to be a historical personage and becomes a symbol.' (ibid:10) - It is this symbol that interests me here: the possibility that on the traveller's - or travel writer's - road there is also a 'road to Damascus,' where, in the epiphany of the ordinary meeting the extraordinary, there may be a break-through of the Other - through which the agent comes 'to be more than I thought I was.'
The Conquistador traveller undertook his shamanic tasks directly, and wrote about them as a report to his King (and as a plea for fair treatment of the Indians). The travel writer - if we are to entertain this symbolic, analogical possibility - undertakes his tasks indirectly, through literature. He does not lay hands upon the Indians of his journey, but words upon his reader. As I have noted at several points, the traveller's quest into the symbolic wilderness may be equated to the shamanic journey, which is often performed in service of the larger society as well as that of the individual. The return with the news of the journey has its social function in the dissemination of these messages of the Other. (Modern thought seeking its Self in its exotic, remote and pre-literate Other,) This Other is experienced (directly or vicariously) as a purification. From the shamanic vision quest onwards, self-discovery through a complex, arduous search for an Other is a basic theme of our civilization. The traveller-writer here stands in place of the reader, on whose behalf he has ventured.

The traveller who returns from this searching journey to tell it as a literary 'trance journey,' acts as a surrogate shaman to his own readers. 'The shaman interprets his trance experience as a journey to the spirit world.' says Zweig. 'His skill lies in his ability to enter the magic countries, and then return. Ordinary people are victimized by the perils of the invisible world as Odysseus' crew is victimized. Only the shaman knows how to go, and then come home.' ('74:29) As I have noted elsewhere, Joseph Campbell also sees the hero's quest as a shamanic journey, symbolically undertaken for the redemption of his own community. He says that it is not society that guides and saves the creative hero, but the reverse. The quester's ordeal is to carry 'the cross of the redeemer - not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair.' ('75:331)

The subject, the modern travel writer, is in motion towards an Other. Motion from one potential extreme, of transcendence in adventure, to the other, of defeat in perhaps the banality of touristic simulacra. The expression of this movement is the narrative. Reading, we learn that the writer is a person gifted for (and from) wandering, who like the shaman, has mastered the
secret of travel between the worlds. Like the shaman, the writer crosses into the mythic realm and returns with the story of his journey. He always quests doubly. By extruding his humanity beyond the frontier of the domestic, he embodies a victory over the both the invisible and visible worlds. 'For this he is condemned to a life of endless mobility. Because he is at home everywhere, he will be at home nowhere.' (Zweig,'84:32) Like the questing hero, says Kalter, we readers too are in transit 'between polarities that are increasingly equivocal; spatial and temporal resonances of past, present, and future.' And, via these tales and texts, we '... embark upon our own infinite metaphorical quests for the elusive castle of reality.' ('76:306)

Not all travel writing is amenable to this interpretation, without stretching the model beyond credibility. However, with Antarctic Days with Mawson, North-West by North, These Are My People, Dust on My Shoes, Journey Among Men, Tracks, The Log of White Wog - each of these works may be read as a journey by an experiencing, interpreting agent, through the dream-real world, the 'separate reality' of the Otherworld, during which the agent undergoes tests of skill and identity, contends with threats to their (and our) given order, makes their mistakes, experiences their weaknesses, and overcoming the fears, isolation, temptations and lassitude which dwell beyond and within these borders, returns to prove that, as well as they, we too can 'be greater than we were.' (Robyn Davidson, for one makes this point explicitly.) The writer has shown a vision of the different which may heal the vision of the same.

The analogue is romantic, but for me, it is one of the most interesting ideas to emerge on this journey through texts. For, if not in quest of visions of healing, wholeness and overcoming, for what do we travel, write and read?

ROAD WORK ENDS
EPilogue

The coda of the roader
(or, Reader, on ending somewhere else ... )

This final stage is sometimes known as the Return of the Hero as Master of Two Worlds. (But, as a Roads Scholar...?)

'A soul moves at the speed of a camel walking.' Arab proverb

'The traveller is the friend of God.' Arab proverb

'Voyaging is victory.' Arab proverb

'Travel is travail.' Arab proverb

'Dakar is a steam bath with a view.' New York Times.

'... sometimes I think that it wasn't just Katai who "got away", but Thailand itself, the whole strange trip. I never really got to know where I was going, never reached my destination. Perhaps the code of the road is as simple as that. You never do get there. There is just the road, and what it reveals along the way.'

Charles Nickoll

'... my benefactor's question has meaning now. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you.'

Don Juan to Carlos

'Thus you shall think of all this world:
a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,
a flash of lightning in a summer cloud,
a flickering flame, a phantom and a dream.'

Buddhist Sutra