

## Colonial Memory



# Colonial Memory

Contemporary Women's Travel Writing in  
Britain and the Netherlands

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# Introduction

## ‘Yesterday does not go by’

“Perhaps it’s true that things can change in a day. That a few dozen hours can affect the outcome of whole lifetimes. And that when they do, those few dozen hours, like the salvaged remains of a burned house – the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture – must be resurrected from the ruins and examined. Preserved. Accounted for.”

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*.

*Gisteren gaat niet voorbij* (*Yesterday does not go by*) is the title of a novel written in 1973 by the Dutch female author Aya Zikken.<sup>1</sup> Against the background of a reunion gathering, the plot centres around two Dutch ladies who recollect their colonial childhood. They were in the Dutch East Indies (colonial Indonesia) during the early twentieth century. Zikken has reworked memories of the Dutch East Indies in numerous literary works, such as *De atlasvlinder* (1958), *Ramêh, verslag van een liefde* (1968), *Gisteren gaat niet voorbij* (1973), *Landing op Kalabahi* (1996) and *Indische jaren* (2001).<sup>2</sup> She has also written a large body of travel writing about Indonesia, for instance *Eilanden van vroeger* (1982), *Drieluik Sumatra* (1995) and *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* (1982).<sup>3</sup> Since her repatriation to the Netherlands on the eve of the Second World War and the Indonesian struggle for independence, Aya Zikken has continuously returned to her autobiographical childhood experiences in colonial Indonesia through writing, travelling and writing about travel.

Seen in the post-imperial context of the second part of the twentieth century, Aya Zikken is by no means the only Dutch author who has returned to colonialism in her work. Although official historical records often reveal reluctance on the part of contemporary Dutch society to confront the ways in which colonialism has far outlived decolonisation, the desire to return to the colonial past is ever so present. In Britain also, it is striking that so many texts repeatedly return to scenes of colonialism, to produce a plethora of modes, motives, and meanings. The sheer range of these meanings can be glimpsed when we consider the various plots about the colonial past that are in circulation today. Often inherited from the past, many of these plots have seemingly disappeared, only to resurface in commodified forms on the Western global market: fashionable Oriental garments, African drum music festivals, belly dance courses, the allure of exotic is-

lands in reality-TV shows, the thrill of adventure tourist holidays, the 2002 commemoration of the foundation of the Dutch East Indies Company four hundred years ago in Holland, the proliferation of slave monuments, the promotion of colonial tourist sites such as *het Oost-Indische huis*, documentaries about postcolonial migrants seeking their roots, such as *Motherland: A Genetic Journey*, colonial film epics such as *A Passage to India* or *Gordel van Smaragd*, the *Multatuli* musical and so on.

It is reasonable to say that the colonial past haunts a wide range of Western cultural practices and production today as a ghost in various obvious and obscure guises – in tourism, films, literature, monuments and museums. Taken together, the wide range of these Western instances of colonial recollection demonstrate that colonialism has always carried diverse and conflicting associations for a variety of people, regardless of how official historical narratives have portrayed colonialism, imperialism and European expansion.<sup>4</sup>

In this study, I will examine the phenomenon of the return to the colonial past in late twentieth-century Britain and the Netherlands. I am not concerned with what actually did happen in the colonial past. I am interested less in its irreducible particularities – in what happened, where and why – than in the fact that the colonial experience does not seem to pass but, instead, instigates a compulsion to return. The discussion of the colonial past in the late twentieth century is, however, far too extensive and complex to lend itself to an exhaustive inventory. In order to gain purchase on it, I have chosen to concentrate on women's travel writing as one mode of going back through travel, in which the colonial experience appears particularly intense and pressing. This study explores how women travellers return to the colonial past, an historical episode with which their autobiographical lives are, in one way or another, intricately connected. At the core of this investigation are three women's travel texts: Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* (1981), Marion Bloem's *Muggen mensen olifanten* (1995) and Doris Lessing's *African Laughter* (1992). Crucial will be the examination of how these women's return travel narratives relate to other contemporary forms of colonial remembrance in Britain and the Netherlands.

From the perspective of these women's travel writings, I am interested in a better understanding of the complexities and ambivalences surrounding the return to the colonial past in late twentieth-century Western societies. Why does one keep on returning? To what purpose do women keep on returning and what are the implications of going back? What form does the return take? In particular, I am concerned with what the return by means of travel (rather than, for instance, by means of the imagination) signifies to women whose lives are intricately connected to the colonial past. How does gender inform women's return journeys? What narrative techniques does women's travel writing offer for the articulation of the return? To what extent do female travellers anchor their identities in the colonial past? How do their personal journeys of going back relate to other in-

stances of colonial recall in Britain and the Netherlands? What similarities, overlaps and incongruencies exist between British and Dutch colonial experiences and between how these experiences are recollected in Britain and the Netherlands?

Addressing these questions, this study has a two-fold aim. On the one hand, from a perspective that pays attention to the particularities of gender, genre and historical context, I intend to nuance and historicise one of the pivotal assumptions of postcolonial theory, suggesting that the legacy of empire is obscured in the West today. On the other hand, I aim to widen the predominant focus on the British Empire in contemporary postcolonial studies, by analysing the aftermath of the Dutch colonial experience in Dutch women's travel writing.

In the wake of Edward Said's seminal works *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), postcolonial studies has pushed past the conventional conception of imperial power as a material phenomenon, instead presenting it as an epistemological system. Fusing Foucauldian discourse theory with insights from Antonio Gramsci's political writings, Said and the postcolonial scholars in his tradition have sought to show how Western representations of those parts of the world the West identifies as the "Orient" is a body of knowledge that tells us little about the so-called Orient, which may or may not exist outside of the Western imagination. Rather, this body of knowledge reveals the West's efforts to impose its own epistemology onto the peoples and cultures that came under its hegemonic sway. Because the West's power is linked to the cultural representations it constructs and imposes on the minds of coloniser and colonised alike, it is able to survive the political decolonisation that occurred after the Second World War.

In the tradition of Edward Said's appeal to examine "Orientalism Now," to quote the final part of his *Orientalism*, one of the main ambitions of postcolonial studies has been to draw out the connections, continuations and affiliations between colonial histories and contemporary post-imperial conditions, including the politics of multiculturalism in the West. In the terms of Leela Gandhi, post-colonial studies can be seen as "the theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath."<sup>5</sup> This theoretical resistance resides in the practice of teasing out the colonial genealogies of contemporary Western ideas and notions about non-Western peoples and places. By doing so, in the terms of Homi Bhabha, postcolonial studies is designed "to intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic 'normality' to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities and peoples."<sup>6</sup>

Since its relatively recent emergence as a recognised academic field, however, the theory and practice of postcolonial studies has not unequivocally located an object, or even a horizon of enquiry. Particularly the ongoing debates about definitions of colonial and postcolonial/post-colonial literatures reflect broader discussions about the meanings of the phrase "postcolonial" in terms of periodisation, politics, historicity, and comparative scope.<sup>7</sup> An extensive overview of these

discussions would lead us too far away from the purpose at present. It is, however, safe to say that these discussions did not resolve in a single postcolonial theory or precise methodology. At best, postcolonial studies can be considered a set of critical reading strategies, studying current social structures and discursive formations as effects of the colonial enterprise, particularly the writings that were produced within the period and context of imperialism. I will elaborate in greater detail on postcolonial studies and Said's work in Chapter 1. But for now, it suffices to say that with regard to intent, this critical study can be considered to fall under the ambit of postcolonial studies.

One of the greatest criticisms that has been levelled against Said's Orientalism is, however, that it tends to generalise about the West, a practice no less distorting than the West's tendency to essentialise the Orient, as Said suggests that it does. Orientalism reads as if Said assumes a continuous and unified Western history of representing the non-West in inferior ways from the eighteenth century to the present day. Likewise, in much of the postcolonial scholarship it has inspired, "the West is seen as an undifferentiated, omnipotent entity, imposing its totalizing designs on the rest of the world without check or interruption."<sup>8</sup> Similarly, as Steve Clark rightly observed, contemporary travel writing is often criticised as invariably reproducing Orientalist stereotypes.<sup>9</sup> As the argument goes, the loss of empire is in various ways nostalgically lamented in contemporary travel writing. Nostalgia implies a recapitulation of the end of empire and offers endless opportunities to experience empire over and over again.<sup>10</sup>

In this study I wish to argue that the contemporary Western phenomenon of the return to the colonial past is much more ambivalently shaded. A focus on women's remembrance of colonialism particularly reveals that the phenomenon is inherently conflicting and diversified. For instance, the title of Aya Zikken's novel, *Gisteren gaat niet voorbij*, already indicates that Western women's colonial childhood remembrance is far more complex and equivocal than Said's notion of Orientalism could signify. The phrase echoes other literary recollections of Dutch colonialism by women, such as Maria Dermout's novel *Nog pas gisteren* (*Days before Yesterday*).<sup>11</sup> This suggests that colonial remembrance is never a singular, individual practice, but harks back to earlier patterns of remembrance. At the same time, the word "yesterday" translates colonial history into a vocabulary of a woman's everyday humdrum and orders colonialism into the chronology of her personal life. Although the conventional definition of "yesterday" denotes a day that has finished, in "yesterday does not go by" the past spills over into, and becomes the present. In this instance, Dutch colonialism is not a political or diplomatic event in the past closed off at the moment of decolonisation, as conventional historiography would have it. Moreover, Dutch colonialism is not a completely obscured history, as is often claimed by postcolonial theorists. Rather, the colonial experience is haunting the present life of a woman in the Netherlands. In this woman's narrative, the intimate feelings of nostalgia for her childhood in the Dutch East

Indies overwhelm her adult life and are the lasting remainders of Dutch colonialism.

“Yesterday does not go by” also raises questions about how colonised peoples figure in the woman’s testimony as to the aftermath of colonialism. Mourning the loss of her colonial childhood possibly also entails a desire to experience, one more time, the privileges she enjoyed as a Dutch child in the Dutch East Indies. “Yesterday does not go by” hints at the assumption that Western women travellers possibly return to the colonial experience in order to correct or augment societal mythologies about colonialism, in the process bolstering their own authorial position.

The internal differences existing among women’s return journeys provide us with an additional reason to come to terms with the conflicting meanings and the variety of memories of colonialism. I have deliberately put together a selection of women writers that will not let us be essentialist about gender or simplistic about feminism, a collection that refuses to authorise easy generalisations about the way women travel and remember the colonial past. By calling attention to these writers’ diversity, as well as to their common concerns, I aim to broaden our sense of the scope of women’s writerly endeavours and our means of theorising the articulation between gender and other factors that inflect identity, travel, and colonial remembrance.

Succinctly put, aiming to nuance the West as an omnipotent amnesiac power block in this study, I argue that what we need is a wider historical and aesthetic sense of how Western knowledge about the colonial past is effected, through which channels that knowledge is routed and in whose interests it is deployed. In so doing, this study deploys a feminist postcolonial methodology from a comparative perspective, which centres on a historically contingent notion of memory.

In *Belated Travelers*, Ali Behdad argues, “postcolonial studies are on the side of memory, their oppositionality and function of amnesia [...]”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Sandhya Shetty and Elizabeth Jane Bellamy refer to the discipline’s “archive fever.”<sup>13</sup> Recent work in the field of memory studies could serve well, as I wish to argue, to tease out some of the complexities and ambivalences surrounding the return to the colonial past in late twentieth-century Britain and the Netherlands and, thus, to refine the methodology of postcolonial studies.

It is indeed this body of scholarship that considers how memory functions as a significant means by which the coherence of personal identity and national history is constructed and sustained. Memories form a sense of who we are, as individuals or as nations. Likewise, the colonial past appears as a concern through which Western society and individuals narrate stories about their selves, their nations, their values and standards. At the same time, memory appears as a source of disquiet and as an epistemological problem. After all, who exactly is entitled to know what has happened and whose version of the past is most adequate? In the

terms of anthropologist Johannes Fabian, “[...] can we remember those who are ‘strangers’ to us?”<sup>14</sup> Precisely because colonial memory springs from the Western imagination, it may tell us little, or render only singlesided viewpoints, about the colonial past. In this sense, memory seems an unreliable instrument for those who want to know the colonial past. It offers grounds for anxiety and perturbation, contradictions and ambivalences.

Keeping in mind both these settling and unsettling, constructive and deconstructive dimensions of memory, I intend to propose a model for postcolonial studies from a comparative perspective, which has recently been identified as a new direction in which postcolonial studies is heading. More specifically, I will analyse how Western women’s going back to their colonial experience serves to construct and is, in turn, constructed by the personal, generic and the cultural circumstances in which their return occurs. This study uses the motif of the colonial past in order to examine intersections of gender identity, travel writing and the culture of colonial remembrance in the three travel narratives under investigation. By paying attention to both the settling and unsettling nature of recollection, more specifically by analysing how gender, genre and the contingencies of a specific (post)imperial culture impinge upon the return to the colonial past, this study differentiates and shades the postcolonial argument that the West is a monolithic power block lamenting the demise of empire.

The issue of the cultural circumstances of remembrance requires further explanation. It will be an interface between two axes of comparison analysing the return to the colonial past: one focusing on intersections between travel writing, memory and gender, and another one comparatively analysing how women’s travel writings are historically embedded in the distinct cultures of colonial remembrance of Britain and the Netherlands. Since it is crucial to analyse how the narratives of return travel under investigation circulate, and are embedded in two different Western cultures of colonial remembrance, a comparative historical outline of these two cultures of remembrance will be fleshed out in Chapter 2. The latter perspective will bring the Dutch empire and its contemporary legacy under the same spectrum of analysis as with the British empire. The focus on Dutch colonialism is relevant in that it has thus far received little attention from a postcolonial perspective and allows us to question the predominance of the Anglo-Saxon focus in international postcolonial studies.

In order to assess the multi-sided complexities involved in the motif of the return to the colonial past, it is necessary to develop an interdisciplinary methodology. Therefore, situated loosely under the ambit of postcolonial studies, this project adopts insights from a range of disciplines and subdisciplines, such as narratology, genre criticism, (feminist) travel writing scholarship, new historicism and (post)colonial historiography.

The study is organised as follows.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 will respectively provide a theoretical and historical framework for the three case studies analysed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. In the latter chapters, I explore the forms and functions of the women's return travel narratives. The authors and narratives are selected on the basis of their representativeness for diverse ways in which the settling and unsettling dimensions of memory manifest themselves in Western women's travel texts. In each chapter, the close reading of the text will be briefly introduced by an outline of a relevant literary context in which the text under examination is embedded.

Chapter 1 renders an overview of a range of relevant theoretical debates: on the notion of memory in cultural studies; genre theory; gender and colonial discourse in women's travel writing; the relationship between literary texts and their contexts; and comparative literature. Discussing the former theoretical debates, I will expand on the pivotal concepts and insights that form the basis of the postcolonial methodology from a comparative perspective proposed in this study. Particular attention will be paid to the interrelations between the notions of gender, genre and cultures of colonial remembrance and to how these interrelated concepts can be understood in a historicised and comparative manner. These discussions will form the theoretical skeleton of this study.

In Chapter 2, I will comparatively outline how the women's representations of the colonial experience through travel are related to colonial discourses and the perpetuation of these colonial discourses in the aftermath of Dutch and British imperialism. The three return travel narratives are partly conditioned, as I wish to argue, by the specific historical conditions in which colonial practices in the Dutch East Indies and Rhodesia took place, and by the distinct Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance in which they circulate. In order to understand further particularities, similarities and dissimilarities between these historical conditions, I will discuss a range of gendered (post)colonial discourses and address issues such as white women and colonialism; Western representations of non-Western people; national identity and white masculinity.

Chapter 3 will analyse how nostalgic desire triggers Aya Zikken's return journey to Indonesia and how this nostalgic desire affects the representation of the Dutch East Indies in Zikken's travel narrative *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*. Through the notions of nostalgia and the sublime, the question addressed will be the extent to which the colonial past is productively represented through the return journey. Particular attention will be paid to the observation that the Dutch East Indies is at once all pervasive and its presence felt, whilst also endlessly deferred and never to be reached as the object of the traveller's destination. If Chapter 3 focuses on the colonial past and its nostalgic representations in women's travel writing, Chapter 4 looks at how the colonial past becomes strategically incorporated in the articulation of the traveller's identity, postmemory and ethnographic authority.

In Chapter 4, Marion Bloem's *Muggen mensen olifanten* will be the object of inquiry for an analysis of the return to the colonial past. In this analysis, I shift my attention to the extent to which the return to the Dutch East Indies becomes a political strategy for the articulation of second-generation female Indo identity. Drawing on the notions of postmemory and ethnographic authority, I will be concerned in particular with the way in which the return to the colonial past becomes strategically constructed for the purpose of the traveller's self-representation, at the same time that it also serves to exercise ethnographic authority over Indonesia. Thus, focusing on the implications of the return to the colonial past for the traveller's identity and authority in this chapter, the next chapter deals with the implications of the return to everyday colonial life for the representation of the space visited.

Chapter 5 deals with the question of the return to the imperial everyday in Doris Lessing's *African Laughter*. I will examine how *African Laughter* navigates between social realism and experimentalism in order to describe the Zimbabwean everyday in transition. The travel narrative emphasises the unruliness, diversity and simultaneity of manifold individual experiences that make up the Zimbabwean everyday in transition. Yet, the female I-narrator's anti-colonial, yet Western, viewpoint of Zimbabwean quotidian life is visibly highlighted and suggests a progressive view of Zimbabwean history and a celebratory view of black agency. Drawing on theories of the everyday and on feminist postcolonial theory, I will be concerned with how the recollection of the (imperial) everyday could serve the political project of giving voice to Zimbabweans' everyday lives, at the same time that the Western female traveller functions as the authoritative subject of everyday history.

Finally, I will evaluate the postcolonial methodology from a comparative perspective that will have been brought into practice in the foregoing chapters. Moreover, I will reprise the main insights that can be drawn from this study and elaborate on its implications for further study. I will specifically devote attention to the relevance of this study, first, for the current resurgence of "roots" visible in tourism and other cultural practices, second, for genre criticism in relationship to transnational feminism in the aftermath of empire, and, finally, for postcolonial studies from a comparative perspective.



# Chapter 1

## A trip down memory lane. Colonial memory in women's travel writing

“What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more...’”

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gay Science*.

### The Desire to Return

In the opening pages of Alexandra Fuller's *Scribbling the Cat*, the autobiographical protagonist recounts that her journeys in Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are motivated by a desire to return to the colonial past of these countries, specifically to the violent war which led to the independence of Zimbabwe.<sup>1</sup> After a meeting in Zambia with a man called “K.”, a devout Christian with the murderous record of a white veteran Selous Scout during the independence war, Fuller asks ethical questions about her personal involvement in the war, which she experienced as the child of British settlers. Vastly different from Nietzsche's hypothetical demon that threatens with the eternal return of the same, in *Scribbling the Cat* the eternal return of the same is not just bearable, but even desirable. Driven by ambivalent manifestations of desire, the narrator travels in pursuit of the past.

In Western culture, the distant past as well as faraway places have always been privileged sites triggering dreams, desire and imaginations. Since late eighteenth-century Romanticism, the desire to escape from the surrounding world into more imaginary realms has been a recurrent motif in Western literature. William Wordsworth returns to his childhood past in *The Prelude* and John Keats imagines the medieval past in *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. Exotic places are staged in the work of Samuel Coleridge, such as in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and in that of Lord Byron, for instance in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Characteristic of the Romantic focus on the imagination is that a will to realism remains present, even if it is only to highlight that the subject desires to depart from it.<sup>2</sup> Since the surrounding world simply cannot be abandoned altogether, alternative realms come to stand as a paradigm of paradise lost and are imagined in a melancholic manner. As a mode of perception characteristic of childhood, the past or the Orient, the Romantic imagination is imbued with positive qualities that the empirical world

lacks. From this perspective, Fuller's craving to return to her childhood past, particularly since this childhood is spent in an exotic climate like the one in Southern Africa, is sensible to the contemporary Western readers of *Scribbling the Cat*. As was the case for the former Romantic poets, here, too, the referential landscape matters. The geographical journey needs to be made, if only to go beyond the "tangible" landscape and glimpse its colonial past.<sup>3</sup>

In this study, I will examine how the colonial experience has, for some women in the West, generated a resurgence of the Romantic desire to imagine the past through travel and memory.<sup>4</sup> This chapter sets out to create the theoretical framework in which to think about these women's journeys to, and memories of the colonial past and, by doing so, will give theoretical body to a comparative postcolonial approach. The subsequent chapters will provide historical-contextual and literary-critical elaborations of the theoretical touchstones addressed here.

## Colonial Memory

Although the Romantic desire to return to the past is all pervasive in contemporary literature, the progressive-chronological notion of time underlying the Romantic return has none the less been amply questioned. From the perspective of memory as formulated in the works of cultural theorists such as Mieke Bal and Andreas Huyssen, I will seek an understanding of the past as a historically contingent notion, which cannot be studied without paying attention to the context which determines how the past is remembered. But first, let us shortly discuss how Romantic notions of the past have historically evolved.

In *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth laments that he cannot recover his past self through retrospection, because chronological time simply cannot be reversed: "So wide appears the vacancy between me and those days/ which yet have such self-presence in my mind/ that musing on them/ often do I seem two consciousnesses/ conscious of myself and of some other Being."<sup>5</sup> As this quote indicates, the Romantic view of the past is weighed by the idea that the past is ultimately lost due to the chronological progression of time.

The cyclic time structures of early nineteenth-century Victorian poetry indicate, however, that the notion of time increasingly became one in which the past resurfaced in the present, thereby patterning both large-scale, or natural, and small-scale, or human, cyclical phenomena. For instance, Tennyson's acclaimed cyclic poem *In Memoriam* shows the immanence of the past, assuming certain fundamental laws behind human and natural time, from which religious and social conclusions were drawn.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century modernist literature and theory suggest another notion of temporality, following from a new idea of human consciousness as in flux. As Sigmund Freud contends in *Des Unbehagen in der Kultur*: "In mental life, nothing that has once taken shape can be lost, [...] everything is

somehow preserved and can be retrieved under the right circumstances.”<sup>6</sup> The central notions of psychoanalysis – instinct, dream, association, repression, repetition – all appear to be written as functions and dysfunctions of the return of the childhood past in the present.<sup>7</sup> The psychoanalytical subject is indeed defined as a cluster of operations and transformations that try to manage, act upon, and repress the return of the past. Therefore, the modernist return of the past in the present is both a problem to solve and the core of its solution. As a consequence, the modernist past is never finished, but continuously leaps over into the present. The past is sometimes experienced even more vividly than the present. In *A Sketch of the Past* Virginia Woolf describes the intensity of her childhood memories in the present: “Those moments [...] can still be more real than the present moment. This I have just tested. For I got up and crossed the garden.”<sup>8</sup> Although the modernist notion of the past was often seen as stifling present action, its return was nevertheless considered repairable. As a result, modernism managed to sustain a vision of a better future.

The latter belief in progress is one way in which modern can be distinguished from postmodern notions of time. As memory theorist Andreas Huyssen argues, the experience of time has today shifted “from present futures to present pasts.”<sup>9</sup> Technological changes and phenomena – mass media, the emergence of the Internet, mass tourism and new patterns of consumption – weigh heavily on the coordinates of space and time structuring our lives. As a result, as historian David Lowenthal observes, “the past is everywhere”, from heritage villages and historic preservation to memorabilia and relics.<sup>10</sup> In this “new culture of the image of the simulacrum” where the promise of a better future has become insecure, people seem to find reassurance in looking back.<sup>11</sup> Huyssen argues that the presence of the past expresses “the growing need for spatial and temporal anchoring in a world increasing in flux in ever denser networks of compressed time and space.”<sup>12</sup>

Since the 1980s, the broadening public debate about the Holocaust in Europe and the United States has accelerated and energised the academic attention to the notion of “memory” in Holocaust and cultural studies. In addition, these debates have engendered an ethical imperative to the remembrance of the past. As is conventionally assumed, the commemoration of Holocaust atrocities and its victims could ensure that the return of the same would “never again” occur. In the post-World War world, memory helps to prevent a resurgence of the largest atrocity of modernity. At the same time, the vexing question of how to remember the Holocaust adequately, or at least productively, has prompted ongoing debates since Theodor W. Adorno’s renowned statement that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.”<sup>13</sup>

In the wake of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and the art historian Aby Warburg’s seminal works on cultural memory, various scholars have gained an understanding of memory as an epistemological problem, and as, by its very na-

ture, failing to represent the past adequately.<sup>14</sup> They have sought to understand the social, cultural and political dimensions of memory, particularly the way in which memory links the past with the present.<sup>15</sup> Memory, be it individual or social is, in the terms of Mieke Bal, “an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and re-described even as it continues to shape the future.”<sup>16</sup> To Bal, the past is a strategic invocation in and for the present. Its functions derive from today’s needs and predilections, and it is constituted through the present’s selective filter. Memory, then, is viewed as an “instance of [...] social forgetting rather than remembering.”<sup>17</sup> For the main concerns in this study, fruitful insights can be drawn from such a concept of memory.

To consider the past as a concern of the present complicates the teleological drive behind conventional views of the colonial past. The colonial past is not a past event, but rather, a becoming form, not something that has finished, but that has a certain kind of futurity. Rather than an earlier historical period closed off at the moment of decolonisation, the colonial past outlives that moment and haunts the postcolonial present in various obvious and obscure guises. My engagement with such historically contingent notion of memory becomes useful for a critical re-assessment of conventional views of the colonial past. Particularly seen in light of the prevailing “tendency to speak of colonialism as though it were exclusively a black experience,” the ongoing aftermath of the colonial past in postcolonial Europe is a particularly urgent issue to address.<sup>18</sup> While widespread debates about the atrocities of Nazism have ignited the imperative for a discourse of productive remembrance of the Holocaust in public discourse, a similar call with regard to Western colonialism is non-existent today, or has only recently begun.<sup>19</sup> I will elaborate on this point in greater detail in Chapter 2.

This study, then, considers the late twentieth-century turn to “the colonial past” as often disavowing its most literal referent – the former colonial period – and connotes instead a host of other meanings in, and for, the present moment. Such an approach allows us to see how the past becomes not one, but multiple and co-existing versions. It also brings into view how personal and cultural memories about colonialism intersect and interact with one another. Individual memory is no longer an isolated repository of personal experience, but rather a function of social memory. As Jonathan Crewe formulates it, any memory articulated by an individual is “always a function of socially constituted forms, narratives, and relations. Conversely, however, social memory is always open to revision by an individual memory in the ongoing collective process of memorisation.”<sup>20</sup> The latter perspective brings into focus how the authority of dominant colonial memory discourses can be questioned.

Various postcolonial theorists have indeed reconceptualised notions of memory – “memory” (Wole Soyinka, Edward Said), “amnesia” (Homi Bhabha, Leela Gandhi), “melancholia” (Paul Gilroy) or “nostalgia” (Renato Rosaldo) – in order to examine the forms of Western knowledge that emerge from the displacements

produced by the very functioning of colonial practices and discourses.<sup>21</sup> In this study, I will draw on their work but complement and nuance their insights by proposing a differentiated model of intersecting individual and cultural memories.

From this perspective, crucial to this study is the examination of how colonial memory is shaped by the ideologies, possibilities and restrictions of the context in which it is situated. Concretely, if memory is lacking any secure anchor beyond the exigencies of the (textual, individual, and cultural) present, then our critical task is to direct the focus to the circumstances that bring the past into expression. These circumstances can be further specified as genre, gender and the surrounding cultures of remembrance. In the next section, I will focus on issues of genre and gender in women's travel writing.

### **Women's Travel Writing and Orientalist Discourse**

As a formal code of communication, genre shapes, organises and structures the production and interpretation of meaning. Genre theorist John Frow contends that there would be no communication possible without genres: "No speaking or writing or any other symbolically organised action takes place other than through the shapings of generic codes, where 'shaping' means both 'shaping by' and 'shaping of': acts and structures work upon and modify each other."<sup>22</sup>

As forms of communication, recollections of the colonial past are similarly shaped by generic codes.<sup>23</sup> Women authors such as Doris Lessing, Aya Zikken and Marion Bloem have written large bodies of literature about the colonial past, which range across many genres. Their bodies of work demonstrate a relentless desire to memorise and re-memorise the colonial episode with which the autobiographical childhood of the authors is entangled. This study, however, will focus on travel writing as a genre that is particularly intriguing for a discussion about Western women's return to the colonial past since it reveals how memory, in the terms of Pierre Nora, "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects", hereby transforming the concrete in "lieux de mémoire."<sup>24</sup> Although an extensive analysis of the motif across various genres falls beyond the scope of this study, I will rely on the three authors' multi-generic work as a fruitful point of reference in fleshing out the demands that women's travel writing puts on the articulation of colonial memory.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that in travel writing scholarship there is a general reluctance to define travel writing as a genre. Genre taxonomy has more broadly attracted suspicion in literary theory because it suffers from the disadvantages that come with categorisation. Categories and definitions can never exhaustively delineate texts according to specific features. Any attempt to portray them as such, risks reducing the complex realities of texts in favour of the larger category to which texts supposedly 'belong'.<sup>25</sup> In a similar vein, this study does

not adopt genre as a self-contained and explanatory category. Regarding travel writing, such a notion of genre would be particularly problematic. Because of its hybrid nature, travel writing hosts a variety of genres and feeds from, and back into, various forms of literature. Marie Louise Pratt rightly described travel writing as “one of the most polyphonous of genres.”<sup>26</sup>

It is however safe to say that travel writing can be loosely described as an autobiographical first-person narrative, in which a travelling persona retrospectively describes his or her travel experiences involving the peoples and places he or she encounters. In the terms of Hayden White, travel writing can be considered “a fiction of factual representations.”<sup>27</sup> Although imbued with notions of realism and mimetic truthfulness, travel writing is never a truthful expression of a journey, but the result of a literary configuration, which the author negotiates. From this perspective, it becomes possible to study what realities, experiences and memories are, and are not, part of the literary configuration of travel writing.

In the wake of Said’s *Orientalism*, a range of travel writing scholars have engaged with “critical studies,”<sup>28</sup> “critiques of ideology”<sup>29</sup> or “discourse analysis”<sup>30</sup> to address the role and the nature of the Western tradition of travel writing in relation to European colonial history. In this vein, travel writing is considered as a form of cultural knowledge Said named Orientalist discourse, discourses produced in and by the West, which proclaim as “real” and “natural” a dichotomy in the world between the Occident and the Orient, while at the same time producing highly-controlled and domesticated forms of otherness. In this manner, Orientalist discourses can provide the rationale for Western projects and interests, such as conquest and colonialism, even if these strategic ends remain concealed. Similarly, the focus of this particular strand of travel writing criticism is on the ways in which from the very first stages of colonialism to the present day, Europeans have used travel writing as an effective tool for mapping, documenting and disciplining non-Western territories.

Orientalist discourses often rely on specific demarcations and composite formulations, such as particular cultures (“Indonesian” and “Zimbabwean”) or related expanses (“East-Asian” and “South-African”). Concerning the Indonesian archipelago, anthropologist James A. Boon observes, “a long history of formulations by outsiders [...] schematized Indonesian peoples, obscured their complexities and made them appear both alluring and compelling.”<sup>31</sup> Among the most recurrent tropes are those connecting Indonesian spaces and peoples with paradisiacal associations. Indonesia is indeed saturated with notions of beauty, divinity and mystery, as suggested in the descriptive phrases “Garden of the East”<sup>32</sup> and “Emerald Girdle”.<sup>33</sup> Diametrically opposed to these notions, ideas of decay as well as metaphors of degeneracy have been just as easily and strategically assigned to Indonesian locations and cultures in Western descriptions.<sup>34</sup> In *Dutch Culture Overseas*, the historian Frances Gouda has analysed how the biological concept of evolution has been deployed by Dutch colonial scientists since the mid-

nineteenth century. In these terms, Indonesians were immature and childlike, they only slowly ascended the evolutionary ladder, or were equipped with the lesser intelligence of sub-human species. Competing biological theories explained the essential helplessness of Indonesians and justified the nurture and control of the Dutch coloniser.<sup>35</sup>

During the last two decades, one strand of postcolonial scholarship has emerged that scrutinizes the genealogy, discursive authority, and material conditions of possibility of Western discourses about Africa. In analogy to Edward Said's notion of Orientalism, in *Blank Darkness* Christopher Miller has coined the term "Africanism" for a Western tradition of representation that imposes a language of desire on the least-known part of the world, hereby exercising control over it and subsequently calling it "Africa".<sup>36</sup> Miller envisions a significant role for Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* within this Africanist regime of representation since the novella, to quote Miller, "makes the initial perception of a discourse as 'Africanist' possible".<sup>37</sup>

In the wake of Miller, a series of postcolonial scholars have examined how old motifs of discovery and mystery featuring in *Heart of Darkness* have surreptitiously been planted on a new canvas in subsequent Western depictions of Africa and how "The Dark Continent" has continuously been represented with various tropes of degeneration, savagery, monstrosity and mystery.<sup>38</sup> As travel writing critics such as Patrick Holland, Graham Huggan and Tim Youngs have suggested, since Conrad, Africa and the Congo in particular, has become the textual site of an abject and extreme, yet undifferentiated African otherness, in which every aspect of life presents itself as always already wrapped in metaphor and myth.<sup>39</sup> Since *Heart of Darkness* then, Africa and the Congo have become topoi of dystopic transgression, invented spaces of radical antagonism to the European imagination. Time and again the continent has been portrayed as the ultimate antidote to civilisation and believed to bring about the physical, moral and psychological downfall of both indigenous and Western subjects alike, transforming their humanity into utter barbarism.

Although extremely influential, one of the main problems with Said's Orientalism, and we could add, with Miller's Africanism, is their ahistorical, generalising sweep and the little room left for the agency of individuals.<sup>40</sup> As Dennis Porter argues, "if articulate language is a collective enterprise of the kind Said describes, then the individual is not free to write against the discursive grain, but is bound by an already constituted system of utterances."<sup>41</sup> Steve Clark similarly argues in *Travel Writing and Empire*, that individuals "cannot do other than reproduce [Orientalism's] fundamental structures of oppression with varying degrees of blatancy."<sup>42</sup> This issue is taken up by a range of feminist postcolonial studies, such as Sara Mills's *Discourses of Difference* and also Inderpal Grewal's *Home and Harem*, which have addressed the question of women's travel writing in increasingly complex ways.

In *Discourses of Difference*, a study of the narrative possibilities of travel writing for the expression of Victorian female identity, Sara Mills argues that Western women travellers, for example Mary Kingsley and Alexandra David-Neel, do not just reproduce and appropriate the Orientalist regimes of representation of the cultures in which they are embedded.<sup>43</sup> Mills argues that these Victorian women's travelogues could not wholeheartedly adopt the Western, male-connoted, imperialist voice which was dominant for travel writing at the time and instead display "a stress on personal involvement and investment on the part of the narrator."<sup>44</sup> Mills's focus is Western women's complicities in Orientalist discourse but it also nuances Said's Orientalism from a feminist perspective.

The question of women travellers and their relationship to Orientalism has been addressed in ways that circumvent certain problems inherent to earlier criticism of women's travel writing, such as Karen Lawrence's *Penelope Voyages* or Jane Robinson's *Wayward Women*.<sup>45</sup> The aim of these latter studies is to recover female travel writers that were previously effaced from the male-dominated history of travel, at the same time when they positively qualify the self-definitions of female travel writers.<sup>46</sup> Based upon a feminine style of writing, mode of perception or notion of geography, women's travel writing is distinguished from those written by men. Many of the latter studies indeed share an insistence on a separate tradition of women's travel writing, in the process adopting "woman" as a unitary category and making undifferentiating assumptions about women's travel writing. Such approaches risk conscripting women's texts by definition into the service of an emancipatory politics and fail to account for the complex entanglements and complicities of Western women's travel writings with Orientalism.

Building on the more recent feminist postcolonial approaches to Western women's travel writing, this study will analyse the extent to which the return to the colonial past in women's travel writing intersects with the late twentieth-century British and Dutch cultures of colonial remembrance in its communally shared repertoire of the discourse of Orientalism. I am concerned in particular with the ways in which a violent Orientalist ethics of alterity provides one of the main foundations for the affirmation of women's colonial memory and identity. In the next paragraphs, I will focus more closely on how particularly in travel writing women's colonial remembrance can be seen as a complex architecture accommodating a variety of sometimes conflicting functions.

## **Identity and Ethnography in Women's Travel Writing**

The past allows individuals to build footholds and meanings that, however contingent, can help to shape identities. At the same time, fault lines, silences, omissions and blind spots also occur in the constitution of memory and these acquire new relevance in the context of this study of women's travel writing in the aftermath of empire. During the journey the traveller could rely on a trace of some-



thing from her past, a memory. Yet, memory is ultimately a story about, and thus a discourse on, original experience. Therefore, recovering the colonial past is not a hypostatising of fixed grounds and absolute origins, but rather an interpretation of earlier experience that can never be divorced from the filterings of subsequent experience, or articulated outside of the structures of language and storytelling.

Although the articulation of colonial memory is informed by shifting considerations on the self in the present moment, in travel writing neither the autobiographical travelling subject nor the present moment are fixed and stable notions. The autobiographical subject of travel writing, according to Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, “follow[s] the trajectory of a series of selves in transit.”<sup>47</sup> Travel writing indeed stages a rapidly changing context of movement, interaction and encounter, during which the subject negotiates status. As Kristi Siegel describes, “the [travel] writer often delves through layers of self, and, in a performative way, constructs and reconstructs his/her identity.”<sup>48</sup> Through a continuous process of redefinition, she locates herself in complex relations to her community or country of origin and to the people and places met during the journey and seeks to achieve specific goals in doing so.

At the same time, however, travel writing does not have as its principal focus of attention the life course of the first-person narrator, as would be the case in autobiography.<sup>49</sup> Equally important is the ethnographic concern with the representation of the peoples and places visited. Rob Nixon accurately describes travel writing as a hybrid, eclectic genre that “stands at the generic cross-roads of ethnography and autobiography.”<sup>50</sup> Apart from its connections to autobiography, travel writing indeed shares overlaps and historical affinities with ethnography, which are well documented.<sup>51</sup> Not only have travellers often followed the anthropological routes from Europe to the so-called ‘traditional’ societies of former colonies,<sup>52</sup> stylistically too, travel writing sometimes draws on the non-emotive, impartial and formal language of conventional ethnography to suggest rendering a diagnostic report about the visited society.<sup>53</sup>

As a consequence of the autobiographical and ethnographic concerns of travel writing, Nixon contends that “the presence of two competing foci of interest makes travel writing generically unstable, but also grants the writer radically different styles of authority.”<sup>54</sup> From this perspective, the genre of travel writing functions along predictable lines but with unpredictable content and its political dimensions are similarly unstable. At the crossroads of autobiography and ethnography, it harbours contradictory styles, foci of interest, purposes and centres of authority. For instance, the objective and emotionally detached style of the ethnographer could easily co-exist with a more subjective and emotional register of the autobiographical subject. Such styles of authority are often exploited to serve various ends. Since travel writing offers both ethnographic and autobiographical possibilities that are always struggling to become textualised, autobiography and

ethnography do not peacefully co-habit the genre of travel writing. Rather, they affect and constitute each other and their mutual relationship is never fixed.

As a mode of ethnographic writing, travel writing, as James Clifford argues, “enacts a specific strategy of authority involv[ing] an unquestioned claim to appear as the purveyor of truth in the text.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Edward Said assigns to the Western traveller “a flexible positional superiority” over the cultures he or she describes.<sup>56</sup> The ethnographic authority, on which both anthropological and travel texts draw to legitimise themselves, has historical roots. Its force, therefore, is collective and incremental rather than singular and aesthetic. Ethnographic writings are to be situated in a European colonial tradition in which they played a crucial role. The knowledge of local cultures often provided the ideological foundations that allowed for the exercise of Eurocentric power over colonised cultures. It cannot be overemphasised that the appeal of non-Western cultures in contemporary travel texts draws for a considerable part on stereotypes and fossil views of the non-West, which proliferated during the European colonial tradition.

Moreover, the notion of ethnographic authority implies an institutional dimension. Both ethnographic and travel writing have become institutionalised powerfully in academic disciplines, in museums of art and in Western consumerist culture. These institutional environments accredit ethnographic texts with the authority to address Western audiences and to speak *on behalf* of the culture represented.

Finally, the authority of ethnographic texts is also a matter of individual voice. It is precisely the role of autobiographical memory in the assertion of ethnographic authority, which is my main concern in this study. In addition to the historical and institutional factors at stake in the operation of ethnographic authority, Edward Said has explained that each Western traveller locates him or herself individually as the claimer of truth over non-Western cultures:

[...] everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself [sic] vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in the text.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, ethnographic authority is not only an historical and institutional effect, but also a textual effect of the personal. The relationship between the travelling figure and the cultures represented in travel writing is never ‘real’, but is the textual outcome of the organisation of narrative voice, structure, images and themes.

For the purpose of the matter at hand, it becomes necessary to address the question of how the motif of the return to the colonial past determines, and is determined by, the textual struggle between autobiography and ethnography. To put it differently, colonial memory becomes not only an issue of autobiographical self-representation, but also a question that is intricately intertwined with the

ideology of Orientalism, power, and authority. To phrase it in the terms of Johannes Fabian, it is crucial to address how colonial memory could be used “as schemes that enable one to put the unfamiliar into familiar categories.”<sup>58</sup>

## Comparing Dutch and British Cultures of Colonial Remembrance

Like any other genre, travel writing frames the world in a certain kind of way, but the communication organised by the travel genre, does not occur in isolation.<sup>59</sup> Travel writing is “a repository of cultural memory.”<sup>60</sup> Travel texts presuppose certain kinds of cultural knowledge in order for meaning making to take place: knowledge of the semantic features of the material, the structure of the speech situation or certain types of cultural knowledge.<sup>61</sup> Readers supplement the latter kinds of information with the explicit information conveyed by texts. This knowledge is inferred by the text, even if it does not explicitly textualise it. It is a form of knowledge that is part of the broader cultural frame in which Western readers live. Therefore, texts share a repertoire with their surrounding cultures, which makes them historically embedded.

According to the paradigm offered by Edward Said, Orientalism is perpetuated not only through travel writing but through a variety of Western textual forms, such as colonial administration, colonial photography or even domestic Victorian novels. Subsequently it is reasonable to say that the Orientalism is “at once generically structured and metageneric in [its] reference; [it] refers from one genre to another.”<sup>62</sup>

New Historicism is one body of work concerned with “the embeddedness of cultural artefacts in the contingencies of history.”<sup>63</sup> As formulated by Stephen Greenblatt, New Historicists are interested in “complex symbolic and material articulations of the imaginative and ideological structures of the society that produced [works of art].”<sup>64</sup> In other words, art is understood in relation to other representational practices operative in the culture at a given moment, without ignoring its specific aesthetic dimension. Following Greenblatt, in this study “I do not want history to enable me to escape the effect of the literary but to deepen it by making it touch the effect of the real, a touch that would reciprocally deepen and complicate history.”<sup>65</sup>

As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2, the colonial past plays a crucial role in the constitution of national imaginations and representations of (postcolonial) immigrants in Britain and the Netherlands. The formation of national identities is always an historically oriented process. Therefore, transmitting historical knowledge is an important tool for strengthening the cohesion of a nation. As Dipesh Chakrabarty contends, one important feature of national identity formation in Europe is the production of:

[...] completely internalist histories of Europe in which Europe was described as the site of the first occurrence of capitalism, modernity or Enlightenment. These “events” in turn are all explained mainly with respect to “events” within the geographical confines of Europe (however fuzzy its exact boundaries may have been).<sup>66</sup>

In general terms, colonialism enters national memory as a Western event that occurred in the past, and is completely detached from external influences, from the present, and from Western women. Official notions such as “The British Empire” and the “Dutch Golden Age” carry various positive meanings in dominant Dutch and British discourses. The colonial past is predominantly remembered as a great national achievement and declared as a source of pride. Moreover, relegated to the inconsequential past of the nation, the colonial past is remembered in the Netherlands and Britain as a masculine heroic epic. In this manner, discourses of colonial remembrance serve the formation of national imaginations, which erase (gender and ethnic) differences among national subjects for the purpose of manufacturing a communal foothold, the Western nation state. Such monolithic imaginations of the nation serve as a means of determining the nation’s position toward alien elements in order to preserve or redefine national identity against non-Western others. Thus, dominant discourses of colonial remembrance help to engender a binary opposition between national and non-national others, resonating hierarchies existing in the colonial enterprise.

However, it would be inaccurate and simplistic to make too general a statement about the various discourses of colonial remembrance existing in contemporary Western societies. What Stuart Hall says about previously colonised societies equally applies to post-imperial societies: “societies are not post-colonial in the same way and [...] in any case the post-colonial does not operate on its own but is in effect a construct internally differentiated by its intersections with other unfolding relations.”<sup>67</sup> In order to assess how each return narrative under investigation is dictated by different female colonial experiences and different locations within the postcolonial aftermath, I will comparatively historicise the women’s narratives in the contingencies of the British and Dutch cultures of colonial remembrance. By doing so, this project tries to valorise the idiosyncrasy of each return, and places them in a comparative perspective in order to examine the particularities of the Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance, which inform them. Such a comparative approach will further help us to avoid making generalising statements about the aftermath of empire in the West.

This comparative dimension of my methodology, in fact, implies a focus on internal imbalances within postcolonial studies itself. Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, editors of the seminal work *The Empire Writes Back*, contend that “the strength of post-colonial theory may well lie in its inherently comparative methodology and the hybridised and syncretic view of the modern world which this implies.”<sup>68</sup>

The authors argue that postcolonial theories of literary production can keep up with the pluralism in the postmodern world since they generally assess the various legacies of colonialism in order to create fissures in dominant narratives of national literature and history. In light of this comparative potential, however, it is remarkable that postcolonial studies has predominantly centred on Anglophone literatures.

Pivotal postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Edward Said have the British Empire as their main focus. The works of postcolonial authors ranging from Salman Rushdie to V.S. Naipaul and from Jamaica Kincaid to Bharati Mukherjee have helped to define postcolonial theory as an Anglophone critical enterprise. Similarly, as one strand of postcolonial studies, travel writing scholarship has predominantly flourished at Anglo-Saxon universities, where the focus, again, has been mostly on travel writing in English.<sup>69</sup> Thus, if postcolonial studies adopts a comparative methodology, then it is one with a rather restrictive scope.

The predominant focus on Anglophone literatures and the British Empire is regrettable, not to say problematic, for various reasons. Despite being a critical set of reading strategies geared towards the eradication of unequal colonial power relations, postcolonial studies cannot be absolved from reproducing its own mechanisms of marginalisation. In *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture*, Sandra Ponzanesi regrets that the field rests on the dominance of the English language, despite being so fruitful and contentious, and considers it crucial “to address the source of present linguistic hierarchies in order to avoid one of the most visible pitfalls of postcolonialism – the reignition of a totalizing discourse.”<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, since European expansion has always been driven by strong intra-European rivalries, influence and competition, the sole focus on the British Empire cannot yield thorough understandings of the phenomenon.<sup>71</sup> Nicholas Thomas contends that the British Empire is “not a unitary project, but a fractured one, riddled with contradictions and exhausted as much by its own internal debates as by the resistance of the colonised.”<sup>72</sup> The analysis of the nature of the British Empire could gain complexity from a comparative research that includes other empires. To go some way towards making up for this, this study focuses partly on two women writers, Aya Zikken and Marion Bloem, who will be situated in the aftermath of Dutch colonialism, which is “a missing empire” from the postcolonial debate.<sup>73</sup>

The need to bring literatures from the Dutch postcolonial context in an international encounter has recently, albeit marginally, been recognised. Slowly but steadily, there is an increasing tendency to engage with postcolonial theory among literary scholars of Dutch colonial and postcolonial literature, such as Theo D’haen, Ieme van der Poel, Isabel Hoving, Inge Boer, and Pamela Pattynama.<sup>74</sup> Primarily imported through gender studies, postcolonial theory in the Netherlands remains, thus far, an individual practice conducted by literary scho-

lars, whose object of study is not, or not always, the literatures in Dutch.<sup>75</sup> In *Europa buitengaats*, editor Theo D'haen brings together a range of essays about colonial and postcolonial literatures in various languages and imperial contexts, including the Dutch one. The volume introduces itself as pertaining to situate “the relevant Dutch literary production in a wider European frame.”<sup>76</sup> At the same time, a methodological inquiry into how literatures in Dutch can be studied in a comparative postcolonial framework has so far remained absent. As this study hopefully displays, an engagement with a thoughtful and historicised comparative method is a fertile direction for postcolonial studies that ensures that it can evolve as fertile, provocative and contentious as ever in the future.

However, how could comparative research energise postcolonial studies when the very methodology of comparison has come under suspicion since the last decades? The notion of comparison poses the researcher with a dilemma, which Charles Bernheimer formulates as follows:

If you stress what these literatures have in common – thematically, morally, politically – you may be accused of imposing a universalist model that suppresses particular differences [...]. If, on the other hand, you stress difference, then the basis of comparison becomes problematic and your respect for the uniqueness of particular cultural formations may suggest the impossibility of any meaningful relation between cultures.<sup>77</sup>

This dilemma is exacerbated in the current age of multiculturalism, which is both a space for multilingualism, polyglossia and cultural understanding and a space where nationalist and religious aspirations produce fierce conflicts. In this context, Comparative Literature has been faced with some very pressing questions, which lead to the proclamation of a disciplinary crisis or even of the “death of the discipline.”<sup>78</sup> Although Susan Bassnett argued that Comparative Literature has continued to live under a new name, such as postcolonial studies, I have raised questions above about the comparative dimension of the postcolonial field regarding its over-emphasis on the British Empire and Anglophone literatures.<sup>79</sup>

In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak invokes the figure of the “planetary” for the purpose of a new politics of reading within the discipline of comparative literature.<sup>80</sup> Her theoretical account seems more relevant for the issues and questions addressed here. Spivak imagines the figure of the “planetary” as an allegory to shed light on the fractured, unresolved notion of the postcolonial text, especially when viewed cross-culturally. As Spivak argues, if comparative literature is to move out of either comparative universalisms or exceptionalisms, which are structured alongside the familiar terms of cultures and nations, we need to recognise that histories and contexts are always already divided and diversified. Hence, crucial to the task of the planetary reader is pluralisation, the de-centering of collectivities, such as ‘The West’, and even the opening up of ‘Dutch’

or 'British' national cultures of remembrance. Spivak's proposal to be aware of cultural difference within the 'same' culture, and the retracing of multiform historical trajectories is underlying the project I am proposing in this study.

In light of Spivak's appeal to open up collectivities and considering the problem with the notion of comparison as mentioned above, this study engages various axes of comparison for the examination of colonial memory. It is organised as "a comparison of order", to use Foucault's terminology, and establishes the simplest element of a thematic motif to arrange differences among women's travel writings.<sup>81</sup> In order to flesh out further differences and overlaps, another mode of comparison is adopted. The comparative historicisation of the travel narratives indicates my concern with evaluating women's colonial memory in relation to distinct (post)colonial histories and post-imperial discourses. The latter venture invites us to make "a comparison of measurement," which entails, in Foucault's terms, establishing relations of equality and inequality. A comparative historical outline of Dutch and British colonial cultures and post-imperial cultures of colonial remembrance will be constructed to bring into view the extent to which Western women travellers are complicit and resistant to these histories and their legacies. This is relevant, not only to bring into view how cultures of colonial remembrance inform Western women's journeys, but also to comparatively demonstrate how these cultures of colonial remembrance are spatio-temporally distinct.

Rather than setting up a comparison between disparate Dutch and British literatures, histories and contexts, I propose a double comparative model, consisting of a comparison of order and a comparison of measurement. These two axes of comparison converge in the analysis of cultural memory. Such a double comparative method will allow us, on the one hand, to nuance general claims about an allegedly unequivocal notion of 'Western colonial remembrance' today. On the other hand, it enables us to refute the predominance of Anglophone literatures in postcolonial studies. By doing so, I intend to navigate between a universalist comparative model and a model which stresses unique and irreconcilable difference concerning the Western women's return to the colonial past. A reading strategy, informed by what Benedict Anderson has called, "a spectre of comparison" – an "incurable doubled vision" that sees literatures "simultaneously close up and from afar"<sup>82</sup> – could be a productive and fruitful direction into which the field can evolve in the future.

## Conclusion

Questions of colonial memory in contemporary post-imperial European societies have been critically addressed by various postcolonial scholars in the wake of Edward Said, but in so doing, they have often deployed universal and ahistorical notions of memory. This study aims to propose a historically contingent concept

of memory, which enables us to bring into view idiosyncrasies, dissimilarities and overlaps in colonial memory in its various manifestations and more specifically informed by issues of genre, gender and context. By bringing texts embedded in the Dutch and British colonial legacy in an analytical encounter, I also aim to weaken the Anglo-Saxon focus of postcolonial studies.

My specific concern in this chapter has been to provide a theoretical understanding of colonial memory in travel writings featuring female travellers whose lives are intertwined with colonial history. These narratives are particularly relevant for the study of colonial memory, particularly to address questions of how colonial memory determines, and is determined by issues of gender, the generic boundaries of travel writing, and the cultures of colonial remembrance in which these travel narratives circulate.

Theoretical discussions of colonial memory in women's travel writing, the relation of women's travel writing to colonial discourse, as well as women's travel writing's embeddedness in distinct cultures of colonial remembrance, has yielded a set of research questions that will be addressed in the following chapters. First, if women's travel writing has both ethnographic and autobiographical dimensions, then the question arises as to how colonial memory plays a role in the articulation of the female traveller's identity as well as in representations of the people and spaces she visits. Secondly, if colonial memories in women's travel narratives are to be situated in relation to the discourses of colonial remembrance that circulate in the Dutch and British contexts that inform them, then we are to explore the extent to which women's colonial memory reproduce and reinforce the dominant regimes of representation of the cultures in which they are embedded. Stephen Greenblatt sees the relationship between cultural texts and contexts as follows: "the existence of art always implies a return, a return normally measured in pleasure and interest."<sup>83</sup> From this perspective, not only the communally shared repertoires between women's texts and their surrounding cultures of colonial remembrance need to be examined. Also the question as to how Western women's narratives imply a return, which is opposed to, or incongruent with, discourses of colonial remembrance circulating in society becomes an important matter to consider. The following chapter will situate these latter questions within a comparative historical context.



## Chapter 2

# Women's memory of Rhodesia, the Dutch East Indies and Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance

“Should I call it history? And if so, what should history mean to someone who looks like me? Should it be an idea, should it be an open wound and each breath I take in and expel healing and opening the wound again, over and over, or is it a long moment that begins anew each day since 1492?”  
Jamaica Kincaid, “In history”

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, imperialism has not only been about conquest, invasion and domination, but increasingly became a thing of the mind. It is relevant, therefore, to study the Western systems of cognition and interpretation which Europe deployed in the process of its colonial expansion and in understanding the non-Western territories with which it came into contact. The force of these interpretative schemes is collective and incremental, and therefore, also the memory work of women travel authors cannot solely be considered as singular and aesthetic. Their travel texts and memories which will be the object of examination in the following chapters, will be situated in this chapter in relation to the complex symbolic and material articulations of the imaginative and ideological structures of the imperial Dutch and British societies, past and present, which helped to produce them.

In particular, I will address how women's literary representations of colonial memory give shape to, and are shaped by, colonial discourses, and by the perpetuation of these colonial discourses in the aftermath of Dutch and British imperialism by a series of re-enactments, displacements and projections. The approach taken combines postcolonial discourse analysis with colonial historiography of the Dutch East Indies and Rhodesia in order to bring into view the concrete meanings of the memory discourses expressed by Aya Zikken, Marion Bloem and Doris Lessing respectively. These are conditioned by the historically-specific conditions in which Dutch and British imperialist practices in the Dutch East Indies

and Rhodesia took place, and by the distinct Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance in which these women travellers are positioned. In order to further understand some of these idiosyncratic particularities and concrete dissimilarities, colonial discourses in the Dutch East Indies and Rhodesia and post-colonial discourses in Britain and the Netherlands will be approached from a comparative perspective.

## **European Women and the Domestication of Empire**

Although the first waves of colonial residents inhabiting the Dutch East Indies and Rhodesia consisted predominantly of male employees – officials, military and civil servants – who were in service of the South Africa and the East Indies Company, European women’s immigration increased in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Women’s immigration ran parallel to the opening up of both colonies to private enterprise. New kinds of settlers – male capitalists, farmers, planters and traders – came to cultivate and inhabit the regions and many of them brought their wives with them. By the late nineteenth century, when the economic and political climate had stabilised and when colonial life was modernised, an increasing number of white women had joined their husbands or had arrived on their own.

Until the early 1990s, however, scholars of empire had rarely examined the role of (European and non-European) women in colonial history. Up to that point, colonial historiography was predominantly considered a political or diplomatic narrative, while historians drew on primary sources such as written decrees, treaties and policy proposals of Western statesmen.<sup>1</sup> In selecting the public domain as the historical reality where everything important was happening, traditional colonial historiography failed to account for the fact that, in their daily lives, native elites, Western wives, children, priests and peasants also took part in, and influenced, the official colonial policies, laws, regulations and practices. Consequently, the involvement and contributions of a large amount of non-whites and women were underhighlighted in the official historical records. In so doing, scholars of empire writing reproduced the gender exclusions and racial inequalities that characterised the historical realities of most colonial cultures. Overemphasising the predominance of white men in the public segments of colonial societies, the conventional colonial historiographic narrative helped to support the wrong assumption that colonial history was written by white men only.

Since approximately the last two decades, the role of European women as historical subjects has been rethought in feminist postcolonial historical scholarship.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of the 1992 collection of essays by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, a range of studies have criticised the dominant idea that the colonies were no place for a white woman and have documented and analysed the complex positions and in-

volvements of European women in the power structures of colonial and post-imperial societies.<sup>3</sup>

Anne McClintock was among the first to question the paradox that the private institution of the family, the realm where women's activities are visible most clearly, is kept outside of the official historical records, while at the same time familial forms are regularly invoked as *metaphors* for the origin and development of nations in narratives of national history.<sup>4</sup> Feminist historians have tried to resolve this paradox by re-qualifying the private and the domestic as social spheres crucial to what we think of as the historical imagination. For instance, in *The Social World of Batavia*, Jean Gelman Taylor focuses on family relations in Dutch colonial society from its onset to the late nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Taylor's study is an early example of the "domestication of empire" and how it allows us to see women as historical agents.<sup>6</sup> It is no coincidence in this respect that colonial everyday life plays such a crucial role in the memories of women travel writers like Aya Zikken, Doris Lessing and Marion Bloem, as will be discussed in the following chapters. I will specifically address the theme of colonial everyday memory in my analysis of Doris Lessing's *African Laughter* in Chapter 5.

Apart from the question of women as historical agents, feminist historians have addressed the issue of women as writers of history. In *Dwelling in the Archive*, Antoinette Burton points to the fact that women are conventionally viewed as symbolic bearers of tradition and the nation, rather than as subjects writing history.<sup>7</sup> Burton contends that if women's structural locations have meant that the domestic looms large in their imaginations of the past, "we must take them seriously precisely as archival forms in order to bring women's 'private' experiences more fully into the purview of history."<sup>8</sup> The travel texts analysed in the following chapters offer us an opportunity to consider how, under what historical conditions and discursive forms, women have made use of their colonial experiences and memories to wrestle with the exclusions and possibilities of colonial history as a public, political practice. Before we can proceed with the question of how women's literary representations of the colonial past relate to other discourses of colonial remembrance, I will first comparatively outline some of the pivotal elements of the historical realities that shaped the women's literary representation of the colonial past.

## **European Women in Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies**

In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Elleke Boehmer explains that in late nineteenth-century colonial texts, motives and justifications for imperialism have formed "a complicated interlocking matrix, comprising many layers" in which motives and justifications for empire continuously conflated and transmuted.<sup>9</sup> Justifications and motives for empire have also altered continuously as they were mediated by time, context, and circumstances.

The British occupation of Rhodesia relied on a combination of strategic, commercial and religious motives.<sup>10</sup> The royal charter, issued by the British government in 1889, fuelled the capitalist drive of Cecil Rhodes and secured the monopoly of the South African Company in Rhodesia. In so doing, the South African Company could provide a counterbalance to the rising social and political power of Dutch Boers and their newly invented ideology of “Afrikanerdom,” securing British interests in the region at almost no expense to the taxpayer at home.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of the British missionary David Livingstone’s appeal to “two pioneers of civilization,” commerce and civilisation, Cecil Rhodes dreamt of connecting the adjacent African possessions of the British Empire from Cape to Cairo. Specifically for Rhodesia, Rhodes had set his mind on developing the region into a productive and civilising white dominion.<sup>12</sup> In order to establish an island of beneficent British technological know-how and superior cultural settlement and sociability that would thrive amidst an ocean of black Africans, Rhodes fashioned moral ideals to match his economic needs; Enterprise would secure the happiness and salvation of dark barbaric tribes.<sup>13</sup>

The official rhetoric legitimising the Dutch colonisation of the Indonesian archipelago altered significantly from an economic to a moral register around 1900. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, journalists, writers and politicians from all kinds of ideological backgrounds had spoken against the exploitative nature of colonial practices in the Indonesian territories.<sup>14</sup> Their criticisms served to amend the official colonial rhetoric and policy of the so-called “cultivation system” (*cultuurstelsel*). Since the 1830s this policy had coerced the indigenous populations in cultivating export cash crops – for instance, coffee, tobacco and rice – which were sold on the world market through government monopolies and which were to generate Dutch national income and compensate for the financial deficits the Netherlands had experienced in the early nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> In 1901, the newly enthroned Queen Wilhelmina enunciated a new colonial policy in her annual oration to the Dutch parliament. The “Ethical policy” (*ethische politiek*), which was to guide official colonial procedures in Indonesia until decolonisation, assigned the role of guardianship and moral custody to the Dutch colonisers and focused on educating and uplifting the local populations by developing and improving school, medical, transportation and other kinds of public infrastructures. The ethical policy bestowed more autonomy and self-government by promoting decentralisation, and establishing administrative divisions based on traditional Indonesian units of authority. At the same time, it secured a heightened form of European surveillance and reduced indigenous leaders to the role of subordinate colonial administrators, while the local prestige and ceremonial authority they wielded, facilitated colonial rule.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Dutch and the British could cherish a rather unambiguously heroic image of themselves as conquerors or righteous civilisers of the non-Western world. Tending non-Western peoples is

the arduous but moral duty of the white man, as Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899) indicates. With the passing of time, colonial practices sometimes produced their own forms of self-validation which were subsequently taken up as part of collective memory, as in the Dutch well-known proverb *Daar wordt iets groots verricht*, suggesting the heroism of the Dutch colonisers abroad.

## Geographies of Belonging

In both Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies, myths and fabrications about racial difference sustained colonial policies as well as the organisation of settlers' life. European residential quarters were strictly separated from the native quarters, respectively called *kraals* and *kampongs* in Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies. In Rhodesia particularly, black and white peoples lived completely segregated lives except when labour on a temporary basis necessitated a coming together on mines, farms and in domestic services.<sup>16</sup> In 1931, the Land Apportionment Act legislated the division of land and forced the black population into native reserves.<sup>17</sup> The latter legislative practice engendering separation between colonisers and colonised was, according to the historian Robert Blake, the only "safe" system if a twentieth-century white minority class was to dwell in the same land as a conquered black majority, particularly considering the rising African nationalism at the time.<sup>18</sup>

In both Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies, colonial domination of local peoples was made to depend on the cultural, political and economic linkages with their respective mother countries, although the particular nature of these ties differed considerably. In the Dutch East Indies, colonial rule and internal affairs depended to a great extent on the legislative and executive power of the Dutch metropolitan government, particularly in comparison to Rhodesia. From the early nineteenth century onwards, the authority over the Dutch East Indies was vested in the Dutch Queen.<sup>19</sup> Although the British Queen also had official authority over Rhodesia, at least until its unilateral declaration in 1965, in reality, the British government could not intervene directly in Rhodesian internal affairs. Although legislation of internal affairs was delegated to local Governor-Generals in both the Dutch East Indies and Rhodesia, in the case of the Dutch East Indies, the Dutch Minister of overseas territories, who was seated in the Dutch metropolitan government in The Hague, always assisted the governor-generals.<sup>20</sup> The colonial office in London, by contrast, had legislative authority over internal affairs of the Crown colonies, but not over dominions such as Rhodesia.

To a certain extent, the varying degree of political independence runs parallel to a variation in the economic profitability of the two territories to their metropolitan centres. The Dutch East Indies was economically much more important to Holland than Rhodesia was to Britain. At certain times, the financial benefits of the Indies consisted of 14 to 20 per cent of the Dutch national income. During the

decade of the 1830s, when the colonial policy or *het cultuurstelsel* (cultivation system) was issued, revenues from Java reached as high as 31 per cent of the government income. During the interbellum period from 1918 to 1942, earnings from the Dutch East Indies through revenue, profits and income transfers, still hovered between 15 and 20 per cent. These figures were also magnified in the Dutch collective imagination. The famous Dutch proverb *Indië verloren, ramspoed geboren* suggests a general fear that losing the Indies would hamper the position of the Netherlands in the international domain.<sup>21</sup> As a result of these strong economic ties of interdependence, the Dutch metropolitan government interfered in Dutch East Indies internal affairs much more than the British government in Rhodesian affairs.

Compared to the Dutch government, the British government was relatively indifferent to what happened in Rhodesia. This has much to do with the fact that Rhodesia has always been, economically speaking, rather unimportant to the British Empire, especially compared to India or to the neighbouring region of South Africa. The country's landlocked position, the cost of travel to the country, together with the strenuous requirements imposed by the Rhodesian authorities on potentially interested immigrants did not make Rhodesia an attractive country of immigration.<sup>22</sup> Although various attempts were made to send out white immigrants to Rhodesia, on the whole, these attempts were relatively unsuccessful. Only when the depression after World War I hit the British economy, Rhodesia provided work and served to counter unemployment. In *African Laughter*, Doris Lessing describes how her father, a traumatised veteran of World War I, came to Rhodesia as if he wanted to retreat from all worldly affairs. Raised in urban environments, however, the larger portion of the British population was unwilling to take up rural occupations in Rhodesia. Although Rhodesia was always represented at the Wimbledon expositions, the country remained relatively unknown to the British public, certainly not as well known as other British settlers' territories, such as Australia, Canada and the United States. Sparked off by news about the Anglo-Boer wars and about the African resistance to colonial rule in 1893 and 1896, Rhodesia's reputation was one of a small and dangerous place somewhere in the heart of darkest Africa. When the Royal charter granted to the East Africa Company expired in 1919, Rhodesia became a British territory with self-government. The settlers themselves desired a greater degree of independence from the metropole, thinking it would facilitate maintaining control over labour and land.<sup>23</sup> The British government had frequently shown its concern over the protection of African interests, but had never wanted, or had been positioned, to regain its authority over native policies in the region.<sup>24</sup> Only after the Second World War, when international opinion became generally interested in colonised peoples and, when nationalist movements were striving towards decolonisation, Britain intervened more actively in Rhodesian affairs.

Since the seventeenth century, when the Dutch East Indies Company had started to develop economic activities in the region, colonial society had evolved into a hybrid, eclectic, multicoloured mestizo culture.<sup>25</sup> Although the ruling group was presented to the outside as a seamless web of white European rule, it had integrated various local customs and indigenous practices.<sup>26</sup> The European cultural lifestyle incorporated, as Frances Gouda observes, “a mix of Javanese cosmology which intermingled with no-nonsense Dutch practicality, moral self-righteousness, and spiritual anxieties.[...]”<sup>27</sup> Some of the third or fourth generations spoke *petjoh*, a creole language mixing Dutch, Javanese and Betawi Malay, and were not familiar with standard Dutch.

Although the cohabitation of white men and native women existed in most colonial societies in Asia, Africa or South America, it is only in the Dutch East Indies that “interracial unions had developed into ingrained features of the cultural landscape.”<sup>28</sup> Until 1900, the practice of interracial sexuality remained relatively free of moral reproach and the offspring of interracial intercourse were legally designated as European, provided that the white fathers recognised them. Officially only three categorisations were used – Europeans (*Europeanen*), natives (*Inlanders*) and Foreign Asians (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*). In reality, however, these categories, and particularly the category of “Europeans”, were multi-layered in terms of class and ethnic background.<sup>29</sup> A detailed discussion of the various terms used to distinguish population groups is beyond the scope of this study, but it is useful to clarify the distinctions made between so-called “permanent” and “temporary” colonial residents, and colonial residents who were considered ‘purely’ white and those of mixed race.<sup>30</sup> The group of permanent colonial residents (*Blijvers*) included individuals from mixed racial descent as well as ‘purely’ whites, the so-called *Blanda totok*. The category of Indo-Europeans (*Indo-Europeanen*) were of mixed European-Asian descent and had usually acquired the juridical status of “European” as a consequence of the European father’s formal recognition.<sup>31</sup> Following the ethical policy in the early twentieth century, a new group of ‘white’ colonisers arrived to the Dutch East Indies, who were referred to as *passers* (*trekkers*) since they were not considered to stay permanently.

These latter categories were not juridical or administrative, but were deployed in daily life to structure the social relations between people. Particularly the racial distinction between purely white and residents of mixed race increasingly symbolised social hierarchies since the turn of the twentieth century. As a side-effect of the newly promoted *ethische politiek* (the ethical policy), the social and economic status of the long-term inhabitants of mixed race decreased considerably. In this period, large numbers of white immigrants from Holland – engineers, teachers, nurses – came to the colony, the so-called *totoks*, who were considered as ‘purely white’ and soon comprised the highest class of the social ladder. Due to the policies and efforts to uplift the local population approximately in the same period, the number of better-educated Indonesians also increased. As a result, a large

number of residents of mixed descent could no longer compete for jobs and became increasingly impoverished. In a period when racial divisions between groups of white European colonisers and non-white populations had permeated colonial society, Indo-Europeans, who embodied a threat to these clear-cut divisions, were increasingly stigmatised. The vexed social status of the Indo-European populations in the Dutch East Indies and their subsequent migration to the Netherlands is a point to which I will return in more detail in the chapter on Indo postmemory in Marion Bloem's travel narrative.<sup>32</sup>

As opposed to the ethnically multi-layered colonial culture which had developed over centuries in the Dutch East Indies, Rhodesian colonial culture was from its onset in the late nineteenth century manufactured to become "intensely, almost overpoweringly, British in sentiment."<sup>33</sup> With the help of the British government's issued Empire Settlement Acts, the South Africa Company and the local government took great care to recruit and import the "right" type of settlers.<sup>34</sup> They were to meet certain requirements such as to be in possession of a stipulated amount of capital, to have a minimum degree of education, and to be of "British kith and kin."<sup>35</sup> Rhodesia was portrayed to potential settlers as a white vivid oasis in the midst of the African continent, as a typically British setting with beautiful rose gardens and very fine race courses.<sup>36</sup> As one information leaflet suggests, intending settlers were only to bring their cricket bats and tennis racquets.<sup>37</sup> In Rhodesia, everything that reminded of the home country – relics of English schools, regiments and clubs – were treasured and also British social nuances were transferred in large part, so that "the style of public life, the motivation of many public figures, and the divisions between the English speaking electorate can only be fully appreciated in their light."<sup>38</sup>

The ideal of Britishness in Rhodesia signals a striking difference with other British settlers' colonies – Australia, New Zealand and Canada – where local conditions and the geographical distance from Britain gradually helped to feed an independent cultural consciousness. The historian Alois S. Mlambo points in this respect to the fact that most Rhodesians came from Britain via South Africa, where the nationalist rivalry with the Boers had reinforced the assertion of British identity as "a defence against the strangers and foreign ways of the expansionist south."<sup>39</sup> Since the ruling classes consisted of British-born settlers who retained economic, political and social control in the region, the legislation of discriminatory policies against non-British who tried to make a home in Rhodesia, was not uncommon. White-upon-white racism emerged in institutionalised forms, for instance when the Rhodesian government rejected appeals by Afrikaner settlers to organise their own religious education or denied permanent residence permissions to a group of Italian construction workers who had come to build the Kariba-dam.<sup>40</sup> The so-called "coloureds" legally counted as European, but they were socially stigmatised and frowned upon as a problematic category of people.<sup>41</sup> Their status was almost in all respects inferior to the British, though superior to



the Africans. They usually took up service jobs for Africans, such as storekeeping in the so-called “kaffir shops.”

## Colonial Domesticity

Most lives of Western women in Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies transpired in a domestic space that was segregated from the political and economic world of men. As the historian Elsbeth Locher-Scholten points out, the average Dutch colonial woman was an “incorporated wife,”<sup>42</sup> dependent for her social status on her husband. Similar to the *memsahib* in India and most white women on Rhodesian farms, she lived European discourses of femininity to the hilt and attempted to create a replica of “home” for her husband and children. Exclusion from official functions in colonial policy-making, farming or the business world left European women with little more than anxieties about servants, the running of charity organisations, cultivating botanical gardens or entertaining themselves with reading and playing instruments. Many accounts by and about European colonial women, including Doris Lessing and Aya Zikken’s colonial canons, are saturated by a bleak sense of superfluosity, by feelings of boredom and homesickness.

White women expressed a colonial mentality in their own right and in their proper female domain, whether in the household or within various women’s organisations. Women’s colonial mind-set was most sharply delineated when it touched upon the native population whom they met mainly through their servants. In supervising their domestic servants, white women enacted a rhetoric of parental guidance, which was employed by men in the public and commercial arena.<sup>43</sup> Whether in Indies manor houses or on Rhodesian farms, indigenous house servants were integral to the European private domain and to the daily lives of Western women. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, domestic help had become a luxury not available to the middle-classes and the working classes in Britain and the Netherlands from which many settlers, farmers and soldiers came. Therefore, the common practice of employing servants, even by colonial households living in poverty, suggests that some degree of proximity was required in order to keep a social distance, marking the otherness and subordination of domestic servants.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time when colonial discourses and policies display an anxiety over the preservation of limit and difference between Europeans and natives, there is always the possibility that the oppositional categories become contaminated and produce mixing, ambivalence and excess. The visible efforts colonial discourses make to uphold racial difference indeed suggest a fear of contamination. Suggestive of the latter is the colonial obsession with the so-called “black peril” in Rhodesia. Fear of “black peril,” incidents of alleged sexual violence by black men against white women, spawned a wide range of legislation including the prohibition of sexual relations between white women and black men. Historian John

Pape observes that the official response to black peril differed considerably from the response to “white peril,” the sexual abuse of black women by white men.<sup>45</sup> Despite protestations, there was never any law passed to prohibit white men from having sexual relations with black women, although interracial sexuality was morally reproached. The main reason for this is that the official prohibition black peril was necessary in order to solidify racial and gender difference constructing a white male supremacist social order.<sup>46</sup>

In the Dutch East Indies, the indigenous nursemaid (*baboe*) came to be seen as the primary mother figure for many Dutch children.<sup>47</sup> However, the proximity to the *baboe* and her indigenous influences was also seen as threatening the children’s Western education and making the children “undisciplined,” “wild” and “repugnant.”<sup>48</sup> Rhodesian house servants were predominantly African “house boys.”<sup>49</sup> European women often resisted hiring African women as domestic servants as they feared that their husbands might establish sexual liaisons with them.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, here too, the employment of male native servants did not occur without reservations. In the image that European colonial society produced of itself and for itself, European women were beautiful and fragile and, hence, in danger of being overpowered by their African servants.<sup>51</sup>

The ideal image of the European woman was indeed a beautiful and idle woman with the non-sexual morality of wife and motherhood, which existed by way of contrast to an overtly sexualised image of the “exotic” indigenous woman, who possessed a sexuality that was seldom connected to motherhood.<sup>52</sup> Associated with moral dignity, beauty and controlled sexuality, Western women’s bodies served to consolidate a sense of a Western civilised community with common goals and interests, which was defined in opposition to the nature and interests of native communities. They were seen not merely as symbolic markers of colonial culture, but especially their sexuality was taken as one of the hallmarks of untainted whiteness and the moral supremacy of the colonial community.

Besides the majority of European women who led the lives of incorporated women, there were women like Mary Kingsley and Ethel Tawse Jollie in Africa, and Aletta Jacobs and Augusta de Wit in the Dutch East Indies, who had very different lives and opinions about the role and status of women.<sup>53</sup> As journalists, travellers, ethnologists, missionaries and reformers, women travelled to the colonies to explore alternatives to marriage and family life. To women like Olive Schreiner, Rhodesia was a space to bring about gender equality and resist imperialism. Other women wished to prove their capabilities and equality with men by participating in the work of uplifting the ‘natives’.<sup>54</sup> For instance, Ethel Tawse Jollie, the first woman parliamentarian in the British overseas empire, played a leading role in the development of the British Empire in South-Central Africa in general and the achievement of responsible government in Southern Rhodesia in 1923 in particular.<sup>55</sup> The empire offered Jollie an outlet and a public sphere for her political and scholarly energies, as it did for women like Mary Kingsley and

Gertrude Bell, who sought fulfilment in exploration and anthropology, without wishing to challenge imperial power in the metropolis.

The idea that white women had rights, powers and capabilities that equalled those of European men often emerged from overt or hidden contrasts with non-Westerners, particularly with non-Western women. As Antoinette Burton describes, racial superiority and national pride, so integral to the habitus of empire, was often used as the basis for women's emancipation.<sup>56</sup> A great sense of national and racial pride was dominant in the texts written by suffragists, for instance by the Dutch suffragist Aletta Jacobs, which forestalled any solidarity with native women, and which was cherished even if patriarchal attitudes and the plight of thousands of women in Europe was being deplored. These women legitimised their juridical and political claims for equal rights with European men by participating in imperial practices, and by reiterating in their feminist discourses the dominant nationalist sentiments and racial hierarchies.<sup>57</sup> Bluntly put, the nineteenth and early twentieth century women's movement in Europe and their struggle for political and juridical equality with men could establish itself rhetorically through, and against, a discourse of confinement of non-Western women.<sup>58</sup>

In the following part of the chapter, I will address the question of how Western women's personal narratives of empire relate to contemporary discourses about colonial remembrance in Britain and the Netherlands.

## **The Dynamics of Postcolonial Afterlife in Britain and the Netherlands**

### **Political Decolonisation<sup>59</sup>**

In the Indonesian Archipelago, with the foundation of the first nationalist organisation "Budi Utomo" in 1906, the Dutch East Indies government was confronted with rising nationalist sentiments since the early twentieth century, but the eventual process toward Indonesian independence was catalysed by the Japanese occupation of Indonesia on 1 March 1945, during which Dutch leadership heavily relied on the protection of the United States and Britain.<sup>60</sup> Soon after Japanese surrender on 14 August 1945, the Indonesian nationalist leaders Sukarno and Hatta declared the independence of Indonesia on 17 August 1945. The Dutch Royal military forces violently tried to regain control over the regions from 1947 to 1949. However, the international community, particularly the United States, increasingly lost belief in the moral right of these actions. Washington became convinced that lending support to Hatta and Sukarno was the only way to prevent the Indonesian people from falling prey to communism.<sup>61</sup> The Netherlands, which was heavily dependent upon American aid provided under the Marshall plan, was eventually forced to acknowledge Indonesian independence on 27 December 1949.

Since 1945, an insurgence of nationalism had also emerged on the African continent, which clashed with the British nationalism of African colonial cultures, a clash which was unprecedented anywhere in the empire before, neither in India nor in the other white dominions.<sup>62</sup> Despite the settlers' loyalty to Britain, Britain did not want to alienate the African political elite and sought to discover some kind of "brokering role between [...] rival claims."<sup>63</sup> In the period from 1957 to 1963, the British conservative government made eight new African nation-states, among which were the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In Southern Rhodesia, the last African pillar of the British Empire, the white minority government declared independence unilaterally in 1965, a development realised partly due to the split between the two main African nationalist groups ZAPU and ZANU.<sup>64</sup> With its white minority government and society structurally based on the discrimination of the black population, Southern Rhodesia was moving against the climate of "winds of change" that had affected international opinion since the 1960s.<sup>65</sup> The United Nations imposed sanctions against the new republic, forbidding its members to have trade or diplomatic relations with Rhodesia. Rhodesia also posed a problem to Britain, which was already accused by liberal-minded individuals of complicity with the apartheid system in South Africa since 1949, and at the time, tried to develop a multi-racial democratic Commonwealth. In 1979, at a Commonwealth summit, independence for Rhodesia was eventually agreed upon. Rhodesia was now back under the authority of Britain and moving towards independence.

### Nostalgia for Empire

Processes of decolonisation have intensely transformed the cultural, political and economic climates of both postcolonial and metropolitan societies. However, as various postcolonial theorists have recently pointed out, the full impact of decolonisation has rarely been explicitly recognised, particularly in the West. Postcolonial theories of colonial memory, eclectic as these are in philosophical terms, share a focus of memory as an instance of forgetting. For example, Salman Rushdie uncovers such a mechanism of forgetting in 1980s films about the Raj, for example *A Passage to India*, *Heat and Dust* (1983) and *Jewel in the Crown* (1984).<sup>66</sup> According to Rushdie, these cinematographic memories portray empire as if it were a magnificent enterprise run only by Western (male) individuals since the focus is mostly on the actions, behaviour, feelings and adventures of the white (male) colonial elite. The Indian classes in these films, as Rushdie suggests, "get walk-ons, but remain, for the most part, bit-players in their own history."<sup>67</sup> As a result, hierarchies of power prevailing in colonial India are reproduced in the recollections these Raj films provide. The latter deploy Eurocentric perspectives of Indian colonial history, hereby silencing and sidelining indigenous experiences and perspectives of this historical episode.

As Rushdie's critique illustrates, recollections of empire often emerge from displacements produced by the very functioning of colonial power. Many imaginations of colonial Indonesia in contemporary Dutch culture similarly centre on white colonial classes, rather than on indigenous experiences. The critical task, then, becomes to point to the representational limits and epistemological fallacies of colonial memory and to tease out why, for whom and to what purpose empire is remembered in the present.

In *After Empire*, Paul Gilroy is particularly concerned with the role colonial memory plays in the practice of excluding postcolonial immigrants from imaginations of the nation.<sup>68</sup> Gilroy diagnoses contemporary Britain with the social pathology of 'postimperial melancholia.' Britain fails to face the loss of its imperial prestige, Gilroy says, and this is connected to disruptive changes in British culture since 1945, such as the gradual break-up of the United Kingdom and postcolonial immigration. These profound transformations of the social landscape have shaken the sense that Britain is bound by a coherent unitary culture, at the same time when the history of empire became a source of discomfort, shame and perplexity. However, rather than working through those complexities and ambiguities, "that unsettling history was diminished, denied, and then, if possible, actively forgotten."<sup>69</sup> Gilroy is particularly concerned with the repercussions of post-imperial melancholia for the perception of ethnic and racial difference in Britain today. As an attempt to cling on to a sense of national coherence that is believed to have existed in the past, post-imperial nostalgia engenders an inability to imagine postcolonial immigrant subjects as part of the nation.

Whereas Gilroy focuses on the exclusion of postcolonial immigrants from the nation as a direct consequence of post-imperial nostalgia, others have questioned nostalgia as a structure of feeling itself. According to Stuart Tannock, the problem with nostalgia is that it "responds to an experience of discontinuity – to the sense that agency or identity are somehow blocked or threatened, and that this is so because of a separation from an imaginatively remembered past, homeland, family or community."<sup>70</sup> Nostalgia searches to restore continuity by recovering what is perceived to be lost by a rupture between the past and the present. This rhetoric of disconnection, however, can create fundamental misunderstandings with possibly serious consequences.

Renato Rosaldo coined the term "imperialist nostalgia" to point to the nostalgic lamentations of Westerners for non-Western traditions and customs without acknowledging, however, that the West played a crucial part in the alteration or destruction of these traditions and customs. In other words, in Rosaldo's view, imperialist nostalgia risks making the past seem inconsequential for the circumstances in the present and for transforming Western spectators into the innocent bystanders of a history for which responsibility could be too easily alleviated.<sup>71</sup> In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart also offers a critique of nostalgia and contends that nostalgic recollections of the past create the impression that the past does not

hold any constitute meaning for the present. Invested with a desire to escape from the present, nostalgia makes the past into an idealised (and therefore always absent) site of immediacy, presence, and authenticity and denies, or at least degrades, the present as it is lived.<sup>72</sup> As an escape to an idealised colonial past, nostalgia, then, implies a desire to model the future according to this past image, rather than be fitted to the postcolonial reality in the present. This assumption invites reflection on how nostalgic memory organises time and raises questions about the political implications of these temporal relations.

I will proceed in Chapter 3 with exploring “tempo doeloe” discourse, a culturally and historically specific manifestation of nostalgic desire for the Dutch East Indies in the postcolonial Netherlands. I will read Aya Zikken’s nostalgic desire for her childhood in the Dutch East Indies in her travel narrative *Terug naar de atlaslinder* in relation to tempo doeloe discourse, which I consider a historically specific response to a sequence of experiences of discontinuity – involving experiences of violence and retaliation during the process of decolonisation, and repatriation to the Netherlands in a post-World War II context.

Self-evidently, however, in the same way as there is no monolithic and unilateral colonial discourse, postcolonial remembrances of empire manifest themselves as a network of complicated transactions of meaning and knowledge in which different memories and narratives conduct their own negotiations and accommodations of dominant meanings. In the Netherlands today, the glorification of the imperial past in tourist sites, such as *het Oost-Indische huis* (East Indies head quarters) in Amsterdam, does not seem at all incompatible with the commodification of arguably the greatest Dutch protest novel, Multatuli’s *Max Havelaar*. Furthermore such touristic manifestations of nostalgic memory do not seem irreconcilable with the proliferation of a large body of Dutch camp literature by colonial survivors documenting their deprived conditions, intensifying the prevailing assumption circulating at the time,<sup>73</sup> that the Japanese were “brutal oppressors” interrupting the noble mission of the Dutch Ethical Policy.<sup>74</sup> These memory discourses compete with anti-colonial memories of racism, exploitation, and suffering of the indigenous. Harsh critiques of Dutch colonial policy were spawned in historical works written in the 1980s and 1990s, for instance in Lou de Jong’s *History of the Kingdom of the Netherlands during the Second World War* or in Jan Breman’s *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia*.<sup>75</sup> Rudy Kousbroek’s *Oost-Indisch kampsyndroom* polemically targeted the predominant Dutch attitude of nostalgia towards the Dutch East Indies.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, in Britain, various contradicting memorial texts seem to be able to co-exist, ranging along a spectrum from apologetic condemnation, such as by the *Lifeline Expedition*, organising reconciliation journeys linking the European and African nations, to nostalgic glorifications in the Imperial Museum, from appeals to stop apologising for empire, such as by Gordon Brown, to postcolonial rewritings of empire by a long tradition of postcolonial authors.<sup>77</sup> It is safe to say,

therefore, that Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance are by no means unilateral nor unequivocal. They consist of a wide range of memorial texts that tug at, contradict and balloon beyond the definitions that they impose and which may be imposed upon them.

Nevertheless, as postcolonial theorists from Paul Gilroy to Homi Bhabha, from Leela Gandhi to Renato Rosaldo have pointed out, nostalgic discourses of colonial remembrance are hegemonic in Britain and the Netherlands as they are often officially and publicly endorsed. As pointed out earlier, conventional historiography more often than not presents the imperial past as an “internalist” event of national history, which is detached from external influences, mutual exchanges and syncretisations with other cultures. A vision of empire as History is fostered, with a clear trajectory originating in the early modern European expansions and ending with post-war anti-colonial nationalism and decolonisation. Such evocations of empire regard the colonial past as no longer holding a constitutive meaning for the present and the future. From this perspective, they serve to provide “historical certainty and the settled nature” of the nation.<sup>78</sup>

Even though, as we will see further on, women’s colonial memory through travel is visibly mediated by dominant nostalgic evocations of empire mentioned above, the ways in which their narratives centralise women’s lingering legacy of the colonial experience seems to open up alternatives to these hegemonic discourses, particularly in the way in which these discourses consign colonialism to the distant and inconsequential past. In what follows, I will focus on tropes of white masculinity in Dutch and British imaginations of national history.

### **White Man at War**

As Marianne Hirsch and Valery Smith put it, “what a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget, are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender.”<sup>79</sup> And, as we might add, with ethnicity. One of the striking aspects about the iconography of national history that Britain and the Netherlands have sought to commandeer, is that it is relentlessly male and militaristic. The insistence on a history narrated through battlefield victories and defeats indeed suggests a masculine, bellicose, epic-heroic impulse behind British as well as Dutch nationalism, although this impulse manifests itself in historically distinct ways. In nationwide inquiries staged as entertainment during television shows and in the written media in 2002, the British public voted Sir Winston Churchill the Greatest Briton of all time, whereas the Dutch public voted, albeit controversially, Pim Fortuyn to be the greatest Dutchman of all time in 2004. Innocent articulations of national history in popular culture like these feed into and are, in turn, fed by larger complexes of imaginations of national history in which white masculinity circulates as a normative trope.

Particularly the dispersal of the memory of the World Wars in Britain and the Netherlands reveals that it has been made a privileged point of entry into national identity and self-understanding. In *After Empire*, Paul Gilroy observes, somewhat provocatively, that there is something neurotic about Britain's continued citation of the anti-Nazi war.<sup>80</sup> Widely promoted and distributed, the images of Britain at war against the Nazis and of a Britain triumphant in victory over Germany, have underpinned the country's unstable post-1945 settlement. The account of the Blitz has been etched into the country's conscience ever since the war years. Through the recollection of the world wars, the British can know who they are and what their future will be, since they are in the belief that they are still good while their enemies are irredeemably evil.<sup>81</sup> To give just one small example, the British chancellor Gordon Brown proposed in 2006 to transform Remembrance Sunday, when, traditionally, victims of the two World Wars and other conflicts are remembered, into "British Day". Although his proposal was not received without reservations, Brown singles out the role of Britain in the World Wars, specifically its defence of liberty, as pivotal in the British national imagination, defining "liberty, fairness and responsibility" as characteristically British national values.<sup>82</sup> Around the same period, Gordon Brown also suggestively announced that it is time that Britain stopped apologising for the Empire.<sup>83</sup>

The memory of the world wars has equally dominated the post-1945 public arena in the Netherlands, yet in distinct expressions and with different effects. Recollecting political neutrality during World War I in its national consciousness, the Netherlands could preserve an image of itself as the herdsman of international law and as promoter of peace, a memory which reinforces the self-image of moral guide (*gidsland*) supporting Dutch colonial practices overseas since the *fin de siècle*.<sup>84</sup> By conducting an "ethical policy" in the Dutch East Indies, the Netherlands assigned itself an exemplary role as colonial ruler, not with military power, but with moral neutrality as its principal strength. The latter self-image, as Frances Gouda explains, is characterised by "a presumed ability to occupy moral ground in the international arena [...]" as "a highly principled guide to the proper conduct of foreign relations [which] served as an example of efficient but judicious imperial management."<sup>85</sup>

In the same way that the memory of the world wars reinforced the imperial self-image of Britain as a world power, the memory of Dutch neutrality during the First World War reinforces and buttresses a Dutch self-image of a nation great in its smallness, that continues to be moulded and shaped by its "ethical" imperial management of affairs. This ethical idea of the Dutch empire still resonates today in the Netherlands as a neutrality of conscience, visible in the association of Dutch history and identity with the notion of "tolerance."

Although a particularly male-connoted and combative narrative of the world wars is dominant in the national histories of both the Netherlands and Britain, in fact many competing narratives of the nation exist. Different groups (genders,



classes, ethnicities, generations) do not experience the myriad national formations in the same way. Nationalisms, as Anne McClintock rightly argues, are invented, performed and consumed in ways that do not follow a universal blueprint.”<sup>86</sup> The close readings of travel narratives will address how women’s self-defining colonial memory discourses provide potential to write women’s lives and female perspectives into Dutch and British national history. This is at the same time when these memories indicate women’s enduring preoccupation with, and involvement in a colonial past, which is a fundamental, though not dominant, even submerged, part of collective national discourse.

### **Discourses of Postcolonial Immigration and Multiculturalism**

In the postcolonial post-world war era, the transformation of British and Dutch societies demands a rethinking of national boundaries on several levels. Postcolonial immigrants, mainly from the West Indies, travelled initially to Britain for economic reasons, while after Indonesian independence, groups of Indo-European and Dutch colonial residents arrived in the Netherlands.<sup>87</sup> From the start, Britain and the Netherlands dealt very differently with postcolonial immigration. The empire had left Britain with a tradition of multi-racial citizenship, which is virtually unknown in the Dutch colonial context, a point which generates further differences between the two postcolonial European nations; first, in the way in which colonialism is connected to discourses of multiculturalism and second, in the access to national citizenship from which immigrants could put issues pertaining to cultural difference on the public agenda.

Faced with demographic, social and cultural changes in the landscape, the Netherlands and Britain have periodically accommodated the policies to suit ethnically homogenous imaginations of the nation. Britain had always prided itself on the fact that it had absorbed “alien races” and that its real strength lay in its common nationality held together by British institutions.<sup>88</sup> The Commonwealth continued to pride itself on uniting diverse people, cultures and religions under a notion of common citizenship.<sup>89</sup> In the same spirit, the British Nationality Act of 1948 legislated free access to the United Kingdom for all multi-racial Commonwealth citizens. Notwithstanding these high principles, people were poorly prepared when Empire made its unexpected return to Britain.<sup>90</sup> In the course of the 1950s, social problems, such as unemployment and problems with social housing services, were increasingly associated with the arrival of coloured people in Britain. The ideal of a common treatment of all Commonwealth nationalities was soon a rapidly disappearing concept. In the course of the 1960s and 1970s, a series of Acts restricted Commonwealth immigration and common citizenship and 1981 eventually saw the passing of Margaret Thatcher’s British Nationality Act, which closely connected national citizenship to notions of British descent and whiteness.<sup>91</sup>

Between 1949 and 1964, approximately three hundred thousand immigrants and repatriates from Indonesia arrived in the Netherlands, although a considerable amount of people from mixed descent opted for Indonesian citizenship.<sup>92</sup> Approximately one third consisted of repatriates in the literal sense of the term; and two thirds consisted of generations of people from the Dutch East Indies who had never lived in the Netherlands before.<sup>93</sup> When Dutch society was confronted with a group of mixed race immigrants in possession of the Dutch nationality, “the Dutch government opted for an intensive policy campaign aimed at resocialization and assimilation of the group.”<sup>94</sup> The consequences of these policies for the social status of Indo-Dutch immigrants of the first generation and their descendants will be explored in more depth in Chapter 4 about Indo postmemory in Marion Bloem’s travel writing. For now, it suffices to underscore that immigration policies in Britain and the Netherlands deployed notions of national citizenship in terms of whiteness that underlay imaginations of postcolonial people as “second-class citizens” in Buchi Emecheta’s sense of the term, and which obscured the complex of political, historical and cultural connections postcolonial people shared with the collective life of their fellow subjects in Britain and the Netherlands.<sup>95</sup>

Generations of postcolonial immigrants have made political arguments that focus upon their interests, perspectives and social opportunities. In the history of immigrant politics and mobilisation, national traditions of citizenship seem to play a crucial role in the outcome of their struggles.<sup>96</sup> From the mid 1960s onwards in Britain, the restrictionist immigration policy was counterbalanced with a range of policies and regulations that were to promote cultural diversity and tolerance in British institutions, Race Relation Acts, which legislated against racially motivated discrimination, and local Race Relations Councils monitoring racial inequality.<sup>97</sup>

Christian Joppke explains, however, that the conjunction of non-assimilationist race-relations management and the restrictionist immigration policy “has both fuelled and frustrated the aspirations of Britain’s immigrant minorities.”<sup>98</sup> Endowed with national citizenship status yet excluded from Britain’s national community on ethnic grounds, Britain’s immigrant minorities have been more militant and ethnicised than elsewhere, as illustrated by insurgences from Brixton to Bradford. Decades of struggles against racism by black communities – struggles for equal pay and against discrimination on the shop floor; struggles to make the police protect communities from racial attack; struggles to include other histories in educational curricula and the urban “riots” of ’81 and ’85 – have contributed to the amendment of the British Race Relations legislation.

In the Netherlands, debates and policies about immigration and multiculturalism have burgeoned much later than in Britain. As opposed to the British situation, immigrants from the Dutch former colonies – from Indonesia, but also from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles – are not the central focus of these debates,

although they are often invoked as “model citizens whose integration into Dutch society was exemplary.”<sup>99</sup> Even though the term “assimilation” was officially abandoned in the 1970s, the norm continued to be prescribed to them.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, debates about multiculturalism are disconnected from the nation’s colonial legacy. Focused on the numbers of “guest workers” from Morocco and Turkey who were attracted in the late 1950s to helping reconstruct the Dutch infrastructure after the World Wars, immigration policy encouraged the fostering and preservation of cultural difference, assuming that immigrants would only stay temporarily and that it would facilitate their return to their home country. Since their arrival, Dutch society has prided itself in creating a multicultural society in which “Muslims were able to construct a socio-cultural ‘pillar’ alongside the autonomous circles of Protestants, Catholics and the secular community”<sup>101</sup> and create Islamic schools and social organisations, which was officially on par with other Dutch (protestant, catholic) schools and organisations. Despite the fact that postcolonial immigrants are not the central focus of the Dutch debates about multiculturalism, these debates did have implications for an Indo identity politics, a point to which I turn in more depth in my close reading of Marion Bloem’s *Muggen mensen olifanten* in Chapter 3.

Despite variations in postcolonial immigration discourses and policies and dissimilarities in the linkages between the colonial legacy and discussions of multiculturalism, and despite the varying degrees of interference in these policies by migrants themselves, discourses of postcolonial immigration and multiculturalism in both Dutch and British social spaces circulate alongside unremitting reiterations of imaginations of the nation, in which white men take centre stage, often against a melancholic background of a distant, yet heroic and more habitable past. Defined through acts of inclusion and exclusion, imaginations like these continue to signify the primary and originary self-understandings of both European countries, which fuel polarised debates over the “foreigners” which are often informed by projections, neurotic fears and false accusations.

In his travel account of the Dutch East Indies entitled *Brave Dutchmen (Kranige Hollanders)*, Jan Oost jubilates: “In the hut, the old national anthem sounded vigorous and proved that in those faraway regions, the brave spirits of the old fighters, who had sacrificed their blood for the homeland for many years, were fortunately living on.”<sup>102</sup> Throughout the history of empire, assumptions about the improving power of empire shaped, and were reinforced by, specific mythologies about the natives. As various postcolonial discourse analysts have noted, these myths are pushed and pulled historically, politically and cross-culturally.<sup>103</sup> They take shape in a dense field of contrasts harnessed, rhetoric unleashed, ambivalences repeated and ambiguity sustained. An integral part of postcolonial afterlife, mythologies about non-Western otherness are in continual production, are displaced, effused, become translated to new contexts and are determined by various histories.

Scholars have documented the emergence and development of culturalist paradigms in the post-cold war era by means of which ontological differences between cultures are posited and societal events and conflicts between states and regions are understood as civilisational or cultural clashes.<sup>104</sup> Culturalist frameworks draw on older Orientalist traditions – especially towards Islam – in which a range of (overlapping) categories – colonised peoples, foreigners, non-native speakers, refugees, allochthons – are imagined as “others”, while culture is considered the basis of irreconcilable differences distinguishing these others from Westerners. In the process, the culture of these “others” is almost self-evidently attributed the ontological status of a stable, innate race and is associated with a series of pejorative connotations marking difference and inferiority. At the heart of culturalist narratives, then, are two related processes: on the one hand, an increasing inferiorisation or abnormalisation of others and, on the other hand, an appeal to protect and defend the customs and values of one’s own culture. The apocalyptic pathos characterising discourses of cultural otherness feeds utopian expectations about one’s own culture and vice versa. The culturalist framework of identity and difference in this wider geopolitical context translates itself in specific ways in Britain and the Netherlands, where cultural definitions of Britishness and Dutchness respectively are continuously made, remade and contested with reference and by contrast to a series of cultural others.

From reality shows such as *Survivor* and *Stanley’s Route* to multicultural music festivals, from the success of Islamic art to Oriental fashion design, manifestations of cultural otherness have a high currency in contemporary Western cultures. As Deborah Root argues, the problem with such seemingly innocent examples of popular culture is that they construe cultural difference through particular systems of authority that are charged for their own sake.<sup>105</sup> Such Western manifestations of cultural difference produce financial profit, excitement, pleasure and entertainment for the West, at the cost of negating the peoples and cultures that are the source of interest.<sup>106</sup> At the same time when these commodified goods speak in registers of multiculturalism, tolerance, inclusion, respect or admiration, they patronise, ghettoise and cash in on non-Western cultures.<sup>107</sup> In this manner, seemingly well-intentioned Western practices for the benefit of non-Western peoples are often organised to achieve the bluntest of economic purposes. For instance, in the wake of the Tsunami Disaster in 2004, the economic journal *Trends* promoted the economic profitability of a “socially engaged image” for corporates and multinationals.<sup>108</sup> Such instances indicate that attitudes and practices of tolerance, redemption and inclusion do not seem at all incompatible with Eurocentric attitudes. So too, the significance of women’s travel writings lies to a large extent in its particular expression of this major commercial interest in manufacturing cultural otherness in European cultures of colonial remembrance today, which draws on certain tropes and rhetorical techniques of cultural otherness that date back to the colonial era.

## Conclusion

I have focused in the previous sections on some pivotal elements of the colonial discourses and the historical realities informing colonial memory in Aya Zikken, Marion Bloem and Doris Lessing's travel writings, which will be my focus in the following chapters. My concern was to show comparatively how these women's memories and journeys are informed by the specific historical conditions in which Dutch and British imperialist practices in the Dutch East Indies and Rhodesia took place, and by the distinct Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance in which the travel narratives circulate.

While colonialism before 1900 in Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies had largely been a male affair, the twentieth-century colonial mind-set was no longer only a male prerogative. In Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies, the immigration of Western women appeared to fit in the larger colonial architecture, designed to develop and sustain Western domination. Symbolically and materially, Western women often figured as the female embodiment of Western superiority, even if most of them were themselves confined to the domestic sphere. At the same time, motives and justifications for empire as well as imperial policies were often intertwined in complex ways, differed from region to region and altered with time and context. Rhodesian and Dutch East Indies colonial cultures differed considerably in their cultural, political and economic relationships to the respective mother countries of Britain and the Netherlands.

The lingering influence of colonial legacies in the postcolonial afterlife in Britain and the Netherlands has also been addressed. Memory discourses about colonialism often foster a nostalgic vision of empire and relegate it to the inconsequential past. At the same time, accounts of the national histories of Britain and the Netherlands predominantly focus on the World Wars, suggesting an insistence on a white masculine history narrated through battlefield victories and defeats. Whereas the memory of the world wars reinforced the imperial self-image of Britain as a world power, the memory of Dutch neutrality during the First World War reinforced and buttressed a Dutch imperial self-image that continues to be moulded and shaped by its "ethical" imperial management of affairs.

Such imaginations of the nation are achieved and established at the same time when ethnic outsiders are defined, a process that inevitably seems to revitalise the nation. The focus on discourses of multiculturalism and postcolonial immigration revealed that one important dissimilarity between the Dutch and British context is that Empire had left Britain with a legacy of multi-racial citizenship, which was virtually absent from the Dutch context, in which a policy of assimilation had been adopted. In addition, while in Britain, discourses of multiculturalism are connected to imperialism, in the Netherlands, these discourses predominantly focus on Turkish and Moroccan "guest workers" and are generally disconnected from the Dutch colonial past. Finally, attention has been devoted to the ongoing

colonial legacy of consigning postcolonial subjects to inferior categorisations and Orientalist stereotypes, at the same time that the ethical imperative for economic imperialism is being repeated. One of the main issues explored in the following chapters is how women's colonial memory through travel writing is indebted to, and serves to reinforce, the relentless concern with positing figurations of cultural otherness characterising the Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance in which they circulate.

## Chapter 3

# Nostalgic memory in Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*

Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* (*Back to the Atlas Butterfly*) (1981) recounts the author's nostalgic search for the arcadian setting of her childhood in contemporary Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I will interpret that search through a conceptualisation of the sublime, following Lyotard and Nancy, emphasising history's loss. The return journey to the lost landscape of Zikken's colonial youth is beset by endless delays and detours, while it is simultaneously indirectly invoked through intertextual, fictional, and imaginative allusions. Ignoring the contemporary life of Indonesia and Indonesians, Zikken ultimately finds again her pre-modern paradise – though not on Sumatra, where she actually lived during her childhood, but on the Mentawai Islands. Hence, the historical sublime is displaced, yet ultimately domesticated and beautified.

Preceding my analysis, I will briefly discuss the role of nostalgia in the literary-historical context of Dutch colonial literature about the Dutch East Indies within which Aya Zikken's travel narrative can be situated. Nostalgia plays a crucial role in the formation of an "Indies imagined community" as well as in the standard critical approaches to Dutch Indies literature. This excursion is relevant as my aim is to show that through the sublime and the traveller's nostalgic memory, the nostalgic desire saturating *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* both reconfirms and questions the nostalgia, which is dominant in an important strand of Dutch colonial literature about the Dutch East Indies.

### Nostalgia for Empire: Tempo Doeloe Discourse

#### Colonial Repatriates' Memory Communities

"Tempo Doeloe" is a recurrent term denoting a mode of nostalgia to the Dutch East Indies in contemporary Dutch culture and literature. The phrase 'tempo doeloe' literally means 'the good old days' in Pasar Malay, the colloquial colonial language that was used in the Dutch East Indies. In what follows I specifically focus on tempo doeloe discourses in the literary memories and experiences of

immigrants and repatriates of the first generation, which have come to shape Dutch colonial memory, besides manifold other mnemonic writings.

If nostalgia, as argued in chapter 2, indeed responds to an experience of discontinuity, then there are a series of circumstances that gave former residents of the Dutch East Indies the impression that the link between their present and their past was abruptly broken. A sequence of disruptive experiences in the lives of these repatriates may have stimulated the desire to conjure up images and visions of the Dutch East Indies as a lost paradise from which they were prematurely expelled.

Preceding the repatriation in the late 1940s, a large group of colonial residents had been physically affected by the political turmoil leading to decolonisation. During Japanese occupation in 1945 many experienced tremendous hardships, as did the indigenous populations. They were forced into internment camps or were shipped to work camps in Thailand and Burma. After Japanese surrender (on 14 August 1945), the Indonesian nationalist leaders Sukarno and Hatta declared the Independence of Indonesia on 17 August 1945, and this instigated a period of chaotic backlash against the colonial classes, which came to be known as the *bersiap* period.<sup>2</sup> For their protection against Indonesian retaliation, colonial citizens remained in the camps, and were, this time, under the protection of the Japanese. During the years from 1947 to 1949, the Dutch Royal military forces violently tried to regain control over the Indonesian regions.<sup>3</sup>

The title of the contemporary historical study *Mission Interrupted: The Dutch in the East Indies and Their Work in the XXth Century* illustrates how the invasion of Japanese forces was seen as the disruptive catalyst that impeded Dutch colonial rule and eventually brought it to an end.<sup>4</sup> It was indeed felt, in the terms of another contemporary publication, that “the destructive hand of the Japanese” (*De schennende hand van de Japanner*) had crushed the humanitarian work done by the Dutch.<sup>5</sup> The rupture between the past and the present posited is clear. What was perceived as a relatively peaceful and happy time of Dutch colonialism suddenly ended with Japanese occupation. Experiences of war and imprisonment made this fracture real and gave way to the proliferation of a large body of camp literature – diaries, memoirs and ego-documents – in which survivors of the Japanese internment camps documented their deprived conditions.<sup>6</sup>

Besides these memories of suffering, imprisonment and hardship, the role of the Dutch military forces in the violence preceding decolonization also sparked controversy over Dutch accountability. In 1992, Graa Boomsma, son of an officer of the Dutch Royal military forces, published his historical novel *The Last Typhoon* [*De laatste typhoon*] in which he compared the acts of the Dutch forces during the *bersiap* period to the deeds of the German SS.<sup>7</sup> Boomsma scandalised veterans who had served in the Dutch KNIL army during this period and who took the case to court. They were offended by Boomsma’s insinuation in the novel that the operation of the Dutch KNIL army in the Dutch East Indies evoked a resemblance



to Nazism. While for people like Boomsma the violence inflicted by the Dutch KNIL officers may have raised ethical questions about Dutch colonial practice in general, to others the affair disturbed the sense of moral righteousness and tolerance which they had always connected to Dutchness.

It is indeed during imperial rule, as was pointed out in Chapter 2, that a self-image of moral leadership (*Gidsland*) started dominating the Dutch national imagination. The Netherlands assigned itself an exemplary role as colonial ruler by implementing around the turn of the twentieth century an 'ethical policy' (*ethische politiek*) – a civilising mission – in the Dutch East Indies. Although this ethical self-image had already been contested since the early twentieth century in novels such as Louis Couperus's *The Hidden Force*, to many, discussions over Dutch accountability in the decolonisation process may have created a fissure between a colonial 'before' in which a moral sense of righteousness could still be retained and an 'after' in which this belief in moral innocence could no longer be maintained, or at least had suffered serious damage.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the fact that colonial repatriates returned to a Dutch postwar context in which the Second World War dominated the public imagination may also have played a role in feelings of separation from an imagined past, homeland or community. Most residents did indeed arrive in the Netherlands in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when the country was recovering from German occupation. In the public arena, little room was left for coming to terms with a collective or personal past, which was different and elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the 1950s was not an era that stimulated looking back, rather it was a time of looking forward, rather than of remembrance; a time of national consensus, economic reconstruction and the development of a welfare state. As a result, Dutch colonial history in the East soon came to be ostensibly forgotten and was relegated to a dark corner of national history during the immediate postwar period.

Feeling rootless and disoriented, repatriates needed a space to share, think about and narrate their shared past.<sup>10</sup> Launched in 1958, the journal *Tong Tong* was specifically aimed at those repatriates of mixed descent who wanted "to repose and tell their stories".<sup>11</sup> Immigrants and repatriates sought each other's presence as they shared experiences and memories of a time gone by and a space they came from, which were incongruent to the memories of German occupation in the Dutch collective imagination.

Since the immediate postwar period, the practice of working through the loss of the Dutch East Indies through memory has spread beyond the group of repatriates and immigrants and their offspring. There are reasons to suggest that it has nowadays become a fundamental, though not dominant, even submerged, part of collective national discourse. Specific customs, words and traditions reminiscent of Dutch East Indies colonial culture are turned into ritualised memory traces that have firmly and fairly unproblematically become ingrained in Dutch public, cultural and everyday life. For example, the yearly festival devoted to the Dutch East

Indies called *Pasar Malam Besar* or certain food traditions associated with the Dutch East Indies – the rice table (*Indische rijsttafel*) or a type of spicy cake (*Indische cake*) – are widely enjoyed in the Netherlands today. The significance of these commemorative cultural acts lies in giving expression to collective forms of nostalgic yearning, while transcending far beyond the group of people who have direct family histories connected to the Dutch East Indies.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time while *tempo doeloe* discourses continue to thrive in various manifestations, these have generally not been considered in public debates, even though the latter have increasingly addressed questions of national identity, cultural heritage and ethnic difference. For the last two decades discussions have focused in particular on those populations, particularly from Turkey and Morocco, who have migrated to the Netherlands in the wake of the labour migration policies of the 1960s. However, that *tempo doeloe* discourses have become relatively widespread and uncontested as a part of national discourse does not mean that they are less significant as postcolonial phenomena that deserve critical scrutiny.<sup>13</sup> In what follows, I precisely introduce the latter perspective by analysing in more depth some of the aesthetic and ideological complexities inherent in *tempo doeloe* literary discourse.

#### Literary Variations of *Tempo Doeloe* Discourse

The context outlined in the preceding section suggests that at the heart of *tempo doeloe* sentiments are a number of political developments and transformations that triggered a sense that one's imaginatively remembered past was irretrievably lost. It is striking in this respect that a large number of authors debuting in the Netherlands during the late 1940s and 1950s had spent a large part of their lives in the Dutch East Indies.<sup>14</sup> Many authors felt the need to narrate their memories of life in 'Paradise Lost' and in so doing amend the link with the past they perceived to be broken through literature.<sup>15</sup> To name but a few authors: Hella S. Haasse (*Oeroeg*, 1948), Maria Dermout (*Nog pas gisteren*, 1951), Aya Zikken (*Het godsgeschenk onbegrepen*, 1953), Albert Alberts (*De eilanden*, 1953), Rob Nieuwenhuys (*Vergeelde portretten uit een Indisch familiealbum*, 1954) and Margaretha Ferguson (*Anna en haar vader*, 1959).

In the wake of the steady production of Dutch colonial literature since the 1870s, this body of literary writings has played a crucial role, as Pamela Pattynama explains, in the constitution of an 'imagined community' in Benedict Anderson's sense of the term: "For the imagined community of the East Indies, literature performs a community-constituting function and serves as a joint source of identification."<sup>16</sup> Reading, exchanging and discussing literature about the Dutch East Indies has provided the group of repatriates with a bond. This is still the case today. When the academic research group of Dutch East Indies literature organises symposia on Dutch East Indies literature and hosts literary meetings at Lei-

den University, the largest part and most loyal audience consists of repatriates and their descendants.

Before focusing in more depth on the notion of *tempo doeloe* in relation to literature about the Dutch East Indies, it is worthwhile pausing for a moment to consider how *tempo doeloe* has diversified and how it evolved in time. It is indeed necessary to emphasise that, although it provides important foundations for a social community of repatriates, *tempo doeloe* is by no means a homogeneous or static memory discourse. There are at least two important axes of social difference – age and ethnicity – which ostensibly help to produce and define literary variations in *tempo doeloe* discourse.

As pointed out in Chapter 2, ethnic differentiations informed experiences and memories of colonial residents in the Dutch East Indies, as well as their social positioning within Dutch society after their arrival. Official policies of assimilation, together with the employment opportunities in the prosperous economic climate of the 1950s and 1960s, engendered the assumption that the first-generation Indo families had merged almost unnoticeably into Dutch society. As a result, Indo-European identity is arguably still obscured and ostensibly forgotten in Holland nowadays. In the media and the public domain, it is often either normalised into a monolithic category of white ethnicity, or is seen as a dramatically different non-western ethnicity.

Within the colonial repatriates' memory communities, ethnic differentiations among authors have also played a considerable role in the reception of literary recollections of the Dutch East Indies. More specifically, literary reviewers have adopted ethnic hybridity as an implicit or explicit criterion in their evaluation of literature of the Dutch East Indies. Hella S. Haasse's work, for instance, triggered derogatory remarks by reviewers Tjalie Robinson and Rob Nieuwenhuys, who argued that the author is a full-blooded Dutch woman and therefore unfamiliar with 'real' life in the Dutch East Indies.<sup>17</sup> Margaretha Ferguson's collection of short stories, *Hollands-Indische verhalen* (1974), was strongly criticised by Lilliane Ducelle in the latter's review in the journal *Moesson*, as she argued that she could not recognize 'the' Dutch East Indies in Ferguson's representation of it.<sup>18</sup> Both ethnically 'white', Haasse and Ferguson, however, spent their childhood in the Dutch East Indies. Doubting the 'authenticity' of Haasse's and Ferguson's literary imaginations of the Dutch East Indies, the negative reviews show more than anything that many differing memories of the Dutch East Indies exist and that there is no such a thing as a singular, authentic experience, or memory, of the Dutch East Indies. I return to this point in the next paragraphs.

Age or generation is also deployed to differentiate between different voices within the *tempo doeloe* paradigm, connected as these identity markers are to variations in experiences of the Dutch East Indies. Repatriates who spent their lives or part of their lives in the Dutch East Indies are traditionally referred to as writers of the first generation, who are distinguished from their descendants, the

writers of the second generation. Since the 1980s, second-generation authors – such as Marion Bloem, Adriaan van Dis, Jill Stolk and Alfred Birney – started writing ‘postmemories’ of the Dutch East Indies, which they know through the stories and recollections of their parents, who were repatriates.<sup>19</sup> Recently, the proliferation of work by third-generation authors suggests that the Dutch East Indies continues to play an important role in the identity constructions of particularly second- and third-generation writers of mixed descent in the Netherlands today. The latter case suggests that *tempo doeloe* representations do not merely fulfil a need to conserve the past, but that they could also be a forceful means of memory politics serving the affirmation of cultural identity in the present. It is worthwhile underscoring therefore that it is clear that there are a number of different voices in the paradigm of *tempo doeloe* and that the mode of nostalgia that they foster and construct, serves different aesthetic and political objectives in different texts.

### Contesting Authenticity

In many texts of particularly authors of the first generation, the Dutch East Indies is remembered as an Arcadian home and these texts are often characterised by a yearning for the bygone days and the luxurious life in Indonesia’s tropical climate that Dutch settlers were forced to leave behind. The literary and photographic work by Rob Nieuwenhuys (writing under the pseudonym E. Breton de Nijs) is illustrative in this respect, with suggestive titles such as *Yellowed Portraits from an Indies Family Photo Album* (1960) or *Coming and Staying: Tempo Doeloe, a Drowned World* (1982).<sup>20</sup> Narratives, such as those by Nieuwenhuys, present themselves as projects of conservation whose function and emotional appeal depend on the absence of the Dutch East Indies. With a similarly affective dimension, in Hella S. Haasse’s acclaimed novel *Oeroeg*, the protagonist refers to the Dutch East Indies as his “landscape of the soul” (*landschap van de ziel*).<sup>21</sup> Beb Vuyk describes the Dutch East Indies as the “mother country in the distance” (*vaderland in de verte*).<sup>22</sup> Explaining the need for photography books such as *Coming and Staying*, Nieuwenhuys draws on the emotional dimension associated to the past-ness of the Dutch East Indies as follows:

[...] *Tempo doeloe* is een verzonken wereld zoals alle werelden verzinken. We hebben dit als een historisch gegeven te aanvaarden, zonder verdriet en tranen, zonder ergernis of haat. Alleen aan een beetje weemoed kunnen we ons niet onttrekken, maar dat is met alles wat sterft, verdwijnt of verloren gaat.<sup>23</sup>

*Tempo doeloe* is a drowned world, like all worlds drown. We have to accept this historical fact, without sadness and tears, without outrage or hate. We can only restrain ourselves to a little melancholy, but this is with everything that dies, disappears or is lost.

Nieuwenhuys associates *tempo doeloe* with “a little melancholy”, which he, moreover, contrasts to more forceful, emotional responses to the past-ness of the Dutch East Indies, such as sadness and even hate. Rejecting the latter emotions, Nieuwenhuys, on the one hand, endorses an attitude of resignation vis-à-vis the fact that the past has become past, on the other hand, he frames melancholy as an emotion which is ‘allowed’, hereby creating the impression that justification for melancholy is somehow required.

The photo albums by Rob Nieuwenhuys intend to save the Dutch East Indies from disappearance or oblivion. As one example out of many narratives, they revive ‘the drowned world’ through photographic material and make it into a site of presence. The Dutch East Indies is also conserved through other media – textually in literature but also virtually on the internet and materially in cultural heritage expositions.<sup>24</sup> As attempts to integrate a vision of colonial Indonesia into Dutch national memory and heritage, the political relevance of *tempo doeloe* discourses cannot be underestimated. It is useful to highlight, therefore, that there are some crucial contradictions and tensions lying at the heart of *tempo doeloe*.

The notion of an authentic experience which is almost as if it were self-evidently connected to ideas about excavating and retrieving the Dutch East Indies is one of the crucial tensions. On the one hand, repatriates gather around memorial texts of the Dutch East Indies, which, as they feel, convey their shared past. On the other hand, considering that remembrance is always a reconstruction, idealised and distorted through desire, *tempo doeloe* could of course never reflect the past as experienced.

It has already often been iterated that memory crystallises experience into a few precious moments, selected by desire and distorted by oblivion. The standard critical approach to literature of the Dutch East Indies leaves, however, an illusion of authenticity intact and sometimes reinforces it. By token, first-hand experience has been an integral element of the very first definitions of what is conventionally called ‘Dutch East Indies literature’ (*Indische letteren*). A resident of the Dutch East Indies, a novelist and a literary critic, Rob Nieuwenhuys published a number of anthologies and essays to argue that writings about the Dutch East Indies are a specific strand of Dutch literature.<sup>25</sup> In *Oost-Indische Spiegel* (1972), Nieuwenhuys defined ‘Dutch East Indies literature’ as thematically characterised by events and adventures in the former colony and as formally recognisable by its lively, colloquial *parlando* style.<sup>26</sup> Considering how nostalgia makes the idealised past into a site of immediacy and presence, it is no surprise that Nieuwenhuys singles out a realist content and colloquial speech for his definition of Dutch East Indies literature. Literary styles such as realism and colloquialism tie narrativity closely to socio-referential experience and are well suited to create fictions of authenticity. This makes them particularly useful for nostalgic attempts to make the past present.

The notion of authenticity is, however, undercut by the practice of intertextuality characterising tempo doeloe discourse. Authors indeed often draw on textual material written by other authors in their attempts to retrieve and represent the Dutch East Indies. For example, Margaretha Ferguson's return travel narrative of Indonesia, *Other People Live There Now* [*Nu wonen daar andere mensen*], 1974), shows several textual overlaps and dialogues with representations of the Dutch East Indies by other authors, and this form of intertextuality often occurs explicitly and in a self-reflexive manner.<sup>27</sup>

In *Other People Live There Now*, the autobiographical narrator returns to Java in order to revisit the fairly worry-free décor of her childhood and adolescence, but also to the place where she, as an adult, spent painful years in a Japanese camp in Batavia. Observations of Java of the early 1970s are interspersed with autobiographical memories of the place through flashbacks and self-reflection. During Ferguson's return journey, the names of two of her fellow authors and repatriates, Hella Haasse and Aya Zikken, frequently appear. Ferguson refers to them as old school friends and references their literary work. On her arrival, for instance, the narrator conveys that she is reading "with endless admiration" Haasse's return travel narrative of Indonesia, *Krassen op een rots*, published four years earlier.<sup>28</sup>

Ferguson's return to the Dutch East Indies through travel and memory is overtly shaped by various intertextual references. Illustrative are instances in which the narrator's actions and observations of Java awaken memories of herself in the colonial situation of the 1920s. She does not always extensively describe these recollections, but regularly directs the reader to the literary work of fellow author Aya Zikken. Remembering a bicycle ride in Jakarta, Ferguson refers us to Aya Zikken's novel *Yesterday Does Not Go By* [*Gisteren gaat niet voorbij*], 1972): "We used to do this too, as school girls on bikes – the bicycle-slipper parade so wonderfully described in Aya Zikken: *Yesterday Does Not Go By*".<sup>29</sup> In this fragment, Zikken's novel is an intertext referring to Ferguson's personal memory of riding a bicycle as a schoolgirl in Jakarta. Ferguson's Dutch East Indies is thus constituted by means of the recollection described by another author. The I-narrator's tempo doeloe becomes the literary presentation of the Dutch East Indies by Aya Zikken. The assumption that Ferguson shares a childhood experience in the Dutch East Indies with Zikken becomes an occasion to insert and borrow from the latter's writings, while at the same time, it is precisely through establishing such intertextual connections between each other's writings that an allegedly shared childhood experience is given expression and brought into existence.

A literary reviewer of the newspaper *Het Vaderland*, Margaretha Ferguson frequently reviewed literary works of colleague authors and was of course familiar with other repatriates' tempo doeloe imaginations.<sup>30</sup> In *Other People Live There Now*, she makes explicit that her tempo doeloe primarily comprises adolescent recollections of love, sexuality and sexual yearning. Before stating this, however, Fergu-

son enumerates a long list of tempo doeloe recollections by other authors in order to highlight what 'her tempo doeloe' is not:

Ik weet het, mijn Indische herinneringen hebben niets uitstaande met vertedering voor fraaie verhalen vertellende kindermeiden zoals bij Maria Dermout en Rob Nieuwenhuys, ik heb ternauwernood iets doorleefd van drama's zoals in Aya Zikken's *Atlasvlinder*, de jeugdherinneringen van Hella Haase uit datzelfde Batavia als waar ik woonde spelen zich af in een andere geestelijke ruimte dan de mijne, de prachtige straatschuimverhalen van Tjalie Robinson herken ik alleen vanuit mijn ooghoeken, de natuurwereld van Beb Vuyk heb ik al helemaal nooit zo doorleefd, er ternauwernood van geweten – al die schrijvers toveren mij een Indië voor ogen dat ik wel herken maar waarvan ik mij nooit bewust ben geweest als mijn wereld [...].<sup>31</sup>

I know, my Indies memories have nothing in common with the tenderness for nannies telling beautiful stories, as in Maria Dermout's and Rob Nieuwenhuys's work, I have hardly experienced any part of the drama in Aya Zikken's *The Atlas Butterfly*, Hella Haase's youth memories of the Batavia where I lived, have sprung from a mental space different from mine, I only vaguely recognize the magnificent stories of dwelling on the streets by Tjalie Robinson, and I have never lived through the world of nature of Beb Vuyk, I hardly knew it existed – these authors all magically bring a Dutch East Indies in front of my eyes, which I recognize, but which I was never aware of as my world.

In this fragment, the loss of the irrecoverable past in the Dutch East Indies has turned into astonishment that the recollections of a range of authors are absent in Ferguson's case. The aching nostalgia for a lost paradise, characteristic of the community of repatriates from the Dutch East Indies, is temporarily suspended and, instead, projects itself as the absence of memory. The narrator notes that other people's tempo doeloe are not hers. Nevertheless, descriptions of other authors' imaginations of the Dutch East Indies help to define her tempo doeloe through negation. What this fragment illustrates is that notions such as authenticity are fraught with contradictions when applied to the nostalgic remembrance of the Dutch East Indies, since the narrator's 'authentic' tempo doeloe manifests itself as textually and intertextually constructed. Ferguson's Dutch East Indies consists of densely patterned surfaces that direct us, beyond the boundaries of the work itself, to the memories and observations of the Dutch East Indies in other repatriates' writings. The fact that Ferguson's tempo doeloe is brought into discourse by means of textual references to the work of other authors implies that the Dutch East Indies past is constituted in language and is, therefore, not in need of excavation and conservation.

## Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*

In *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*, a woman traveller named Aya Zikken visits Sumatra, one of the islands of the Indonesian Archipelago located north of Java. Her journey is a way of returning to her colonial childhood in Sumatra. 'De atlasvlinder' (*The Atlas Butterfly*) in the title refers to a novel written by the same author in 1958, which evokes a Dutch girl's colonial childhood in the Dutch East Indies of the early twentieth century. In the travel narrative, the narrator realises that the hope of retrieving her childhood or the place where her childhood took place is unrealisable. Regardless of this understanding, she undertakes the journey. During her travel, a process of remembering takes place, which helps the narrator to grasp the past. In what follows, I will analyse the return journey *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* (*Back to the Atlas Butterfly*) as a nostalgic desire for the Dutch East Indies, which is an impossible journey destination. As I will argue, the travel narrative revolves around a crucial ambivalence. The narrator is not able to arrive at her destination because the colonial past can never be reached. Despite this impossibility, the Dutch East Indies past considerably influences the traveller's journey as it is the object of her nostalgic memory. At stake is thus a tension between a desire for a past that is unreachable, on the one hand, and an idealised representation of the past on the other hand. In order to explore how this tension manifests itself and discuss some of the consequences, I will first embark upon developing a theoretical model of interrelated concepts of nostalgic desire and the sublime and memory as two literary manifestations of that desire.

### Nostalgic Desire and its Literary Representations

*Terug naar de atlasvlinder* narrates not just a journey across Sumatra, but also a journey in time. The return to the time and space of the Dutch East Indies emerges as the autobiographical narrator's personal experience of seeing the colonial past beyond the visible landscape. During her journey to the "postcolonies," the narrator continuously falls out of time.<sup>32</sup> In the physical remainders of the past, she gathers evidence to support her memories. But flashes of memory also seem excessive and unpredictable forces that intrude on her (account of the) journey. Her memories are often disruptive, non-contingent forces, which destroy the regulated structure of the journey.

The sensory encounter with the empirical surroundings transports the traveller's imagination beyond the visible. The term sensory, rather than visual, is used here to indicate that the return experience is triggered by various senses, ranging from touch to smell and from sound to vision. From this perspective, it is worthwhile recalling that Fredric Jameson characterises postmodernity by:

a weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in new forms of our private temporality, whose 'schizophrenic' structure (follow-



ing Lacan) will determine new types of syntax and syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts; a whole new type of emotional ground tone – what I will call ‘intensities’ – which can best be grasped by a return to older theories of the sublime.<sup>33</sup>

In Fredric Jameson’s terms, postmodernity is characterised by an implosion of historicity determining “a new type of emotional ground tone”, which can best be grasped by the older theories of the sublime. Jameson sees “historical deafness” as one of the symptoms of our age, which includes “a series of spasmodic and intermittent, but desperate, attempts at recuperation.”<sup>34</sup> Our loss of historicity most resembles a schizophrenic position, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time. With this loss, a general depthlessness and affectlessness of post-modern culture is countered by outrageous claims for extreme moments of intense emotion.

A concept of fluidity, ambivalence and ungraspability, the sublime has played a major role in the history of Western thought.<sup>35</sup> Classical theories of the Sublime of the eighteenth century were articulated in the philosophical work of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. In Romantic literature it became an important mode of imagining the fearful and irregular forms of nature.<sup>36</sup> The term generally refers to a greatness with which nothing else can be compared and which is beyond all possibility of calculation, measurement or imitation. It denotes an extremely moving subjective experience, an “experience of transcendence,” usually during an encounter with a visible object, such as a landscape.<sup>37</sup> The sublime experience has an affective force with the power to transform the subject, to evoke strong, even overpowering feelings, usually in a manner that is elevating, but also potentially terrifying.

The sublime has generally been conceived as a masculine aesthetic. It has been associated with notions of appropriation and domination of a male subject over the visible object, and with a notion of moral authority or insight that the subject infers from the sublime experience. As Barbara Freeman puts it in *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women’s Fiction*, the sublime involves a sexually coded dominance of “male spectatorship” over “objects of rapture.”<sup>38</sup> Freeman’s study is a feminist critique of the sublime, and simultaneously it is an attempt to re-structure the sublime for women’s writing. In her study, Freeman re-discovers “a feminine sublime [that] does not attempt to master its objects of rapture” in representations of excess in novels by Kate Chopin, Toni Morrison, Jean Rhys, Mary Shelley and others.<sup>39</sup> Such re-conceptualisations of the sublime are useful for a better understanding of colonial memory in women’s travel writings such as *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*. Freeman’s study, however, entails a number of problems, the most important one being that her notion of a feminine sublime fails to account for the potentially proprietary relationships existing between Western women travellers and the peoples and settings they describe in their narratives.

The sublime has increasingly attracted the attention from contemporary thinkers and theorists, not only from Fredric Jameson, but also from Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida. The latter have renewed eighteenth-century notions of the sublime in order to examine a range of contemporary phenomena such as postmodernity, masochism and hypermedia. Crucial to these recent reformulations of the sublime is that they do not posit the sublime anymore as a metaphysical or divine sublimity. Instead, the postmodern sublime becomes an aesthetic mode of expressing an excruciatingly tantalising as well as terrifying experience, resulting from the fact that history is ultimately unknowable, unrepresentable, unreachable, and excessive. Although an in-depth discussion of postmodern theories of the sublime is beyond the scope of this study, I do reprise some of these insights and will expand on them during my analysis.

From Jean-François Lyotard's perspective in *Inhuman Time*, the sublime becomes an aesthetic mode for the post-World War expression of the loss of faith in History as a grand narrative. The revival of the sublime in the post-World War world thus becomes, in Lyotard's view, an excessive experience resulting from the inability to represent the past. The sublime is "the event of a passion, of a possibility for which the mind will not have been prepared, which will have unsettled it, and of which it conserves only the feeling – anguish and jubilation – of an obscure depth."<sup>40</sup> Lyotard's notion of the sublime is fruitful for the analysis of *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*, especially since the colonial past is the traveller's object of a desire that is never fully satisfied, but can only be gestured at in the attempts to analyse it or understand it.

At this point, it is worthwhile underscoring that my notion of nostalgic desire from the perspective of the sublime centralises the relationship between the past and the subject's experience of the past in the present. As the sublime, my notion of nostalgic desire is more akin to positive reformulations of nostalgia, for instance in Sinead McDermott's article "Memory, Nostalgia, and Gender in a Thousand Acres" and Leo Spitzer's "Back through the Future: Nostalgic Memory and Critical Memory in a Refuge from Nazism."<sup>41</sup> In his formulation of nostalgia, Leo Spitzer also centralises the subject's experience in the present, rather than the representation of the past. The latter argues that by establishing "a link between a 'self-in-present' and an image of a 'self-in-past,' nostalgic memory [...] plays a significant role in the reconstruction and continuity of individual and collective identity."<sup>42</sup> As I wish to consider both positive and negative dimensions of the notion of nostalgia in women's return journeys to the colonial past, it is more fruitful to unfold the term 'nostalgia' and to distinguish between nostalgic desire as the sublime aesthetic on the one hand, and representations of nostalgic memory, on the other. Below I will engage with Susan Stewart's critique of nostalgia, which is more concerned with the representations of the past produced by nostalgia.

Theorists of the sublime have connected the sublime to formlessness, to what is beyond representation. They have contrasted the sublime to the beautiful, which has been linked up with form, limit, and representation. As Jean-Luc Nancy says: “Form or contour is limitation, which is the concern of the beautiful: the unlimited is the concern of the sublime.”<sup>43</sup> Even though the narrator of *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* can never go back to the past, at times, she brings into articulation the colonial past through autobiographical memory. In this respect, it becomes necessary to consider the capacity of nostalgic memory to turn the past into a site of immediacy, authenticity and presence. As Susan Stewart argues in *On longing*, one of the main problems with nostalgia is that it fixes history into determinate and clearly contoured representations of past happiness. Hence, represented as nostalgic memory, the past becomes a concern of the beautiful, instead of the sublime. In focusing on the nature and representation of nostalgic desire in what follows, I will address the extent to which the Dutch East Indies manifests itself as a sublime desire for history that can never be fully satisfied, or becomes a limited representation of the ‘beautiful’ past, which is the very product of that desire for history.

## The Sublime Dutch East Indies

### Literary Allusions

In *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*, the Dutch East Indies are to a certain extent presented to the reader as a problem. Only in the articulation of the desire for it, are glimpses of Dutch East Indies brought into discourse. In this section, I will discuss the intertextual relationship between *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* and *De atlasvlinder* as one mode in which the past is gestured towards, without representing it.

As the title *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* suggests, this is in fact not a narrative about a return to the colonial past, but about a return to the novel written earlier by Aya Zikken in 1958. At the very beginning, the traveller explains that her journey is a pilgrimage to “Jot and Ibrahim and Moenah, the monkey Keesje, the cat Pepi, the dignified wooden house on poles in the garden of the seven marvels [...]” (9).<sup>44</sup> The latter are references to the setting, characters and events that figured in the novel *De atlasvlinder*. Stating that she desires to experience all this again, Aya Zikken is presented in *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* as the author of *De atlasvlinder*, who desires to inhabit the fictionalised colonial world created by her. In this manner, *De atlasvlinder* seems to stand in a metonymical relation to the ‘lived’ childhood of the travelling persona, and her colonial childhood itself is not described. Rather, her childhood is transferred to nearby material, *De atlasvlinder*, shaping her childhood in a distorted and fictionalised form. It is worth noting that, in the terms of Lacan, the perpetual reference of one signifier to another in an eternal deferral of meaning is a formulation of the ceaseless movement of desire. According to La-

can, “Man’s desire is a metonymy [...] Desire is a metonymy.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the traveller’s anxiety over the loss of the childhood past which she has once joyfully experienced, becomes a nostalgia for something contiguous with that past, namely the fictionalised childhood past as described in *De atlasvlinder*. In her attempt to return to her childhood past, all that she is left with is a previous imaginary recollection of this past in the novel *De atlasvlinder*.

The reference to *De atlasvlinder* is an attempt to represent that which cannot be represented, the narrator’s colonial childhood in the Dutch East Indies. According to Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*, in order to represent that which cannot be represented, the art of the sublime “denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable” and instead it “searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.”<sup>46</sup> One often resorts to myths, allusions or figures when confronted with the unrepresentable or transcendental nature of the sublime. Lyotard argues that “Allusion [...] is perhaps a form of expression indispensable to the works which belong to an aesthetic of the sublime.”<sup>47</sup> The reason for this is that allusion is a form of representing something unrepresentable without having to represent it.<sup>48</sup> From this perspective, it is possible to see the intertextual relationship with *De atlasvlinder* as a sublime allusion. References to the novel hint at the colonial past, at the same time that the past itself is deferred.

What, then, do the allusions to the novel precisely signify? The plot of *De atlasvlinder* evolves around the arrival of an extraordinary atlas butterfly in a Dutch colonial settlers’ village at Sumatra. The butterfly announces to some people, a miracle, to others an unexpected guest (7). In fact, not one, but two guests, Miss Borneman and her daughter Oetari, arrive, and consequently the inhabitants’ lives and the relations between them drastically change. The protagonist is Gembyr, a dreamy thirteen-year-old Dutch girl, who lives a utopian imaginary world amidst the wonders of the tropical nature of the highlands, together with her Indo-Dutch friend Ferdie. During the stay of the atlas butterfly, Gembyr’s naïve world gradually collapses and she is confronted with the colonial world of adults. She discovers that it is a highly stratified microcosm in terms of class and ethnicity as well as gender. At the end of *De atlas vlinder*, Gembyr is obliged to leave behind the environment of her childhood, the highland village in South Sumatra. Her father is promoted to a new job and the family moves to the island of Java.

The fabula is rendered through circular narration. Various characters focus on the chronological events and re-narrate them from their own point of view. Analysing Aya Zikken’s novel *Code voor Dander*, Dutch literary scholar Petra Veeger draws attention to the novel’s peculiar narrative structure. According to Veeger, *Code voor Dander* consists of various embedded stories that cross-reference and give meaning to one another. She refers to it as “a frame story with a changing frame.”<sup>49</sup> *De atlasvlinder* is characterised by a similar narrative structure. The novel

renders an account of the experiential worlds of various characters in Dutch colonial society, of their environment and of their views of one another. Because of the multiplicity of viewpoints and the particular narrative structure of *De atlasvlinder*, the question is raised as to whose Dutch East Indies the traveller of *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* wants to return.

Yet, the phrase “a pilgrimage to the old Jot, who told me stories as a child” indicates that the traveller identifies as a younger self with the protagonist of *De atlasvlinder*, the dreamy thirteen-year-old Dutch girl Gembyr, the child of Dutch settlers. It can be assumed that the journey narrated is a search for the colonial childhood experience of Gembyr, which is indeed the central theme of the novel. However, the past experience to which the traveller wants to return remains unclear, since the novel precisely narrates an evolution in Gembyr’s childhood. Therefore, alluding to Gembyr does not really lead to a representation of the colonial past on stable and fixed historical ground.

Moreover, neither of the two stages in Gembyr’s development is in fact represented in *De atlasvlinder* as a childhood experience to which it is either possible or desirable to return. At first, focalised by Gembyr, the Dutch East Indies are clearly presented as an unreal world created by imagination. Since Gembyr’s Dutch East Indies are presented in the novel as imagined, rather than as physical surroundings, the return across space to Gembyr’s Dutch East Indies would be doomed to fail. In the novel, Gembyr believes herself to have the imaginary power to create her own reality during the rainy season and for the duration of the atlas butterfly’s concomitant stay. The girl is convinced that she can project herself to the minds of other things and people if she uses her imaginative power: “Things come to me when I gesture at them.”(28) As a result, Gembyr’s focalisation smoothly glides from observation to invention, from exterior to interior worlds, from neutrally recording to imagining people’s behaviour, from facts to fantasy.<sup>50</sup> Everything has extraordinary dispositions. The events that occur in Gembyr’s life are transformed by her into a concatenation of magical events – a beautiful woman is ‘in reality’ a mermaid who bewitches men, a walking stick is a snake in disguise and Ferdie’s mother transforms into an octopus woman who swallows her son.

Gradually, however, Gembyr loses her belief in her self-created mythical world and realises it is an illusion. This evolutionary moment happens when Ferdie, for whom she invents and with whom she lives in her imagined world, abandons her and falls in love with Oetari: “I now know that there is no such thing as our world. There is my world and your world. In one’s own world, one could smile and die, while someone else is not concerned.”(49)<sup>51</sup> Given Gembyr’s realisation that she lived an imaginary and naïve world, does the traveller of *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*, who identifies with Gembyr as a young girl, desire to return to Gembyr’s mythical world before her realisation that she lived with naïve illusions? If this is true, then the traveller of *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* wants to return to a myth.

As *De atlasvlinder* progresses, the reader, together with Gembyr, discovers a colonial society in which unhappiness, boredom and social hierarchies structure people's lives. Gembyr's limited and naïve focalisation magnifies the fierce inequalities that prevail in the Dutch colonial world described. It is a narrow-minded world where women gossip, men exploit the native workers and where strict racial hierarchies determine people's position on the social ladder. Gembyr does not understand anything about it and, as a child, she is powerless towards it. Yet her feelings of compassion and indignation towards those who are oppressed, as it is brought home to the reader, are justified. Thus Dutch colonial culture is criticised and juxtaposed with Gembyr's naïve, good-hearted perceptions. Given the negative depiction of 'real' Dutch colonial culture in *De atlasvlinder*, it seems unlikely that these are the Dutch East Indies to which the traveller desires to return.

Faced with the inexplicability of past events and the giddy suspicion, terrifying in its eventual impact, that the force of these events might determine her present reality, the narrator of *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* incorporates intertextual references to *De atlasvlinder* as a means of grappling with the impossibility of a return to the space of her childhood.

*De atlasvlinder*, its characters and events, become metonyms for a desired yet always-out-of-reach colonial childhood, but it would be impossible to argue that the novel renders an unequivocal representation of Dutch colonial culture. Rather, the novel raises itself the question about how the Dutch East Indies can be captured in a singular narrative. Incorporating the novel as a sublime allusion, *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* provides an entry, not into the colonial past, but rather into a mis-en-abîme of imagined representations of Dutch East Indies culture. In this respect, it bears repetition to state that the perpetual reference of one signifier to another in an eternal deferral of meaning, is a formulation of the ceaseless movement of desire in a Lacanian vocabulary.

### Affects and Self-reflexivity

In the opening pages, the narrator dwells for three pages on how she has anticipated the feelings her return would induce: "I was determined not to be surprised. To protect myself, I had imagined the return to Indonesia in all possible ways. [...] The most important thing was that nothing would affect me too deeply." (5)<sup>52</sup> In order to control her emotions, she informs us that she finds it necessary to write about her experience. Yet, even when writing, emotions are difficult to control: "Also on paper I have to keep myself under control to not let myself carried away. I want to register facts. I want to gather information and observe detachedly [...]." (7)<sup>53</sup> The self-imposed necessity to control her feelings by writing expressed by the narrator in the opening pages, serves as a legitimisation of the travel narrative that follows. However, the emphasis placed on "I want to" anticipates that her intention to control her emotions might be unsuccessful.

The project of sublime art today, as Lyotard argues, is the ongoing investigation of the affects resulting from the sublime experience. In his article “Emma: Between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis,” Lyotard reinterprets Freud’s case of Emma, a woman who suffered from the phobia of entering shops alone, as a result of being sexually harassed during childhood, which she did not remember. Lyotard conceptualises “affect” as follows: “Affect as ‘effect’ of excitation is there, but not for anything other than itself. [...] The affect only ‘says’ one thing – that it is there – but is witness neither for nor of what is there.”<sup>54</sup> From Lyotard’s perspective, affect is an effect of the past and as such confirms its existence. Yet, affect itself is unable to represent the past and hence cannot be a witness. Like Emma’s anxious feelings, sublime art does not witness history, nor does it try to capture or articulate it in a closed narrative. Instead, the sublime becomes a territory fraught with desire, anxiety and loss.

In *Terug naar de atlaslinder*, Zikken describes how a friend of hers had arrived in Holland after a return journey to Indonesia and had failed to express his experience. Instead, he stumbled: “‘It was, it was – ‘Really, you know –’”(5).<sup>55</sup> Intense emotions prevented him from expressing his encounter with the past. His attempts to rationalise his feelings (“really”) failed. Unable to express his experience, which is described as “inexpressible” and “unpronounceable” (5), he could only resort to hoping that the addressee would know what he meant (“You know”).<sup>56</sup> Warned by her friend’s experience, Zikken is determined to protect herself against the intensity of emotions that she anticipates will be induced when she returns.

But which feelings precisely does she expect to manage and control? Conscious of the fact that her return to the colonial past is a priori doomed to fail, Zikken has mixed feelings. The return to the landscape of her colonial childhood holds the hope of seeing a situation that she is familiar with, with which she will rejoice. But the return might well be disruptive and even terrifying, as she could never expect what to retrieve. In “The Sublime Offering”, French theorist Jean-Luc Nancy argues that “the sublime is a feeling, and yet, more than a feeling in the banal sense, it is the emotion of the subject at the limit.”<sup>57</sup> Nancy’s notion of the sublime echoes Lyotard’s earlier cited idea that the sublime is a threshold experience with the obscure depth of history, of which the subject conserves only the feeling. Moreover, taking their cues from the Burkean and Kantian sublime, both theorists specify the affective dimension of the sublime as an ambivalent mix of pain and pleasure, of anguish and jubilation, echoing the Burkean paradox of “delightful terror”.

In *Terug naar de atlaslinder*, the anticipation of this mixed emotional energy translates itself into a geographical deferring of the eventual confrontation with the place where the narrator was raised, the village of Lahat, the space where the past and the present converge. Aya Zikken does not take the shortest route to the village. The geographical trajectory of the journey serves to postpone this moment

for as long as possible. She starts her journey in Northern Sumatra and plans to approach her destination, very slowly and via several detours. She departs from the region of the Batak in North-Sumatra, and via the region of the Minangkabau and the Mentawai-islands, she cautiously arrives in Lahat in Southern Sumatra. Although the traveller has voluntarily planned this journey, she seems troubled by frightful hesitation. Calling her return to Sumatra “a shock of recognition,” Zikken compares herself with Alice in Wonderland (68).

When Aya Zikken finally arrives in Lahat, she fully understands that she cannot return to the past. She is left with nothing but the possibility of analysing her own affects, with her never-ending, frustrated, nostalgic desire. The account of Aya Zikken’s encounter with Rameh particularly makes this point clear. It is worth noting that “Rameh” is a name alluding to an old friend. His ‘real’ name is never used. As is the case with the sublime allusions to the novel *De atlasvlinder*, “Rameh” is a fictional reference standing in for the desired yet never-to-be articulated friend she used to have. The name refers to a character from the novel *Rameh, Verslag van een liefde* (*Rameh. Report of a Love*).<sup>58</sup> In fact, a double literary allusion is used to refer to him. As the I-narrator explains: “The little friend Ferdie from the book *The Atlas Butterfly* and Rameh are one and the same figure.”(183)<sup>59</sup> Even though an encounter between Zikken and Rameh/Ferdie takes place, it remains unclear to the reader who exactly the old friend is. Regarding characterisation and signification, the identity of the old friend is redirected to nearby fictional characters.

Soon, as Zikken states, they concluded that due to “a gap of forty years of different histories and different developments,” they did not have anything to say to each other anymore.<sup>60</sup> The narrator’s failure to represent her history is here reconfirmed. Nevertheless, she preserves the desire for it. When they part again, Rameh/Ferdie scribbles a *pantun*, an old Malayan poetic form, on a piece of paper and hands it over to Zikken. The last lines “How sad are those who left?/ Also those who stayed are sad” express his sadness about them having gone separate ways.<sup>61</sup> Rameh/Ferdie expresses his melancholy for a past, but his affect does not testify to their common past. Their past is not brought into the text. Zikken is disappointed by his expression of affect. She had hoped that he would have passed her his address because in that case: “We would have been able to write letters to each other and in these letters we could express everything, which we could not express now” (184).<sup>62</sup> Aya Zikken’s wish to write letters to Rameh/Ferdie once again suggests that her desire to return is never-ending. Simultaneously, her desire “to express everything, which we could not express now” is an effect of the sublime and a standing reminder of her inability to witness the past. In other words, in the same way as allusions, expressions of affectivity gesture at the colonial past, without representing it.

Aya Zikken’s eventual arrival to Lahat, the village where she spent her childhood, is rendered using a mix of observations, intertwined with imaginations of



her surroundings. It seems that the only thing left to do for her is to wander amidst the debris of the past. The I-narrator screens the site of Lahat in terms of voids and absences and finds the space of her childhood in decay. In the end, the stark materiality of Lahat in the late 1970s shatters the traveller's hope that she will ever be able to come home to her fantasy. She makes the following self-reflexive considerations about her return.

Men zegt dat je nooit terug moet gaan naar plaatsen waar je eens gelukkig bent geweest. En toch blijven we dat steeds maar weer doen. We willen terug, we gaan terug. Je vraagt je af waarom we dat doen, of het werkelijk altijd een ontgoocheling moet worden en wat het dan is wat je ontgoochelt.(174)

One says that you should never return to the places where you have been happy once. Yet, we keep on doing this. We want to go back, we go back. You wonder why we do this, and whether it should really always be disappointing and what precisely disappoints.

In terms of Kant and reprised by Jean-Luc Nancy, "the imagination", when faced with the impossibility of conceiving the Idea (of history), and not a presentation of that idea, "sinks back into itself."<sup>63</sup> Similarly, in *Sublime Desire*, literary scholar Amy J. Elias has noted that the imagination "confronts not its products (i.e. history as the known past) but its own operation, the construction of history itself."<sup>64</sup> In *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* the past is not represented by minute study or empirical reconstructions. Rather, the narrator testifies to the unrepresentability of the past by means of reflections upon her failure to bring back the past.

Assessing the great disparities between what she imagines and what she sees upon her return, the narrator realises: "[...]The passing of time has gnawed at beloved houses and even entire gardens have been eaten."(174)<sup>65</sup> Becoming aware of this, Aya Zikken replies to the question of what makes the return disappointing that she poses herself. As early as 1798, Immanuel Kant had already noted that people who return home are usually disappointed because, in fact, they do not want to return to a *place*, but to a *time*, a time of youth.<sup>66</sup> Time, unlike space, cannot be returned to, ever, time is irreversible.

From this understanding, the question follows: "It is marvellous to return. But what the hell do you do once you have arrived?"(181)<sup>67</sup> As the narrator explains, she had vaguely imagined performing "A magic gesture"(180) in order to mark her return, but even this does not feel appropriate anymore once she has returned.<sup>68</sup> She had brought a souvenir, a precious fossil oyster shell, found near her house in Lahat in the 1930s and engraved by her father. She had wanted to bury the fossil in Lahat again, "as the personal return of something which had never really been mine" (181).<sup>69</sup> The latter comment hints at the question of colonial guilt, which gradually came to be addressed in Dutch public discourse, as I

have explained in Chapter 2. This tongue-in-cheek expression of the need to compensate for Dutch colonial oppression and exploitation has personal implications: Was she, as a Dutch colonial child, ever entitled to a childhood in the Indies, considering the structural inequalities of the context in which her childhood was situated? However, her self-reflexive considerations fall short on analysing this issue further. Instead, her imagination sinks back on itself in the sense that she is particularly mesmerised by her own failure to bring back the past. These considerations of the ongoing effects of the colonial past on her self, is another way in which colonial history is represented as her own nostalgic desire, rather than as a stable block of historical knowledge.

In the next paragraphs, I will discuss how *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* represents the Dutch East Indies as the object of Zikken's autobiographical childhood memory.

### Memorising Childhood, Sentimentalising Colonialism

When Aya Zikken returns to Lahat, she visits the site where the old house of the Assistant-Resident (A.R.) used to be. The Assistant-Resident was the civil servant controlling the region and was second in rank to the Governor-General. Aya Zikken remembers the symbol of colonial power during a tea ceremony:

Tegen vijf uur kon je de A.R. en zijn vrouw de weg zien oversteken. Iemand hield een parasol boven hun hoofd als bescherming tegen de zon. [...] Je zag een rij bedienden de weg oversteken met zilveren dienbladen met zilveren theepot en schalen. De kopjes waren van heel fijn Chinees porselein vertelde mijn vriend Rameh mij. Die theeceremonie maakte grote indruk op mij als kind en ik kende de A.R. onmetelijke rijkdommen toe die hij waarschijnlijk wel niet gehad zal hebben. (178)

By five o'clock you could see the A.R. [assistant-resident] and his wife crossing the road. Someone held a parasol above their heads as protection against the sun. [...] You could see a line of servants crossing the road with silver trays with a silver teapot and plates. The cups were made of very fine Chinese porcelain, my friend Rameh told me. The tea ceremony made a big impression on me as a child and I endowed the A.R. with indefinite wealth, which he most probably did not possess.

In this fragment, Zikken represents the colonial past as her personal childhood *tempoe doeloe*, as a worriless childhood time of happiness and joy. The historical meaning of the past is presented in the closed form of a "beautiful" memory. As French theorist Jean-Luc Nancy argues: "Form or contour is limitation, which is the concern of the beautiful: the unlimited is the concern of the sublime"<sup>70</sup> In addition, the aesthetic category of the "beautiful" is conventionally linked to un-

disturbed pleasure. While Nancy talks about “enjoyment and preservation of the *bild*,”<sup>71</sup> Lyotard says that “the beautiful is a pure happiness of the soul and the sublime a happiness mediated by suffering.”<sup>72</sup> As the above fragment illustrates, Zikken’s “beautiful” childhood recollections of the Dutch East Indies suggest a similar undisturbed happiness. Contained in the representation of a colonial childhood memory, a determinate form of happiness is attributed to the past.

While articulating memories of her childhood, such as the one above, Zikken makes the colonial past into the object of her personal sentiments. Focalised by the child self of the traveller, descriptions of the luxurious tea set emphasise the wealth of the A.R. The (presumably) native servants are staged as marginal figures bringing tea, while their act reinforces the superior status of the A.R. As child and as bystander, the I-narrator’s role is downplayed. The recollection ends with a comment of the adult I-narrator on the younger self’s fascination. Stating that the A.R. was probably not as rich as she used to believe as a child, the narrator uses the wealth of the A.R. as an occasion for the expression of her identity, not as, for instance, a political argument or a critical reflection on the wider context in which her colonial childhood was situated. Emphasising the aggrandising property of her younger self’s imagination, the wealth of the A.R. becomes the object of a personal preoccupation with the psychology of her younger self.

In the course of her journey, Zikken tries to recapture her childhood past by gradually immersing in the referential surroundings of late 1970s Sumatra:

Ik doe of ik zomaar wat rondreis. In mijn hart weet ik beter. [...] Ik doe wat ik kan door eerst een beetje te acclimatiseren, door de klanken van de taal weer in mijn mond te nemen en voorzichtig te proeven, door me langzaam aan steeds meer te herinneren, langzaam wakker te worden. Want deze eerste dag heb ik beleefd als een proces van langzaam wakker worden terwijl ik niet eens wist dat ik was ingeslapen. (9)

I pretend that I am just travelling around a little. In my heart I know better. I do what I can to first become acclimatised a little, by savouring the sounds of the language in my mouth again and carefully tasting them, by slowly remembering more, by slowly awakening. I have experienced this first day as a process of slow awakening, while I did not even know that I had fallen asleep.

As I explained earlier, Aya Zikken does not take the shortest route to the village of Lahat. During the detour, a process of “slowly remembering” takes place. At first, the language of Bahasa Indonesia is totally foreign to her, but soon Zikken discovers that she intuitively grasps the meaning of the words if she allows the language to overwhelm her. In the beginning, she uses cutlery to eat rice, but gradually she takes up the habit again of using her fingertips.

Zikken's emphasis on the sensory is also visible in her descriptions of her surroundings. Her interest and perceptions are particularly directed towards Sumatra's natural resources. These impressions and recollections of nature in late 1970s Sumatra are not narrated from a distance, but in highly sensuous terms. Note in the following fragment the strong emphasis, not only on 'to see' but also on phrases such as 'smell', 'taste', 'emotions' and 'to feel':

Nee, de echte dingen zijn niet veranderd. Geur, smaak, emoties verbonden met je jeugd. Het betasten van vroeger gekende dingen, het aanraken van een bamboestengel, van geledingen van suikerriet, scherp alang-alanggras langs je blote benen, het zien van een brede waringin met luchtwortels aan het eind van een dubbele oprijlaan die loopt naar een huis-nog-van-toen. (7)

No, the real things have not changed. Smell, taste, emotions connected to youth. To feel once familiar things, to touch bamboo, the sections of sugar cane, sharp alang alang grass along naked legs, to see a wide waringin with its roots in the air at the end of a double drive running to a house-of-back-then.

The above fragment illustrates how Aya Zikken draws upon all the senses in order to filter her autobiographical childhood surroundings from existing nature in late 1970s Sumatra. Singular affective experiences, such as the touching of bamboo, seem to function as *pars pro toto*, re-directing her imagination towards the past.

Zikken's remembering through the senses naturally leaves out a whole array of other possible representations of Indonesia's past and present and the relationship between the two. Her childhood memories invoke sensuous and sentimental meanings of the Dutch East Indies and thereby deviate attention from the wider political context of colonialism which made her childhood in the Dutch East Indies possible. Neither does Zikken pay much attention to the political, social or economic realities of the late 1970s Sumatra to which she returns, despite the fact that Indonesia had only recently recovered from a turbulent period of economic downfall and political tensions, including a civil war during the crisis year of 1965 and a power shift from General Sukarno to Hadji Muhammad Soeharto. At no point in the travel book, does Zikken reflect on the extent to which her rosy childhood in the tropics might hold a constitutive meaning for the Sumatra she returns to, even though Indonesia had only gained independence roughly thirty years before.

Zikken's autobiographical quest for childhood does not only stand in the way of queries about the wider context of colonialism, but it also serves to reiterate certain colonial stereotypes about an allegedly Indonesian premodernity. Considering that Zikken perceives the Sumatran natural world (as opposed to the Dutch

natural world) as a preferred sight of childhood memory, it is clear that the recovery of her past is intricately connected to the Indonesian space she visits.

It is precisely Zikken's focus on the Indonesian natural world which indicates that a woman traveller's individual observations and autobiographical memories are never solely her own. This is particularly clear in her account of the Mentawai-islands. In Zikken's descriptions, the islands are portrayed with tropes of wilderness, tribalism and tradition. They are reminiscent of a stereotype of "the premodern unspoiled island", which is embedded in a European literary tradition of "Robinsonades" dating back to Daniel Defoe's enormously influential novel *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, written in 1719.<sup>73</sup> In ways similar to the character of Robinson Crusoe, Zikken arrives at the island by ship. Even though Zikken does not run aground, her ship is caught by stormy weathers and navigates for many hours along the coast before the crew and passengers are able to go ashore. Zikken describes the islands from a distance. In her view it resembles "the unknown tropical island in the books for boys I used to read." (67)<sup>74</sup> Because of the high waves, the ship cannot approach the island more closely and the crew and passengers need to change over to a smaller motorboat in which they will go to the island. When Zikken faces the risky task of jumping into the motorboat, she comments:

Het is een bekend gebeuren. Iedereen heeft het wel eens op de film gezien. Maar daar werd het gevaarlijke werk beslist altijd door een 'double' gedaan en de heldin werd geholpen door een sterke knappe man die in het bootje gereed stond om haar op te vangen. Hier hadden de helden geen tijd. Zelfs niet voor een helpende hand.[...] Aan die vrouw die perse in hun boot wilde, hadden ze geen boodschap. Ze schreeuwden me verwensingen toe, toen ik minutenlang doodsbenauwd op het trapje bleef staan mikken voor ik sprong. Nu ja, ik kwam erin. Met blauwe plekken en doorweekt was ik toch al. (67)

It is a familiar event. Everyone has probably seen it before in films. But then the dangerous scenes are definitely played by 'doubles' and the heroine is always helped by a strong handsome man who is waiting in the little boat to catch her. Here, the heroes did not have time, not even to offer a helping hand. [...] They did not trouble themselves with that woman who insisted to join their boat. They were yelling and cursing at me when I hesitated at the steps of the boat, for many minutes and scared to death, aiming before I jumped. In the end I managed, although I came out bruised and soaked to the skin.

This scene has a slapstick effect. Zikken creates the image of herself as an older woman who trudges and experiences difficulties arriving on the island. In *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*, the conventional "romantic portrayal of Robinson Crusoe" is

replaced by an ironical self-portrayal of an ageing female traveller who hardly feels up to the adventure.<sup>75</sup> Before wading through the water, Zikken comments: “I understood that I had become quite old because years ago I would have managed easily but now I just found it really uncomfortable.”(67)<sup>76</sup>

Zikken’s ageing female body forms an impediment, but it also underlines the arduousness of her journey. The difficult arrival contrasts with the paradisaical experience of the island. Finally having arrived on the beach, Zikken is happy to feel solid ground and, dehydrated, she stumbles to the nearest hut to ask for a sip of water. Slowly recovering and with a painful body, Zikken suddenly realises that she has retrieved the harmonious and sensuous way of life within nature she remembers from her youth. In spite of her encounter with two Western aid workers, Zikken portrays the island as premodern: On the island, the past, as she says, “is only recent.” (69)<sup>77</sup>

Arriving at the Mentawai Islands, Zikken realises:

[...] Ik [ben] in een paradijs. Onafzienbare zandstranden met palmen, glashelder water, af en toe de monding van een riviertje waar ik doorheen moet waden, wat snel heen en weer schietende krabbetjes over het zand, koraalriffen en geen mens te zien, geen huis te bekennen. Alleen het gebeuk van golven op de kust, het gekwetter van vogels en het roepen van apen, ver weg in de bomen in het binnenland. Klappers liggen op het strand, schelpen in allerlei kleur en vorm. (68)

[...] I [am] in paradise. Immense sand beaches with palm trees, crystal clear water, there are river mouths I have to wade through, little crabs shooting inland across the sand, coral reefs and no human beings, no houses to be seen. Only the pounding of the waves the shore, the twittering of birds and the screaming of apes in the distance of the trees. Coconuts are lying on the beach, and shells in various colours and shapes.

As this fragment suggests, Zikken seems to have ‘found’ the site of her sensuous childhood memories. She easily merges with the surrounding nature and does not only record nature using visual images, but also describes tactile and aural impressions. Zikken indulges in nature, which is portrayed as benign and harmless towards her. Described in affective and sensuous terms, Aya Zikken’s paradisaical experiences of the Mentawai-islands recreates her autobiographical childhood memories of the Sumatran highlands. From this perspective, her memory projections aestheticise and domesticate the Indonesian landscapes of the early 1970s she visits. In so doing, the colonial past is not only frozen in determinate representations of sensuous and premodern beauty. Remaining epistemologically unquestioned, these representations also seem to suggest that the nostalgic per-

ception of Indonesia, past and present, is the only way in which this space can be viewed.

## Conclusion

One of the principal conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlaslinder* is that particularly in travel writing, nostalgia is a rather equivocal notion, implying both the subject's experience of the past in the present, as well as a particular form of representation of the past. Reformulations of the sublime by Lyotard and Nancy have enabled us to see Zikken's nostalgic desire as a sublime "event of a passion", resulting from the inability to represent the Dutch East Indies. In this latter sense, The Dutch East Indies manifested itself as the use of sublime allusions to the novel *De atlaslinder*, the emphasis on ambivalent affects, such as anguish and jubilation, and as the narrator's imagination falling back on its own failure to reconstruct her colonial childhood. The colonial past showed itself, not as a stable block of historical knowledge, but as a relentless, unsatisfied desire for history; as something that could only be gestured at without witnessing it fully. At the same time, however, nostalgia becomes more akin to the category of the beautiful, rather than to the sublime, when the past is transformed into a site of presence through the representation of Zikken's autobiographical childhood memory.

Informed by the generic struggle between ethnographic and autobiographical concerns of travel writing, Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlaslinder* channels the indeterminacy of the colonial past into the traveller's autobiographical childhood memories, as well as in ethnographic knowledge about late 1970s Sumatra in terms of sensuousness and premodernity. Zikken's *Terug naar de atlaslinder* fixes and conserves the Dutch East Indies as an idealised past, in a way similar to the dominant *tempo doeloe* discourse, but it also leaves room for the Dutch East Indies as indeterminate and ungraspable history, the object of the traveller's nostalgic desire. The way in which *Terug naar de atlaslinder* articulates a female travelling subject who is moved by her nostalgic desire and her autobiographical childhood memories of the Dutch East Indies harbours its principal contribution to the Dutch culture of colonial remembrance in which the travel narrative circulates.





## Chapter 4

# Indo Postmemory in Marion Bloem's *Muggen, mensen olifanten*

*Muggen Mensen Olifanten* (1995) written by Marion Bloem is a collection of 57 travel narratives about journeys across the globe. It renders accounts of Africa, Latin America and the United States, but the emphasis is on South-East Asia, particularly on the Indonesian Archipelago. In these travel narratives, the autobiographical protagonist is described as an “Indo-Dutch” woman of the second generation, whose parents grew up in the Dutch East Indies and migrated around the time of Indonesia’s decolonisation to the Netherlands. Bloem’s journeys and perceptions of places and peoples of the Indonesian archipelago are in various ways informed by memories of her parents’ colonial past, a past she has not experienced herself.

In this chapter, I will build on Marianne Hirsch’s notion of “postmemory” and explore Bloem’s belated but intense negotiation with her parents’ colonial past as an imaginative and creative investment. I am particularly interested in untangling some of the ambivalences and tensions in the relation between Bloem’s Indo-Dutch postmemory and the Indonesia she describes in her travel account. To be more specific, I will explore the tension between on the one hand, the political need to reaffirm Indo-Dutch postmemory against the background of contemporary multicultural Netherlands and on the other hand, its strategic function in asserting ethnographic authority over the Indonesian space and peoples described. Bloem’s travel book is indeed marked by a strong ethnographic claim. Bloem’s position of a cultural insider and expert is rhetorically construed by her continued differentiation from Western tourists and her knowing recognition of the staged authenticity for Western eyes. At the same time, her ethnographic expertise reiterates Dutch colonialism in its collapse of Indonesian history and the populations of the various islands. Central issues that will inform the discussion are the deployment of tropes of “anti-conquest” and “the antitouristic binary”, the insistence on reciprocity, cultural insiderism, the proficiency in Pasar Malay and the female exotic body.

## The Spectre of Indo-Dutchness

Before we proceed with the analysis, it is worthwhile considering that to look into the connections between Indo-Dutchness as a mixed racial identity on the one hand and Indonesia as a cultural space on the one hand, asks for an understanding of the complex historical situation of Indo-Dutch populations in the colonial society of the Dutch East Indies as well as their status of a marginalised, even invisible, ethnic group within Dutch multicultural society today.

With the terms “Indo” (*Indisch*) and “Indo-Dutch” (*Indisch Nederlands*), I specifically refer to those generations of mixed descent who migrated to the Netherlands in the wake of Indonesia’s decolonisation. As I have explained in Chapter 2, this social group was called “Indo-European” (*Indo-Europees*) in the colonial context, a term used to denote that they stemmed from interracial intercourse between indigenous Indonesian women and Dutch men during the era of colonialism. It is important to point out that during and after their migration to the Netherlands, the term “Indo-European” lost currency and came to be replaced by the term “*Indische Nederlander*” (Indo or Indo-Dutch). Accordingly, this denominator will be used in this study to refer to those immigrants of mixed descent and their offspring in the Netherlands.

Between 1949 and 1964, approximately three hundred thousand immigrants and repatriates from Indonesia arrived in the Netherlands, although a considerable amount of people from mixed descent opted for Indonesian citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Approximately one third consisted of repatriates in the literal sense of the term; and two thirds consisted of generations of people from the Dutch East Indies who had never lived in the Netherlands before.<sup>2</sup> Since many Indonesian nationalists considered the Indo-European population, who had belonged to the ruling colonial classes, as traitors to the national cause, the Netherlands seemed a natural place for them to stay. Moreover, their immigration was undoubtedly influenced by the sense of common language and culture, fostered by imperial connection. When in the course of the 1950s and 1960s, Dutch society was confronted with a group of immigrants that had Dutch nationality yet possessed a somewhat “different” ethnic background, “the Dutch government opted for an intensive policy campaign aimed at resocialization and assimilation of the group.”<sup>3</sup> As the Indo populations had derived social status from adapting to colonial culture in the Dutch Indies, as the official discourse went, they would be ready to orient themselves towards Dutch culture. Consequently, cultural assimilation was the approach visible in a series of social policies.<sup>4</sup> A ‘too Asian’ oriented family was regarded as asocial. For instance, applications for social housing from families who were “too oriented towards the east” were rejected.<sup>5</sup>

The assimilation policy was fuelled by the Dutch post-war 1950s context, a time of economic reconstruction, national consensus, and the construction of the welfare state. In this climate, one tended to look to the future, rather than to the

past.<sup>6</sup> The economic boom facilitated assimilation, as there were ample opportunities for employment. It was also supported by the prevailing attitude in the wake of the Second World War that racial differentiation was not desirable.<sup>7</sup>

Official policies of assimilation, together with the employment opportunities in the prosperous economic climate of the 1950s and 1960s, created the impression that the first generation Indo families had merged almost unnoticeably in Dutch society. It would be more accurate to say, however, that Indo identity has been largely obscured and ostensibly forgotten. Nowadays, Indo-ness is still often either normalised into a monolithic category of white Dutch ethnicity, or is portrayed as a dramatically different non-Western ethnicity in the media and the public domain. In so doing, Dutch culture manages to suppress the Dutch history of miscegenation in colonial Indonesia. With its complicated allusions to the history of sexual entanglements between the Dutch and Indonesian populations, Indo-ness relates, in the terms of Meijers, to a “people without history.”<sup>8</sup>

As I have discussed in Chapter 2, official discourses about Turkish and Moroccan migrant communities in the 1980s shifted to discourses that valued cultural difference and the preservation of cultural traditions. This novel way of thinking about migrant populations and multiculturalism provoked the second Indo generation to react against the assumption that the first generation had easily assimilated into Dutch society. In what follows, I will address how the literature written by Indo authors who debuted in the 1980s and are usually named Indo authors of the second generation, play an important role in Indo revisions of Dutch national history and identity, an aspect I will deal with by means of Marianne Hirsch’s notion of ‘postmemory’.<sup>9</sup> These authors are, for example, Jill Stolk, Alfred Birney, Adriaan van Dis, or Annelies Timmerije. Publishing her debut novel in 1983, Marion Bloem is frequently regarded as an “icon of this generation”<sup>10</sup> and as one of its “main representatives.”<sup>11</sup>

## Second-Generation Indo Postmemory

It has been noted that second-generation Indo authors share a concern with identity as one of their main themes.<sup>12</sup> Their work often is an attempt to reconcile the different geographic and cultural attachments characterising Indo identity and history. The preoccupation with identity distinguishes the second from the first generation: “The majority of first generation Indo migrants felt *kesasar* (dislocated) and were convinced that their home country was situated ‘there’, ‘then’. Uncertainty about identity is more characteristic of second-generation Indo authors.”<sup>13</sup> Second-generation Indo literature thematises cultural identity through a variety of means. In doing so, as Bert Paasman argues, use is made of “historical knowledge, ego documents of their parents and family members, literary works, traditions of Indo culture and travelling to the country of origin.”<sup>14</sup> This

list confirms that grappling with the issue of identity often leads to a quest for cultural affiliations defined in temporal and geographical terms.

This quest is often translated into a journey to Indonesia or, through the use of retrospection, to the Dutch East Indies. It is rooted in a desire to uncover the hidden memory of the Indo experience in the colonial past, their migration and subsequent experiences in post-imperial Holland. In her debut novel entitled *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*, Marion Bloem writes: “The Dutch East Indies of the Dutch, of Daum, Multatuli, *Oeroeg* and the white door lived a life in libraries, at schools, in history books. The Dutch East Indies of her parents has died or has never existed” (190).<sup>15</sup> The memory project carried out by second-generation Indo authors, such as Marion Bloem, has both a personal and a political connotation, in the sense that it involves excavating family histories, which are interwoven with Indo history, the latter being officially effaced from Dutch public discourse.

The memory politics of the second Indo generation are complicated by their temporal and geographical distance from colonial history in the Dutch East Indies. Raised in the post-imperial Netherlands, second-generation Indo authors only heard about the Dutch East Indies, that faraway country belonging to the past, through the stories of their parents. For a better understanding of Indo-Dutch memory politics in *Muggen mensen olifanten*, it is fruitful to engage with Marianne Hirsch’s notion of “postmemory.”<sup>16</sup>

In her study *Family Frames*, Hirsch elaborates the concept of ‘postmemory’ as the specific form of memory in the art by second-generation Holocaust survivors, for instance in the graphic artwork *Maus* by Art Spiegelman. Hirsch describes ‘postmemory’ as follows:

Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a very powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. [...] Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can neither be understood nor recreated.<sup>17</sup>

To shift Hirsch’s concept of ‘postmemory’ from the context of second-generation Holocaust survivors towards second-generation Indo writing by Marion Bloem proves to be productive, particularly when the notion of ‘second-generation’ is considered in the psychotherapeutic sense of the term. In the discipline of psychotherapy, the term ‘second-generation’ refers to the children of victims of war, of the Holocaust or any other form of violence. This definition applies as much to the children of Holocaust survivors as to the children of the first Indo generation. The literary work of second-generation Indo authors often is coloured by their

parents' experiences, in particular by the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, the Bersiap, the Indonesian revolution and their migration to the Netherlands.<sup>18</sup> At stake is often knowledge of the Dutch East Indies, which is acquired through their parents' stories, an education governed by the idea that there is such a thing as a set of Indo norms, and proficiency in Pasar Malay.<sup>19</sup> In Marion Bloem's oeuvre, for instance, the father, who is a pivotal figure, is depicted as a veteran of the Dutch maritime force during the decolonisation of Indonesia, as a prisoner in the Japanese camps and as a dislocated migrant in the Netherlands.<sup>20</sup> Similar to the stories of children of Holocaust survivors, the characters in Bloem's oeuvre are dominated by the past of their parents, a past that preceded their birth.

In addition, Hirsch's notion of 'postmemory' endows the children of the second-generation with an imaginative and creative agency to reconstruct their parents' memories. They are not just passive receivers of a past that preceded them. Rather, they re-create and give new meanings to their parents' experiences. The latter point will prove particularly fruitful when analysing the functions of Indo-Dutch postmemory in *Muggen mensen olifanten* as a travel text. Regarding Indo postmemory as a creative construction enables us to address the question of its strategic purpose for the genre of travel. As will be suggested in what follows, through the strategic insertion of Indo-Dutch postmemory, *Muggen mensen olifanten* presents itself not only as an autobiographical, but also as an ethnographic document that renders an instructive account of Indonesia and its peoples.

### **The Politics and Authority of Indo Postmemory. Marion Bloem's *Muggen Mensen Olifanten*. *Reizen door een Veranderende wereld*<sup>21</sup>**

The travel narratives collected in *Muggen mensen olifanten* all cover a relatively short time span, have few characters, and focus on one theme. They usually have a pointed ending. Marion Bloem mainly travels through social spaces and renders an account of a series of human interactions and encounters. *Muggen mensen olifanten* is a human-centred, interactive narrative which is firmly anchored in the sensory experiences, judgments, and personal desires of individual characters. Marion Bloem makes her way across Indonesia, moving vertically, down and up the country's social scale, from dinner parties with fashion designer Issey Miyake and fellow authors, to outback scenes with the Papuan poor – although the latter are always encountered within a tourist frame.

The series of travel narratives is preceded and concluded by two narratives which present Marion Bloem as a second-generation Indo child in the Netherlands. "Als het maar een boom is" (*As Long As it is a Tree*) recounts an Indo girl, who is assigned the homework of drawing a tree. Assisted by her nostalgic Indo father, the girl draws a palm tree against the background of an Indonesian landscape, including a volcano and a bright sun. Her drawing is very different from the other children, who have drawn trees forming part of the Dutch landscape.

The teacher accuses the girl of having copied a tree from a photograph instead of having drawn a 'real' tree. "Welkom thuis" (*Welcome Home*) is the last narrative of the series. The title plays upon the travel writing convention of ending the narrative with the traveller's arrival back home. "Welkom thuis" describes an Indo girl who is curious about her place of birth and therefore asks her mother to return to the Dutch city of Arnhem. Her mother dissuades her from going there by shattering the myth of 'home': "Do not be so concerned about that city. You were just born there, nothing else." (362)<sup>22</sup>

"Als het maar een boom is" and "Welkom thuis" introduce Bloem's Indo post-memory as an identity marker that alienates her from her white Dutch environment. In both narratives, one of the parents intervenes and complicates the child's learning of Dutch everyday conceptions. The parents' interventions are prompted by their personal experiences of life in the Dutch East Indies and by their subsequent migration to the Netherlands. Thus the experiences and memories of her parents directly dominate the protagonist's life. While a tree and a home are unequivocal notions to Dutch children, for an Indo child they involve more ambivalent meanings. Both stories suggest that the second-generation Indo child straddles two cultures, the Dutch outer world and the Indo traditions at home. She imaginatively recreates her parents' Indo memories (she makes a drawing of her father's memory of a palm tree). In this manner, her parents' stories acquire new meanings in her own life (the drawing makes her an outsider at school). These figurations of Indo postmemory help to underscore Bloem's autobiography as a second-generation Indo girl, who is perceived by her white Dutch environment as 'different'.

The experiences and perspectives of second-generation Indo women are a dominant theme in Bloem's work. This connects the protagonist of *Muggen Mensen Olifanten* to the female second-generation Indo protagonists of Bloem's novels *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*, *Vaders van betekenis* and *De honden van Slipi*. All protagonists struggle with similar sentiments and experiences: the schism between the private world of the Indo family and the outer world of Dutch society, being objectified by Dutch society's cultural and sexual stereotypes, a sense of belonging to the Indo community thanks to the familiarity with Indo traditions, yet also a sense of unbelonging because these traditions originated in another place, the Dutch East Indies, and in another time, the past of the parents, a past to which the second-generation Indo protagonists do not easily have access. By token, in *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje* the narrator says: "Perhaps, her ancestors' Dutch East Indies has died where it was born: in their stories."<sup>23</sup> Finally, the return journey to Indonesia is a recurrent theme in the three novels mentioned above, although it does not function structurally as the main plot, as it does in *Muggen Mensen Olifanten*.

### Articulations of Indo Postmemory in *Muggen Mensen Olifanten*

In the travel narrative “Sprookjes op straat” (*Fairytales on the Street*), a young girl from Sulawesi narrates her life story to Bloem, while both are waiting to be served at a bar near the Jalan Legian in Bali. As Bloem explains, the young woman asked permission to be in her company at the bar because she finds it not right for a woman to be alone in public. As soon as the two women introduce themselves to one another, they establish a sense of commonality; not only on the basis of gender, but also because of their mixed ethnicity (The girl is Sulawesi-Arab). The girl’s life story is narrated in direct speech with short interventions by Bloem’s questions. It is an adventurous life story in which the turn of events is controlled by karma, mystical higher forces and witches.

What particularly concerns me in these passages is the way in which Bloem frames the life story told by the young woman from Sulawesi. The narrative form of her life story reminds her of a particular kind of storytelling with which she was raised:

Als kind las ik Twaalf Soedaneesche en Javaansche sprookjes, een boek dat met plakband bijeengehouden werd. Mijn ouders hadden het meegenomen uit Indië. Deze sprookjes waren heel anders dan de sprookjes die ik op school te horen kreeg. Als het meisje in haar grappige Engels haar levensverhaal begint te vertellen moet ik onwillekeurig aan die sprookjes met hun onverwachte wendingen en onbegrijpelijke, trieste afloop denken.(19)

When I was a child, I read *Twelve Sudanese and Javanese fairytales*, a book held together with tape. My parents had brought it from the Dutch East Indies. These fairytales were very different from the fairytales I heard at school. When the girl starts telling me her life story in funny English, I involuntarily start thinking about those fairytales with their unexpected turns and incomprehensible, sad endings.

It is suggested that the girl’s life story triggers Bloem’s interpretation in terms of a fairytale book of her youth: The memory of the fairytale book comes “involuntarily” (*onwillekeurig*). In this way, Bloem connects her interpretation of the life story explicitly to the identity of herself as the addressee, rather than that it is claimed as a general ‘truth’. At the same time, she underscores her Indo upbringing. Informing the reader that she read *Sudanese and Javanese fairytales* as a child, “fairy tales that were very different from the fairytales I heard at school,” Bloem establishes at once her cultural difference from her presumed (white Dutch) readers and her alleged cultural insiderism in the culture of the girl from Sulawesi. I will come back to this latter point in more detail below.

What concerns me here is that Bloem’s interpretation of the encounter with the girl from Sulawesi is dominated by the fairytale book, symbolising all the experi-

ences and narratives of the generation of her parents, who were raised in the Dutch East Indies. As an Indo woman of the second generation, Bloem is distanced in time and space from its source, the Sudanese and Javanese cultures of story telling. Passing the fairytale book to her, Bloem's parents mediated her connection to these cultures.

Although according to Marianne Hirsch, postmemory is fundamentally the result of an imaginary investment, in the narrated text above, however, this creative and constructed nature remains implicit. Instead, Bloem underscores the authenticity of the fairytale book. The fact that the fairytale book, "held together with tape", was brought by her parents from the Dutch East Indies, creates the impression that, even though Bloem herself has no direct relationship to Indonesia, she nevertheless did have access to 'authentic' textual remnants from the Dutch East Indies, the value of which is underscored by the fact that the book is in the process of degenerating. The emphasis placed upon the authentic resonates with the nostalgic project of conservation in the Dutch East Indies community in the Netherlands, which I have addressed in the previous chapter. Moreover, as we have seen to be the case with Aya Zikken's representation of nostalgic memories, the fairytale book in *Muggen mensen olifanten* is similarly supposed to enhance the truthfulness of her travel account. Bloem's ethnographic claim increases particularly because of the centrality of the fairytale book as an 'authentic' remnant of Sudanese and Javanese culture in her Indo upbringing.

At a closer look, the fragment raises questions about the legitimacy of the narrator's drawing on Indo-ness to claim knowledge about local storytelling. First, the impression is created that formal similarities exist between early twentieth-century Sudanese and Javanese fairytales and a life story told by a girl from Sulawesi in the 1990s. Thus 'reading' the Sulawesi girl's life story in terms of local fairytale telling in the Dutch East Indies, Bloem eclipses the transition from the Dutch East Indies to the Independent Republic of Indonesia into a temporally static space. Moreover, the association between the narrative of the girl from Sulawesi and a fairytale book of Javanese and Sudanese stories implies conflating the various ethnic and cultural traditions existing in Indonesia. By doing so, the narrator reduces the complex amalgam of ethnic traditions and cultural hybridisations to one singular, homogenous cultural entity, "Indonesia". The impression is created that there is such a thing as 'the storytelling of Indonesia', which is magical, and which is culturally different from Western storytelling.

Second, the fairytale book suggests that Bloem's knowledge of Sudanese and Javanese local fairytale telling is mediated, not only through a generational frame, but also through a colonial frame. The complete title of the book is *Twaalf Soendaanesche en Javaansche Sprookjes aan Hollandsche kinderen naverteld* (*Twelve Sudanese and Javanese Fairytales re-narrated to Dutch Children*) by B. Alkema.<sup>24</sup> At stake is thus not a local, but rather, a colonial edition of Sudanese and Javanese fairytale telling translated for Dutch children. Taking into account the omitted phrase "re-told to



Dutch children,” Bloem’s knowledge of local fairytale telling is thus mediated by a colonial intervention. Bloem inscribes herself in a tradition of writing that “privilege[s] the ‘west’ as the site of the production of [...] knowledge about other cultures.”<sup>25</sup> Although the fairytale book on first sight appears to distinguish Bloem from other Western travellers – particularly those raised with European traditions of storytelling – Bloem’s upbringing is equally interwoven with European (colonial) traditions, particularly considering the colonial context in which the fairytale book originated. Bloem’s alleged Indo entry into local cultures of storytelling enables Bloem to claim knowledge over Indonesia, but at the same time, it disguises the role of her imaginative investment and the colonial frame in which her access into local culture is embedded.

Bloem also plays out the proficiency in Pasar Malay as an element of Indo postmemory that serves to articulate her identity as a second-generation Indo traveller as well as to support her ethnographic claim. Pasar Malay is the lingua franca used across the Indonesian Archipelago as a colloquial language in everyday interactions among colonial residents, traders and natives. In this sense it resembles what Doris Lessing has called “kitchen kaffir” in the Rhodesian context.<sup>26</sup> In the story “*De koorts van de dood*” (*Fever of Death*), again set in Bali, Bloem is informed by Ketut, “My young Balinese friend” (29) that one tourist is seeking an interpreter.<sup>27</sup> Despite being unemployed, Ketut declines the job offer: “She squeezes my arm and whispers: ‘Takut’, which means ‘afraid’.”(29)<sup>28</sup> In a performative sense, this phrase introduces what follows. Quoting the Pasar Malay phrase *takut*, Bloem underscores the verbal substitution that constitutes her future translator’s mission. She will supply the translations. The “heteroglossia” is powerful, for the Pasar Malay phrase aligns Ketut, first, to the category of the linguistically hampered and, second, to the less courageous, as opposed to Bloem.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, Bloem’s knowledge of Pasar Malay indicates the degree to which her personal background is entangled with the Dutch colonial era.

The subsequent travel narrative evolves around events in which Bloem performs the role of interpreter between Lucas Witsen, a Belgian tourist who is looking for opportunities to purchase ancient traditional grave sculptures from Borneo, Toraja and Sumatra, and a handful of local men who illegally steal and sell the grave sculptures. Bloem’s task is to facilitate the tourist’s acquisition of traditional grave sculptures, a role she is able to fulfil because of her knowledge of Pasar Malay and Dutch.

Bloem’s act of translation places her in a situation that enables her to emphasise her Indo postmemory. Sharing the spatio-temporal narrative setting, Lucas cannot but totally rely on Marion Bloem in order to understand the personal desires, wishes and the cultural conceptions of the Balinese sellers during the business negotiations. Bloem helps him haggle to get the sculptures for a lower price but her interlingual translation is not always a literal one. Bloem translates Lucas’s bluntness in a polite way: “I translate what he says but I say everything a

little friendlier.” (31)<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere, Bloem mentions the politeness and indirectness she was raised with as behaviour that differentiated her from the Dutch.<sup>31</sup> Hence, the impression is created that drawing on her Indo background, the traveller is able to easily translate between Western and Balinese languages and cultures. Her self-assigned position as a linguistic and cultural intermediary creates the impression that she is sufficiently acquainted with local culture, as opposed to Witsen.

Moreover, as Bloem explains, the local seller Johnny tells her that bad luck, “the fever of death,” has turned upon his family since the sculptures are at his house. Empathising with, and trying to ‘translate’ this cultural belief, Bloem initially tries to convince Lucas to discontinue his quest. She tells Lucas: “If you ask me, those things bring bad luck.” (33)<sup>32</sup> Thus Marion Bloem translates the Balinese cultural significance attributed to the sculptures. Even more, she formulates the translation in her own subjective voice, implying that she has incorporated this particular cultural value in her own belief system.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the fact that Bloem’s friend Ketut tries to protect her from the fever of death by bringing sacrifices to her house, and the fact that Johnny’s wife and grandmother are extremely grateful towards Bloem – they literally embrace her in their (cultural) arms – when Lucas eventually buys the grave sculptures, functions to reinforce Bloem’s cultural affiliation with Balinese culture (33-34). It is this form of cultural insiderism that results from Bloem’s articulation of Indo postmemory and identity.

In *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation*, Michael Cronin calls for attention to the centrality of language to the doing and telling of travel. According to Cronin, what is often ignored in travel writing and its criticism is the fact that an act of appropriation takes place when translating, when bringing ‘the other’ home to one’s own language: “Indifference to the question of language [...] has led to a serious misrepresentation of both the experience of travel and the construction of narrative accounts of these experiences.”<sup>34</sup> In “De koorts van de dood,” by contrast, the question of translation seems to be addressed explicitly. Bloem’s self-representation as a Pasar Malay-Dutch interpreter could be regarded as a compensation for the neglect of the question of language as identified by Michael Cronin. Depicting herself as a translator allows tackling some of the translation strategies usually left unquestioned by travel writers. Yet, merely representing the traveller as a translator does not do away with the problem of translation altogether. In “De koorts van de dood” most of the conversation is rendered in Dutch and only rarely interspersed with Pasar Malay heteroglossia. This means that, regardless of the discursive presence of the translating traveller/speaker, one important form of translation is unproblematised. Michael Cronin refers to this form of translation as “interlingual translation, the translation between languages, the interpretation of verbal signs by means of verbal signs from another language.”<sup>35</sup> This is one reason to assume that the discursive act of translation functions to serve another purpose, namely to represent herself as an Indo woman of the second generation

who translates and has incorporated the cultural values of the Balinese sellers of the sculptures she describes.

Bloem performs a final intersemiotic translation act as a travel writer at the end of “De koorts van de dood.” The end narrates an encounter between Bloem and Lucas in Antwerp one year after the acquisition of the grave sculptures. Lucas looks terrible and tells her that his life has been filled with misery since he returned from Bali. The narrative loops back to Bloem’s attempt to translate to Lucas the Balinese belief in the bad luck of the grave sculptures. Her attempt failed because Lucas’s Eurocentrism did not allow room for other cultural belief systems.<sup>36</sup> Although Bloem failed to translate the cultural semiotics of the fever of death, she succeeds in doing so when writing her narrative. Because the travel writer passes the cultural value of the grave sculptures on to Lucas, she compensates for the single-sided economic interest in Bali culture, be it by Lucas or the Western travel writing business as a whole. Again, this ending suggests that Bloem aligns herself on the side of the Balinese, both as a translating traveller and as a travel writer. Through translation, Bloem tries to balance the scales between Bali and the West.

As a travel narrative, however, Bloem’s *Muggen mensen olifanten* is more complicit in translating and commodifying non-Western cultures than the narrative seems to convey. Scholars such as John Hutnyk and Graham Huggan have criticised the Western travel writing business for cashing in on non-Western cultures.<sup>37</sup> As a commodity that principally arouses interest as a narrative about exotic locales, *Muggen mensen olifanten* is, like Lucas Witsen, complicit in an economic system that eventually serves Western profit-making only, while the same narrative conveys Bloem’s Indo postmemory politics, underlining her cultural affiliations to the local population.

The final element of Indo postmemory that will be discussed here is the fact that the colonial reality of “unlimited and ungovernable fertility of ‘unnatural’ unions” in the Dutch East Indies is visible from Bloem’s female exotic body.<sup>38</sup> Travelling through the Indonesian Archipelago, Bloem is often confronted with her appearance by the people she encounters. In an interview with *Dagblad Tubantia*, Marion Bloem talks about the role of female exotic beauty in her oeuvre.

Het is voor mij erg moeilijk om te schrijven over iemand die lelijk is en die niet wordt gezien. Ik weet niet hoe dat is. Als je bezig bent met bijvoorbeeld research en iemand plaatst een opmerking over je uiterlijk, dan is dat irritant. Maar soms is het natuurlijk ook fijn en gemakkelijk: ik maak snel contact. [...] Ik heb er dus over geschreven omdat het meespeelt in de contacten die ik op reis heb.<sup>39</sup>

For me it is very hard to write about someone who is ugly and who is overlooked. I do not know what that feels like. If you are busy doing research for

instance and someone comments upon your appearance, that is annoying. But surely sometimes it is very nice and it makes things easy: I make contact easily. I have written about it because it plays a role in the contacts I have while travelling.

The author explains her portrayal of female exotic protagonists, claiming this has affected the establishment of interactions with people she herself encounters. In a series of novels, Bloem depicts female exotic protagonists who focalise, sense, act, think and 'speak back'. In *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*, a tourist camera symbolically haunts the protagonist whenever she steps into the Dutch public space and also her boyfriend Eddie has many sexual preconceptions about Indo girls.<sup>40</sup> In *Vaders van betekenis*, the second-generation Indo protagonist has a sexual relationship with a Japanese man. Their relationship symbolically represents the process of coming to terms with a painful chapter in colonial history, when the Japanese imprisoned colonial residents, including the protagonist's Indo father, before the decolonisation of Indonesia took place.

According to the postcolonial historian Frances Gouda, Indonesian *njai* and their Indo daughters made up the most part of a poor voiceless group in the Dutch East Indies of the early twentieth century and hence "they could be described with various forms of otherness."<sup>41</sup> The attributing of sexual unruliness to Indo girls, Gouda argues, reveals an underlying political significance. In the course of the early twentieth century, Dutch colonial policy enforced strict regulations aimed at preventing the mixing of people from different racial and social backgrounds. Indo girls came to symbolise all the dangers connected with interracial reproduction:

[...] They symbolized, in their hybrid physicality, the enormous cultural chasm between European virtues of hard work and a newly embraced ethic of sexual self-restraint, on the one hand, and the supposed lethargy and promiscuity of indigenous society on the other.<sup>42</sup>

This particular mode of stereotyping Indo women belatedly affects and characterises Bloem's travel experiences of Bali during the 1990s. In the travel narrative "You good friend," Marion Bloem is in a restaurant, where a Balinese waiter tries to persuade her to talk to a young Italian tourist. The 24-year-old upper class Italian is attracted to Bloem's ethnic hybridity: "Jij bent Balinees en toch ook westers" (38) and proposes to marry her. The combination of Bloem's 'Balinese' looks together with her being a writer of "books about sex" (38) make her, to the Italian, the perfect lover. The Italian's impressions of Bloem suggest that a moral notion of post-1960s Dutch sexual liberty has reinforced the shameless and libidinous connotations of female hybrid identity during the colonial era. In contrast to the colonial stereotype of Indo femininity, however, in the late twentieth century

promiscuity and free sexual morality have become an object of desire, instead of repugnance. Having said this, however, it is worthwhile reminiscing Robert Youngs' assumption that repugnance and desire for otherness are two sides of the same coin.

In "You good friend", Bloem eventually agrees to talk to the Italian, but this development has more to do with the Balinese waiter. The fact that he passes on the Italian's request to her particularly astonishes Bloem: "It is remarkable to hear this question from his mouth, since the Balinese working here have known for many years that I am married and they would never let themselves be tricked into doing something like that." (35)<sup>43</sup> The waiter acts as the messenger and this unsettles Bloem's expectations of 'normal' behaviour, perhaps not of the Balinese in general, but then at least of the waiter in that restaurant. Soon Bloem discovers that, in line with her expectations, the waiter initially refused to help the Italian, but changed his mind when the Italian offered him one hundred dollars. Bloem's knowledge of Balinese culture is reconfirmed by the way she reacts: "100 dollars? Normally he needs to work three quarters of a year to earn that money!"<sup>44</sup> Bloem's second reaction reveals a sense of disappointment, which suggests feelings of cultural betrayal: "'So one hundred dollars was the price of *adat*,' I sigh."<sup>45</sup> *Adat* is an unwritten set of local and traditional laws and codes, regulating social, political and economic laws in many parts of Indonesia. Bloem suggests that if the Balinese waiter had acted according to *adat*, he would not have co-operated in the Italian's attempt to approach her. In so doing, it is highlighted that Bloem shares with the waiter the knowledge of *adat*, including the cultural code of behaviour prohibiting the latter from allowing the Italian to approach her.

Marion Bloem's sentiments of betrayal towards the waiter might be understood from the perspective of historian Esther Captain, who suggests that "a metaphor of the family" is regularly deployed among the second-generation Indo populations in the Netherlands. Captain contends: "Among the Indo community, a strong sense of community existed since the Indo group was perceived as not (entirely) Dutch on the basis of appearance. A sense of Indonesianness creates ties that could be sensed as familial."<sup>46</sup> The idea that the Indo community perceives itself as one family, and therefore Indo people cannot be lovers, is initially based on the physiognomic difference from other Dutch people.<sup>47</sup> In 'You good friend', Bloem seems to suggest that a vague sense of 'Indonesianness' connects her to the waiter in a familial way, sharing *adat* or values such as protection and security. By recording her reactions of astonishment and disappointment, Bloem reconfirms her 'family' ties with the Balinese waiter. At the same time, she remains silent about sharing the class status of restaurant guest with the Italian tourist, which distinguishes her from the waiter.

Consequently, this scene portrays Bloem as a female victim in a double sense. As the embodiment of female Indo hybridity, she is the object of male voyeurism as well as of cultural betrayal. In *Moving lives*, Sidonie Smith contends that: "[a]

complicated set of intersecting constraints affects the Western woman of color when she travels, given the cultural politics of racial visibility and the vulnerability attending her transit in inhospitable places.”<sup>48</sup> *Muggen mensen olifanten* indeed defines Marion Bloem as an exotic female subject speaking back, as a woman who is continuously reminded of the sexual legacy of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, which is written on her body. Documenting how she is confronted both with male voyeurism as well as with cultural betrayal enables Bloem to point out her familiarity with Balinese culture, which serves to legitimise her ethnographic authority over the Indonesian space she describes. At the same time, however, Bloem’s class status as tourist and restaurant guest reveals an important class difference between her and the Balinese waiter, which is, however, never made explicit. In what follows, I will explore in more depth how Bloem’s autobiographical assertion of Indo postmemory relates to her ethnographic claim over the Indonesian archipelago.

#### The Authority of “Anti-conquest” and the Critique of Western Tourism

The British travel writing scholar Tim Youngs argues that European travel writers articulate cultural identity as follows: “travel writers are at once establishing their cultural affinities with, and spatial, experiential difference from their readers.”<sup>49</sup> Marion Bloem, however, questions the possibility of establishing cultural affinities between herself as a traveller and her (presumed) white Dutch readers.<sup>50</sup> In *Muggen mensen olifanten*, the traveller’s cultural affiliations with the home society are indeed more divided and uncertain. Bloem establishes not only spatial and experiential, but also cultural differences with the (Dutch white) home community.

To put it more strongly, Bloem suggests in various ways that she feels stronger cultural affiliations with the Indonesian peoples she meets than with the Dutch home society. Conventionally the travel writer and her audience at home share a cultural frame, which is left implicit since it is perceived by both parties as the ‘standard’ point of reference. However, due to Marion Bloem’s more divided cultural loyalties, the Dutch home society and its cultural frames are problematised. This is possible in travel writing, given Steve Clark’s assumption that “if the structural function of the journey is to uncover, bring into relation, there are potential reversals by which the authority of home may be suspended, even repudiated.”<sup>51</sup> In the course of her journeys, Bloem scrutinises the Dutch cultural conventions, particularly the modes of framing Indonesian people and places. Drawing on her Indo postmemories, Bloem presents her perceptions and viewpoints as distinct from and, critical of, the dominant white Dutch cultural framework and the colonial legacy shared by its readers.

Bloem revokes the authority of the home society by formulating her critique of white Western tourists she encounters during her travels. The actions and opinions of these tourists are often ironically depicted. They are spoilt, stingy and

exploitative characters who try to benefit from the local poor. The Belgian Lucas Witsen is on a hunt for illegal grave sculptures in Bali. The Canadian Marc has himself carried by the New Guinean guide Yessaye on a walking trip through the Baliem valley, despite his fashionable mountain clothing and professional equipment. At the same time, Bloem's critique of tourism is a reminder of the assumption formulated by the travel writing scholar James Buzard, that contemporary travel writers often posit what he identifies as an "antitouristic binary" between genuinely interested travellers and voyeuristic tourists.<sup>52</sup> They do this as a reaction against the democratisation and commodification of travel, against what Paul Fussell famously declared: "We are all tourists now and there is no escape."<sup>53</sup> Since travel (writing) has nowadays become potentially available to anyone in the West, travel writers often look for ways to distinguish their travel practices and to attribute these with more exclusive and unique meanings.<sup>54</sup>

Evaluating the travelling practices of Westerners, Bloem underscores that she herself is not a tourist like them. In the travel narrative "De dief van de padi" (*The Thief of the Padi*), set in Bali, which involves relationships between Balinese women working in the tourist industry, Bloem and the generic 'tourists':

De Balinese vrouwen die op het strand proberen om wat textiel of hun arbeidskracht in de vorm van massage te verkopen, geven mij het gevoel dat ik thuiskom wanneer ze mijn naam roepen, mijn hand vastpakken, en de laatste nieuwtjes vertellen. [...] Toeristen klagen dat ze Bali niet leuk vinden omdat ze op het strand steeds lastig gevallen worden door Balinezen die hun iets willen verkopen...(25)

The Balinese women on the beach, who try to sell their textiles or manual labour in the form of massages, give me a feeling of homecoming when they call my name, take my hand and tell me the latest gossips. [...] Tourists complain that they don't like Bali because they feel harassed by the Balinese who try to sell them things on the beach...

As it stands in such blunt contrast, the generic touristic voice ('toeristen klagen') strongly emphasises Bloem's familiar relationship with these women. The three dots inserted after the tourists' opinion are a general convention indicating silent disapproval. Bloem's critique of Western tourism is clearly linked to her Indo cultural difference. The close relationship between Bloem and the Balinese women working on the beach is suggested by the Balinese women's acts of familiarity and friendship towards Bloem as well as by Bloem's emotive response to them and her feelings of 'homecoming'.

Bloem's sensory expression of 'homecoming' when she meets the women is of course very much related to her Indo postmemory. It is suggested that the narrator's historical and ethnic affiliations with Indonesia make her feel at home

among the Indonesian women. This has a political significance, when viewed in the context of contemporary Dutch society, where Indo experiences and memories have been regularly marginalised. Additionally, it is also a trope that helps to increase her ethnographic claim.

With regard to the latter issue, it is illuminating to consider Mary Louise Pratt's notion of "anti-conquest", which she developed in *Imperial Eyes*, an analysis of the shifts in discursive authority in European colonial travel writing of Latin America. Focusing on the role of natural history and sentimentality in British travel writing of inland exploration in the second half of the eighteenth century, Pratt explored how travellers asserted a new type of discursive authority of "anti-conquest", which could effectively be exercised because it distinguishes itself from the overtly expansionist travel writing of the previous navigational phase of colonialism. The impact of discourses of natural history and sentimentality, then, is inherently connected to the fact that they "claim [...] no transformative power whatsoever, [they] differed sharply from overtly imperial articulations of conquest, conversion, territorial appropriation, and enslavement,"<sup>55</sup> at the same time masking their own objectives of surveillance and control behind a screen of innocence.

Pratt's notion of anti-conquest, and particularly the sense of relationship it singles out in the operation of discursive authority, is fruitful to understand Bloem's ethnographic claim. To a large extent, the latter similarly draws on a posited difference from other travellers, in this case Western tourists. Many travel narratives in *Muggen mensen olifanten* focus on cross-cultural encounters which have a triangular structure involving Bloem, Indonesians, and a tourist (group). The encounters and interactions between tourists and local peoples, as well as Bloem's own encounters with locals, are both narrated from her point of view. This enables the reader to compare and contrast Bloem's travel experiences to those of the other Western tourists she meets along the way. Bloem criticises Western tourists, while at the same time assigning her own perceptions and travel experiences of Bali more exclusive and truthful meanings by drawing on her Indo cultural background, heritage and postmemory in order to make ethnographic claims based on the authority of "anti-conquest."

In so doing, it is important, following Mary Louise Pratt, to insist on a desire to achieve reciprocity in the relationship to the local populations, or in Pratt's terms "to establish equilibrium through exchange."<sup>56</sup> Once again, this two-way traffic relationship is then set in contrast to the inequalities that characterise the relationships of other travellers, in the case of *Muggen mensen olifanten*, of Western tourists.

Let me illustrate this by analysing the narrative "Peniskokers en rokjes van stro" (*Penis Gourds and Grass Skirts*), which centres on a local festivity, called the "warriors' party" in Wamena, Irian Jaya. As Bloem explains, the event is organised by Indonesian officials "to give the Papuans a chance to celebrate the Indonesian *merdeka* [independence] in their own way."<sup>57</sup> Bloem's ironic depiction of



the warrior's party is a critique of what Dean MacCannell has identified as "staged authenticity."<sup>58</sup> MacCannell argues that nowadays traditional rituals are often transferred to events of "staged authenticity" that are to satisfy the desire of tourists to see something different and exotic during their holidays. While the gesture behind staged authenticity seems to be a valorisation of tradition, as MacCannell explains, its deepest effect is the opposite: "Every instance of staged authenticity delivers the message that tradition does not constrain us, rather we control it."<sup>59</sup>

Bloem's description of the warriors' party in Wamena similarly suggests that local traditions are transformed into heavily controlled spectacles for the satisfaction of Western tourists. Bloem renders a description of the Papuan warriors from a tourist point of view, and this, in addition to the frame of control and surveillance used to represent the Papuans. The reader is informed that a traditional village is artificially built with new huts, "to provide groups of tourists with an idea about life in Papuan society. Around the huts, a few posts and deep red and pink flowers are planted to make everything look more pleasant."<sup>(91)</sup><sup>60</sup> Not only does Bloem highlight the aestheticised nature of the village, she also points with great irony to the methods of surveillance used to control the entire spectacle. She critically describes, for instance, how tourists are attracted to visit the Papuan replica and hunt for photographs of 'traditionally' dressed warriors. The Javanese organisers are described as hopelessly trying to control the large group of Papuan actors:

Luid schreeuwend rennen ze, als een Indonesiër het startsein geeft, naar de cirkel, werpen hun speren en schieten hun pijlen af. Stokken in de grond duiden aan tot waar men mag lopen, maar veel papoea's trekken zich er niets van aan en passeren die grenslijn. De Indonesische organisatoren die alles bediselen lopen driftig naar de groep en leggen uit dat ze niet verder dan die lijn mogen rennen voordat ze hun wapens op een van de palen richten. De Dani's giechelen een beetje om die kleine Javaanse heren die met hun keurige leren schoenen, bang om uit te glijden, door de modder wankelen om hen op de regels te wijzen. (91)

As soon as an Indonesian gives the go-ahead, they run, yelling loudly, to the circle, throw their spears and shoot their arrows. Sticks in the earth point out up to which point they were supposed to run, but many Papuans do not care and cross the borderline. Irritated, the Indonesian organisers, who are arranging the event, go to the group and explain that they cannot cross the borderline to aim their weapons at one of the posts. The Dani giggle a little because of those small Javanese gentlemen with their neat leather shoes who, afraid to slip, are staggering through the mud to point out the rules to them.

That the Javanese exercise power over the entire event is ironically highlighted by the use of the verb “bedisselen” (to arrange). Their surveillance, however, is highlighted by its failure. Their manoeuvres to gain control are unsuccessful. The Papuans transgress the spatial boundaries established by the Javanese to direct their movements, and they laugh at the clumsiness of the Javanese as they “are staggering through the mud.” In this manner, Bloem creates the impression that the Javanese are not suitable, do not have the habit of exercising control, nor are entitled to do so. Moreover, her description suggests that the Javanese are also ridiculed by the Papuan warriors. Precisely by joyfully crossing the spatial boundaries, the Papuans point to the rational order imposed on them.

Bloem’s representation of the Papuan warriors is interesting when viewed in light of the paradox inherent to the fact that Bloem in this scene is a tourist who criticises other tourists. It is reminiscent of anthropologist James Clifford’s assumption that in Western writing, servants are often “domesticated outsiders of the bourgeois imagination” that have been used to bring about “fictional epiphanies, recognition scenes, happy endings, utopic and dystopic transcendences.”<sup>61</sup> In this vein, Bloem’s descriptions of the Papuans as critical outsiders of the tourist show come in handy for a traveller who is concerned with distancing herself from a tourist spectacle, which is performed for her, while at the same time aligning herself with the local populations with which she feels more affinities.

When Bloem’s role transforms from an observing spectator to an active participant in the warriors’ event, an interesting dynamic unfolds that spatially underscores Bloem’s desire to set her cultural and emotional loyalties straight. Searching for her travel companions, Bloem ‘accidentally’ ends up on the warrior stage among the performing Papuans:

Dan merk ik dat ik per ongeluk het strijdveld opgelopen ben. Opeens ben ik omringd door dansende Papoea’s. Al hun ogen zijn op mij gericht. Ik hoor en zie ze hijgen. Hun adem verwarmt mijn gezicht. Ze maken zich klein om onder de bescherming van de paraplu te dansen, en ik steek de paraplu zo hoog als ik kan in de lucht. Hun ‘Wah wah wah’, hun ‘dankuwel’, is als een warm denken die mij omsluit. Hun zwarte natte lichamen raken mijn vochtige kleren. (93)

Then I notice that I have accidentally walked onto the battlefield. Suddenly I am surrounded by dancing Papuans. Their eyes all focus on me. I can hear and see them panting. Their breath warms my face. They bend to dance under the protection of the umbrella, and I keep the umbrella up in the air as high as I can. Their ‘Wah wah wah’, their ‘thank you’, is like a warm blanket enfolding me. Their wet black bodies touch my moist clothes.

In this fragment, a clear suggestion of reciprocity between Bloem and the dancers is at stake. Bloem figures here as a sensuous persona who rather passively registers the bodily actions of the dancers. Their dances are described by referencing to individual body parts, which function as grammatical subjects: their eyes look at her, their breath warms her face and their bodies touch her. An affectionate, erotic encounter is suggested by a strong emphasis on the physical contact of bodies, by the staccato tone expressing the actions and by Bloem's sensory, erotic experiences of humidity and warmth. Bloem holds up the umbrella, while the dancers bend themselves, indicating that she and the dancers share a sense of affection and concern for each other. The repeated reference to the Papuans' gratitude – both in Papuan language and in its Dutch translation – is a clear marker of a sense of reciprocity established. The expression of gratitude is of course a very explicit reference that proves consent after an exchange has taken place. In this particular case, reciprocity is reinforced by the fact that Bloem understands the gratitude expressed in the Papuans' language.

That Bloem 'accidentally' walks onto the staged battlefield is reminiscent of something Francis Spufford noticed about travellers: They are "notoriously bad at saying why."<sup>62</sup> This assumption is surprising, particularly considering that everything related to the personal is emphasised particularly in women's travel writing. Yet, Spufford observes that there is "a virtual absence of individual motivation" in travel writing, which makes the traveller "susceptible to perpetual redefinition through encounter."<sup>63</sup> As the piece shows, Bloem's redefinition is established by means of spatial proximity between herself and the Papuans, when she 'accidentally' walks onto the stage.

Another spectacle of reciprocity involves Bloem, a Canadian tourist named Marc and their Papuan guide Yessaye – indeed once again a triangular composition of characters. When Marc asks Yessaye whether he can take a photograph of the latter dressed in traditional Papuan warrior clothes, Yessaye consents on the condition that a photograph of Marc in traditional Papuan dress will be taken as well. When Marc disapproves, – "Marc looks annoyed. Angrily he puts away his camera."<sup>64</sup> – Bloem intervenes and convinces Marc by explicitly referring to a normative ideal of equal exchange: "This is not unreasonable! One good turn deserves another!" (93)<sup>65</sup> Bloem's demand for reciprocity should be understood against the capitalist tourist setting in which the act of photographing is staged. Within this tourist setting, there is a fundamental lack of reciprocity, given the unequal power relations between tourists and host country as well as between Javanese 'directors' and Papuan 'performers.' Thus Bloem's insistence on reciprocity contributes to her critique of tourism.

In this textual portion, the power relations between tourists and Papuans are metonymically represented by the act of photographing. When finally the photographs of Yessaye and Marc in traditional Papuan dress are taken, this culminates in a comedy of cultural cross-dressing. While Marc is enjoying his Papuan cos-

tume and indulges in having his photograph taken, Yessaye secretly tries on Marc's clothing. Bloem comments: "It is a remarkable experience, seeing these two Canadians, one wearing a penis gourd, posing under a palm with dangling leaves and the other dressed in a sweater made of lamb's wool, carefully trying on a pair of Medicaid glasses." (94)<sup>66</sup> Then Yessaye sneaks behind Marc's back and poses for the photograph in Western clothing, next to the indigenised Marc. The comic reversal of clothing suggests an 'innocent' act of equal trade between the Papuan Yessaye and the Canadian Marc, in which Bloem is involved.

This example of cultural cross-dressing owes much to the conventions of the Orientalist writing that started flourishing in Europe in the eighteenth century, such as in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. In her study of Mungo Park's *Travels in the interior of Africa*, Pratt identifies a similar comic instance of reciprocity, when Mungo Park becomes the object of the female gaze. Pratt contends: "Much of the comedy lies in parodic reversals of Eurocentred power relations and cultural norms."<sup>67</sup> It is indeed the case that cultural cross-dressing transforms Marc from the active subject with visual power into the passive object of photography. His transformation, or perceived degradation, is reinforced by the loss of two symbols of Western optical technology – his camera and his glasses. Marc's transformation into the object of the gaze is accompanied by an indigenisation of his clothing. When Marc sees Yessaye and realises what is going on, his reaction is described as follows: "He stares at Yessaye and grabs his face, his nose, like how a prudish woman can suddenly cover her breasts when she feels caught in the nude." (94)<sup>68</sup> Thus the narrator reconfirms the loss of Marc's European masculine authority by feminising him. As the initiator of the staged drama of cultural cross-dressing, simultaneously acting as the observing narrator, Bloem highlights her insistence on reciprocity. By doing, so, she confirms her position as anti-conqueror and downplays that she shares the tourist status with Marc and any other tourist for that matter, including the class privileges that are inherently connected to this status.

## Conclusion

In the analysis of Marion Bloem's *Muggen mensen olifanten*, I have discussed the question of women's colonial memory through travel as seen from the perspective of second-generation Indo postmemory politics, and have assessed the implications this particular form of memory has for the ethnographic concerns of travel writing. Particular figurations of Indo postmemory have been quoted – Javanese and Sudanese storytelling, the proficiency in Pasar Malay and the female exotic body – and their function as a mode of ethnographic authority, in combination with Bloem's critique of Western tourism and her insistence on reciprocity, has been addressed.

The above analysis has proved how Indo postmemory in *Muggen mensen olifanten* ambivalently and paradoxically serves the recuperative objectives of second-generation Indo identity politics as well as the exercise of ethnographic authority over Indonesia and its peoples. On the one hand, figurations of Indo postmemory underline Bloem's split loyalties between Dutch and Indonesian cultures. They are politically strategic as recapitulations of Indo experiences and perspectives, particularly when seen against the background of Dutch postcolonial society, where these experiences and perspectives have more often than not been marginalised and erased from the official historical records.

On the other hand, figurations of Indo postmemory also function to reinforce *Muggen mensen olifanten's* ethnographic claims about Indonesia and its peoples, precisely because they sharply distinguish Marion Bloem from other Western travellers in Indonesia as well as from her white Dutch readership. Through Marie-Louise Pratt's notion of the authority of "anti-conquest," I have addressed how Bloem disassociates herself from the Western tourists she criticises by strategically positioning herself as culturally affiliated with local people. Bloem's accreditation of her ethnographic account involves underscoring shared cultural traits with local people, while the commonalities and complicities with the West are downplayed, such as class privilege, tourism, the Western commodification of the non-Western other, and the European colonial tradition of appropriation and surveillance over non-Western cultures.

In *Tourists with Typewriters*, Graham Huggan and Patrick Holland observe that postcolonial travel writers often "must struggle to match their political views with a genre that is in many ways antithetical to them – a genre that manufactures 'otherness' even as it claims to demystify it, and that is reliant on, even as it estranges, the most familiar of Western myths."<sup>69</sup> Set against the background of the Dutch colonial and postcolonial history of effacement and assimilation of Indo identity, Marion Bloem's insistence on Indo postmemory can be considered as a critique of the Dutch home society and its colonial legacy. However, whether this grants authority to *Muggen mensen olifanten* to speak to a Western readership on behalf of the Indonesian peoples remains to be seen.



## Chapter 5

# Everyday memory in Doris Lessing's *African laughter. Four visits to Zimbabwe*

Doris Lessing's *African Laughter* is the account of four journeys to Zimbabwe.<sup>1</sup> It presents transitions in everyday Zimbabwean life, which are mostly voiced by individual people's recollections and observations. The autobiographical travelling protagonist, Doris Lessing, was born of British parents, spent her childhood on a large farm in Southern Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe) and first came to England in 1949. Declared a prohibited immigrant by the colony's white government, Lessing was forbidden to return to Southern Rhodesia because of her anti-colonial ideas. Since the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, she has been allowed entrance again. *African Laughter* recounts Doris Lessing's four journeys to the country, made in 1982, 1988, 1989 and 1992.

The following close reading will discuss an aesthetic device that I will name 'acoustic bricolage,' which is used to represent the Zimbabwean everyday in the book.<sup>2</sup> Deploying a number of narrative strategies – such as a fractioned visual aesthetics, the use of direct speech, and the obfuscation of the primary narrator's voice – *African Laughter* creates the impression that a multitude of coexisting individual voices are rendered in a microscopic and fragmentary way. In the genre of travel narrative, such a representation is unconventional and stands in stark contrast to the predigested and authoritative forms by means of which particularly male Western travel writers offer their encounters with others and otherness to the readers. One reason why this is so is because acoustic bricolage circumvents the often-assumed mimetic analogy in Western travel writing between realistic language and the mapping of the non-Western people and places visited. Acoustic bricolage estranges the reader and prevents him or her from fully understanding and domesticating the Zimbabwean everyday into clear-cut and stable meanings.

Nevertheless, the particular status of the autobiographical narrative voice, and specifically her everyday memory of colonial life in the book, requires closer attention in relation to its aesthetic of acoustic bricolage. Readers of travel writing are generically concerned with an account of the traveller's experience of her jour-

ney. Consequently, the autobiographical narrator exerts her influence on the descriptions of non-Western peoples and places that are represented. In particular, I will consider the ways in which the narrator's voice is characterised by multiple dimensions – Marxist, feminist, and Western – which stand in continuous conflict. In considering the ambivalences that mark the primary narrative voice, I will discuss how Zimbabwe is not only aesthetically reimagined but also manipulated for political purposes. *African Laughter* does not so much inform the reader about transitions in Zimbabwean everyday life; rather, it strategically constructs this temporality of the everyday for the purpose of the narrator's anti-colonial politics 'from below.' Before embarking on the close reading, I will situate *African Laughter* against the background of an aesthetic and epistemological development in the portrayal of Rhodesia in Lessing's oeuvre.

### Rhodesia in Lessing's Oeuvre

Doris Lessing was born of British parents in Persia (Iran) in 1919. When Lessing's father saw images of Southern Rhodesia displayed at one of the empire exhibitions in the mid-1920s, he decided to migrate with his wife and two children and pursue a career in maize farming. The family lived in isolation in the Rhodesian countryside. After the Second World War, Lessing left Southern Rhodesia to make her way to London with the manuscript of her first novel, *The Grass is Singing* (1950). In the mid-fifties, Lessing was declared a 'prohibited immigrant' by the country's white government because of her writings, which engaged with communism and denounced the treatment of black people in colonial Africa. Lessing was not to return to the country for more than a quarter century, though she continued to write about Africa. It was not until Zimbabwe gained independence under a black majority in the early 1980s, that Lessing was allowed entrance to the country again.

Southern Rhodesian life under white minority rule has been an important focus, particularly of Lessing's earlier work, written in the 1950s and 1960s. The focus on Africa gradually disappeared from Lessing's oeuvre in the 1970s and 1980s. Published in 1992, *African Laughter* not only thematises a return journey to Zimbabwe, it also signifies the return to Africa in Lessing's writings. Moreover, the travel narrative precedes by two years the publication of the first volume of her acclaimed autobiography *Under My Skin*, narrating Lessing's life in South Rhodesia until she moved to London in 1949. If the autobiography *Under My Skin* is a genealogy of the self, then the travelogue *African Laughter* can be considered as its spatial counterpart, a genealogy of the space Zimbabwe. In the following paragraphs, I will outline how *African Laughter* is informed by an aesthetic and epistemological transition, which took place in Lessing's work from the mid-1960s onwards.



### Social Realism in the Early Writings

Set against an African background, Lessing's earlier writings adopt an aesthetic of social realism. Conventionally social realism is considered to centre around a cluster of assumptions: the belief that objective reality exists and is translatable; the perceived coincidence between the sign and its referent; the assertion that to narrate life is to represent it in the whole of its authenticity; and, finally, the notion that a literature committed to social action is able to transform the world into something other than it is.<sup>3</sup> Focusing on social relationships and the hardships of everyday life, these works display Lessing's effort to write historically concrete and truthful representations of African colonial societies. They mirror the ugly realities of colonial life and sympathise with the disenfranchised, in particular with black workers and Western women. Lessing's earlier writings cover various 'fictional' genres, such as the novel (*The Grass is Singing*), the bildungsroman (*Martha Quest*) or the short story (*This Was the Old Chief's Country*, *The Sun Between their Feet*) as well as 'non-fictional' genres, such as the travelogue (*Going Home*) or the essay (*A Small Personal Voice*).<sup>4</sup> Despite generic differences, all these works illustrate Lessing's conviction that colonial Africa can be scrutinised by means of an aesthetic of social realism.

In the above-mentioned works, the narrative voice pertains to the construction of an insightful frame of reference that defines, comments upon and interprets the colonial society depicted. The narrative voice is omniscient, and her rational interpretation is represented as a truthful one.<sup>5</sup> Usually white female characters – Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing* or Martha in *Martha Quest* – are described acting in colonial African societies. The narrative voice records the complexities, tensions and ambiguities between the various mental and moral realities within the colonial societies. For instance, both in *The Grass is Singing* and in *Martha Quest*, the omniscient narrator describes how the main protagonist feels displaced within colonial culture since her desires and dreams are at odds with the prevailing values and rules of this culture.

Lessing's social realist writings often map out the trajectories of white (predominantly) female protagonists towards self-realisation.<sup>6</sup> These protagonists are depicted within a colonial society, characterised by social segregation between the races as well as the sexes. In this microcosmos, it is socially required that urban sensibilities and ideas about "British civilisation" be translated into the rural environment of African colonial culture. The white female protagonist feels alienated from this colonial reality, which confines her and she desires to escape from it. In *Martha Quest*, for instance, Martha imagines such a momentary escape. She thinks of walking back from the Station to her home, something that white girls were not supposed to do: "She imagined that eyes would follow her, queerly, as she set off, on foot, along a road where a dozen cars might be expected to pass that afternoon. White girls do not... [sic]."<sup>7</sup> As the fragment illustrates, *Martha Quest*

thematizes Martha's self-realisation, which is thwarted by the gendered and racial behavioural codes of African colonial culture.

In their confined situations, the female protagonists identify with black Africans. In their eyes, blacks too suffer from white male minority rule. Nevertheless, black African characters are only depicted on the side, which suggests that their portrayal only serves the central theme of white female self-realisation. They are frequently present, yet only to the extent that they play a role as domestic servants within Rhodesian colonial culture. They are flat characters, represented from the outside, and their mental and moral realities are often omitted. *The Grass is Singing*, for instance, suggests that the domestic servant Moses has murdered the protagonist, the white woman Mary Turner. Yet, his motives remain unfathomable. The absence of character in the representation of Moses is problematic.<sup>8</sup> *The Grass is Singing* is highly conscious of the oppressive function of silence and isolation in the life of Mary Turner. Yet, Moses himself remains psychologically blank and is stripped of any speech of his own. Since Moses is deprived of individual characterisation, he seems to stand for a general black menace to Western women. In this manner, he is depicted as the epitome of the Western stereotype of "Black Peril". Although the depiction of Mary Turner's miserable life implies a critique of the racist, hypocritical and narrow-minded ideas circulating in African colonial culture, *The Grass is Singing* also reinforces some of these very colonialist ideologies. Thus, Lessing's social realist writings appear primarily concerned with "a white Eve in a petrified garden"<sup>9</sup> and the depiction of black Africans above all serves this theme.<sup>10</sup>

The question of how the Colour Bar can be transcended by means of a social realist aesthetic poses an important problem to Lessing's earlier writings about African colonial society. Her writings display a relentless preoccupation with inequalities between races, classes and sexes that prevail throughout African colonial culture. Yet, representations of black Africans serve to focus on white female self-realisation. They are represented from an anti-colonial female, but Western point of view. As a result, black characters are portrayed without speech, character and mental activity. Thus portraying the disenfranchised blacks, Lessing's social realist writings are complicit in reproducing the very colonial ideologies that they simultaneously condemn fiercely. Literary scholar Lorna Sage connects this paradox in Lessing's social realist writings to the author's position in Africa as a child of white settlers. She says that Lessing "is encountering her settler's problem, and hasn't found a solution."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in a 1980 interview with Michael Thorpe, Lessing explains that she was simply unable to depict black Rhodesians in her earlier writings since "in Rhodesia as a white person my contact with the blacks as equals was just nonexistent."<sup>12</sup> Despite their anti-colonial stance, Lessing's social realist writings cannot but describe the reinforcing cycles of the status quo. Despite the fact that the omniscient narrator conveys an anti-colonial

message, Lessing's social realist writings continue to describe black Africa from a privileged Western position.

### Formal Experimentation in the Later Writings

From the mid-1960s onwards, Lessing has gradually left her focus on the social inequalities in colonial Africa. This shift of focus is accompanied by a formal transition in Lessing's body of work. An important issue in the discussion of this transition is that Lessing lost faith in Marxism as an optimistic ideology of history at approximately this time. Published in 1962, Lessing's most acclaimed work, *The Golden Notebook*, presages the doubting of Marxist politics.<sup>13</sup> The protagonist Anna states in the opening pages: "Now we have to admit that the great dream has faded and the truth is something else."<sup>14</sup> In the novel, the mental collapse of Anna is paralleled with the gradual downfall of the Marxist party in Britain, when internal problems concerning mismanagement are revealed. Moreover, Anna's experience as a member of a communist group in Africa made her realise that the ideology of communism is sometimes incompatible with the surrounding reality:

The 'line' was simple and admirable. In a colour-dominated society like this, it was clearly the duty of socialists to combat racialism. Therefore, 'the way forward' must be through a combination of progressive whites and black vanguards. [...] At the moment there were no black trade unions, for they were illegal and the black masses were not developed yet for illegal action. [...] So our picture of what ought to happen, must happen in fact, because it was a first principle that the proletariat was to lead the way to freedom, was not reflected anywhere in reality.<sup>15</sup>

In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna realises that the communist 'line' is incommensurable with the African colonial context. The fact that an unbridgeable gap divides progressive whites from inferiorised blacks poses a real problem to the Marxist politics that Anna and her white friends had been pursuing. In the African colonial context, marked by racial segregation under white minority rule, it is unimaginable that the black proletariat would instigate "the way forward". The quotation marks used to ironically formulate "the way forward", resonate a questionable ring to the progressive notion of history, which this communist phrase implies. As this segment illustrates, *The Golden Notebook* explicitly expresses doubts about the communist ideas and their related notions of progressive history and the belief in rationality as an instrument of social change.

*The Golden Notebook* is exemplary for a shift in Lessing's writings from a social realist aesthetic to increasingly experimental forms. The theme of Anna's departure from Marxism is intricately connected to the novel's formal experiment, particularly to the abandonment of an omniscient narrative voice. Formally charac-

terised by multiplicity, non-linearity and fragmentation, *The Golden Notebook* intersperses the basic story line with a range of notebooks that recount the experiences of Anna in various ways. The storyline of Anna and Molly, two politically committed single mothers in London, is interwoven with Anna's five notebooks: one narrating the African experience during her adolescence, another her political life, a third is a novel Anna is writing, the fourth is a personal diary and, finally, the story of her turbulent love affair with an American writer while she is on the brink of insanity. *The Golden Notebook* presents multiple narrators denoting Anna's manifold identities, be they past, present or variously imagined. Therefore, plural, non-linear and fragmented narration in *The Golden Notebook* has come to replace the strongly rational, singular narrative voice of Lessing's earlier social realist writings. The novel suggests that a Marxist epistemology, characterised by a progressive notion of history and a notion of subjectivity as a conscious agent of history, has been abandoned. Rather than an interpreter or spokesperson whose consciousness distances her from the society she observes, Anna is a subject who finds herself in the very middle of history. In multiple ways (as an artist, a communist, a mother, a woman), Anna interacts with her surroundings, but she is not able to rationally analyse what is happening, even as she tries to in her notebooks.

This epistemological shift leads Lessing to thematise and accept, however restlessly, and adopt repetitive and cyclic histories in her later fiction work. The extent to which the past determines people's present thoughts and behaviour increasingly becomes the most prominent question. By the 1980s, Lessing's shift from social realism culminates in the writing of science fiction. As British literary scholar Judith Gardiner contends: "If she can create new environments in fiction, Lessing can get people to experience new situations vicariously and so change their thinking."<sup>16</sup> Following Gardiner, Lessing's engagement with the genre of science fiction is a formal mode to address the question of history through imagining realities anew. Lessing abandoned a social realist aesthetic and replaces it by other aesthetic forms to transform conventional and cyclic patterns of thoughts. Hence from the mid-1960s onwards, Lessing has destroyed realism, in order to safeguard it through formal experimentation. She has saved the notion of identity only by resorting to a multiple notion of identity in *The Golden Notebook*, or to a vague collective plural in the five science fiction books of the *Canopus in Argos* series. She has preserved history, yet it is no longer a progressive notion of history. Her persistent hope to escape cyclic notions of history leads to a notion of history established as eternal worlds in science fiction.

In what follows, I will read *African Laughter* against this outline of the formal, political and epistemological shifts in Lessing's work. The travelogue announces Lessing's return to a thematic focus on Africa. This return, however, is only partly a regression to the social realist aesthetic that characterised Lessing's earlier writings set in Africa. Although travel writing is conventionally a genre imbued with

notions of realism, truthfulness and veracity, *African Laughter* formally experiments with these notions. Before embarking upon my analysis of Lessing's book, I will outline some insights from theoretical discussions on the notion of the everyday, particularly with regard to women's travel writing, which form the framework for my discussion of *African Laughter's* representation of Zimbabwe.

### **Doris Lessing's *African Laughter*. Four Visits to Zimbabwe**

#### **Everyday Memory in Women's Travel Writing**

*African Laughter* principally focuses on the everyday lives of the Zimbabwean people, past and present. It recollects social gatherings of white farmers on the verandahs, discussion groups of black women, dinners, train journeys and the like. Political, economic or institutional infrastructures are not explicitly memorialised or observed, but appear only to the extent that their influence is felt in the people's everyday lives. As I have argued in Chapter 2, dominant modes of colonial remembrance in Britain and the Netherlands, tend to prioritise colonial historiography focusing on the political and diplomatic domains. The extent to which Doris Lessing's focus on everyday memory challenges these discourses of colonial remembrance is an important issue to address.

With respect to the approach to travel writing as colonial and Orientalist discourse discussed in Chapter 1, it is important to consider recent theorisations of the everyday. As Rita Felski argues, the everyday harbours habits, routines, inchoate impulses, drudgery, and unconscious desires.<sup>17</sup> Everyday life is characterised by circadian rhythms and forms of repetition that have changed little over the centuries. At the same time, the disruptive potential of the everyday lies in its unruly temporality as it forms the antithesis of knowledge, reason, and control. From this perspective, the quotidian is relevant for analysis, since it, at least theoretically, could subvert the authoritative structuring and mapping of non-Western spaces and people, which have marked the travel genre.

The notion of the everyday also played a crucial role in the theoretical debates about the questions whether women's travel accounts differ fundamentally from those written by men, and the extent to which travel writing is inherently gendered. Several feminist travel-writing scholars have positively requalified private practices, personal concerns, and the everyday, in order to balance what appeared to be a masculine preoccupation with public matters in narratives of travel.<sup>18</sup> Jane Robinson's *Wayward Women* or Karen Lawrence's *Penelope Voyages* for example, argue that female travellers, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu or Lucie Duff, had access to aspects of female daily life in non-Western cultures that were inaccessible to their male counterparts, such as the Turkish bathhouse. Narrating in a down-to-earth manner about the daily lives of Turkish women in terms of the normality of women's customs and practices, their accounts contest the fantas-

matic eroticisation of women's places in travel texts written by males. In Chapter 1, I have discussed the myriad problems the former revalorising approach to women's travel texts entails. It is particularly worthwhile for the purpose at hand to recapitulate that it fails to account for the complex entanglements and complicities of Western women's travel writings in the exercise of control over the people and places visited.

Feminist postcolonial scholars, such as Sara Mills's *Discourses of Difference* (1991) and Inderpal Grewal in *Home and Harem* (1996), have addressed gender as always intersecting with other factors – class, ideology, ethnicity, and the like – that co-determine the ideological positions from which women travellers observe (everyday life in) foreign lands and peoples.<sup>19</sup> In Mills's view, women's travel narratives open up possibilities for female expression that are often denied to women's travellers at home. Yet, they are also complicit in the reproduction of Orientalist myths and stereotypes. Since everyday memory in *African Laughter* cannot be viewed apart from the Rhodesian context in which the traveller's childhood took place, class, ideology and ethnicity are important factors to consider in the implications of the narrative voice. Additionally, since Lessing's interest in the revolutionary potential of the everyday can also be accounted for by her anti-colonial communist politics, *African Laughter's* representation of Zimbabwe stands at the crossroad between female self-expression and Marxism. The communist concern with the everyday has been made visible in the attempts to write 'history from below' by Edward P. Thompson and philosophers such as Henri Lefebure.

A similar involvement in communist activities both in Southern Rhodesia and in London in accordance with an interest in the everyday have been well documented in Doris Lessing's two-volumed autobiography *Under my Skin* (1994) and *Walking in the Shade* (1997). A concern with the everyday also characterised Lessing's novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962) in its thematisation of the downfall of communism by focusing on its effects on the daily minds and lives of communist party members in Britain. By the same token, *African Laughter* registers political changes in Zimbabwe, such as the new black government under President Mugabe, insofar as it affects the daily lives of Zimbabweans. Doing so, *African Laughter* is concerned with recovering the voices of ordinary Zimbabweans, especially black Zimbabweans. People's lived experiences and their stories and memories are considered the most fruitful sources of ethnographic knowledge. This challenges the idea that politics is played out only in the public domain.

However, if the everyday is the antithesis of control and mapping, as alleged above, it is crucial to consider the extent to which the messiness and atemporality of the everyday can be preserved in *African Laughter*. In representing ordinary people's accounts of their daily lives in the private sphere, Lessing describes the Zimbabwean everyday in an experimental form, which is characterised by non-linearity, fragmentation, and multiple narrators conveying colloquial discourses in direct speech. Yet, considering the fact that the narrator's voice pursues a distinct

Marxist political project, it is necessary to reflect on the progressive temporality that is inherent to this political project in relation to the everyday and its memory in Zimbabwe.

### The Ineffable Zimbabwean Everyday

*African Laughter* consists of four chapters, each chapter narrating one journey. Since the book narrates several journeys, it does not describe a singular journey, but several experiences and memories of the same place. This structure challenges the traditional travel plot, an account of a singular, chronological journey across a time span from departure to arrival.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the journeys described in the four chapters lack a linear and chronological structure. Although three out of four chapters start off with a description of the traveller's flight with air Zimbabwe and her arrival, the subsequent travels through Zimbabwe are all narrated in fragments. These fragments are typographically marked off from one another by blank spaces and titles in bold. The titles introduce referential information: places ("Talk on the Verandahs", "In the Offices" or "The Mashopi Hotel"), topics ("Aids", "Corruption" or "Witchcraft") or kinds of people ("Garfield Todd", "The Travelling Classes", "The Farmers in the Mountains", "Aid Workers Talk"). Sometimes they convey a more enigmatic, literary message ("Over the Rainbow", "Fat Cat Admonished", "Passionate Protagonists"). The spaces and titles are para-textual features that combine to suggest that *African Laughter* has its own fractured aesthetic. It suggests that the fragments are compiled as "a bricolage," characterised by non-linearity, diversity and simultaneity.<sup>21</sup>

In these entries, daily practices, particular situations and conversations are offered. The style of direct and indirect speech prevails over panoramic, descriptive and observatory scenes. The emphasis on colloquial language in *African Laughter*, conveyed in direct and indirect speech, cannot be overestimated. Direct and indirect speech is commonly known to create an effect of immediacy and vivacity. It is a form of narration that 'shows', rather than 'recounts'.<sup>22</sup> In travel writing, direct and indirect speech are often used to mimic and instantiate the colloquial immediacy of the cross-cultural dialogues the traveller experiences. In *African Laughter* however, the use of direct and indirect speech is exploited for a different end. It reinforces the representation of the Zimbabwean everyday as a factitious compilation of voices, what I would like to call an 'acoustic bricolage.'

Conventionally, travel writing is guided by an autobiographical narrator, who presents his or her perspective on the experiences and encounters taking place. In *African Laughter*, in contrast, more often than not the autobiographical narrator/travelling protagonist remains concealed. The systematic and overt focus is not on the traveller's physical journey and her travel experiences and memories. Rather, the narrator moves from foreground to background – from dominance to reticence, as it were – and back again. This slipping in and out of focus of the protagonist is reinforced by the typographical composition of the narrative frag-

ments, enveloped as they are by blank spaces and headed by titles in bold. Rather than being a continuous, seamless journey, the itinerary is continually interrupted so that the reader's flow, too, becomes broken and non-sequential. White spaces in-between the fragments halt the order of the interrelated events, while titles, emphasised in bold, introduce new and unrelated pieces of information, forcing the reader to readjust attention. With each new fragment, the reader is encouraged to complicate what he or she has read previously, forced to construe a new sense of coherence among the apparently arbitrarily ordered fragments.

Rendering people's opinions and conversations in direct and indirect speech, the form of acoustic bricolage includes divergent versions of the colonial and postcolonial past, narrated by individuals who recount their daily lives. As a result, history's intentions come to be presented as the intentions of many subjects; and no certainty is claimed about what those intentions might be. At first sight, there is no omniscient voice that speaks with more authority than the others. All voices are, in the words of one of the characters, "nothing but a straw blown in the winds of history" (379). Since the Zimbabwean everyday is represented as a plurality of voices, memories and details, any human attempt to understand the past, present, or future proves elusive. From this point of view, the aesthetic of the acoustic bricolage suggests a model of history that ultimately rests on the random or ineffable nature of everyday life.

#### Tensions between narrators

Sometimes, however, there are overt descriptions of Doris Lessing as the protagonist travelling through Zimbabwe. The explicit representations of the travelling protagonist cannot but make their impact on the fragments in which her experience seems to slip out of focus. As Jan Borm notes, "the reader [of travel writing] will presume that the author is predominantly concerned with the account of a journey he or she actually made."<sup>23</sup> The narrator retrospectively narrates the trajectory of the travelling protagonist, mapped out by means of the first person pronoun, the simple past tense, and modifiers of space or time. Although retrospective and travelling narrator focalise alternately, the retrospective I embeds the experiencing narrator at the time of travel. For instance, typical sentences like "When I returned to the country where I had lived for twenty-five years ..." (11), or "It took me two hours to drive that short distance from Harare to Marondera ..." (28) follow the conventions of narratorial authority in travel writing. Borm's assumption of the reader's concern with the autobiographical journey is crucial for evaluating the effects of acoustic bricolage, in which, as I have argued above, the narrator often seems to disappear.

When the I-narrator is reticent and moves into the background, the impression is created that the primary voice is delegated to various characters, whose voices directly speak to the reader. For instance, in the fragment entitled "So what



should be done?" the narrator and the travelling protagonist seem both effaced to allow the three characters to speak for themselves:

Marxist student: The Bourgeois Revolution has failed. Now we must have a Revolution of the Proletariat.

Black farmer: Transport, it's all transport. If only Comrade Mugabe would organize transport...

White man (born in the country, plans to stay in it, on innumerable boards, committees, charitable governing bodies): First you take the brakes off investment. But that won't change anything until something else happens. ... training, training, training ... it's training that we need, TRAINING. (416-417)

This triple character-bound focus suggests something of the contradictory views of Zimbabweans in 1989 with regard to the question how the country could be pulled out of its deadlock. Alternative visions are presented in a similar manner, first by the subject of utterance, then with colloquially expressed speech. This formal similarity suggests that all three viewpoints are equally valid: they seem neutral and nuanced depictions of Zimbabweans' opinions about possible solutions. At first glance, their opinions seem unmediated by value-laden statements or overt comments. It seems that the travelling narrator has temporarily left the stage.

Nevertheless, the travelling protagonist remains present. The title of the fragment, "So what should be done?", followed by the temporary focus on the white man and his bracketed descriptions – "(born in the country, plans to stay in it, on innumerable boards, committees, charitable governing bodies)" – suggests Lessing's presence and marks her intervention. Although the three opinions expressed are articulated in a streamlined, if not caricatured, manner, one may assume they were expressed during one or several encounters with a fourth character, the traveller who interviewed them about what should be done. In instances such as these, the narration of the traveller's journey retreats to the background, and the second-level narrators who are embedded in that narrative are given priority. Taken together, the collection of secondary voices creates the impression of an acoustic bricolage of everyday opinions and viewpoints. Yet, though faded away, the primary narrator remains hierarchically superior and exerts more control over the narrative. Despite all, the reader is tempted to read the travelling protagonist's presence into the bits and pieces of speech. In this way, acoustic bricolage is characterised by a tension that exists between the primary narrator and embedded narrators.

In other fragments, traces of the frame of the protagonist's travel narration are virtually absent. This happens when specific scenes and dialogues are registered

in a putatively neutral voice, for instance in the fragments “Zimbabwe” (191), “Witchcraft” (214-215), and “Over the Rainbow” (229-230). “Zimbabwe” appears as a short fragment in the chapter that is entitled, “Next Time 1989.” It is introduced as follows: “A scene guaranteed to appeal to connoisseurs of political irony...” The scene, in which Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo visit Garfield Todd who is in hospital, is narrated neutrally, without explicit mediation. Although the irony was of course already noted and cannot be ignored, it remains unclear who rendered the comment. The piece ends with a comment in direct speech, saying that the two men together visiting Todd, is “the best of Zimbabwe” (191). Albeit in direct speech, the comment lacks the inquit-formula, which one would normally expect. The lack of the inquit-formula formally depersonalises the comment, whereas the use of direct speech presupposes a subject of utterance.

Fragments such as “Zimbabwe” raise questions about the precise nature of the communication that takes place: who speaks, and to whom? The utterance “A scene guaranteed to appeal to connoisseurs of political irony...” is neutrally conveyed, and, yet, it is addressed to those readers who may identify as connoisseurs of political irony. One could argue that the statement about the possible appeal of the scene for political connoisseurs might be ascribed to the primary narrator, if we take into account that the retrospective I-narrator is also the narrative authority of some of the preceding and following fragments. However, it remains unclear in what context the narrated scene should be placed, even though the anonymous utterance in direct speech at the end of the fragment hints at the fact that a conversation has taken place. If the fragment is considered as an extract from a conversation, the identities of the speaker and the addressee remain evasive. Hence, this seems to be a form of communication between a speaker with an anonymous subjectivity and an addressee who is a silent witness. Although the autobiographical narrator has faded away, we already know it is Doris Lessing. Thus, particularly in the instances where the communicative situation seems elusive or unclear, the primary narrator exerts her influence and can never be assumed to have entirely left. Since only snatches of conversations are expressed, it is as if someone walks through a crowd and picks up bits and pieces of dialogues.

These narrative techniques – the fractured para-textual structure, the compilation of the speech of many characters, and the reticence of the I-narrator to narrate her own perceptions – together create Zimbabwe as a patchwork of voices on everyday topics, ranging from eating habits and transport to political figures and farming techniques. Consequently, reading *African Laughter* is like scrolling over Zimbabwe with a continuously regulated hearing aid. The result is an acoustic bricolage, composed of intensified, yet unrelated, sound bites of Zimbabwe. Assembling a coherent ‘overview’ of the quotidian Zimbabwe, remains difficult. The Zimbabwean everyday is registered in rich aural particularities.

As the emphasis on direct speech indicates, it is not only the act of eyewitnessing that produces ethnographic information of Zimbabwe. In *African Laughter*, the primacy of the eye is downplayed for the sake of the aural. The fact that the traveling protagonist often retreats to the background creates the impression that she is a silent witness. When she moves to the forefront, she predominantly talks. The book thus replaces the figure of the eyewitness, conventionally associated with travel writing, with the one of the listener. The bricolage of everyday voices mimics the registration of a tangle of speech that reaches the ear. Rather than looking, listening seems a sensuous perception that takes place habitually and spontaneously, often happening without conscious awareness or assent. Rita Felski, theorist of the everyday, describes the perception of everyday life as “a habitual, distracted mode of perception [...] of mundane events that unfold imperceptibly just below our field of vision.”<sup>24</sup> Daily life, its habits and routines, are part of what we are not fully conscious of, and thus unfurls nearly outside of the more rational practice of viewing. Since the controlling eye is relinquished in *African Laughter*, the reader is encouraged to take up a similar distracted and semi-conscious reading mode with respect to the unfolding quotidian events and conversations that are recounted.

It might be argued that the formal structure of the bricolage of everyday voices is an experimental technique that in fact overcomes the very everydayness, or taken-for-grantedness, of the Zimbabwean everyday. Especially in light of the ‘realist’ conventions of travel writing, the form of bricolage confuses. Therefore, it might be said that bricolage effectively distances the reader from the prosaic, from the everyday. It makes everyday life strange. This argument, however, ignores the fact that, as a colonial discourse, travel writing enters into a realist pact with the reader, even when it pivots on the unfamiliar, the strange, the Other. The question whether realism is up to the task of expressing what is other is usually not raised. To Said and the scholars in his wake, the seemingly ‘truthful’ and ‘realist’ nature of travel writing’s representations of non-Western others conceals that it commits in fact a form of epistemic violence towards the non-Western Other. Upholding an illusion of the Other, travel writing in fact familiarises the Other for its Western audience. Hence, it could also be argued that the bricolage in *African Laughter* is an aesthetic act of further distancing the Zimbabwean everyday, which is already unfamiliar to its Western audience. It estranges the reader and prevents her from domesticating the Zimbabwean everyday. In this process, the often-assumed mimetic analogy between realist language and the experience of the Zimbabwean everyday is avoided. The acoustic bricolage of the Zimbabwean everyday deprives the reader of descriptions about how the Other ‘really’ was or is.

*African Laughter*’s open-ended and indefinable representation of Zimbabwe seems to link up with feminist geographer Gillian Rose’s argument that the notion that space is knowable, mappable, and describable and, consequently, con-

trollable, is fundamentally a patriarchal concept. The book's microscopic focalisation stands in stark contrast to the surveillance and control that are exercised in travel texts by colonial travellers. Rose argues that, regardless of how diverse a group they are, women generally engage with the world in a less controlling, more flexible and varied way, an engagement that challenges masculine ways of knowing space. The feminine approach to the world challenges the rigid boundaries between the private and the public sphere. In Rose's geography, the everyday is thus valued as an end in itself, rather than as an inferior realm that serves the public sphere. As Susan Bassnett aptly contends: "For feminists, an alternative mapping consists of tracing patterns from the most banal and trivial everyday events so as to create a completely different set of identifiable structures outside patriarchal control".<sup>25</sup> Similarly, in its slipperiness, atemporality, and unrepresentability lies a good deal of the power of the acoustic bricolage that conveys everyday life in Zimbabwe. What remains to be accounted for, however, are some of the ideological underpinnings of the narrator's voice in her rendering of the Zimbabwean everyday, past and present.

#### "Nothing but a straw blown in the winds of history"

As indicated above, the genre's autobiographical journey structure is upheld in *African Laughter*, despite the fact that the narrator and protagonist frequently hide in the background. At the moments when her own journey is at the forefront, Lessing is described in conversation with the people she encounters. In fragments when Lessing is presented, she often acts as "an interpretative focaliser".<sup>26</sup> The conversations are focalised by her, and, doing so, the emphasis is on the traveller's thoughts and visions of what other individuals are saying. In those instances, the traveller's focalisation heavily determines the reader's interpretation of the conversations.

This insertion of the figure of the interpreting traveller, as characterised by a distinct social make up (female, white, British, middle class, Marxist, anti-colonial), raises the question of the ways in which representations of everyday cross-cultural conversations may be ideologically charged. Lessing portrays herself as an anti-colonial British woman with a colonial background. Her experiences and memories of Southern Rhodesia were situated, to paraphrase the literary scholar Louise Yelin, at "the margins of empire".<sup>27</sup> Recollected after her return home, the traveller's identity is filled with tensions and ambivalences. Her whiteness prevented her from identifying unproblematically with the black anti-colonial struggle. Her gender and political points of view distanced her from identifying with colonial culture. As her gender, racial and political affiliations continuously clash with one another, the traveller's geographies of belonging are always already displaced. Her alliances and identifications are shattered between the past and the present, and between Britain and the former colony of Southern Rhodesia. With regard to the subjectivity of colonial settlers, Alan Lawson argued that they are

“always separated from where one lives by virtue of one’s origins and from one’s origins by virtue of where one lives”.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Lessing’s return portrays her as displaced, both as a Western female subject in the colonies, and as a female subject in the West with a childhood past in the colonies.

Even though Lessing has a number of selves to draw on, to a certain extent her experiences are unified into a general “anti-colonial Marxist politics”. However, this politics by no means implies a fixity of subject position that the phrase might suggest. The traveller’s subject position is continuously constructed and reconstructed during her journey as she, time and again, positions herself vis-à-vis the people she encounters and perceives. More often than not, highly connotative phrases that mark the traveller’s subjective interpretation are in evidence.

Talking to white settlers on “a Commercial Farm,” she describes their speech as “babyish querulous grumbling” (183). In this instance, the anti-colonial attitudes of the traveller inflect the speech of the white settlers. As made evident by her connotative phrases, the traveller criticises the colonial continuities in everyday life after independence. This implies, however, that she resurrects the everyday for progressive ends. Her overt anti-colonial condemnation of the white farmer’s customs and opinions reveals that the traveller’s depiction of the Zimbabwean everyday is based on a notion of ‘progress.’ As historian Christopher Lash rightly observed, progress is the “ideological twin” of nostalgia.<sup>29</sup> It insists that improvement can come through human effort, even in the face of discouraging events. While nostalgia degrades the present by representing the past in an idealised manner, progress, by contrast, makes the future into an idealised site of immediacy and presence, and denounces the present.

Remembering her colonial childhood, Lessing remembers black people predominantly as colonial victims from an outsider’s point of view. As a result, the transition of black Zimbabwe from the colonial past to the postcolonial present is often a priori represented by her as a form of progress. On a visit to a “Communal Area,” a poor living area for blacks in 1988, Lessing states that these areas might be dreadful places, but that the ‘Reserves’ in Southern Rhodesia were much worse. She adds, “here is a transformation that can be valued and understood only by people who know what it was all once like” (167). One could wonder whether the Western traveller, raised among the white settlers, really knows how “it was all once like” for the black Africans inhabiting the Reserves. Seeing the colonised blacks from the outside, as victims of racial segregation, Lessing tends to interpret any change from this white-dominated hierarchy as a positive one.

In “Next Time 1989,” Lessing finds herself in the company of a group of black young social workers, called the ‘Book Team,’ at a train station on their way to Matabele land. Having difficulties with buying tickets, they discuss the inefficiency of the contemporary train transport system. The situation makes the colonial railway system in Southern Rhodesia spring to Lessing’s mind. Subsequently, she tells the group about her memories:

And there we are on the platform which I swear has not changed by so much as a nut or a bolt. ... The long platform seethes with people. Then the train consisted of half a mile or so of coaches, most of them with a few white faces at the windows, then, further along, a couple of coaches with brown faces-Indians and 'Coloureds' – a forced conjunction of people guaranteed to cause resentment to both, which it did for all the time of White Supremacy. Finally came a couple of coaches where all the blacks were squashed. This arrangement meant that most of the platform used to be sparsely occupied by whites. I amuse the Team by a description of those times. They find the past improbable, and laugh at it. (245)

In contrast to the younger black social workers, who only consider its present condition, Lessing compares the Zimbabwean railway system to the Rhodesian railway. The platform is described by her as a transient site, in which the present and crowded platform is juxtaposed with the colonial platform, sparsely populated by whites. The Rhodesian railway, as the traveller criticises, was spatially organised according to a strict racial hierarchy. The unequal relations between black and white are underlined by the contrast between “most of the coaches,” with in them “a few white faces at the window” and “a couple of coaches,” “where all the blacks were squashed.” The middle category, consisting of Indians and “Coloureds,” is criticised for being “a forced conjunction” as well as for causing “resentment.”

Set against the background of general discontent about the mismanagement of the Zimbabwean railway, the narrator's memories of the colonial everyday past make for a powerful insertion. The traveller's vision suggests that, although the post-independence Zimbabwean railway may have its flaws, it has managed to shake off the segregationist structure that ruled the Rhodesian railway system. Considering the black colonial everyday in terms of victimisation and oppression, this fragment again illustrates Lessing's belief in progressive temporality – often despite the visual or aural evidence she records. The social workers' complaints as well as their impatience with what they see as a badly managed public institution serves to underline the future-oriented commitment of the Zimbabweans towards the state of their country in 1988. But it also displays that a progressive notion of temporality is inherent in Lessing's anti-colonial politics. Paradoxically, while rendering Zimbabwean life in all its particularities, the traveller's political support of black emancipation channels her representation of Zimbabwe into a progressive notion of the everyday, which denounces the colonial white-dominated past and idealises the postcolonial and independent present.

In the paradigmatic article entitled “Under Western Eyes”, feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticises Western feminist writings about Third World (women) because of the “authorizing signature” that endorses ethnocentric universalism.<sup>30</sup> Her critique serves well to scrutinise the recuperation of the Zimbab-

wean everyday, as it is pursued in *African Laughter*. Attributed with epistemological and ontological authority, the I-narrator is the only recurring subject in the travel narrative, who has a clearly defined subjectivity and personal history. Despite the fact that the form of acoustic bricolage presents manifold opinions and subjects who recount their life experiences, the autobiographical voice is generically assigned the authority to create a definite temporality for the Zimbabwean transitions of everyday life that are depicted. In Mohanty's terms, in many Western feminist writings, "Western feminists alone become the true 'subjects' of ... counterhistory." Third World women, in contrast, never rise above the debilitating generality of their "object status".<sup>31</sup>

This is particularly indicated by the traveller's celebratory, and yet ahistorical, representation of black Zimbabweans. During her encounter with a black hitchhiker, called Gore, Lessing praises his exuberant laugh, considering it as representational for what she terms "the African Laughter," a universal, atemporal category of Africans: "He shook with laughter, the marvellous African laughter born somewhere in the gut, seizing the whole body with good-humoured philosophy" (80). "African Laughter" is of course also the title of the travelogue. The phrase suggests a 'biologisation' of the African 'race', presenting optimism and cheerfulness as typical of African culture, and connecting it to the physical gesture of laughing. Consequently, it is suggested that the "good-humouredness" of the "African" philosophy is an innate biological feature that is shared by all Africans. In *My Father's House* (1992), Ghanaian-British theorist of race Kwame Anthony Appiah explains this process as follows:

Where race works – in places where 'gross differences' of morphology are correlated with 'subtle differences' of temperament, belief, and intention – it works as an attempt at metonym for culture, and it does so only at the price of biologizing what is culture, ideology.<sup>32</sup>

In his review of Lessing's *African Laughter*, titled "The Art of Sympathy," Appiah rightly criticises Lessing's "silence about the interior lives of black Zimbabweans".<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the interior lives of black Zimbabweans are muted to make room for a celebratory, biologised notion of African identity.

The book's Marxist politics of the everyday clings to the fantasy that a decisive struggle would at last establish absolute justice and contentment. Paradoxically, that notion of such a decisive struggle runs counter to the unruly temporality of the everyday. The Marxist revolution implies the transformation of "the temporality of everyday perception, unsettling sluggish and habit-bound modes of thought, through the revelatory force of the new".<sup>34</sup> Hence, in contrast to *African Laughter's* general form of acoustic bricolage, the travelling narrator's anti-colonial story fails to preserve the messiness and multiplicity of the everyday, as it puts Zimbabwe on a course of progress. In this manner, the traveller's represen-

tations of everyday life serve the progressive ends of her Marxist politics. At the same time, a multitude of Zimbabwean voices are rendered; yet, ultimately, they never rise above their object status.

## Conclusion

In the past decade, a great number of memoirs and return travel narratives have been published by male ex-Rhodesian male writers, such as Chris Cocks's *Fireforce* (2006), Dan Wylie's *Dead Leaves* (2002), and Peter Stiff's *See You in November* (2002), which have collectively come to give shape to a specific subgenre of the war memoir.<sup>35</sup> Assessing the political transitions from colonial to postcolonial Zimbabwe, these books reify male-connoted nostalgic memories of white Rhodesia, focusing on themes such as the Selous Scouts and the epic and heroic hardships of Rhodesian soldiers during the independence war. It is striking, in contrast, that the recollection of the colonial everyday is visible not only in Lessing's *African Laughter* but also in memoirs and return travel narratives written by other white ex-Rhodesian female writers, such as Alexandra Fuller's *Scribbling the Cat* (2004) and Lauren St John's *Rainbow's End* (2007).<sup>36</sup>

Considering that its disruptive potential lies in its messiness, its unruly temporality, and in its resistance to reason and control, these women's recollection of the everyday cannot a priori be considered as subversive. *African Laughter's* experimental form, which I have named 'acoustic bricolage,' suggests simultaneity, diversity, and fragmentation. The narrative form is characterised by a number of para-textual features and narrative techniques, such as the deployment of direct speech, the prioritisation of second-level narrators, and the downplaying of the primary narrative voice. Therefore, the device of acoustic bricolage suggests that everyday memory and history cannot be captured by an orderly temporal narrative, and amounts to little more than the personal opinions and experiences of manifold subjects, who are "nothing but a straw in the winds of history." Yet, although the travelling narrator continuously slips out of focus, the fact that she is the only recurring narrative voice that can be identified and accorded a personal memory and history is crucial in the book's representation of the Zimbabwean everyday. The emerging narrative is characterised by an anti-colonial style of authority, which renders the Zimbabwean everyday in terms of a history of progress.

Representing the Zimbabwean everyday in transition from the colonial past to the postcolonial present, *African Laughter's* political potential primarily resides in the epistemological and aesthetic move away from notions of mimesis, realism, and truthfulness, which the genre of travel writing induces. Conventionally, these notions are crucial for travel writing's expression of ethnographic knowledge; the reader of travel writing is conventionally encouraged to be primarily concerned with the traveller's autobiographical journey. However, despite its attempt to de-



part from mimesis, the anti-colonial narrator's account included in *African Laughter* is ultimately assigned with a more authoritative status than the other African voices that are expressed. As a result, not so much the African peoples, but rather the Western female traveller becomes the subject of the memory and history of the Zimbabwean everyday.

Marked by political, social, and economic crises, the current situation in Zimbabwe has changed dramatically since Lessing's return travels. In 2003, Lessing published "The Jewel of Africa" in the *New York Review of Books*, which charged President Mugabe in the name of "the poor blacks who will yet again watch their land being taken from them ..." (8). In much the same way as *African Laughter*, the article includes representations of black Africans, their history, and the African natural world, which are all weighed by the future-oriented and anti-colonial message the author tries to convey. As I have tried to show, Lessing cannot entirely avoid regressing to the cooptation of black peoples and African space for the articulation of her anti-colonial female Western self-expression, at the same time as *African Laughter* describes Zimbabwean everyday life, past and present, in its rich particularities.



## Conclusion

“There must be an end in sight  
for the transient stopping places  
to be necessary, to be memorable.”

Molly Holden, *Stopping Places*

This study was concerned with providing a wider historical and aesthetic sense of how colonial memory is effected, through which genres it is routed, and in whose interests it is deployed. Through an analysis of Aya Zikken’s *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*, Marion Bloem’s *Muggen mensen olifanten* and Doris Lessing’s *African Laughter*, I have focused on colonial memory in women’s travel writing in relation to the specific historical contingencies of the contemporary Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance in which they circulate. Firmly anchored within the structures of language and storytelling, the notion of colonial memory deployed in this study builds on cultural theories of memory by Mieke Bal and Andreas Huyssen. It is a textual site where issues of gender and travel writing intersect with dominant discourses of colonial remembrance in Britain and the Netherlands. In so doing, this study has explored and uncovered a series of complexities, tensions and ambivalences in the contemporary return to the colonial era through memory and travel by texts and people in Britain and the Netherlands today. These complicate and nuance some of the conventional assumptions about colonial memory in traditional colonial historiography (colonialism as Europe’s closed-off past) and postcolonial approaches in the wake of Edward Said (colonialism as Europe’s unrecognised aftermath).

### Gender, Power and the Postcolonial Afterlife

Large-scale political and economic realignments in the last decades of the twentieth century accelerated transformations in people’s notions of community, in the imagination of new markets, and in the renegotiation of borders and territories. While the national, cultural and ethnic boundaries are increasingly being pressurised in this transnational climate, it is strikingly paradoxical how growing numbers of people feel the desire to return to their past and examine the connections and intersections between their family histories and official national historiographies, including those pertaining to the colonial era. Sometimes these personal genealogical inquiries, in turn, manifest themselves as popular goods on the global market through the Internet, on national television as well as in local

libraries and institutes erected for the preservation of cultural heritage. In television programmes such as *Who do you think you are?* and *Verborgen verleden* (Hidden past), celebrities trace their family trees. The *Lifeline Expedition Project* in Britain organises reconciliation journeys linking the European and African nations, in which white Europeans and Americans walk in replica yokes and chains as a symbolic sign of apology for the slave trade. In the Netherlands, databases and other initiatives, such as the National Institute of the Dutch past of slavery and heritage (*Nationaal Instituut Nederlands slavernijverleden en erfenis*) provide support to people in retrieving their family history in its intertwinement with the slave trade. The development of so-called “roots tourism” has nowadays become a central component of UNESCO and the World Tourist Organization’s Cultural Tourist Programme on the Slave Routes.

This veritable roots explosion intensifies one of the vital insights that can be drawn from this study; that one’s desire for the past (and memory and travel as manifestations of this desire) is not, nor has ever been, an individual, isolated affair. I have been concerned indeed with exploring how colonial memory in contemporary women’s travel writings emerges in collaboration with, and against, official memories and narratives of colonialism that follow the belatedness of the postcolonial moment. Since literary genres presuppose cultural knowledge in order for meaning-making to take place, the communication about the colonial past that women’s travel writing organises is considerably influenced by its surrounding culture of colonial remembrance.

Dominant historical narratives in Britain and the Netherlands have distinctively dispersed the complex legacies of myriad colonial encounters in heroic accounts of a national history that happened in an Other time gone by, and in exotic accounts of Other people in distant places. Imbued with notions of historical and cultural strangeness, then, the colonial era has regularly been channelled in Eurocentric narratives which serve to underscore clear-cut distinctions between the nation’s past and its present as well as between Western and non-Western cultures and subjects. In various ways, the close readings of women’s travel narratives in this study exposed how the memory of colonialism similarly served to manufacture cultural otherness that, even as it estranges, relies on the most familiar of Western mythologies about previously colonised peoples and places. In addition, it has been shown how women’s travel writing is always at risk of turning colonial memory into a fixed historical ground for the anchoring of identity politics. This study, therefore, raises questions about the degree to which colonial memory, particularly in commodified form, is not increasingly threatened to transform into a hegemonic language that underlines undeniable cultural difference, as it attempts to recover what one has lost.<sup>1</sup>

It is worthwhile reiterating, however, that there are a range of different voices in Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance and that the mode of memory they foster and construct serves different aesthetic and political objec-

tives in different texts. Having diversified and evolved in time, cultures of colonial remembrance are indeed by no means homogenous or static. Social differences such as gender and ethnicity help to produce and define variations in colonial memory discourses and make these discourses intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony. Officially endorsed narratives of colonialism in Britain and the Netherlands tend to be male-connoted, bellicose and epic-heroic. In this context, I have argued that, if the trope of colonial everyday memory looms large in women's travel accounts, we must take it seriously as an archival form in order to bring women's perspectives and experiences of colonialism into the purview of history. Feminist historians have long used unconventional sources – letters or diaries – to write women's experience (back) into history and, in doing so, established an alternative archive from which to challenge exclusionary official histories. Contemporary travel writing, then, provides women with a language that in various ways recovers what is effaced by hegemonic accounts of colonial history, favouring male-connoted realms, such as politics, economy and the public space.

In the analysis of Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlasvlinder*, the colonial past haunts Zikken's journey in Indonesia as a sublime desire that defines the traveller's experience as a white Dutch woman with an unforgettable, yet also indeterminate childhood past in the Dutch East Indies of which the legacy keeps on disturbing her daily life in the present. At the same time, the travel narrative also accommodates Zikken's nostalgic memories of this childhood, hereby fixating the colonial past in an autobiographical narrative of beautiful recollections and sentimental anecdotes of empire and in ethnographic accounts of an Indonesia which is sensuous and premodern.

In Marion Bloem's *Muggen mensen olifanten*, colonial memory is both a historical ground for the formation of the traveller's second-generation female Indo identity, and a particular style of ethnographic authority of "anti-conquest." Bloem's travel narrative draws attention to the split loyalties between Dutch and Indonesian cultures defining the second-generation Indo female traveller. Based upon her postmemory of the Dutch East Indies, the traveller positions her as culturally affiliated with the people and place she describes and, hence, uncovers the hidden history of miscegenation and interracial sexuality in Dutch colonialism. The traveller adopts the colonial past as an anchor on the basis of which she exercises ethnographic authority over Indonesia, while at the same time she is sensitive to the unequal power relations involved in the effacement of Indo identity from the Dutch public discourse about colonialism and its aftermath.

Doris Lessing's *African Laughter* (1992) recounts the author's return to Zimbabwe after her 25-years exile from Rhodesia. The book's main literary device I have termed "acoustic bricolage," the rendering of the Zimbabwean everyday through multiple narrators, colloquial discourse, direct and indirect speech, and conversational bits and pieces. The retrospective I-narrator of the genre of travel

writing recedes to make way for a simultaneous, unruly, and fragmented everyday. Nevertheless, at key junctures the narrator returns, assuming an omniscience informed by a Marxist and feminist vision of inevitable progress in which her autobiographical memory of the colonial everyday plays a crucial role. Passages that extol the “Africanness” of the landscape as well as of raucous laughter lead me to conclude that Zimbabwe ultimately becomes a backdrop for a journey of self-realisation for the white female self.

In summary, women travel authors have deployed the trope of colonial memory in their narratives to rewrite dominant historical narratives about colonialism, at the same time that they reconfirm stereotypes of historical and cultural otherness prevailing in the Dutch and British cultures of remembrance, which they simultaneously subvert. In light of the recent expansion of roots tourism, this point does not merely uncover that women’s colonial memory is always already collective and incremental. Emerging against officially endorsed versions of colonialism, women’s return to the colonial past through memory and travel manifests itself as a form of recreation and re-imagination. Since women’s travel narratives recycle existing figurations and mythologies of self and other, the linear-regressive temporality of ‘return’ reveals itself in fact as one characterised by repetition and circularity.

### **Women’s Colonial Memory and Transnational Feminism**

In *Beyond the Pale*, Vron Ware is critical of the “resounding silence” about the development of Western post-world war feminism in a period of continuous reconstructions of colonial memory shaped by specific forms of racism operating within the shifting boundaries of British society.<sup>2</sup> Ware sees as one symptom of feminism’s uneasy awareness of its own historical context, the lack of engagement over the last eighty years with the colonial connections the majority of white British middle-class feminists have in some form or other. Disregarding these connections is particularly problematic, to Ware’s mind, since, while white Western feminists with colonial backgrounds may feel it is necessary or desirable to recollect this aspect of their family histories, the subject positions of most black British women, in contrast, are inescapably connected to the British Empire, regardless of whether or not they themselves wish to acknowledge or account for this.

Ware’s assumption points to the possibility that Western women’s colonial memory could productively contribute to, or at least play a role in, the current debates about transnational feminism and cultural difference in the age of multiculturalism. In the current climate, which is both a space for multilingualism, polyglossia and cultural understanding and a space of “clashing civilisations”, in which nationalist and religious aspirations produce fierce conflicts – also among women – feminism is faced with difficult and divisive challenges.<sup>3</sup> For instance,

in the socio-political context of the war on terror, Western women like Laura Bush and Cherie Blair intertwined autobiographical self-expressions, speaking of emancipated womanhood in the West, with ethnographic claims about the subjugation of Afghan women and in so doing, their discourses effectuated authority from experiential authenticity and truthfulness. Such discourses align themselves with the hegemonic and imperialist politics of Western countries, at the same time speaking in a register of solidarity and the common goal of women's liberation.

In this context, feminists have negotiated on the one hand, a universal dream of global sisterhood and solidarity among women who possess shared values and aspirations, and on the other hand, the valorisation of pluralism and an acceptance of the myriad of differences in women's circumstances, their values and aspirations. The emphasis on the commonality among women has often meant that ethnic, class or sexual differences among women were mystified and that the political agenda of one group of women dominated the issues fought by other groups of women. The politics of difference, however, includes the risk of cultural relativism, an unquestioned celebration of difference and the reconfirmation of primordial cultural identities.<sup>4</sup>

Assessing the cultural significance and the complex of meanings and functions of colonial memory in women's travel writing, this study responds to Ware's focus on the colonial backgrounds of Western women and particularly to the significance of their memories in the context of transnational feminist practices. More specifically, the form or genre in which women narrate their colonial experiences, is an important issue to consider in the discussion. Always at risk to naturalise and reaffirm the conventional boundaries that provide the ground for their narratives and memories, the ways in which Women in the West could productively account for their involvements in colonial history depends to a large extent, as this study uncovers, on the forms and modes of speaking they deploy in doing so.

In women's travel narratives, colonial memory is a multi-layered canvas on which the ethnographic and autobiographical possibilities of the genre are struggling to be textualised. The meanings of women's colonial memory, therefore, are never fixed. The content of memory is unpredictable and its function in women's travel writing proved to be similarly unstable. Due to the narrative tensions characterising travel writing, women travellers could become agents of history and ethnography, while more often than not the former colonised spaces and peoples they describe in their recollections and observations never rise above their object status, an inferior status to which they are already assigned by hegemonic discourses of colonialism and imperialism.

Scrutinising women's travel writing as a genre that yields political potential for women's memory and historical agency, but one that often does so at the expense of producing dramatic and reductive Otherness, I have in fact addressed a funda-

mental dilemma that is always at stake in the enterprise of reconstructing the past, certainly for women. The German-Romanian author Herta Müller aptly formulates the dilemma as follows: “When we don’t speak, we become unbearable, and when we do, we make fools of ourselves.”<sup>5</sup>

Narrativising the past is fruitful, particularly for women, since the colonial past is integral to self-expressions for many women, which have been ostensibly forgotten by dominant historical narratives in the West. It is necessary as a transnational feminist practice of affiliation as it identifies the grounds for historically specific differences and similarities between women in diverse and asymmetrical relations.<sup>6</sup> However, regarding the messy and heterogeneous nature of experience, to bear witness to one’s past is, in fact, fundamentally impossible. Any narrative of remembrance is always one out of many possible imaginations of the past, which is idealised and distorted through one’s desires. The colonial past is always crystallised into a few precious moments selected by memory and by oblivion.

In light of the above dilemma, it is worthwhile considering how specific speaking modes, such as travel writing, perpetuate, if not exacerbate, conventional notions of cultural and historical otherness in the narration of women’s involvements in colonialism. Its productive potential resided to a large extent in the deployment of non-mimetic techniques or experimental narrative forms. The aesthetic of the sublime in Aya Zikken’s *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* or the narrative technique of bricolage in Doris Lessing’s *African Laughter* promised to transpire even more productively in genres less confined than travel writing by conventions of realism. In the context of feminist transnational practices, it is worthwhile, therefore, exploring modes, genres, or aesthetic possibilities that go beyond the representational realism that travel writing induces.

Regarding the role of colonial memory for feminist transnational practices, this study envisages possibilities for a critique of realist modes of representation, questioning the unequivocal turning of the colonial past into a project of conservation. A brief look at recent Holocaust commemoration sites, such as the Holocaust Memorials in Berlin and Jerusalem, reveals that representational realism has increasingly been replaced by more experimental modes of representation. Similarly, a large range of postcolonial writers, from Salman Rushdie to Jamaica Kincaid, have adopted postmodern techniques – pastiche, irony, metafiction – to express the enduring colonial legacies of colonialism in the West, and simultaneously criticising officially endorsed versions. Hence, a variety of sources, forms or genres exist, for women in the West to borrow from, for the purpose of narrating their involvements with colonialism, and by doing so, create alternative histories, identities and possibilities for transnational alliances.



## Divided and Diversified Legacies: Dutch and British Cultures of Colonial Remembrance

The colonial memories in the travel narratives by Aya Zikken, Marion Bloem and Doris Lessing are considerably conditioned by the historical settings in which colonial practices in the Dutch East Indies and Rhodesia took place, and by the historically distinct Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance in which these narratives circulate. In the same way as there is no monolithic and unilateral discourse of women's colonial memory, discourses of colonial remembrances in Britain and the Netherlands manifest themselves as local networks of complicated transactions of meaning and knowledge, in which various memories and narratives conduct their own negotiations and accommodations of dominant meanings, depending on their spatio-temporally specific histories and contexts.

This study, then, was concerned with examining the tensions and ambivalences involved in the contemporary return to a colonial era in a comparatively historicised manner. The aim was first, to provide a counterbalance to those postcolonial approaches that overlook the uncertainties, inconsistencies, and contradictions that afflicted Western efforts to remember empire, making abstract claims about how 'The West' deals with its imperial legacy and colonial history – a practice no less distorting than the tendency to essentialise the Orient. Second, this study aims to supplement those postcolonial inquiries of Anglophone literatures in the context of the British Empire, and open up the discussion to address literatures originating in Dutchophone postcolonial contexts. It aspires in this way to create a better understanding of the Janus-faced nature and the complex and multi-faceted legacies of empire in various European countries, which have combined to create the phenomenon of European expansion and colonialism as a whole.

Identifying a two-fold predicament of contemporary postcolonial studies – to abstract the West and to overlook non-Anglophone literatures – I have compared the myriad forms of intersecting colonial remembrances and memory discourses in Britain and the Netherlands, and the ways in which women's memories of colonialism are related to them.

Without paying attention to the specificities of Dutch and British colonial practices and their myriad contemporary legacies, we would not have been able to fully understand a large range of issues and concerns which surfaced in the analyses of the travel accounts of Aya Zikken, Marion Bloem and Doris Lessing. To name just a few, it would have been impossible to understand why nostalgia could have taken root so intensely among the repatriates from the Dutch East Indies after repatriation, if we had not considered the predominance of the memory of the German occupation in the Dutch public arena after the Second World War. We would not have been able to understand why Marion Bloem's account insists so much on the effacement of the Dutch colonial history of miscegenation and its contemporary implications on the Indo community of the second genera-

tion, if we had not addressed the Indo community as a group of people who increasingly became the object of racial prejudice in the Dutch East Indies, and were subjected to an official policy of assimilation on their arrival in the Netherlands. We would not have been able to fully consider the implications of Doris Lessing's account of white settlers in contemporary Zimbabwe, if we had not considered the complicated political, economic, cultural and historical relations that have existed between Britain and Rhodesia.

Efforts of historicisation, nuancing and diversification are crucial in probing some of the critical practices and premises on which contemporary postcolonial studies is based. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that by no means have I been able to provide an exhaustive and in-depth analysis of all the issues and topics at stake in the relations between women's colonial memory, travel writing and the contingencies of Dutch and British cultures of remembrance. The focus on Rhodesia and the Dutch East Indies, for instance, can certainly not account for a comparative analysis of Dutch and British colonial practices, regardless of how complex and internally differentiated these empires themselves were. Moreover, important transnational intersections between Dutch and British cultures of colonial remembrance could only be hinted at, and not sufficiently be elaborated on, such as the role of language and translation in the transnational circulation of images of non-Western Others, or the connections between national narratives and supra-national discourses of globalisation.

In order to avoid that postcolonial studies would produce its own insurmountable truths, canons, internal hegemonies and mechanisms of marginalisation and exclusion, what we need is more comparative research on how colonialism has generated various histories, divided legacies and diversified literatures, which have originated in so many other contexts than exclusively the Anglo-Saxon one. Women's colonial memory in Britain and the Netherlands is interwoven in a complicated web of diachronic and synchronic power relations, which makes their positionings, their remembrances, feminist commitments and ethnographic complicities similar in one way, while, varying along with their personal identities, idiosyncratic memories and particular contexts, they are completely dissimilar. Without having provided definite answers, this study has revealed a divided, diversified and historicised insight into how the contemporary return to the colonial past is permeated with tensions and conflicts, arising when the operations of gender and travel writing are considered to intersect with various legacies of colonialism in late twentieth-century Britain and the Netherlands.

# Notes

## Introduction

1. Aya Zikken, *Gisteren gaat niet voorbij. Tempo Doeloe*. (Zwolle: La Riviere en Voorhoeve, 1972).
2. Aya Zikken, *De atlasvlinder*. (Amsterdam: Atlas, 1958. 2002); Rameh, *verslag van een liefde*. (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1968); *Landing op Kalabahi*. (Amsterdam & Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Atlas, 1996); *Indische jaren. Het verhaal van Tjisaroea*. (Amsterdam & Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2001).
3. Aya Zikken, *Eilanden van vroeger*. (Amsterdam & Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Atlas, 1982. 1996); *Drieluik Sumatra*. (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1995); *Terug naar de atlasvlinder. Een reis door Sumatra*. (Den Haag: Leopold, 1981).
4. In this study, the notions of colonialism and imperialism will be adopted interchangeably in order to highlight the intricate interconnections between the practice of implanting settlements on a distant territory, and the ideas, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre which accompany the ruling of a distant territory. Furthermore, I will be using the terms colonialism and imperialism, on the one hand, and postcolonialism and post-imperialism, on the other hand, in order to chronologically distinguish between colonialism and imperialism in the early twentieth century and the perpetuation of colonialism and imperialism during the second half of the twentieth century after decolonisation. However, it is worthwhile emphasising here that it will become clear in what follows that I will consider colonialism, imperialism, postcolonialism and post-imperialism, not as self-explanatory, but as analytical notions.
5. Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). 4.
6. Homi Bhabha, "Postcolonial Criticism," *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Studies*, eds. S. Greenblatt and G. Gunn (New York: Modern Language Association, 1992). 437.
7. For discussions on the term "post(-)colonial" See Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature. Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); Gyan Prakash, ed., *After Colonialism. Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992); Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Post-Colonialism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998); Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, *Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London: Routledge, 1996); Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
8. Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory," *The Decolonization Reader*, ed. James D. Le Sueur (New York & London: Routledge, 2003). 16.

9. Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire. Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London & New York: Zed Books, 1999). 8.
10. This argument has been elaborated in: Theo D'haen, "Travelling India," *The Paths of Multiculturalism. Travel Writing and Postcolonialism. Proceedings for the Mossel Bay Workshop of the XVith Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, eds. John Noyes, Maria Alzira Seixo, Graca Abreu, Isabel Mouthinho (Lisbon: Edicoes Cosmos, 2000). 177; Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, "Varieties of Nostalgia in Contemporary Travel Writing," *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, eds. Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). 151; Antoinette Burton, "India Inc.? Nostalgia, Memory and the Empire of Things," *British Culture and the End of Empire*, ed. Stuart Ward (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). 217.
11. Maria Dermout, *Nog pas gisteren* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1951); Maria Dermout, *Days before Yesterday*, trans. Hans Koningsberger (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959).
12. Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers. Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994). 6.
13. Sandhya Shetty and Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, "Postcolonialism's Archive Fever," *Diacritics* 30.1 (2000).
14. Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). 158.

## Chapter One

1. Alexandra Fuller, *Scribbling the Cat. Travels with an African Soldier* (New York: Picador, 2004). 3.
2. Paul Hamilton, *Wordsworth* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986). 6.
3. Stuart Semmel has addressed the Romantic remembrance of the past through travel to Waterloo in: Stuart Semmel, "Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting and Memory after Waterloo," *Representations* 69. Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering (2000).
4. Peter Coveney has explored the resurgence of the romantic view of childhood in modernist literature in: Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood. The Individual and Society: A Study of a Theme in English Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967). Esp. 303-336.
5. William Wordsworth, "Book Second. School-Time Continued," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams, 6 ed., vol. 2 (London & New York: Norton & Company, 1993). 222, line 29-33.
6. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. David McLintock, ed. Adam Philips (London & New York: Penguin, 2004). 7.
7. Richard Terdman, *Present Past. Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1993). 241.
8. Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M. H. Abrams, 6 ed., vol. 2 (London & New York: Norton & Company, 1993). 1990.
9. Andreas Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia," *Public Culture* 12.1 (2000). 21. See also Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: University Press, 2003); Petar Ramadanovic, *Forgetting Futures. On Memory, Trauma and Identity* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001).

10. David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). xv.
11. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 6.
12. Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia." 36.
13. Theodor W. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," trans. Samuel Weber and Shier-ry Weber Nicholson, *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedermann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). 162.
14. An alternative approach to memory utilises psychoanalytical theory and is concerned in particular with the memory of Holocaust and trauma. See for instance Soshana Felman, "In an Era of Testimony: Clause Lanzmann's Shoah," *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
15. Ansgar Nünning and Astrit Erll, "Where Literature and Memory Meet: Towards a Systematic Approach to the Concepts of Memory Used in Literary Studies," *Literature, Literary History, and Cultural Memory*, ed. Herbert Grabes, vol. 21, *Real – Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* (Tübingen: Narr, 2005). 265; Ann Rigney, "Portable Monuments: Literature, Cultural Memory, and the Case of Jeannie Deans," *Poetics Today* 25.2 (2004).
16. Mieke Bal, "Introduction," *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Jonathan Crewe, Mieke Bal and Leo Spitzer (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999). vii.
17. Bal, "Introduction," xiii.
18. George Lamming in an interview with Raymond Gardner, *The Guardian* 10 July 1974, as quoted in Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature. A Critical Introduction* (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993). 91.
19. For instance, this dissymmetry between the Holocaust and colonialism concerning an ethic of remembrance is obvious in the legislative domain. Various European countries have endorsed a ban on Holocaust denial and revisionism, as recently became clear in the controversy surrounding the revisionist historian David Irving's prosecution in Austria.
20. Jonathan Crewe, "Recalling Adamastor: Literature as Cultural Memory in 'White' South Africa," *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Jonathan Crewe, Mieke Bal and Leo Spitzer (Hannover and London: University Press of New England, 1999). 75.
21. Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26.2 (Winter 2000); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). 18; Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Paul Gilroy, *After Empire. Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004); Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989). A collection of essays edited by Richard Werbner has adopted the concept of memory to examine the legacy of colonialism in contemporary African nations. Richard Werbner, ed., *Memory*

- and the Postcolony. *African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (London & New York: Zed Books, 1998).
22. John Frow, *Genre* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006). 10.
  23. Astrid Erll and Klaudia Seibel, "Gattungen, Formtraditionen und Kulturelles Gedächtnis," *Feministische Erzähltextanalyse*, eds. Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning (Stuttgart: Metzlerverlag, 2004).
  24. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989). 9.
  25. David Duff, ed., *Modern Genre Theory* (London: Longman, 2000). xii.
  26. Mary Louise Pratt, "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985). 141.
  27. Hayden White, "The Fiction of Factual Representation," *Grasping the World. The Idea of the Museum*, eds. Donald Preziosi and Claire Fargo (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2004); Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
  28. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2000). 8.
  29. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992). 10.
  30. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire. Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993). 10.
  31. James A. Boon, *Affinities and Extremities. Crisscrossing the Bittersweet Ethnology of East Indies History, Hindu-Balinese Culture, and Indo-European Allure* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). 3.
  32. E.R. Scidmore, *Java. The Garden of the East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899). Contemporary works about the Indies often use covers displaying paradisiacal photos of the Indonesian natural world with palm trees and deserted rice fields, for instance Hella S. Haasse, Rudy Kousbroek, Kester Freriks, Carry van Bruggen, Wiecher Hulst, Beb Vuyck, Maria Dermout et al., *Tjantik Indonesia. De mooiste verhalen over Indonesië* (Amersfoort: Novella uitgeverij, 1994); Kees Ruys, *Indonesië. Een reis door de randgebieden* (Arnhem: Pandora Atlas, 2003).
  33. Interestingly enough, the phrase "Emerald Girdle" was initially introduced as an instance of verbal irony through its deployment as a hyperbole in the renown novel by Multatuli, *Max Havelaar of De Koffievelingen Der Nederlandsche Handelmaatschappij*, ed. Anemarie Kets (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992). On the final page, it is stated that the book is dedicated to "Willem den derden, Koning, Groothertog, Prins ... meer dan Prins, Groothertog en Koning ... KEIZER van 't prachtig ryk van INSULINDE dat zich daar slingert om den evenaar, als een gordel van smaragd..." and subsequently asks William III in protest whether it is his wish that more than thirty million of his citizens in the Indies are being mistreated and exploited in his name. In contemporary usage, for instance in various tourist guides of Indonesia, the term has more often than not lost this ironic connotation. In 1997, a film called "Gordel van Smaragd" was released. Orlow Seunke, "Gordel van smaragd," (PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, 1997), eds. Wim Lehnhausen and Orlow Seunke. For a feminist postcolo-

- nial critique of the film, See Pamela Pattynama, "Een Indisch Meisje in Gordel van smaragd," *Zamikrant* 11 (1997).
34. Alexander Bakker, "Van paradijs tot plantage. Beeldvorming van Nederlands-Indië in reisverslagen, 1816-1900," *Indische Letteren* 2.13 (1998). 75.
  35. Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. 138.
  36. Christopher L. Miller *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
  37. *Ibid.* 170.
  38. See Patrick Brantlinger. *Rules of Darkness. British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1988); Annie E. Coombes, *Annie E. Coombes, Reinventing Africa. Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1994).
  39. Patrick Holland & Graham Huggan. 'Zones.' *Tourists with Typewriters. Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan 2000); Tim Youngs, 'Africa/The Congo: The Politics of Darkness.' Peter Hulme & Tim Youngs (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
  40. Graham Huggan, "Postcolonial Studies and the Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity," *Postcolonial Studies* 5.3 (2002). 253. For a renowned critique of Orientalism by Homi Bhabha, who emphasises the conflicting nature of colonial discourse, see Homi Bhabha. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1994). 85-92.
  41. Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). 7.
  42. Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire. Postcolonial Theory in Transit*. 8.
  43. Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1991). Introducing a postcolonial paradigm of women's travel writing, Mills's study has inspired other feminist scholars in their readings of travel texts by nineteenth-century women, travelling in the context of the British and Dutch colonial context. On Lady Nugent in the British colonial context, see Claudia Bardenstein, "'Making 'the Agreeable' to the Big Wigs": Lady Nugent's Grand Tour of Duty in Jamaica, 1801-1805," In *Transit. Travel, Text, Empire*, eds. Anna Johnston and Helen Gilbert, vol. 4, *Travel Writing across the Disciplines. Theory and Pedagogy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002). On Aletta Jacobs in the Dutch colonial context, see Ena Jansen, "The Discourse of Difference in Reisbrieven Uit Afrika En Azië (1913) by Dr. Aletta Jacobs: A Dutch Feminist's Perspective on South Africa and the Dutch East Indies," *Journal of Literary Studies/ Tydskrif vir Literatuurwetenskap* 14.1/2 July special issue on Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory (1998). and Mineke Bosch, "Colonial Dimensions of Dutch Women's Suffrage: Alletta Jacobs' travel Letters from Africa and Asia 1911-1912," *Journal of Women's History* 11.2 (1999). It has also been found useful for the interpretation of British modernist post-war women's travel writing. See for instance Hsu-Ming Teo, "Femininity, Modernity and Colonial Discourse," In *Transit. Travel, Text, Empire*, ed. Anna Johnston Helen Gilbert (New York: Peter Lang, 2002). And my review Sarah De Mul, "Review Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston (ed.) in *Transit: Travel, Text, Empire* (New York: Peter Lang 2002)," *Studies in Travel Writing* 9.2 (2005).

44. Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. 106. See also Sara Mills, "Gender and Colonial Space," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 3.2 (1996); Sara Mills, "Feminist Theory and Discourse Theory," *Discourse* (Routledge: London/New York, 1997).
45. Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem. Nation, Gender and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996). Examples of studies arguing for a separate female tradition of travel writing are Karen R. Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages. Women and Travel in the Literary Tradition* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1994); Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: 20th Century Women's Travel Writing* (London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Gillian Rose, *Feminist Geographies. Explorations in Diversity and Difference* (Essex: Longman, 1997); S. Morgan, *Place Matters. Gendered Geography in Victorian Women's Travel Books About Southeast Asia* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Doris Jedamski, *Images, Self-Images and the Perception of the Other. Women Travellers in the Malay Archipelago* (Hull: University of Hull, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1995); Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women. A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
46. Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. 113. For other critiques of this approach, see Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. 31-41, Susan Bassnett, "Travel Writing and Gender," *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme & Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 227.
47. Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. 14.
48. Kristi Siegel, *Gender, Genre, and Identity in Women's Travel Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004). 7.
49. "Le texte doit être principalement un récit, mais on sait toute la place qu'occupe le discours dans la narration autobiographique; la perspective principalement rétrospective [...] le sujet doit être principalement la vie individuelle, la genèse de la personnalité." Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975). 14-15.
50. Rob Nixon, *London Calling. V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). 166.
51. James Clifford, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late 20th Century* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1997); Joan Pau Rubies, "Travel Writing and Ethnography," *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Moreover, the two-day interdisciplinary seminar "Writing Journeys and Places: Tourists, Pilgrims, Ethnographers" on 11-12 April 2003, Oxford University was entirely devoted to the affinities between travel writing and ethnography.
52. Nixon, *London Calling. V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin*. 66.
53. Nixon, *London Calling. V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin*. 68.
54. Nixon, *London Calling. V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin*. 67.
55. James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge & Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988). 25.
56. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978). 7.



57. Said, *Orientalism*. 20.
58. Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). 158.
59. Maria Alziro Seixo, ed., *Travel Writing and Cultural Memory* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997).
60. Hendrik van Gorp and Ulla Musarra-Schroeder, eds., *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).
61. Frow, *Genre*. 82.
62. Frow, *Genre*. 7.
63. Stephen Greenblatt, *Leaning to Curse. Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990). 164.
64. Greenblatt, *Leaning to Curse. Essays in Early Modern Culture*. 169.
65. Greenblatt, *Leaning to Curse. Essays in Early Modern Culture*. 5-6.
66. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History," *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000). 7-8.
67. Stuart Hall, "When Was the Post-Colonial? Thinking at the Limit in the Post-Colonial Question," *Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, eds. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1996). 245.
68. B. Ashcroft, Griffiths. G. and H. Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). 36.
69. The editors of *Perspectives on Travel Writing* also observed the predominance of the study of travel literatures in English at Anglo-Saxon universities. Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs, eds., *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, vol. 19 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). 5. Regarding Dutch travel writing, serious attention to travel writing has thus far remained absent.
70. Sandra Ponzanesi, *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004). xiv.
71. Reinier Salverda, "Indische Letteren door een Engelse bril: Engels-Nederlandse koloniale en literaire rivaliteit in Oost-Indie: Een verkenning," *Extra Muros, langs de wegen. Opstellen voor Marcel Janssens*, eds. Dirk de Geest and Hendrik van Gorp (Leuven: University Press, 1997). For one concrete example of intra-European rivalries, see the rivalry about Amboyna between the English and Dutch East Indies Companies in the early seventeenth century in: *English East India Compagny, A Remonstrance of the Directors of the Netherlands East India Compagny, Presented to the Lords States Generall of the United Provinces, in Defence of the Said Compagny, Touching the Bloudy Proceedings against the English Merchants, Executed at Amboyna. Together with the Acts of the Processe, against the Said English and the Reply of the English East India Company to the Said Remonstrance and Defence.* (London: Iohn Dawson, 1632).
72. Thomas Nicholas, *Colonialism's Culture. Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994). 51.
73. Reinier Salverda, "The Case of the Missing Empire, or the Continuing Relevance of Multatuli's Novel *Max Havelaar* (1960)," *European Review* 13.1 (2005).
74. Discussions about colonial and postcolonial literatures in Dutch have predominantly focused on literatures in the Dutch East Indies context. In this field, the term "Indies literature" (Indische letteren) is more commonly used than the phrases "colonial" and

- “postcolonial” literature. In chapter 3 and 4, I will elaborate in greater detail on “Indies” literature. When the term “post-colonial” is used in this context, it usually entails a purely chronological meaning and denotes the literature written after decolonisation, written by Dutch and Indo-Dutch authors. Regarding “Indies literature,” however, polemics about what literature the term precisely covers are ongoing. See Theo D’haen, ed., *Semaian 4: Herinnering, herkomst, herschrijving/ Koloniale en postkoloniale literaturen*. (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azië en Oceanië, 1990). 7-9; H.M.J. Majer, “‘Indische literatuur.’ Bezinningen op een definitie,” *Semaian 15. Weer-werk. Schrijven en terugschrijven in Koloniale en postkoloniale literaturen*, ed. Theo D’haen (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en culturen van Zuidoost-Azie en Oceanie, 1996); Peter van Zonneveld, “Indische-Nederlandse literatuur. Problemen en taken,” *Semaian 4*, ed. Theo D’haen (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azië en Oceanië, 1990).
75. Isabel Hoving outlines a divide in the Dutch study of colonial and postcolonial literatures between a philological and a postcolonial scholarly tradition. See Isabel Hoving, “Niets dan het heden. Over Jamaica Kincaid, de postkoloniale literatuurstudie, en wat er van ons terecht moet komen,” *Wandelaar onder de palmen. Opstellen over koloniale en postkoloniale literatuur. Opgedragen aan Bert Paasman*, eds. Piet Verkruijsse, Adrienne Zuiderweg and Michiel van Kempen (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2004). 16-17.
  76. Theo D’haen, ed., *Europa Buitengaats. Koloniale en Postkoloniale Literaturen in Europese Talen*. (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2000). 28.
  77. Charles Bernheimer, ed., *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). 8.
  78. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).
  79. Bassnett, *Comparative Literature. A Critical Introduction*. 10.
  80. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*. 71.
  81. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (London: Vintage, 1994). 51.
  82. Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparison. Nationalism, South East Asia, and the World* (London: Routledge, 1998). 2.
  83. Greenblatt, *Leaning to Curse. Essays in Early Modern Culture*. 158.

## Chapter Two

1. For a more extensive outline of postcolonial and feminist critiques of traditional historiography, see Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 1998). 1-5.
2. During the last three decades, a growing number of literary critics, anthropologists and historians have problematised the homogenous category of ‘the colonised’ and have emphasised their active role in imperial policies and practices. “[...] The prevalent perception of colonialism as a destructive process [...] entailed inexcusable denials of the sovereignty and autonomy of the colonised.” Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture. Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994). 15.

3. The following section on Western women and colonial discourse will particularly draw insights from Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale. White Women, Racism and History* (London & New York: Verso, 1992); Vron Ware, "Moments of Danger: Race, Gender and Memories of Empire," *History and Theory* 31.4 (Dec. 1992); Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem. Nation, Gender and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996); Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women. Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2005); Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive. Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
4. Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in Future Heaven': Gender, Race, and Nationalism," *Dangerous Liaisons. Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). 91.
5. Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia. European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison & London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).
6. Clancy-Smith and Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*.
7. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive. Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India*. 20.
8. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive. Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India*. 27. See also Roberta Rubenstein, *Home Matters: Longing and Belonging, Nostalgia and Mourning in Women's Fiction* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti, "Reading the House: A Literary Perspective," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 27.3 (2002); Rosemary George, *The Politics of Home. Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
9. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature. Migrant Metaphors*. 36.
10. Southern Rhodesia was the name of the British colony situated immediately to the north of South Africa, known today as Zimbabwe. The "Southern" was dropped from normal usage in 1964 and Rhodesia became the name of the country until the creation of Zimbabwe in 1979. North Rhodesia separated from South Rhodesia in 1910. Northern Rhodesia was a British protectorate created in 1911 by combining North-Western Rhodesia and North-Eastern Rhodesia, which were controlled by the British South Africa Company. From 1924, the administration came under the government of the United Kingdom, and Northern Rhodesia became independent in 1964 as Zambia.
11. Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share. A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*, 3 ed. (London & New York: Longman, 1996). 100.
12. A.S. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia. From Occupation to Federation*. (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2002). ix.
13. I.R. Phimister, "Rhodes, Rhodesia and the Rand," *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 1.1 (Oct. 1974). 74.
14. For the major impact of the most renowned protest novel *Max Havelaar* by Multatuli on Dutch public opinion about colonialism. See Gerard Termorshuizen, "'Indië is ook in het litterarische eene melkkoe,'" *Europa buitengaats. Koloniale en postkoloniale literaturen in Europese talen*, ed. Theo D'haen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002). 110-115.

15. As a result of the French occupation of the Netherlands, the country's involvement in a long-lasting colonial war at Java and the need to challenge the Belgian recession, financial requirements arose, which were levelled by national income revenues from the Indonesian Archipelago.
16. Bernadine Baily, *Rhodesia in Pictures*, Visual Geography Series (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 1974).
17. Ian Phimister, "Discourse and Discipline of Historical Context: Conservationism and Ideas about Development in Southern Rhodesia 1930-1950," *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 12.2 (Apr. 1986). 270.
18. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*. 158.
19. Before the early nineteenth century, the Dutch East Indies was not a state-colony yet.
20. The Colonial Office in London had responsibility for all British colonies and dominions besides India, which had its own Secretary of State until 1925, when a separate Office of Secretary of State for Dominion affairs was established. The position of Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs was a British cabinet level position, dealing with British relations with the dominions – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland and the Irish Free State. In Rhodesia, Britain took over administration from the Company in 1923 and granted self-government to the white Rhodesian colonists. This implies that Rhodesia was not under the charge of the State for Dominion affairs.
21. Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. 48.
22. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia. From Occupation to Federation*. 40.
23. Kenneth Good, "Settler Colonialism: Economic Development and Class Formation," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14.4 (1976). 610.
24. For instance when the Federation came into existence in 1953, Britain was supportive of the idea, hoping that economic improvement would assuage white fears and that African interests would be better protected. George D. Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997* (London: MacMillan Press, 1999). 204.
25. Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1997). 199.
26. In *Guide to the Dutch East Indies* published in 1897, the Dutch royal shipping company advertised the agreeable atmosphere on board of its steamship as a prelude to what the European tourist would encounter on arrival in the East Indies. What is presented to the latter, is a cosmopolitan mode of life in which he or she would soon feel at home: "He [the tourist] will, little by little, get accustomed to the Dutch Indian table, and division of the day, *neglige*, tropical siesta, and the twice-a-day bath, to the native servants, and the value and names of Dutch money. [...] Moreover, the English, German, and French traveller may be certain that the majority of the ship's officers and Dutch passengers understand and speak his language." van Bemmelen, J.F. and G.B. Hooyer, *Guide to the Dutch East Indies. Composed by Invitation of the Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij*, trans. B.J.Berrington (London: Luzac & Co, 1897). 8.
27. Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. 165.
28. Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. 165.

29. Ellemers and Vaillant point to the fluid boundaries of the formal category of “Europeans.” For instance, once married to European men, Non-European women could acquire the status of European. J.E. Ellemers and R.E.F Vaillant, *Indische Nederlanders en Grepatrieerden* (Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1985). 16.
30. See Ann Laura Stoler, “Carnal knowledge and imperial power: gender, race, and morality in colonial Asia,” *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, ed. Micaela di Leonardo (Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 51-101.
31. Contrary to a number of historians, I insist on using the actual colonial name “Indo-Europeans” instead of “Eurasians.” The nominator “Eurasian” is useful in the situation of the British Empire, where people of ‘mixed race’ were considered to be ‘native’ people. Pamela Pattynama, “Assimilation and Masquerade. Self-Constructions of Indo-Dutch Women,” *The European Journal of Women’s Studies* 7 (2000). 296.
32. Hans Meijer, In *Indië geworteld. De Twintigste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2004). 10.
33. Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977). 277.
34. The British South African Company, *South Rhodesia. Information for Intending Settlers* (London: Waterlow & Sons, 1903). 73.
35. The phrase ‘kith and kin’ has mockingly been appropriated by president Mugabe to refer to the remaining settlers and other white people in post-independence Zimbabwe. See Thornycroft, Peta. “Mugabe issues with new threat to white ‘kith and kin’ over West’s hostility.” *The Telegraph*. London 13 December 2002, International News. 29. Mugabe’s appropriation of the phrase ‘kith and kin’ has subsequently been used by the contemporary British media in order to portray as, or rather reduce, the recent calamities in Zimbabwe to a racial situation. Wendy Willems, “Remnants of Empire? British Media Reporting on Zimbabwe,” *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. November (2005). 96.
36. The South Africa Company, *Rhodesia 1889-1899 (a Sketch of What Is Being Done Towards the Development of the Vast Territory Granted by Royal Charter to the British South Africa)* (Kent: Simpkin Marshall Hamilton, 1889-1899). 13.
37. The British South African Company, *Southern Rhodesia. Information for Intending Settlers* (London: Waterlow & Sons, 1903). 3.
38. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia. From Occupation to Federation*. 227.
39. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia. From Occupation to Federation*. 50.
40. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia. From Occupation to Federation*. 59; Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*. 273.
41. Julia Katherine Seirlis, “Islands and Autochtons. Coloureds, Space and Belonging in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 4.3 (2004). 411.
42. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, “Orientalism and the Rhetoric of the Family: Javanese Servants in European Household Manuals and Children’s Fiction,” *Indonesia* 58. October (1994). 31. The term “incorporated woman” is coined by Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardener in: Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardener, eds., *The Incorporated Wife* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).
43. Such negotiations with colonial discourse are also clearly visible in Harriet Ward’s *Five Years in Kaffirland*. See Leigh Dale, “Imperial Traveler, Colonial Observer: Humanity and Difference in *Five Years in Kaffirland*,” In *Transit. Travel, Text, Empire*, ed. Anna John-

- ston, vol. 4, *Travel Writing across the Disciplines. Theory and Pedagogy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).
44. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, "So Close and Yet So Far: The Ambivalence of Dutch Colonial Rhetoric on Javanese Servants in Indonesia, 1900-1942," *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, eds. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998); Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991). 22.
  45. Pape, "Black and White: The 'Perils of Sex' in Colonial Zimbabwe." 699.
  46. Pape, "Black and White: The 'Perils of Sex' in Colonial Zimbabwe."
  47. The Malay phrase *baboe* deployed for the Indonesian nursemaid, should be distinguished from the phrase *babu* used in the British Indian context, where it signifies a westernised native. Porter, *The Lion's Share. A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*. 47.
  48. In this spirit, the 1927 colonial publication entitled *Het Indische leven* by the author Bauduin strongly advised colonial residents to send their children to the Netherlands for their education since "de omgang met inlanders voor onze kinderen groote gevaaren voor geest en ook voor lichaam kan beteekenen" (relations with natives are extremely harmful for our children's mind and body). D.C.M. Bauduin, *Het Indische Leven* ('s-Gravenhage: H.P. Leopold's Uitg.-Mij, 1927). 59.
  49. "Even as late as 1948, 88 per cent of domestic workers were men." John Pape, "Black and White: The 'Perils of Sex' in Colonial Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 16.4 (Dec. 1990). 719.
  50. Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire*. 24-25.
  51. Diana Jeater, "No Place for a Woman: Gwelo Town, Southern Rhodesia, 1894-1920," *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 26.1 (2000). 34. In a Public Relations Department publication entitled *Southern Rhodesia's Welcome to Women: Facts and Advice for the new Settler*, European women are advised "never [to] be alone in the house without white supervision." No publication details supplied, as quoted in: Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia. From Occupation to Federation*. 9.
  52. Grewal, *Home and Harem. Nation, Gender and the Cultures of Travel*. 45.
  53. Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism. Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York & London: The Guilford Press, 1994); Carolyn Burdett, *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism. Evolution, Gender, Empire* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave, 2001); Ena Jansen, "The Discourse of Difference in *Reisbrieven uit Afrika en Azië* (1913) by Dr. Aletta Jacobs: A Dutch Feminist's Perspective on South Africa and the Dutch East Indies," *Journal of Literary Studies/ Tydskrif vir Literatuurwetenskap* 14.1/2 July special issue on Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory (1998). On Augusta de Wit, See Darja de Wever, ed., *Het is geen kolonie, Het is een wereld, Vrouwen bereizen en beschrijven Indië 1852-1912* (Amsterdam: Terra Incognita, 2003). 39-46.
  54. See also Deirdre David, *Rule Britannia. Women, Empire and Victorian Writing* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity. Imperial Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

55. Donal Lowry, "White Woman's Country': Ethel Tawse Jollie and the Making of White Rhodesia," *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 23.2 Special Issue for Terry Ranger (Jun. 1997).
56. Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History. British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). 59.
57. Grewal, *Home and Harem. Nation, Gender and the Cultures of Travel*. 65. For the Dutch context, see Maria Grever and Bertheke Waaldijk, *Feministische Openbaarheid. De Nationale Tentoonstelling Van Vrouwenarbeid in 1898* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG/IIAV, 1998). particularly 161-197.
58. Grewal, *Home and Harem. Nation, Gender and the Cultures of Travel*. 65-79.
59. Following the postcolonial historian James D. Le Sueur, I adopt the term 'decolonisation' denoting "a process by which colonial powers – in this case European nations and administrators – left, whether voluntarily or by force, from their overseas possessions in various areas in Africa and Asia." This historical definition of the concept, however, does not intend to refute the fact that the long legacy of decolonisation as "a political, cultural, social, economic, and intellectual phenomenon [...]" has continued to be a fierce feature of everyday life in metropolitan Europe and its former colonies today. In fact, this is precisely my argument in what follows. James D. Le Sueur, ed., *The Decolonization Reader* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003). 1-2.
60. John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation. The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (London: MacMillan, 1988). 57.
61. Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002). 295.
62. Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997*. 202.
63. Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997*. 204.
64. For more on Zimbabwe's Liberation War from the guerrilla perspective, see Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, "War Stories: Guerrilla Narratives of Zimbabwe's Liberation War," *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004).
65. The "Wind of Change" speech of MacMillan in Cape Town in February 1960 is usually considered as the start of the decolonisation process in British Africa.
66. Salman Rushdie, "The Raj Revival," *The Observer* 1 April 1984.
67. *Ibid.* 19.
68. Paul Gilroy, *After Empire. Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004).
69. *Ibid.* 98.
70. Stuart Tannock, 1995, "Nostalgia Critique" In: *Cultural Studies* 9(3) Routledge 1995 453-464. 458.
71. Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989). 108.
72. Susan Stewart. *On Longing: Narrative of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). 23.
73. See for instance "De schennende hand van de Japanner had het ontwikkelingswerk van de Indonesische vrouw en haar kinderen tot puin vermorzeld." Departement van opvoeding, kunsten en wetenschappen, *De Indonesische vrouw. 1898-1949*, trans. Voorwoord Siti Marijam (Batavia: Balai Poestaka, 1948). 28.

74. W.H. van Helsdingen and H. Hoogenberk, eds, *Mission Interrupted. Dutch in the East Indies and their work in the XXth Century*, trans. J.J.L. Duyvendak (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1945). 8.
75. For a more extensive outline of Dutch post-imperial reconstructions of the Dutch East Indies, see Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. 30-33.
76. Kousbroek, Rudy. *Het Oostindisch kampsyndroom*. (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1992).
77. David Pott, "Special Features." London. June 2004. Sponsored by The Fountain Gate Trust. 29 January 2007. <<http://www.lifelineexpedition.co.uk>>.
78. Homi Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994). 140.
79. Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, "Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28.1 (2002). 6.
80. Gilroy, *After Empire. Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* 97.
81. The connection between national identity and the World Wars has manifested itself particularly in sport spectatorship, which became very visible during the World Championship in June 2006. A dualistic presentation of the British against the Germans was fiercely operative among English supporters travelling to Germany. In the Netherlands, too, Dutch negative stereotyping of Germans and explicit references to the World Wars were prevalent. Indicative of this is the social awareness campaign entitled "Holland, Respect your Neighbours," organised during the period preceding the World Cup 2006. 29 January 2006. Paul Gilroy elaborates more in-depth on the relationship between the British tradition of sports spectatorship and its relationship to xenophobia, racism and war in "Two World Wars and One World Cup" Gilroy, *After Empire. Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* 116-125.
82. Patrick Wintout, "Brown: Remembrance Sunday Should Become 'British Day,'" *The Guardian* Saturday 14th of January 2006; Ned Temko, "Race Watchdog Backs the Battle for 'Britishness'," *The Observer* Sunday January 15 2006. Brown's proposal triggered a debate in various newspapers on what British identity actually entailed and whether or not celebrating British identity would be a good idea. Stuart Jeffries, "Column: Our First Brit Day Won't Be All Fun and Games. It Will Be a Time for Solemn Meditation and, Most Likely, Serious Drinking," *The Guardian* January 16th 2006; Jonathan Steele, "The Textbook Whitewash of Our Brutish Empire Is a Lie," *The Guardian* Friday January 20th 2006; Tristram Hunt, "History Lessons We Should Learn," *The Guardian* Sunday January 15th 2006; "Discussion: Is Being British a Cause for Celebration?," *The Guardian* Monday January 16th 2006; Michael White, "Call for New Definition of Britishness," *The Guardian* Tuesday December 20th 2005.
83. Benedict Brogan, "It's Time to Celebrate the Empire, Says Brown," *The Observer* January 15th 2006.
84. For a deconstruction of the dominant Dutch national image resulting from the country's neutrality in the First World War, see Ismee Tames, *Oorlog voor onze gedachten. Oorlog, neutraliteit en identiteit in het Nederlandse publieke debat 1914-1918* (Hilversum: Bèta Boeken, 2006).
85. Frances Gouda, "Here and There, Now and Then: Place, Gender and Race in Occidental and Oriental Landscapes," Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, October 24th 2005.



86. McClintock, "‘No Longer in Future Heaven’: Gender, Race, and Nationalism." 93.
87. After Indonesian independence in 1949, Dutch New Guinea remained a Dutch overseas territory. Although the official reasons for the necessity of Dutch control in Southeast Asia varied considerably, since 1923 it was suggested that New Guinea could provide a homeland to the Indo-Dutch population. For this purpose, in 1926 the *Vereniging tot kolonisatie van Nieuw-Guinea* (New Guinea Colonisation Society) came into existence, which was joined by *Stichting Immigratie Kolonisatie Nieuw-Guinea* (Organisation Immigration and Colonisation New Guinea) in 1930. However, relatively few Indo-Dutch colonisers effectively immigrated to New Guinea. Generally clerks by profession, they were not attracted to go and take up rural professions in New Guinea. International opinion eventually forced Holland to give up New Guinea in 1962. See Danilyn Fox Rutherford, "Trekking to New Guinea: Dutch Colonial Fantasies of a Virgin Land, 1900-1942," *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, eds. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 1998). 255.
88. Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997*. 251.
89. Daniel Gorman, "Wider and Wider Still?: Racial Politics, Intra-Imperial Immigration and the Absence of an Imperial Citizenship in the British Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 3.3 (2002).
90. Porter, *The Lion's Share. A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*. 358.
91. This was accompanied by an insurgence of triumphalist nationalist identity "to counter the perceived decline into woolly multiculturalism and a lack of appreciation for the nation's achievements." See Patrick Williams, "Not Looking for a New (Labour) England. Billy Bragg, Kipling and Ressentiment," *Resisting Alterities. Wilson Harris and Other Avatars of Otherness*, ed. Marco Fazzini, *Readings in the Postcolonial Literatures in English* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2004). 104.
92. A more detailed account of this rather cursory outline of the history of Indo-European immigration can be found in the following standard reference: Wim Willems, *Uittocht uit Indië. De geschiedenis van Indische Nederlanders, 1945-1995* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2001).
93. Evert van Imhoff and Gijs Beets, "A Demographic History of the Indo-Dutch Population, 1930-2001," *Journal of Population Research* 21.1 (2004). 68. Ellemers and Vaillant distinguish between the following groups of returnees: 1) those born in Europe who had temporarily lived in the Indies 2) those 'purely' whites who were born in the Indies or married to an Indo-European or Indonesian 3) those of mixed descent and born in the Indies 4) Indonesian ethnicities, such as Molluccans or Ambonese, who had strong ties with the Netherlands, for instance due to employment in the colonial army or administration 5) Indo-Chinese, who were usually better educated and Western-oriented. Ellemers, J.E., and R.E.F Vaillant. *Indische Nederlanders en Grepatrieerden*. Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1985. 17-18.
94. Mak, "Het huishouden als strijdtoneel. De inburgering van Indische Nederlanders." 241.
95. Buchi Emecheta. *Second-Class Citizen* (London: Allison & Busby, 1974).
96. The argument that migrant incorporation policies have deep roots in national traditions of citizenship and notions of national identity can also be found in Ruud Koop-

- mans, "Migrant Mobilisation and Political Opportunities: Variation among German Cities and a Comparison with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30.1 (2004).
97. Chris Waters, "'Dark Strangers' in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963," *The Journal of British Studies* 36.2 Twentieth-Century British Studies (1997). 217-221.
  98. Christian Joppke, "Multiculturalism and Immigration: A Comparison of the United States, Germany and Great Britain," *Theory and Society* 25.4 (Aug. 1996). 477.
  99. Gouda, "Here and There, Now and Then: Place, Gender and Race in Occidental and Oriental Landscapes."
  100. Pamela Pattynama defines the Dutch notion of assimilation as follows: "The process by which the ethnic-cultural and social position of Indo-Dutch would be, in due course, similar to that of the supposedly homogeneous indigenous people in the receiving society. This concept of assimilation does not imply complete 'sameness': second and following generations may have preserved typical characteristics of the first generation. It does, however, imply that the newcomers are seen and see themselves first and foremost as members of the indigenous society." Pamela Pattynama, "Assimilation and Masquerade. Self-Constructions of Indo-Dutch Women," *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 7 (2000). 84.
  101. Gouda, "Here and There, Now and Then: Place, Gender and Race in Occidental and Oriental Landscapes."
  102. "Krachtig klonk het oude volkslied door de hut en verkondigde daar in die verre streken, dat de dappere geest der oude strijders, die voor lange jaren hun bloed gegeven hadden voor het vaderland, gelukkig nog voortleefde." Jan Oost, *Kranige Hollanders. De beklimming van het sneeuwgebergte van Nieuw-Guinea* (Arnhem: H. Ten Brink, 1918). 91.
  103. For more elaborate analyses of Western representations of Africa, see Tim Youngs, *Travellers in Africa. British Travelogues, 1850-1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); Tim Youngs, "Africa/the Congo: The Politics of Darkness," *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Cheryl McEwan, *Gender, Geography and Empire: Victorian Women Travellers in East Africa* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2000).
  104. Samuel P. Huntington. "The Clash of Civilizations", in: *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (1993): 22-50.
  105. Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture. Art, Appropriation and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996). 30.
  106. Although obviously not a direct source of pleasure, the humanitarian aid projects set up in various Western countries following the Tsunami Disaster on December 26th 2004, provided an opportunity to construe cultural difference in the name of 'cosmopolitanism', but were at the same time regulated by Western systems of authority. I have elaborated this argument in the paper "A Critique of Violence. The Politics of Cosmopolitanism and Commitment in Western TV News broadcasting the Asian Tsunami" ASCA Theory Seminar, January 31 st 2005, University of Amsterdam.

107. Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001). 153.
108. Xavier Carbonez, "Hoe uw bedrijf een sociaal imago aanmeten?" *Trends* (10 februari 2005).

### Chapter Three

1. Aya Zikken, *Terug naar de atlasvlinder. Een reis door Sumatra* (Den Haag: Leopold, 1981).
2. From the Malayan phrase *Siap* denoting 'ready, prepared'. *Bersiap* signifies 'to make preparations'.
3. Euphemistically, these violent military interventions were, and still are now, officially named *politieele acties* (police actions) in the Netherlands. Usually denoting armed interventions by the police within the national boundaries of the Netherlands, the phrase reveals the Dutch persistence to retain their colony.
4. W.H. Van Helsdingen & H. Hoogenberk, eds. *Mission Interrupted. Dutch in the East Indies and their work in the XXth Century*, trans. J.J.L. Duyvendak. (Amsterdam: Elsevier 1945).
5. Siti Marjiam, *De Indonesische vrouw. 1898-1949*. Departement van opvoeding, kunsten en wetenschappen. (Batavia: Balai Poestaka 1948), 8.
6. See Esther Captain, *Achter het kawat was Nederland. Indische oorlogservaringen en –herinneringen 1942-1995*. (Kampen: Kok 2002).
7. Leonard Doyle, 'Colonial Atrocities explode myth of Dutch tolerance.' In *The Independent*, Sunday 29 May 1994.
8. Louis Couperus, *De stille kracht*. (Amsterdam: Veen 1900); *The Hidden Force. A Story of Modern Java*. Transl. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos. (London: Jonathan Cape 1922).
9. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten (1995) 'Verwerking en koloniaal trauma. Balans van begrippen,' *Bzzletin* 24 (228) 6.
10. Pamela Pattynama, 'The Colonial Past in the Postcolonial Present: Cultural Memory, Gender, and Race in Dutch Cinema,' *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*, eds. Daniela Merolla and Sandra Ponzanesi. (Portland: Rowman & Littlefield Pub Inc, 2005). 240.
11. "Tjalie Robinson" Moesson. *Het indisch maandblad Amersfoort*. 29 January 2007. < <http://www.moesson.com/tjalie.htm>>. The journal evolved out of the journal *Onze Brug* which was primarily aimed at providing support for those who had taken refuge in New Guinea after Indonesian Independence. Currently entitled *Moesson*, the journal continues to provide a platform for exchange of experiences and memories of the Dutch East Indies and a meeting point for people with a Dutch East Indies background.
12. Lizzy van Leeuwen, *Ons Indisch erfgoed. Zestig jaar strijd om cultuur en identiteit*. (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 2008).
13. For a differing view of the continuing significance of *tempo doeloe* discourse, see *Postkoloniaal Nederland. Vijfenzestig jaar vergeten, herdenken, verdringen* (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker 2009) by Gert Oostindie, who observes a decreasing relevance of postcolonial identity, which in his view announces the end of postcolonial history.
14. Marianne Peereboom, "'Hoe zou ik mij kunnen losmaken?'," *Het Indisch verleden*, eds. Lucie Th. Vermij and Margriet Prinssen. (Amsterdam: Sara/Van Genneep 1991), 241.

15. "Paradise Lost" is the title of the first short story of the collection: Margaretha Ferguson, *Anna en haar vader* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1959).
16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections of the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso 1991); Pamela Pattynama, 'Herinnerd Indië: Autobiografische teksten van Indische migrantenschrijvers,' *Tydskrif vir Nederlands & Afrikaans* 10.2 (2003): 275.
17. Henk M.J. Maier, 'Escape from the Green and Gloss of Java: Hella S. Haasse and Indies Literature,' *SEAP Indonesia* 77 (2004):85.
18. Darja de Wever, 'Island India: Speuren naar sporen van Augusta de Wit (1864-1939)', paper presented at the Symposium *Indische Letteren 'Vrouwen over Indië'*, Arnhem, November 2004.
19. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997); Pamela, Pattynama, 'Herinnerd Indië: Autobiografische teksten van Indische migrantenschrijvers,' *Tydskrif vir Nederlands & Afrikaans* 10.2 (2003): 270-86.
20. E. Breton de Nijs, *Tempo Doeloe. Fotografische documenten uit het oude Indië. 1870-1914*. (Amsterdam: Querido, 1961); *Komen en blijven. Tempo Doeloe, Een verzonken wereld. Fotografische documenten uit het oude Indië*. (Amsterdam: Querido 1982).
21. Hella S. Haasse, *Oeroeg. Geschenk ter gelegenheid van de Nederlandse Boekenweek van 26 februari tot 6 maart 1948*. (Nijmegen: G.J. Thieme, 1948). 74.
22. Beb Vuyk, *Reis naar het vaderland in de verte*. (Utrecht: Veen, 1983).
23. Rob Nieuwenhuys, *Komen en blijven. Tempo Doeloe, Een verzonken wereld. Fotografische documenten uit het oude Indië*. (Amsterdam: Querido 1982). 1.
24. See for instance <http://www.indischerfgoed.nl/> Last consulted on 13 October 2010.
25. Henk M.J. Maier, 'Escape from the Green and Gloss of Java: Hella S. Haasse and Indies Literature,' *SEAP Indonesia* 77 (2004): 90.
26. Rob Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, 2 ed. (Amsterdam: Querido, 1973). 11-17).
27. Margaretha, Ferguson. *Nu wonen daar andere mensen. Terug op Java*. (Den Haag: Leopold, 1974).
28. Hella S. Haasse, *Krassen op een rots: Notities bij een reis op Java*. (Amsterdam: Querido, 1970).
29. Margaretha Ferguson. *Nu wonen daar andere mensen. Terug op Java*. (Den Haag: Leopold, 1974). 187.
30. For instance, Margaretha Ferguson. 'Aya Zikken over Tempo Doeloe: Oosterse wereld als magneet voor Westerse mens. Zikken's Gisteren gaat niet voorbij: Tempo Doeloe,' *Het Vaderland* 26 January 1974.
31. Margaretha Ferguson. *Nu wonen daar andere mensen. Terug op Java*. (Den Haag: Leopold, 1974), 71.
32. Achille Mbembe has addressed the question "where is the post-colony?" If we think spatially, Mbembe argues, this place is a nothing, an absence, a "displacement." Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony. Studies on the History of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). 15.
33. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 6.
34. Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. x- xi.

35. Deriving from the Latin adjective *sublimis*, which denotes high, exalted.
36. See for instance “I always seek in what I see the likeness of something beyond the present and tangible object.” Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Letter XII. Letters from Italy,” *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, ed. Mary Shelley, vol. 2 (1840). As quoted in M. H. Abrams, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6 ed., vol. 2 (New York: Norton, 1993). 8.
37. Martin Price, “The Sublime Poem: Picture and Poems,” *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986). 32.
38. Barbara Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime. Gender and Excess in Women’s Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995). 3.
39. Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime. Gender and Excess in Women’s Fiction*. 3.
40. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). 141.
41. Sinead McDermott, “Memory, Nostalgia, and Gender in a Thousand Acres,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28.1 (2002); Leo Spitzer, “Back through the Future: Nostalgic Memory and Critical Memory in a Refuge from Nazism”, *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Jonathan Crewe, Mieke Bal and Leo Spitzer (Hannover and London: University Press of New England, 1999).
42. Leo Spitzer, “Back through the Future: Nostalgic Memory and Critical Memory in a Refuge from Nazism.” 92.
43. Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Sublime Offering,” *On the Sublime: Presence in Question* 1993. 35.
44. Jot en Ibrahim en Moenah, de aap Keesje, de poes Pepi, het waardige huis op palen in de tuin met de zeven wonderen [...]
45. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits. A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1977). 175.
46. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984). 81.
47. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. 80.
48. Amy J. Elias, *Sublime Desire. History and Post-1960s Fiction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). 60.
49. Petra Veeger, *Manoeuvres. Proza uit de jaren vijftig en zestig* (Delft: Eburon, 1996). 138. My translation.
50. Here and in the following chapters, I adopt the notion of focalisation as coined by Mieke Bal, referring to “the relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are represented [...] The relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen’, perceived.” Mieke Bal, *Narratology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 142.
51. Ik weet nu dat er niet zoiets bestaat als onze wereld. Er is een wereld van mij en er is een wereld van jou. In je eigen wereld kan je glimlachen en doodgaan. Een ander heeft daar niets mee te maken.
52. Ik wilde me beslist niet laten verrassen. Bij wijze van zelfbescherming had ik me het weerzien met Indonesië op alle mogelijke manieren voorgesteld.[...] Het voornaamste was dat niets me te diep kon raken.
53. Ook op papier moet ik me in toom houden, me niet laten meeslepen. Ik wil notities maken over verzamelde feiten. Ik wil inlichtingen inwinnen en koel observeren [...].

54. Jean-François Lyotard, "Emma: Between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis," *Lyotard. Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (London & New York: Routledge, 2002). 32.
55. 'Het was, het was -' 'Toch, weet je -'
56. Onzegbaar. Onuitspreekbaar.
57. Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Sublime Offering," trans. Jeffrey S. Librett, *On the Sublime: Presence in Question* (Albany: State University of New York, 1993). 44.
58. Aya Zikken, *Rameh, Verslag van een liefde* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1968).
59. Het vriendje Ferdie uit het boek *De Atlasvlinder* en Rameh zijn een en dezelfde figuur.
60. Een kloof van veertig jaar uiteenlopende geschiedenis en uiteenlopende ontwikkeling.
61. Hoe bedroefd zijn zij die weggaan?/ Ook wij die bleven zijn bedroefd.
62. We zouden elkaar brieven kunnen schrijven en daarin alles zeggen wat we nu niet over onze lippen hadden kunnen krijgen.
63. Nancy, "The Sublime Offering." 43.
64. Elias, *Sublime Desire. History and Post-1960s Fiction*. 67.
65. De tand des tijds die maar raak knaagt aan geliefde huizen en zelfs hele tuinen wegvoert.
66. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978). 60.
67. Het is fantastisch erheen te gaan. Maar wat doe je verdorie als je er bent?
68. Een magische handeling.
69. Een persoonlijke teruggave van iets dat nooit echt van mij is geweest.
70. Nancy, "The Sublime Offering." 35.
71. Nancy, "The Sublime Offering." 34.
72. Lyotard, "Emma: Between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis." 31.
73. For a genealogy of the Robinsonade in eighteenth-century Dutch travel writing, See P. J. Buijnsters, "Imaginaire reisverhalen in Nederland gedurende de 18e eeuw," *Nederlandse literatuur van de achttiende eeuw* (Utrecht: HES Uitgevers, 1984). 7-32.
74. Het onbekende tropische eiland uit de jongensboeken die ik vroeger las.
75. Daniel Defoe, "Introduction by Angus Ross," *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Penguin Books, 1965). 15.
76. Ik begreep ook dat ik eigenlijk al aardig oud was want jaren geleden zou ik voor dit alles mijn hand niet hebben omgedraaid, maar nu vond ik het gewoon bar oncomfortabel.
77. Is nog maar kort geleden.

## Chapter Four

1. A more detailed account of this rather cursory outline of the history of Indo-European immigration can be found in the following standard reference Wim Willems, *Uittocht uit Indië. De geschiedenis van Indische Nederlanders, 1945-1995* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2001).
2. Evert van Imhoff and Gijs Beets, "A Demographic History of the Indo-Dutch Population, 1930-2001," *Journal of Population Research* 21.1 (2004). 68. Ellemers and Vaillant distinguish between the following groups of returnees: 1) those born in Europe who

- had temporarily lived in the Indies 2) those ‘purely’ whites who were born in the Indies or married to an Indo-European or Indonesian 3) those of mixed descent and born in the Indies 4) Indonesian ethnicities, such as Molluccans or Ambonese, who had strong ties with the Netherlands, for instance due to employment in the colonial army or administration 5) Indo-Chinese, who were usually better educated and Western-oriented. Ellemers, J.E., and R.E.F Vaillant. *Indische Nederlanders en Gerepatrieerden*. Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1985. 17-18.
3. Mak, “Het huishouden als strijdtoneel. De inburgering van Indische Nederlanders.” 241.
  4. Mak, “Het huishouden als strijdtoneel. De inburgering van Indische Nederlanders.” 247.
  5. Mak, “Het huishouden als strijdtoneel. De inburgering van Indische Nederlanders.” 250.
  6. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, “Verwerking en koloniaal trauma. Balans van begrippen,” *Bzzletin* 24.228 (1995). 6.
  7. Mak, “Het huishouden als strijdtoneel. De inburgering van Indische Nederlanders.” 245.
  8. Meijer, Hans *In Indië geworteld. De Twintigste Eeuw*. (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 2004).
  9. “Zij zijn rond de jaren 1950-1955 geboren, uit ouders van wie er ten minste een, soms twee in Nederlands-Indië verblijf gehouden hebben en ze hebben in ten minste een deel van hun werk de dekolonisatie van Nederlands-Indië als onderwerp. Ze beginnen rond 1980 met publiceren. Alleen in hun vormgeving zijn de overeenkomsten minder groot, al kan men in stijl en taalgebruik wel vaak het orale karakter, de parlando-stijl zoals Nieuwenhuys die noemt, en het Indisch-Nederlands met Maleise woorden en uitdrukkingen onderscheiden.” In: Bert Paasman, “‘De een draagt een bril en de ander is Indisch.’ Inleiding op de literatuur van de tweede generatie Indisch-Nederlandse auteurs,” *Indische Letteren* 18.4 (2003). 163.
  10. “Icoon van deze [i.e. tweede] generatie”, In: Esther Captain, “Indo Rulez! De Indische derde generatie in de Nederlandse letteren,” *Indische Letteren* 18.4 (2003). 260.
  11. “De belangrijkste vertegenwoordigers van de Tweede generatie zijn de prozaschrijvers Ralph Boekholt, Marion Bloem, Jill Stolk, Nicolette Smabers, Adriaan van Dis, Ernst Jansz, Frans Lopulalan, Glenn Pennock, Theodor Holman, Kester Freriks, Alfred Birney en Anneloes Timmerije, en de dichters Madeleine Gabeler, Indo Dumpel, Karin Ottenhoff, Joetta de Jager, Eddie Lie, Eddie Supusepa, Abe Sahetapy en Djodjie Rinsampessy.” In: Paasman, “‘De een draagt een bril en de ander is Indisch.’ Inleiding op de literatuur van de tweede generatie Indisch-Nederlandse auteurs.” 166.
  12. ‘ze worstelen soms met hun identiteit.’ In: Paasman, “‘De een draagt een bril en de ander is Indisch.’ Inleiding op de literatuur van de tweede generatie Indisch-Nederlandse auteurs.” 167.
  13. “De meeste Indische migranten van de eerste generatie voelden zich kesarar (afgedwaald) en weten zeker dat ‘daar’, ‘destijds’ hun thuisland ligt. De identiteitstwijfel behoort meer bij de tweede generatie Indische schrijvers.” Pamela Pattynama, “26 februari 1948. Oeroeg van Hella Haasse verschijnt als Boekenweekgeschenk. Herinneringsliteratuur en ‘post’herinneringen bij eerste en tweede generatie Indische schrij-

- vers,” *Kunsten in beweging 1900-1980*, eds. Rosemarie Buikema and Maaïke Meijer, *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2003). 212.
14. “[...] egodocumenten door ouders en familieleden, van literaire werken, van overgeleverde Indische cultuur en van reizen naar het land van afkomst.” In: Paasman, “De een draagt een bril en de ander is Indisch.’ Inleiding op de literatuur van de tweede generatie Indisch-Nederlandse auteurs.” 167.
  15. “Het Indië van de Nederlanders, van Daum, van Multatuli, van Oeroeg, van de witte poort leefde een eigen leven in bibliotheken, op scholen, in geschiedenisboeken. Het Indië van haar ouders is gestorven, of heeft nooit bestaan.” Bloem, *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*. 190.
  16. Pamela Pattynama introduced the notion of ‘postmemory’ to make an argument about the inclusion of second-generation Indo literature in the corpus of Dutch East Indies literature. Pattynama, “26 Februari 1948. Oeroeg van Hella Haasse verschijnt als Boekenweekgeschenk. Herinneringsliteratuur en ‘Post’herinneringen bij eerste en tweede generatie Indische schrijvers.” 213.
  17. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames. Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). 22.
  18. Paasman, “De een draagt een bril en de ander is Indisch.’ Inleiding op de literatuur van de tweede generatie Indisch-Nederlandse auteurs.” 163.
  19. Esther Captain specifies Indo themes such as ‘the education by and the influence of the grandparents, the Indo and Chinese honouring of ancestors, the presence of a late beloved, the importance of martial arts and of silence’ In: Captain, “Indo Rulez! De Indische derde generatie in de Nederlandse letteren.” 265.
  20. Peter van Zonneveld lists ‘a dominant father figure: strong, silent, scared by the war’ as one of the characteristics of second-generation Indo literature. Peter van Zonneveld, “Indische literatuur van de twintigste eeuw,” *Europa buitengaats. Koloniale en postkoloniale literaturen in Europese talen*, ed. Theo D’Haen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002). 148.
  21. Marion Bloem, *Muggen mensen olifanten. Reizen door een veranderende wereld* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1995).
  22. Maak je niet druk om die stad. Je bent er alleen maar geboren, verder niets.
  23. “Het Indië van haar voorouders is misschien gestorven waar het geboren was: in hun verhalen.” Bloem, *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*. 196.
  24. B. Alkema, *Twaalf Soendaneesche en Javaansche sprookjes aan Hollandsche kinderen naverteld* (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1919). Another more suggestively colonial publication is B. Alkema, *Ons Insulinde. Hoe we ’t verkregen en wat het door ons werd* (Deventer: Dixon Charles, 1916).
  25. Cheryl McEwan, *Gender, Geography and Empire: Victorian Women Travellers in East Africa* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2000). 13.
  26. Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin. Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949* (London: Harper-Collins, 1994). 114.
  27. Mijn jonge Balinese vriendin.
  28. Ze knijpt me in mijn arm en fluistert: ‘Takut’, wat ‘bang’ betekent.
  29. I follow Marie Louise Pratt in using the Bakhtinian concept of ‘heteroglossia’ to point to the presence of ‘local’ or ‘foreign’ words and phrases in travel writing. “Heteroglossia” is coined by Michael Bakhtin in: Michael Bakhtin, translated by Caryl Emerson



- and Michael Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981). 263. Here “heteroglossia” refers both to the diversity of social speech types and the diversity of individual voices characterising the novel and to the internal stratification of any national language.
30. Ik vertaal wat hij zegt. Maar ik zeg alles iets vriendelijker.
  31. See for instance, Bloem, *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*. 124-125. During a journey to Indonesia with her mother, they visit an old acquaintance who offers them tea. As the protagonist remembers, her mother taught her that in the Dutch East Indies/Indonesia it is considered polite to refuse when people offer you tea or food. On birthday parties in Holland, however, this custom made her different from the other Dutch children.
  32. Volgens mij brengen die dingen ongeluk.
  33. The belief in magic is usually referred to as ‘the silent force’ or *guna guna*, also *goena goena*. In Bloem’s literary work, *goena goena* is a constant element in the articulation of Indo postmemory. The magical is usually depicted as constituting an integral part of her Indo upbringing, once more, it is an element which distances her from ‘Dutch’ society. E.g. “Ze herinnert zich iets van een verbod. Ringen die je op de WC niet om mocht houden. Krachten die verloren gaan.” (She remembers some kind of prohibition. Rings you could not wear on the toilet. Powers that disappear.) Bloem, *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*. 191.
  34. Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000). 2.
  35. Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation*. *ibid.* Cronin draws on Roman Jakobson’s identification of three kinds of translation: interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation. The kind of translation which Roman Jakobson termed intersemiotic refers to the translation between different semiotic systems. The other two kinds of translation considered by Jakobson are the intralinguistic translation, within one single language (e.g. finding a synonym in English), and interlinguistic (and thus intrasemiotic) translation (e.g. to substitute a French word for an English one). Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).
  36. Bij ons worden ze beter bewaard dan in het oerwoud. Wij behandelen hun kunstschatten met meer respect dan zij. Zelf zien ze er de waarde niet van. (33) “Left to our care, they will be preserved better than in the jungle. We treat their art treasures with more respect than they do. They do not recognise their value.”
  37. Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001); John Hutnyk, *The Rumour of Calcutta: Tourism, Charity and Representation* (London: Zed Books, 1996).
  38. Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995). 98.
  39. J. Moerman, “Mensen muggen olifanten: Reizen door een veranderende wereld. Marion Bloem,” *Dagblad Tubantia* 05-05-1995.
  40. Bloem, *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*. For instance, 27-28 and 37.
  41. Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995). 117.

42. Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. 114. For a more extensive discussion of Dutch colonial policy and the debate about miscegenation in the Netherlands Indies, see 153-154.
43. Deze vraag uit zijn mond is merkwaardig, want de Balinezen die hier werken weten al vele jaren dat ik getrouwd ben en zouden zich nooit voor zoiets laten gebruiken.
44. Honderd dollar? Daar moet hij normaal driekwart jaar voor werken!
45. 'Dus voor honderd dollar is de *adat* verkocht,' zucht ik.
46. Esther Captain, "'Een soort zusje en dus verboden terrein.' Indische generaties en relaties anno 2000," *Vertrouwd en vreemd. Ontmoetingen tussen Nederland, Indië en Indonesië*, eds. Esther Captain, Marieke Hellevoort and Marian van der Klein, (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000). 265.
47. Captain links up 'the metaphor of the family' with what she identifies as 'the incest taboo' existing among Indo of the second generation. This notion of 'incest taboo' refers to the seemingly prevailing cultural prohibition of having an Indo or Indonesian partner. See also "Iedere Indische jongen, laat staan elke volbloed Aziaat, was bij voorbaat als minnaar uitgesloten, alsof het om incest ging." (Every Indo boy, let alone a full-blooded Asian, was by definition rejected as lover.") Bloem, *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje*. 13.
48. Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: 20th Century Women's Travel Writing* (London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). 2.
49. Tim Youngs, *Travellers in Africa. British Travelogues, 1850-1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). 3.
50. The title of the novel *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje* (*Not a Common Indo Girl*) alludes to this difficulty in establishing affinities. The phrase *Geen gewoon Indisch meisje* emphasises that this novel is not about a 'common' Dutch, but rather about an Indo girl. Thus at the core of the protagonist's female identity is a cultural difference from the 'common' Dutch women's perspective. Moreover, if the adjective 'common' refers to the Indo girls of the first generation, the phrase indicates a difference between the Indo girl of the second-generation and those Indo girls from the first generation. According to this reading, the phrase emphasises that at stake is not an Indo girl who has assimilated into the Dutch culture, as these girls of the first generation did. Finally, if the adjective 'common' refers to the group of Indo people in the Netherlands, the title also emphasises that the protagonist cannot entirely affiliate with them.
51. Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London & New York: Zen Books, 1999). 5.
52. James Buzard, *The Beaten Track. European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). 4.
53. Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). 49.
54. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2000). viii.
55. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992). 38-39.
56. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 80.

57. [om] de Papoea's de kans te geven om de Indonesische Merdeka op eigen wijze te vieren. Merdeka is a word in the Malay language meaning Independence. The term designated freedom from the Dutch colonial government during the struggle for independence in the 1940s. The Acehnese and West Papuan autonomy movements currently use the term to express the concept of freedom, and the meaning of the term ranges from greater freedom to outright political independence. The major autonomy movement in Aceh, the Free Aceh Movement has the term in its name (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka), as does the major armed independence group in West Papua, the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka).
58. Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds. The Tourist Papers* (London: Routledge, 1992); Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings." *The American Journal of Sociology* 79.3 (1973). 589.
59. MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds. The Tourist Papers*. 298.
60. Om toeristengroepen een idee van het leven van de Papoea te geven. Rondom de hutten zijn enkele palen en donkerrode en roze bloemen gepland om alles er wat gezelliger uit te laten zien.
61. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge & Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988). 4.
62. Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (London: Faber, 1996). As quoted in Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*. 13.
63. Ibid.
64. Marc kijkt verstoord. Geërgerd bergt hij zijn camera weer op.
65. Dat is toch geen onredelijke eis, [...] voor wat hoort wat!
66. Het is een rare gewaarwording, die twee Canadezen, de ene met peniskoker onder een palm met slap hangende bladeren, en de andere in een lamswollen trui naast me, die voorzichtig het ziekenfondsbrilletje op zijn neus zet.
67. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 82. The comic reversal of Eurocentred power relations and cultural norms remains, however, by no means restricted to eighteenth-century Orientalist writing. Also in contemporary culture, ample examples of comic reversals of Eurocentred power relations can be found. To name but a few; the Asian-British comedy series *Goodness Gracious Me*. "Many of the show's most successful moments were 'reversals', like the recurring sketch in which an Indian film crew making a travel documentary about London view it in the same patronising manner that such past fare had looked at Delhi or Bombay, and the first-edition sketch in which a bunch of drunk Indians at an English restaurant abuse the waiter and behave with typical English boorishness ('Give me something really bland, right')." Lewisohn, Mark. "Goodness Gracious Me." From *The Radio Times Guide to Television Comedy* (London: BBC Books, 2003) Another example is the visual art work *Me Series (1997-2000)* by the Iranian French artist Ghazel in which the artist is staged as a veiled woman performing 'typically' Western everyday activities, such as mowing the grass and playing squash. Smith, Terry. "Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity." In: *Critical Inquiry*, volume 32 (2006): 681-707.
68. Hij staart Yessaye aan, en grijpt naar zijn gezicht, naar zijn neus, zoals een preutse vrouw opeens haar borsten kan bedekken als ze zich in haar naaktheid betrapt voelt.

69. Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. 65.

## Chapter Five

1. Doris Lessing, *African Laughter. Four Visits to Zimbabwe* (London: Harper Collins, 1992); Doris Lessing, *Terug naar Afrika. Vier bezoeken aan Zimbabwe*, trans. Geertje Lammers (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1994).
2. The notion of 'bricolage' was introduced in the social sciences by Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* of 1966. As an aesthetic technique, it is used in literary criticism to understand the practice of using bits and pieces of older artefacts to produce a new work of art. It has also been characterised as a postmodern aesthetic, since the deliberate plucking of elements out of their original contexts and bringing them together arbitrarily often serves the blurring of traditional distinctions between the old and the new as well as between high and low art. Dick Hebdige has used the notion to explain how subculture style operates: "The bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or [places] that object within a different total ensemble ..." Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1987). 104.
3. See David Shapiro, *Social Realism: Art as a Weapon* (New York: Ungar, 1973); David K. Herzberger, "Social Realism and the Contingencies of History in the Contemporary Spanish Novel," *Hispanic Review* 59.2 (1991).
4. Doris Lessing, *The Grass Is Singing* (London: Michael Joseph LTD, 1950); Doris Lessing, *Martha Quest and a Proper Marriage. Books One and Two of Children of Violence* (Bristol: Bristol Typesetting, 1964); Doris Lessing, *This Was the Old Chief's Country* (London: Michael Joseph, 1973); Doris Lessing, *Going Home* (London: Michael Joseph LTD, 1957).
5. Shirley Budhos, Judith Gardiner and Ann Singleton made this observation also. See Shirley Budhos, *The Theme of Enclosure in Selected Works of Doris Lessing* (New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1987). 21; Judith Kegan Gardiner, *Rhys, Stead, Lessing and the Politics of Empathy* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989). 83-85; Mary Ann Singleton, *The City and the Veld. The Fiction of Doris Lessing* (London: Bucknell Associated University Presses, 1977). 185.
6. This is also Michael Thorpe's conviction, Michael Thorpe, *Doris Lessing's Africa* (London: Evans Brothers, 1978). 5.
7. Doris Lessing, *Martha Quest and a Proper Marriage. Books One and Two of Children of Violence*. (Bristol: Bristol Typesetting, 1964). 65.
8. Visel, *White Eve in the "Petrified Garden": The Colonial African Heroine in the Writing of Olive Schreiner*, Isak Denisen, *Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer*. 104-141.
9. Visel, *White Eve in the "Petrified Garden": The Colonial African Heroine in the Writing of Olive Schreiner*, Isak Denisen, *Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer*.
10. Another example is the short story "The Old Chief Mshlanga", in which a white girl searches for the kraal of Chief Mshlanga, whose son works as a cook in her mother's kitchen. Her search brings her "beyond our boundaries on that side [where] the country was new to me." In the story, Chief Mshlanga and his son are presented for the purpose of expressing the girl's genuine interest in black servants. Her interest distin-

guishes her from her mother, who is interested in the chief's son being a 'good' native, rather than in his noble background. The girl's interest in the servant, particularly since it brings her outside the boundaries of her home, indicates that the short story "The Old Chief Mshlanga" spatially maps out the white girl's desire to flee the white settlers' private space. Lessing, *This Was the Old Chief's Country*. 165.

11. Lorna Sage, *Doris Lessing* (London & New York: Routledge, 1983). 28.
12. Michael Thorpe, "Interview Doris Lessing," *Kunapipi* 4.2 (23 June 1980). 102.
13. Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (London: Harper Collins, 1962).
14. Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*. 51.
15. Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*. 86.
16. Gardiner, Rhys, *Stead, Lessing and the Politics of Empathy*. 120.
17. Rita Felski. "Introduction." *New Literary History*. 33. Special Issue on the Everyday (2002): 610.
18. See Jane Robinson. *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Karen R. Lawrence. *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the Literary Tradition* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1994); Doris Jedamski. *Images, Self-Images and the Perception of the Other: Women Travellers in the Malay Archipelago*. (Hull: University of Hull, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1995); Gillian Rose. *Feminist Geographies. Explorations in Diversity and Difference*. (Essex: Longman, 1997); Sidonie Smith. *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing*. (London & Minneapolis: University Press, 2001).
19. Sara Mills. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1991); Inderpal Grewal. *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender and the Cultures of Travel*. (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996).
20. Jan Borm, "Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology," *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, eds. Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), vol. 19 of *Studies in European Cultural Transition*, eds. Martin Stannard and Greg Walker. 17.
21. In my MA dissertation I have analysed bricolage in Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote: Which was a Dream* as a technique used for the subversion of gender identity. Sarah De Mul, "Spaces of Neither/Nor: Homosexual Pirates in Heterotopian Worlds. The Subversion of Gender Identity in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream*," MA Thesis, University of Antwerp, 2000.
22. Erica van Boven and Gillis Dorleijn, *Literair mechaniek. Inleiding tot de analyse van verhalen en gedichten* (Bussum: Coutinho, 2003). 249.
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## Conclusion

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