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## Between Utopia and Home

Swedish radical travel writing 1947-1966

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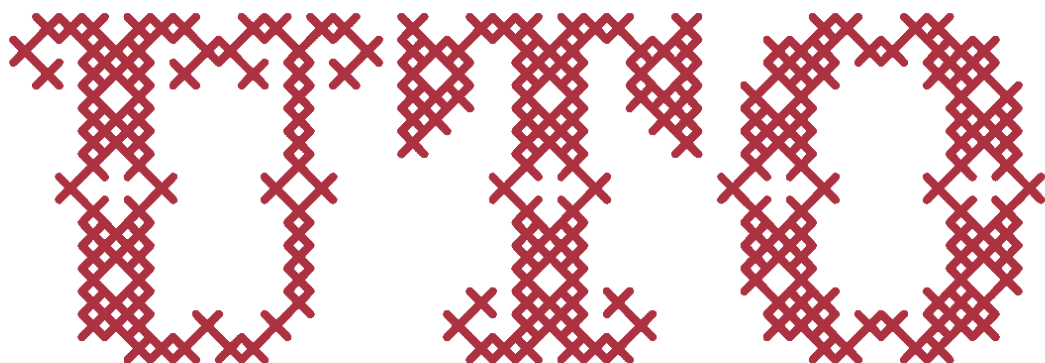
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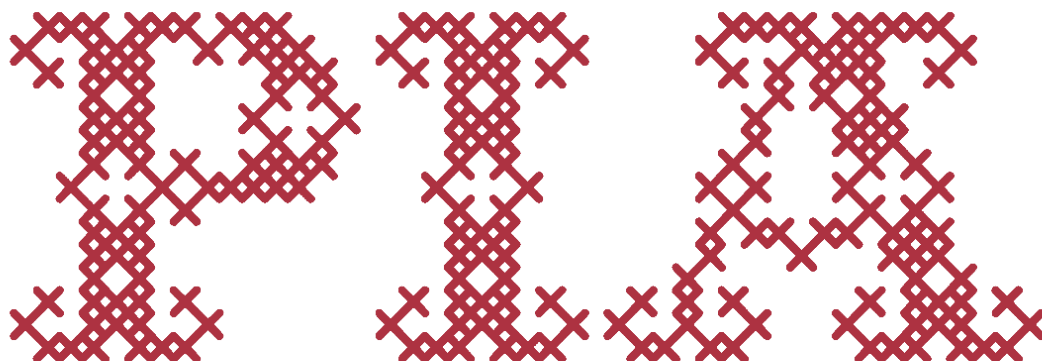
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# Between Utopia and Home

SWEDISH RADICAL TRAVEL WRITING 1947–1966

*Agneta Edman*





## BETWEEN UTOPIA AND HOME



# Between Utopia and Home

Swedish radical travel writing 1947–1966

AGNETA EDMAN



**LUND**  
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So, now I have reached the inner circle of my life. I would like to thank my dear parents, Kurt and Birgitta Edman, for their never-ending faith and support. And my darling sister, Gunilla Edman, for always being my soldier, always. Then there are the kids, Axel, Emilia, and my son, the one and only Hektor. I am not sure if there is anything specific I can thank you for, apart from keeping me grounded, proud, and very amused.

As I write this, I am sitting by the window in my favourite spot in Love Coffee Roasters. Thank you Alex, Daniel, Ebba, Hanna, Jacob, Julia, and Steven for a lovely workspace, excellent coffee, and sad boy music.

April 2017

## I. Introduction

The writers can help us to believe in the utopia of internationalism in the same manner as they did when the utopian ideas dealt with democracy and social justice in our own nook of the world.<sup>1</sup>

This is a study of anti-colonial travel accounts from different parts of the world outside Europe, loosely described as the ‘Third World’. The accounts were published between 1947 and 1966 and were written by Swedish intellectuals: Eric Lundqvist, Artur Lundkvist, Signe Höjer, Elly Jannes, Olle Strandberg, Åke Sparring, Herbert Tingsten, Anders Ehnmark, Sara Lidman, Sven Lindqvist, Jan Myrdal, and Per Wästberg. They were, and in some cases still are, influential journalists, novelists, activists, and/or academics who, again loosely, can be described as connected to or influenced by a certain Nordic school or tradition of thought known as *kulturradikalism*, often translated as ‘cultural radicalism’ or ‘intellectual modernism’. This tradition is characterized by a rational, analytical stance familiar from the Enlightenment, by liberal and/or socialist ideologies, but also by ideas of individual emancipation and radical cultural and social change that can be considered romantic. These radical and modernist intellectuals left Sweden and Europe in order to travel in Africa, South America, and Asia, reporting back on their experiences and impressions, offering descriptions of poverty, oppression, social injustice, and racism, but also of change, hope, and development. Many of the travel books they produced were soon considered significant in the radicalization process that unfolded in the post-war years and peaked at the end of the sixties during the Vietnam movement.

The travel account in itself, as a genre, is also interesting as a source of rich insights into how a writer positions him- or herself relative to cultural, historical and social structures he or she does not belong to or has not experienced before. There is a difference between sitting at your desk, producing texts on a subject, and heading out to look for yourself, with the new perspectives that brings. Also, one cannot

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1 Olof Palme, ‘Politiker och författare’, *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, 3 (1960), 226–34, quote at 231. All translations unless otherwise stated are my own.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

underestimate the authority that comes from having been there, from seeing it for yourself, in a political and intellectual setting, with the critical travel account and the position of the travel writer a case in point.<sup>2</sup>

There are, however, instances where these critical and anti-colonial travel books disclose complex ties to what we today would consider expressions of European privilege and power, of a colonial mind-set or culture where norms and ideas of race, sexuality, and gender meet, intersect, and sometimes undermine one another. This becomes an area even more worthy of study given the tendency in the post-war years among Swedish politicians and intellectuals to emphasize Sweden's supposed 'innocence', having not partaken in the European scramble for the rest of the world, and leaving the Swedes untainted by imperialist 'attitudes', as opposed to, say, the British.<sup>3</sup> This, along with Sweden's non-aligned status in relation to the two super-powers, became a rhetorical point of departure when they tried to define an international role in a new global setting, as the consequences of the decolonization process and the Cold War redrew the map.

I might add that this self-image is poorly founded. Åke Holmberg made it quite clear in his study of the Swedes' impression of non-European areas and peoples, that Sweden do not differ from other European nations: 'Swedish publicists have identified with Europe, the West, Christendom, and the white race. "We" in Sweden is the same "we" as in France or any other prominent European country.'<sup>4</sup> He also notes that the Swedish press published articles on Swedes who were presented as successful contributors to the exploitation of Congo in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>5</sup> Tor Sellström, too, states that even if Sweden as a nation never embarked on a large-scale colonial mission or expansion, Swedes, as individuals, might very well have taken advantage of other nations' exploitation of different parts of the world outside Europe.<sup>6</sup> Positive (and racist) statements on colonialism occur even in the 1950s: Sellström catalogues the blatant racism levelled especially against Africans in the

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2 This became a requirement in the later sixties, not to mention the seventies, as the report book genre was established and became highly influential. See Monika Edgren, *Hem tar plats: Ett feministiskt perspektiv på flyttandets politik i 1970-talets sociala rapportböcker*, Sekel (Lund, 2011); Margareta Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar, 1950–1975*, Lund University Press (Lund, 1988); and Annika Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, Atlas (Stockholm, 2004).

3 See Palme, 'Politiker och författare', 231.

4 Åke Holmberg, *Världen bortom västerlandet*, ii: *Den svenska omvärldsbilden under mellankrigstiden*, Kungliga Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället (Gothenburg, 1994), 23.

5 Ibid. 43.

6 Tor Sellström, *Sweden and national liberation in Southern Africa*, i: *Formation of a popular opinion 1950–1970*, Nordic Africa Institute (Uppsala, 2003), 58. The poet Gunnar Ekelöf travelled as a young man of means to Menton, having planned to meet someone who was supposedly to help him establish a coffee plantation in Kenya. This person never showed up and Ekelöf returned eventually to Sweden; Johan Svedjedal, *Spektrum 1931–1935: Den svenska drömmen*, Wahlström & Widstrand (Stockholm, 2011), 91.

1950s, quoting from a school textbook from 1946 that remained in use throughout the fifties, according to which Africans did not possess ‘the intelligence and the willingness to work of the white race’. The authors of this textbook continued by stating that ‘The white man is the master of Africa, but without the work of the negroe he cannot benefit from the rich natural sources of the land’.<sup>7</sup> This was mirrored in the conservative journal *Svensk Tidskrift* [Swedish Journal] in the early 1960s, as Kim Salomon describes how different contributors warned against the dissolution of the colonial empires, since the ‘primitives’ would never be able to rule their own countries.<sup>8</sup>

In short, I am interested in these travel books as expressions of an anti-colonial critique and a willingness to change, but I am also interested in how this critique and will to formulate alternatives were both tempered and enabled by the limits of language and culture. Also, let us not forget the significance of cultural radicalism: what happened when this particular set of ideas, often utopian and with focus on universalism, bumped into other conditions and realities than the Swedish ones? The decolonization process created a number of new states that could be considered clean slates for those who were hoping for a future radically different from the past and the present.

The objective of the study is therefore to investigate how travel accounts can be related to a European (or Western) culture of colonialism, yet at the same time allow for a reading that recognizes the anti-colonial critique and the attempts to picture a different world in the future. The process is twofold. On the one hand, I trace the outlines of a colonial discourse, a discourse based on privilege and power; on the other I demonstrate how the texts can be read and interpreted as anti-colonial resistance to that very discourse by contemporaries of the travel writers as well as readers today. This ambition—to both criticize the texts and at the same time to make sense of the influences they represented—brings a series of paradoxes to the fore.

One of them concerns the privilege of hindsight, of measuring the past against a standard: for example, a critical theoretical framework that disallows and judges. Martin Kylhammar discusses a similar crux in his study of cultural radicalism. He argues that the study of history is important for modern society in two respects. First, it provides a deconstructive reminder that what is considered ‘natural’ or a ‘given’ today was once one choice or alternative among many, and can be described as a social and cultural construction with roots in the past. Some of these constructions are upheld by power relations, and that realization might force people out of their habitual thinking, pushing them to argue for their own choices. Second, and

7 Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 64.

8 Kim Salomon, *Rebeller i takt med tiden: FNL-rörelsen och 60-talets politiska ritualer*, Tiden (Stockholm, 1996), 83.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

more importantly for my purposes, the study of history offers opportunities to investigate and handle what Kylhammar calls durable dilemmas. He exemplifies this by describing how different scholars have criticized social engineering or information films for housewives as instances of power and authority, where in fact ordinary people were being bullied by the state or various experts. Kylhammar argues that there is little, if anything, to learn from such 'moralistic' analyses, limited to assessing the actions of those who lived before you by the standards of your own perspective and time. Instead, one has to make an effort to discern which dilemma was a factor in the different situations and settings—in his example, the recurring dilemma of the asymmetric relationship between experts and the public, which is an unavoidable element in certain societies. The role of the researcher is to evaluate, critically, whether one particular situation in one particular period, be it social engineering or films for housewives, represented a humane or acceptable solution to that particular dilemma, given the available opportunities at the time. He adds two questions: Could it have been dealt with in a more reasonable manner? And are we better at dealing with this dilemma today?<sup>9</sup> If I apply this stance to my own research, I distinguish two dilemmas, one concerning the asymmetric relations of the privileged, able to report from the realm of the less privileged,<sup>10</sup> the other concerning the restrictions (cultural, social, linguistic) that stipulated critique when communicated to others who were less convinced.

So, have things changed in the case of travel writing? Are we *simon-pure*, free from a colonial culture that manifested itself through repeated representations of race, gender, and sexuality that solidified the elevated position of Europe, the West, or the travel writer her- or himself? Looking at relatively recent research on contemporary travel writing, in this particular case travel/lifestyle magazines, I would say no: Emilia Ljungberg demonstrates how travel articles on Southeast Asia abound with fantasies of the eternal, natural, and spiritual 'East', with free access to smiling and complying 'exotic' women, characterized by colonial tropes (both racist and sexist). Ljungberg makes a point of how other discourses influence the articles as well, but it is still enough for me to claim that the European/Western/Swedish travel writers have access to other parts of the world as a stage or spectacle of fantasies and desires, carefully packaged for consumption by their readers.<sup>11</sup>

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9 See Martin Kylhammar, 'Bryt upp! Bryt upp! Om den moderna konsten att göra sig kvitt det förflutna', in Martin Kylhammar & Michael Godhe (eds.), *Frigörare? Moderna svenska samhällsdrömmar*, Carlssons (Stockholm, 2005), 36–7; see also Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, 'Från patriarkat till genussystem—och vad kommer sedan?' *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, 3 (1992).

10 Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, offers a detailed discussion of report books.

11 Emilia Ljungberg, *Global Lifestyles: Constructions of places and identities in travel journalism*, Makadam (Göteborg, 2012) *passim*; see also Lisa Killander-Braun, *På resa med Vagabond 1998 och 2001*, Institutionen för journalistik, medier och kommunikation, Stockholms universitet

Also, there is the dilemma of theoretical critical purity, of creating a tension between a critical starting point and a theoretical framework, devoid of the very traits you wish to disclose and unravel in the ‘tainted’ source material, the remnants of a past. But what happens when a theorist’s critical observations coincide with the standpoints of a source, when they describe the same or a similar situation or phenomena?

An example of this is Jan Myrdal’s account of his travels in Afghanistan, *Kulturers korsväg* [Crossroads of Cultures], published in 1960. There are several and repeated tropes on race, sexuality and gender in this book, which can be interpreted in terms of a colonial discourse, but that does not mean that one can dismiss it as corrupted or having failed in its intent. For instance, when Myrdal argues for his and his partner’s choice to travel in Afghanistan, he describes how hard it is for him to find relevant information about the country, that even encyclopaedias are ripe with misconceptions and mistakes concerning the area. They have the place as ‘Afghanistan’, where the people speak ‘Afghan’, with little connection to the actual nation—a sort of a fantasy, and this in contexts where one might expect far greater accuracy. Myrdal also interprets the travel accounts and other stories from Afghanistan he can find (mostly British), in which Afghans come across as brutes and barbarians, as conditioned by the colonial context. The West’s imperialist ambitions are buttressed by an ideology that makes occupation seem not only natural, but almost a blessing.<sup>12</sup>

These observations can be compared with the work of Edward Said, one of the most important theorists in the field of postcolonial studies, who points to the exact same relationship: that constructions and representations of brutish Asians or ‘Orientals’ were necessary if colonial expansion, the European scramble, were to seem legitimate, rational, and even humane. Nevertheless, I am expected to use the one, Said, in order to measure the critical scope of the other, Myrdal. The irony is not lost on me. Yet this is a dilemma I cannot escape entirely, and to refer to the anthropologist Anna Tsing, my ambition is to manoeuvre within the confines of it.<sup>13</sup>

In the following I will develop frameworks that enable me to investigate travel accounts in a manner that encompasses my ambition of both identifying and discussing expressions of a colonial discourse and at the same time placing them in the historical context. There is no need for me to pose the question whether there are

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(Stockholm, 2006). Ljungberg makes the observation that postcolonial theorists such as Said and Pratt tend to finish their critical historical studies by demonstrating how the orientalist/colonial discourses are alive and well in the present (ibid. 164); see also David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial discourse in journalism, travel writing, and imperial administration*, Duke University Press (Durham, 1993).

12 Jan Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 1960), *passim*.

13 Quoted in Matti Bunzl, foreword in Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How anthropology makes its object*, Columbia University Press (New York, 2014 [1983]), xxiii.



elements of a colonial worldview in the travel accounts; there is no call for feigned surprise at that. A valid question, however, is which are the elements or tropes from a colonial discourse that can be found. And when identified, how can I understand and interpret those tropes against the particularities of Swedish intellectual, political, and cultural life from 1947 to 1966? What was the character and context of these tropes? What meant that they were not read and interpreted as colonial or imperialist by the audience at the time? I keep returning to this point, but it is important to remember that these travel accounts were considered critical and anti-colonial. Another question I wish to pursue is if, and if so, to what extent, the social criticism of cultural radicalism affected the travel writing. Did the political and cultural ambitions of cultural radicalism travel with the writers, or did their convictions, ideas, and hopes change in pace with their travel experiences, when the writers were faced with reality beyond the familiar?

In either case, it is hard to convince others of your standpoint unless you phrase it using the discursive repertoire on offer. Annika Olsson has pointed out that if texts are not read, they should not be thought subversive and cannot instigate change—a good reminder.<sup>14</sup> Simply, if you wish to inspire change, there is a limit to how avant-garde you can be. Also, by pointing out contradictions between ambition and performance (in hindsight) without trying to make sense of them beyond having proved the existence of a colonial discourse, all the researcher can achieve is to suggest that the writers in question are not critical enough. It becomes a case of ‘catching someone with their pants down’ but nothing more.

So, I begin with the theoretical framework, developing a set of methodological tools, and then I present the historical context that is necessary for the ‘sense-making’, with special emphasis on cultural radicalism. It is also within the historical context that I argue for my selection of travel writers and accounts. This introductory chapter ends with a presentation of the chapters ahead.

## Theoretical and methodological framework

The genre of travel literature is fragmented and hard to define: seafarers’ letters, scientific reports, private journals, even fiction, as will be demonstrated further on, can be included. Travellers are an equally fragmented group: explorers, journalists, scientists, tourists, migrants, and religious and political pilgrims. Carl Thompson layers several definitions of travel writing on top of one another, drawing on different theorists to characterize travel literature as a ‘retrospective, first-person account of the author’s own experience of a journey, or of an unfamiliar place or people’, and

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<sup>14</sup> Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 106.

furthermore that 'the personal or subjective aspect of that narrative is often very pronounced'.<sup>15</sup> He then adds that the account must possess certain literary, aesthetic qualities, and not just communicate information, yet at the same time it should confer a sense of truth, of the narrator being an eyewitness.<sup>16</sup> The travel writer, then, needs to straddle two roles—'that of reporter' and 'that of story-teller'—in order to collect and relay information and then to 'present it in an enjoyable, or at least easily digestible way'.<sup>17</sup> Thompson also discusses the status of travel writing, in certain periods and settings considered a low-brow genre, while at other times, for example, in the interwar years presented by Thompson as 'the golden years', celebrated writers and intellectuals produced travel accounts of considerable quality.<sup>18</sup>

I would perhaps even suggest that the supposed harmlessness and popularity of the genre (of which 'low-brow' tends to be an indication) present opportunities for intellectuals and writers with ambitions to reach a greater audience. The travel account can function as a transmitter of (subversive) ideas and standpoints intended to effect change. Mary Louise Pratt, one of the earlier and most influential theorists of travel writing, hints at this when she describes the writings by Flora Tristan, an early socialist and feminist: 'In the guise of travel accounts, she wrote critiques of social conditions in England (*Promenade in London*, 1840) and France (*A Tour of France*, unpublished till 1977).'<sup>19</sup> Richard Phillips offers a similar interpretation in his investigation of Richard Burton's travel writing, with particular focus on his theory of a 'Sotadic Zone', leading to a search for areas where sexual relationships between men and boys were not only accepted but celebrated: 'I will argue that Burton used travel ... as a medium in which to contest contemporary constructions of sexuality, and more specifically to protest against contemporary homophobia.'<sup>20</sup> In the case of Burton, one is hard pressed to sympathize with his project, considering the trafficking, sex tourism, and exploitation of children both now and then, but his remains an example of how the 'harmless' genre of travel writing could be utilized as a medium for radical ideas. Sometimes perhaps so radical that a considerable distance (actual and metaphorical) between the intended audience and the subject matter was necessary for the readers to at least muster good will.

Apart from being considered a lowbrow genre in general, travel writing was ra-

15 Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing*, Routledge (London, 2011), 14.

16 Ibid. 15.

17 Ibid. 27.

18 Ibid. 58–9. He mentions D. H. Lawrence, André Gide, George Orwell, and Rebecca West among others.

19 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge (London, 1992), 156.

20 Richard Phillips, 'Writing Travel and Mapping Sexuality: Richard Burton's Sotadic Zone', in James Duncan & Derek Gregory (eds.), *Writes of Passage: Reading travel writing*, Routledge (London, 1999), 70. See also Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 179.

rely thought an object worthy of academic study. Looking to the past, before the linguistic turn and introduction of new cultural history, historians often dismissed travel accounts as too subjective and unreliable as sources, while literary historians and scholars of comparative literature seem to have considered the genre subordinate to belles-lettres and poetry, comparable to other genres based on life experience such as biographies and autobiographies.<sup>21</sup> With the introduction of postcolonialism or postcolonial theory to Western universities, bringing new critical perspectives on the history and position of Europe and the West, interest in travel books soared. They became sources not only of the individual writers' ideas and attitudes expressed as their experiences and impressions, but also of the entire mindset that presupposed and legitimized colonialism.<sup>22</sup>

### Orientalism and postcolonial theory

It is a fundamental tenet of postcolonial theory that the West (or Europe) is culturally constructed as a mirror image of an Other, based on the assumption that groups and societies need to pose themselves against what they consider an antagonistic counterpart in order to create their imagined community. It does not stop there, however. In the case of the West/Europe, the process of mirroring aimed at non-Western and non-European areas and cultures has buttressed colonial and imperialist ambitions. The construed self-image of a civilized, enlightened Westerner as opposed to a supposed uncivilized, backward, and superstitious non-Westerner led to and legitimized exploitation, violence, and oppression of peoples and areas far beyond European borders. The aim of the research done with the assistance of postcolonial theory is thus to investigate and analyse all expressions of the overarching ideology that permeates Western life: popular culture, science, education, politics,

21 See, for example, Raoul Granqvist, 'Tidernas resor', in id. (ed.), *Villfarelsens blick: Essäer om resan som kultur*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 1996), 7–18; and James M. Buzard, 'What Isn't Travel?' in Schulz-Forberg, *Unravelling Civilisation*.

22 Thompson, *Travel Writing*; Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, CUP (Cambridge, 2013). Examples of Swedish dissertations on history and travel writing are Mark Davies, *A Perambulating Paradox: British travel literature and the image of Sweden c.1770–1865*, Historiska institutionen, Lunds universitet (Lund, 2000); Hanna Hodacs, *Covering Worldviews: The European expansion and early nineteenth-century Anglo-Swedish contacts*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (Uppsala, 2003); Amanda Lagerkvist, *Amerikafantasier: Kön, medier och visualitet i svenska reseskildringar från USA 1945–1963*, Institutionen för journalistik, medier och kommunikation, Stockholms universitet (Stockholm, 2005); and Maria Nyman, *Resandets gränser: Svenska resenärers skildringar av Ryssland under 1700-talet*, Södertörn doctoral dissertations/Studia historica Lundensia (Huddinge, 2013). See also Charlotte Tornbjær, *Att resa till framtiden? Svenska resenärers föreställningar om kvinnan och familjen i Sovjetunionen*, in Klas-Göran Karlsson & Kristian Gerner (eds.), *Rysk spegel. Svenska berättelser om Sovjetunionen – och om Sverige*, Nordic Academic Press (Lund, 2008).

intellectual debate et cetera. One of the consequences of postcolonial theory is a renewed interest in travel writing as a source, while tracing and mapping the conceptions that underpin texts and other forms of expression of the Other—the curious ‘not-us’, inhabiting the unknown lands beyond.

The starting point of this field of research is considered to be *Orientalism*, an extensive study of the relationship between the West/Europe and the East, or the Orient, published in 1978 by the American Palestinian literary historian Edward W. Said. It has been stated time after time that Said was by no means the first to disclose the connections between colonialism and Western science, humanities, and culture. Edward Said himself mentioned A. L. Tibawi, Abdullah Laroui, Anwar Abdel Malek, S. H. Alatas, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Pannikar, and Romila Thapar, ‘all of whom had suffered the ravages of imperialism and colonialism, and who in challenging the authority, provenance, and institutions of the science that represented them to Europe, were also understanding themselves as something more than what this science said they were’.<sup>23</sup> Yet, *Orientalism* is considered by many to be a seminal work, pervasive enough to inspire even today.

The main point of *Orientalism* was that there is no such thing as disinterested knowledge of the Orient. In fact, the Orient itself, as a concept and as an area of investigation and conquest, is a discursive construction, a result of more or less blatant Western racism and of inter-referentiality. The Orient has been constructed as the Other, a contrasting picture against which the West can articulate and refine a humanitarian, rational, civilized identity. The West defines itself in terms of an Orient that in turn is represented as a repository of flaws and evils. This self-image was the basis of the Western expansion and imperialism: greed and aggression were camouflaged as a civilizing mission. What provoked both criticism and inspiration was the way Said demonstrated the ties between the construction of the Orient as an area of conquest and as an area of scientific investigation—academic orientalists participated implicitly in the destruction and occupation. Said calls this identity-generating construction Orientalism, which is a ‘corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it’.<sup>24</sup> Said touched on the extent of this construction when he claimed that the academic achievements of scholarly orientalists such as Edward William Lane should be seen as born out of the ‘same impulse’ as Victorian pornographic novels and the academic racialism of Arthur de Gobineau and Ernest Renan.<sup>25</sup>

23 Edward Said, ‘Orientalism Reconsidered’, in Francis Barker et al. (eds.), *Europe and its Others*, University of Essex Press (Colchester, 1985), i. 17.

24 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1995 [1978]), 3.

25 Ibid. 8.

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In order to describe and investigate this complex and vast system of utterances and practices, Said chose to use the Foucauldian concept of discursive formation, which gave him the broad scope he needed. Yet, he transformed discourse theory by emphasizing the importance of individual writers in the process.<sup>26</sup> He also wished to take a more critical stance on discourse theory by introducing Antonio Gramsci and the notion of cultural hegemony, a notion that introduced a more distinct and tangible understanding of manifest power, as opposed to the ever-present machinations of micro power suggested by Michel Foucault. This could in turn offer an explanation of why Orientalism, as a way of cultural and political oppression, worked so well, both in the West and the East. Said could thereby explain its durability, since he traced Orientalism, in its most concrete form, back to the eighteenth century and saw no end to it.<sup>27</sup>

The conclusions of Said's book are based on extensive source material: it stretches from eighteenth-century academic expositions and colonial administrative material to American films from the 1970s and academic works on Islam by Western scholars. Said also discussed travel accounts written by French and British travellers in the Orient. Interestingly enough, Said has been accused by many of painting too crude and simplistic a picture of orientalists, yet I find his analyses of travel accounts to be alert to individual, cultural, and historical diversity.<sup>28</sup>

### Orientalism and travel writing

Said described how writers and scholars started to travel to the Orient in greater numbers from the early nineteenth century onwards. He called the travellers pilgrims, perhaps to emphasize the process of search and longing, but also because the Orient represented, more or less disguised, the archaic biblical landscape. The aim of the travellers was to create something new, 'to dispel the mustiness of the pre-existing Orientalist archive. Their writing was to be a fresh new repository of Oriental experience', a desire that Said ultimately dismissed as largely unattainable.<sup>29</sup> He seemed to regard the travellers as intermediaries between scholarly orientalism and orientalism as imperialism, with its exercise of political and economic power.

The distinctions between different writers are made clear, however. Said discusses, for example, how assumptions differed between the French and British travel wri-

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26 Ibid. 3, 23.

27 Ibid. 6–7; see also Edward Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic*, Vintage (London, 1991 [1983]), 221–2, 246–7.

28 One of the most ardent critics is the British historian John M. MacKenzie, for example his *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, MUP (Manchester, 1995). For an overview of the reaction to *Orientalism*, see Ulf Zander, *Clio på bio*, Historiska Media (Lund, 2006).

29 Said, *Orientalism*, 169.

ters, depending on the historical and geopolitical situation in the area. The British regarded India and by extension the Orient as a material possession, leading them to adopt a degree of realism in their style or tone. The French, on the other hand, apprehended the Orient in terms of absence or loss, and in turn gave full rein to their fantasies and dreams.<sup>30</sup> He also counterposes writers within the two groups: thus the ‘quasi-national egoism’ of Lamartine is set against the writings of Gustave Flaubert and Gerard de Nerval,<sup>31</sup> and Alexander William Kinglake, who only expresses the ‘public and national will over the Orient’, against Richard Burton.<sup>32</sup> Flaubert, Nerval, and Burton represent what turns out to be a case in point: it is by means of their writings that Said discusses the nexus of conformity and challenge.

Flaubert and Nerval are described as romantic mystics, travelling in the Orient in order to experience ‘the invigoration provided by the fabulously antique and the exotic’. They were both in the quest of emotional and personal fulfilment, seeking the embodiment of visions, dreams, and sentiments. Edward Said distinguishes them from other orientalists and travellers, saying that they may very well have been closely connected to orientalism, but they also contributed something new, which in turn was an indication of independence. Said traces an open-minded curiosity and a commitment to the Orient in the *oeuvres* of the two writers. The Orient was always present in some sense in their work, whether novels, letters, or other writings, but it was never pinned down or dominated, and it remained ‘a roomy place full of possibility’. Said continues:

On the one hand, therefore, the scope of their Oriental work exceeds the limitations imposed by orthodox Orientalism. On the other hand, the subject of their work is more than Oriental or Orientalistic (even though they do their own Orientalizing of the Orient); it quite consciously plays with the limitations and the challenges presented to them by the Orient and by knowledge about it.<sup>33</sup>

The scope of the discursive formation allows challenge and subversion, but only within certain bounds. Flaubert and Nerval are not able to supersede the discourse of orientalism, only to introduce variations of it, to ‘do their own Orientalizing of the Orient’.

Richard Burton is described as a strong-minded, individualistic, and pugnacious academic and adventurer. Said sees him as an intermediary between the British and French positions: Burton was ‘the center of fantastic adventure and even fantasy (like

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 169–70.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 179–180.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 180–1.

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the French writers) as the authoritative commentator and detached Westerner on Oriental society and customs (like Lane)'. Said also points out that these two roles or positions did not seem to create a tension, Burton considered himself a rebel against the Victorian society he had left behind and 'a potential agent of authority in the East'.<sup>34</sup> Burton's achievements, his knowledge of the Arab language and society, his successful pilgrimage to Mecca, are described and dwelled on with great accuracy by Said, yet these achievements evaporated in the following:

Orientalism, which is the system of European or Western knowledge about the Orient, thus becomes synonymous with the European domination of the Orient, and this domination effectively overrules even the eccentricities of Burton's personal style. ... not only did the field evolve from a system of inspired observation into what Flaubert called a regulated college of learning, it also reduced the personalities of even its most redoubtable individualists like Burton to the role of imperial scribe.<sup>35</sup>

What Said was presenting was a sealed system of regulation and power, with no way out. He did take motives, diversity, and intentions into consideration, but only in order to strengthen the drama of the conclusion: none of the travellers, not even those who deliberately and explicitly tried, were able to escape the discourse. Rita Felski describes a similar approach when she discusses how Derrida 'begins with the assumption that concepts should be rigorous and scientific, only to subsequently mourn their failure to be so'.<sup>36</sup> I interpret this as a creation of a drama, and specifically a starting point from which one can pretend surprise when whatever one is investigating does not reach the standard.

Now, considering the emphasis Said put on the relationship between an orientalist, or colonial, discourse in travel writing and the actual exercise of colonial power, it seems pertinent to discuss to what extent this theory applies to Swedish travel writing, produced by anti-colonial intellectuals in the period of decolonization.

### Orientalism and Swedish travel writing

The literary historian Margareta Petersson was one of the first Swedish scholars to have written about Swedish travel from a postcolonial perspective. Her dissertation from 1988 deals with Swedish travel accounts of India in the period between 1950 and 1975, and she can discern a shift in attitudes and ambition around 1965, when the reports become either more subjective and explicitly political or the complete

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 194–5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 197.

<sup>36</sup> Rita Felski, 'Fear of Being Ordinary', *Tidskrift för kvinnoforskning*, 3–4, (2014), 320.



opposite, taking on a more academic and seemingly objective style.<sup>37</sup> Apart from tracing the radicalization and/or academization process in the Swedish context, Petersson places these accounts in a wider Western cultural context utilizing the theoretical framework of Edward W. Said in order to explain what she calls ‘the tradition’:

On one level the images of India and the West have gone through substantial changes. On another level there is a great continuity. A coherent cultural set of ideas and attitudes is to be discovered beyond the varied conceptions of India. This set of ideas and attitudes partly defines the West in relation to the rest of the world, partly locates the accounts of India in a distinct tradition.

This distinct tradition is the hegemonic orientalism introduced and developed by Said.<sup>38</sup> Petersson demonstrates the strength of orientalism in the same manner, that is, by pointing out remnants of a traditional and reactionary worldview in the travel accounts she analyses. She discusses for instance a travel book written by a young woman, Madeleine Kats. The author had explicitly made an effort to break through ‘the wall of Western thinking that is surrounding her’ and to reverse the perspective by accounting for her Indian friends’ reactions to everyday occurrences and habits in Sweden and the West. Yet, Madeleine Kats does, in spite of her ambitions, participate in the orientalist discourse by describing India as ‘Invariable, perpetual, timeless, shameless, a sucking marsh that absorbs everything within reach’, a description that Margareta Petersson connects to a traditional Western position. Petersson adds: ‘It becomes evident that clichés can survive also among writers who urgently try to find a way out.’<sup>39</sup>

### Colonial discourse analysis and travel writing

Moving on from a more abstract, theoretical level, there are several examples of studies on colonial discourse where the researchers have created concepts in order to describe the characteristics of the discourse. Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins have investigated how non-Western peoples are depicted in *The National Geographic Magazine*. Lutz and Collins distinguish four overarching, recurring themes that are used in the representation of otherness: exoticization, idealization, naturalization, and sexualization.<sup>40</sup> These themes overlap neatly with some of the tropes—literary or

<sup>37</sup> Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 207.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 57–8; see also Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine A. Lutz & Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, University of Chicago Press



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rhetorical figures—presented and discussed by David Spurr. He has written about travel writing as well as journalism and colonial administration. In his book, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, he compiles examples of the patterns of attitudes expressed in different sources, including travel literature, and describes twelve tropes that can be characterized as being part of a colonial discourse. He calls this process ‘mapping’, and the tropes are surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification, debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubstantialization, naturalization, eroticization, and resistance. He applies this model or scheme to more recent source material such as newspapers and magazines, and then traces each trope back in time to pinpoint its ‘genealogy’. The combined process of mapping and tracing genealogy demonstrates the persistence and scope of the colonial discourse, which in turn suggests that the colonial era is not over, not by far. At the same time, one of the tropes introduced, discussed, and illustrated by Spurr is called ‘resistance’, demonstrating an interest in subversion and challenge.<sup>41</sup> I, however, would hesitate to discuss resistance in terms of a trope, but rather a theme, as several of the tropes Spurr presents can be utilized as one is formulating instances of resistance.

Another one of the tropes that deserves special attention is eroticization. Meyda Yegenoglu, for instance, argues for a stronger awareness of a gender perspective in colonial discourse analysis in her criticism of *Orientalism*, pointing out that Said tended to consider issues of sexuality, desire, and fantasies a separate field while discussing the construction of an Oriental Other. Even if he noted the frequency of sexualized tropes, he declared that they called for another form of analysis than the one he was implementing in *Orientalism*. She instead argues that a feminist and psychoanalytical reading of the orientalist discourse could reach further than the one proposed by Said. She emphasizes that ‘The Western acts of understanding the Orient and its women are not two distinct enterprises, but rather are interwoven aspects of the same gesture’.<sup>42</sup>

Looking at how Said actually discusses gender and sexuality in *Orientalism*, he does not in any way deny its significance. While analysing Gustave Flaubert’s travel writing from Egypt, especially the accounts of his encounters with an Egyptian female dancer, Said notes that ‘Woven through all of Flaubert’s Oriental experiences ... is an almost uniform association between the Orient and sex. In making this association Flaubert was neither the first nor the most exaggerated instance of a remarkably persistent motif in Western attitudes to the Orient’. He then describes how the Orient is associated with fecundity, sexual promise, sexual threat, sensua-

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(Chicago, 1993), 89–117.

<sup>41</sup> Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, CUP (Cambridge, 1998), 25–6.

lity, and desire, all of it in unlimited scope, but he refuses to speculate on the reasons behind this, claiming that it is not the 'province' of his study.<sup>43</sup> So, Said does not in any way belittle the importance of gender or sexuality in *Orientalism*—he points both to scope and persistence—but the objective of his study is not to investigate why this connection exists. Also, I think that the perspective suggested by Yegenoglu, focused on women, might be too narrow, especially if the ambition is to discuss colonial culture and discourses in a broader sense.

Anne McClintock confirms the significance of gender and sexuality/desire as part of colonial discourse analysis in her broad study of British colonial culture, *Imperial Leather*, in which she analyses novels, exhibitions, advertisements, diaries, private photographs, and satirical drawings. However, McClintock is not only interested in gender, but rather the intersecting and interchanging perspectives and categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality. She also demonstrates the instability of the British metropolis and the colonial administration, which exposes British imperialism as a highly ambivalent, frail, and ruptured endeavour. The precarious nature of the project, as experienced by the British people, was mediated through different institutions such as the family and the army, where sentiments such as rage, fear, and desire came into play.<sup>44</sup>

The sets of tropes presented by Lutz and Collins, but especially Spurr, have been immensely helpful for my own work, offering a set of middle-range concepts to be used while reading and analysing the travel books at hand. However, there are also other perspectives that have proven useful.

## The unravelling

When Hagen Schulz-Forberg characterizes European travel writing, he uses the metaphor of unravelling, of writing of one's experiences as a form of sorting and organizing: 'It is an effort of representing truth on a foreign country in all its social, cultural and economic complexity as well as in all the simplicity of its stereotypes.'<sup>45</sup> The metaphor implies two things: that the writer has access to a position from which the unravelling can be done, and that there are paths along which the unravelling can be constructed as intelligible for the reader. And if the writers construct narratives, or 'paths', along which the unknown becomes known, one needs to treat them as such—that is, the analyses need to be based on them accordingly.

<sup>43</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 6, 188.

<sup>44</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial context*, Routledge (New York, 1995), 15.

<sup>45</sup> Hagen Schulz-Forberg, introduction in id. (ed.), *Unravelling Civilisation: European travel and travel writing*, PIE Lang (Brussels, 2005), 15.

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Concerning the authority of the writer, of finding a position, I follow Mary Louise Pratt. She has introduced the concept of the monarch-of-all-I-survey to describe a trope and rhetorical strategy especially among explorers (Stanley and Burton, for example), but she points out that the trope is still prevalent in contemporary travel writing. The trope is signified by a situation where the travel writer finds him- or herself at a vantage point in an elevated position—on a hill, mountaintop, balcony, or rooftop—from which they have an extended view that is described in an almost panoramic sense, but with a tinge of mastery, expressed as assessments. There are also instances where travel writers take it upon themselves to ‘fill’ what they consider ‘empty’ landscapes, looking for and defining prospects and possible futures by adding features to the vista, to fantasize about farms, factories, and harbours.<sup>46</sup> I would like to extend the trope of monarch-of-all-I-survey to the entire endeavour of travel writing, in order to be able to describe not only the ambition of the travel writer to unravel, but also the mastery, the privilege, involved in doing so. As an historian, I am interested in the temporal aspect as well, in scanning for possible futures in a landscape, where the writers create moments where time and place coincide.

In order to develop an understanding of this intersection of time and place, I will return to David Spurr. He describes how the scientific method of observation and systematization played a crucial (even fatal) role in the Western understanding and representation of non-Western cultures and societies. This scientific outlook on mankind was further developed in the later nineteenth century, when the influence of Darwinism grew stronger, and the aspect of time entered the hierarchy of complex and less complex economic, political, and social structures. So, when societies were classified according to their complexity, they were also constructing a history of man. The West represents the present times; ‘primitive’ societies, mainly African and Aboriginal, were remnants from the past.<sup>47</sup> The temporal aspect of the hierarchy of mankind implied that travelling in geographical terms also meant travelling in time. Anne McClintock calls this particular form of hierarchy and organization of the world ‘panoptical time’ and ‘anachronistic space’.<sup>48</sup>

The monarch-of-all-I-survey trope is equally useful in gauging the significance of the gaze for European travel writers. Yegenoglu writes extensively about travelogues and the Westerners’ desire to see and observe, arguing that ‘the gaze is considered as the central agent in acquisition of knowledge’.<sup>49</sup> She traces the desire to see, and therefore also to know back in time, to ‘the whole rationalist and epistemological tradition of Enlightenment’ and names it ‘occulocentrism’.<sup>50</sup> To reach into and be-

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<sup>46</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 201–205.

<sup>47</sup> Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 62–6, quote at 63.

<sup>48</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 36–42.

<sup>49</sup> Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 109.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 109–112.

hind, to really see what is behind closed doors, behind veils and in hidden areas, equals therefore true knowledge of the other. From the context of Bruno Malinowski's study *The Sexual Life of Savages*, Marianna Torgovnick suggests that the narrative structure stems from the ambition to gather information through close observation can take the form of a striptease, that the reader is 'seduced' into accepting acts of voyeurism.<sup>51</sup> Not a very compelling or flattering suggestion, but nonetheless relevant, as will be demonstrated later.

Leaving the European traveller's gaze and vantage point, I continue by discussing the ambition to unravel and assess the object and to inscribe meaning to it over time. Dipesh Chakrabarty has in great detail described this process of 'wordling of the world', with the objective to problematize and decentralize the position of Europe as the source and beginning of time, history, and change. Chakrabarty offers rich opportunities to ponder on the travel writer's urge to 'fill' the object—the landscapes, the regions, the peoples—with pasts, presents, and futures. He points out that the propensity to understand and describe societies and peoples in temporal terms is so strong that it is hard to distance oneself from it, 'the metanarrative of progress ... is thus deeply embedded in our institutional lives however much we may develop, as individual intellectuals, an attitude of incredulity toward such metanarratives'.<sup>52</sup> The metanarrative of progress, or 'development', is connected to what Chakrabarty describes as historicism, the philosophical and historical understanding that 'tells us that in order to understand the nature of anything in this world we must see it as an historically developing entity, that is, first, as an individual and unique whole ... and, second, as something that develops over time'.<sup>53</sup> Historicism in itself might therefore not be an issue, but complications arise when the centre of history and time is firmly placed in one location, in Europe. And the implications, according to Chakrabarty, are severe: 'Historicism enabled European domination of the world in the nineteenth century. ... Historicism is what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global, but rather as something that became global over time, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it'.<sup>54</sup> With European development and change as the focus of history, of time and development, it followed that different regions, societies, and peoples could be judged as 'incomplete', having failed to 'keep an appointment with its destiny'.<sup>55</sup>

As each European traveller entered new and unfamiliar areas, she or he would

51 Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive. Savage intellectuals, modern lives*, University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 1990), 7.

52 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*, 2nd edn, PUP (Princeton, 2007 [2000]), 88.

53 Ibid. 23.

54 Ibid. 7.

55 Ibid. 31.

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have access to a global theory that so permeated European thinking that even those who defined their philosophical or political standpoint in direct opposition to each other could find common ground in temporal thinking based on the European experience. The significance of this narrative, with its linear understanding, cannot be underestimated, whether it was Hegelian–Marxist stage theory or Ranke’s insistence on ‘the uniqueness of historical identity or event’.<sup>56</sup>

This global theory offered travellers a framework for their accounts aimed at readers at home, and Chakrabarty calls the objects of this sorting, organizing, and unravelling ‘time-knots’.<sup>57</sup> Unravelling a time-knot means that one organizes observations of objects, whether phenomena or events, along a timescale.

Applied to travel writing, one could expect the writer to search for signs of future hopes and past disappointments, trying to unravel the time-knot in the present, creating a ‘flat’ and linear narrative according to which societies can be judged and validated. The travel writer needs to hold a vantage point, whether figuratively or literally, in order to implement this theory by unravelling the foreign and the unknown, inscribing it into a global chronology of stages. And if applied to the particularities of Swedish, anti-colonial, modernist, radical travel writing, what kind of time-knots and assessments will the writers offer?

### Discourse analysis and reductionism

David Spurr discusses the perils of reductionism in his book. He claims that any project that involves constructing a taxonomy runs the risk of reduction, but he emphasizes that he is prepared to take this risk in order to see things in a larger context. He continues:

If I find that the language of the French in Algeria conforms in certain ways to that of the British in India or the Americans in the Philippines, it is not that I choose to ignore the substantial differences—political, cultural, ideological, geographical—which distinguish these encounters from one another. Rather, given the obvious differences, I have instead tried to identify the unexpected parallels and the common genealogies that unite these apparently disparate occasions of discourse.<sup>58</sup>

Spurr is obviously aware of the historical, political, cultural or geographical distinctions or particularities, but he chooses to emphasize similarity and continuity in order to construct a methodologically helpful model of an ideal type of the colo-

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 112–13.

<sup>58</sup> Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 3–4.

nial discourse. At the same time, this procedure needs to be handled with care, both when it comes to historical specificity, but also to those whose texts one is analysing. The discourse perspective can imply that the material somehow is disconnected from those who produced it. It is the colonial discourse that is to be criticized, not those who participated in it. Yet, there is a tendency to turn to the producers/participants whose 'fall' will create the most dramatic conclusion, such as a Burton or a Katz. No, the author is not dead, he or she is merely made to look stupid.

Of course, there is a certain short-lived pleasure in criticizing those hailed in the court of public opinion as brave and sharp-eyed truth-tellers, to point out that they were not able to rise above a dominant colonial discourse. The pleasure does wear off rather quickly, though. 'The colonial discourse' is not an ontological fact existing 'out there' for us to find. It is a methodological and critical approach. Spurr discusses the method of colonial discourse analysis as a way of organizing regularities and repetitions in an extensive material. You literally pick out what catches your eye in order to create an entity, a shared pattern or repertoire, something we can call a discourse. Spurr also points out that the approach implies that you overlook irregularities and differences in one sense, but in another sense the differences provide the starting point of the whole endeavour, since they strengthen the sensation of the regularities.

Petersson, like Said, homes in on the paradoxes that originate from the explicit ambitions of the travel writers and the texts they actually produce. What interests me is that the arguments are broadly based on an understanding of time that includes a modernist and/or teleological aspect. The process mirrors, ironically perhaps, the unravelling of time-knots as described by Chakrabarty. The scholars work through the travel writings, searching for tropes, filleting them out, and dividing them into two groups: innovations and remnants. The innovations are indications of the present or the future, and the residue is a disappointing reminder of a (conservative) past.

I will go on to present different attempts at exploring how orientalism or colonial discourse analysis can be utilized in relation to travel writing in the West, without dismissing it as a mere expression of an orientalist (or racist/colonial) ideology. At the same time, I do not wish to abandon the critical stance offered by the post-colonial perspective, because, to quote Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, 'It would be as foolish to claim of travel writing that it is uniformly imperialistic as it would be to defend travel writers as being harmless entertainers'.<sup>59</sup>

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59 Patrick Holland & Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical reflections on contemporary travel writing*, University of Michigan Press (Ann Arbor, 1998), ix.

## Constraints, contradictions, and critique

In order to develop the discussion on discursive constraints, and how contradictions can be discussed in relation to critique and a will to change, I leave the field of travel writing and turn to intellectual history, beginning with Mikela Lundahl. She discusses similar dilemmas in her book on the Négritude movement in France in the 1930s, and how the movement has been interpreted in hindsight. She points out how the anti-racist ambition of those who participated has subsequently been described as a form of racist anti-racism. The writers and poets explored an identity as black, defining themselves as negroes in a white and racist society—something which has been criticized as an expression of essentialism. This has in turn has been interpreted as a form of failure, with the anti-racism of Négritude never managing to escape the racist underpinnings or episteme of the period. Again, the critical ambition is deemed as failure, perhaps even part of the system that oppressed in the first place. Lundahl instead suggests a historicized reading, where the texts are interpreted in relation to the historical context, emphasizing the critical ambition of the writers and demonstrating how their rhetorical strategies were fully rational in that particular setting. At the same time, she points out how our present-day perspective, with the privilege of hindsight and access to developments in critical theory, also informs the reading.<sup>60</sup>

A similar perspective is offered by Joan Wallach Scott in her book *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, on a more contextual understanding of the history of feminism. Scott distances herself from the discussion that engages many scholars today, where the battlelines are drawn around the theory of difference and similarity/equality and the appropriate strategies, or even ideologies, in feminist politics. Instead, she introduces a more deconstructivist reading of the subject matter. The necessity of recognizing the role as a member of the collective ‘women’ in order to argue against the construction of sexual difference as an excluding mechanism in the discourse of the equal, universal, and individual ‘man’ created an unsolvable paradox. Scott does not wish to criticize these feminists for not finding solutions to this contradiction, since it springs from within the dominant discourse that they argued against. The counterdiscourse is in this sense shaped by the hegemonic discourse. At the same time, it was the dominant discourse that enabled women to speak up at all. The reasoning of the different feminists was also shaped and determined by the historical moment and the prevailing epistemology, which in turn means their writings are interesting sites of historical and intellectual investigation.<sup>61</sup>

60 Mikela Lundahl, *Vad är en neger? Négritude, essentialism, strategi*, Glänta (Gothenburg, 2005), 14–15.

61 Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French feminists and the Rights of Man*, HUP (Cam-

Scott points out that historians rarely look for contradictions within different ideologies or schools of thought: 'We are used to reading for the clash of opposing positions (feminists versus liberal politicians, for example), but not for the internal tensions and incompatibilities (within concepts such as liberty or separate spheres or the individual) of which these clashes are both symptom and cause.' Scott laments this inattention among researchers, since the contradictions and internal tensions lead to the core of the issue: it is by tracing the contradictions back to the dominant discourse one can understand the 'subversive potential' of feminism. It is also the aim of those privileged to deny the internal paradoxes and to 'displac[e] the source of the problem onto those who point it out'.<sup>62</sup>

Scott also extends the scope of her appraisal by suggesting that other political movements could be discussed in the same manner. One of these is anti-racism. The point made by Scott is that all these movements have to be situated in the historical context of each manifestation in order to avoid a teleological perspective in which some strategies are seen as successful and others as less so. There is no eternal masculinism, capitalism, or racism against which you can fail or succeed: 'Rather feminism (or trade unionism or socialism or antiracism) is produced, differently at different moments, at sites of historically specific discursive contradiction'.<sup>63</sup>

The advantages of the perspective presented by Scott is that it allows, and even forces, criticism to be interpreted within the contemporary social, political, and cultural discourse. The articulation of critique, of a will to change and an alternative way of seeing things, must be seated in some kind of frame of reference for one's contemporaries in order to be convincing, otherwise we risk a form of paralysis (both academic and political), as our fear of being a participant in the oppressive system obliterates or at least restricts our means of expression. The Indian American literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak touches on the aspiration to stay outside the system while discussing 'theoretical purity':

You pick up the universal that will give you the power to fight against the other side, and what you are throwing away is your theoretical purity. Whereas the great custodians of the anti-universal are obliged therefore simply to act in the interest of a great narrative, the narrative of exploitation, while they keep themselves clean by not committing themselves to anything. In fact they are actually run by a great narrative even as they are busy protecting their theoretical purity by repudiating essentialism.<sup>64</sup>

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bridge, MA, 1996) *passim*.

62 Ibid. 16–17.

63 Ibid. 174.

64 Cited in Laura Chrisman & Patrick Williams (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, Harvester Wheatsheaf (New York, 1993), 11.



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According to Spivak, academics and intellectuals seem to fear being exposed to critique, which in turn disarms them, rendering them unable to articulate critique themselves. When I think of my own work, when I have presented my project in different settings, at least at the early stages, I have been taken to task for criticizing critical intellectuals, the argument being ‘just wait and see’, sooner or later someone will turn up to criticize me. An interesting take, I think, that has most definitely spurred my ambition to discuss critical perspectives. What could be said and written in a specific historical period? And what is fair and constructive critique, then and now?

Not many manage to implement this while analysing a discourse. Again, one cannot help but create a drama where an unexpected failure proves the strength of the theoretical perspective: not even those who try will manage to escape the discourse. That aside, the work that has been accomplished in the field of colonial discourse studies is very useful, insofar that it provides the conceptual tools in the initial phase of the analysis, namely the analysis of the travel writing as texts. The taxonomy suggested by Lutz and Collins, and above all David Spurr, is helpful in as much as the sets of samples of tropes create a terminology that enables me to identify different textual elements that characterize a colonial discourse. Kylhammar, Lundahl, Olsson, and Scott, on the other side, have all provided compelling arguments for the results of a colonial discourse analysis to be discussed in relationship to the historical context, with each colonial trope read and interpreted within the discourse of the period (at which point one can by all means criticize them). Again, a text can only uphold a subversive function if it is read and understood; there are limits if one wishes the reader to understand, to be touched or convinced, and then change her or his views.

I analyse the travel accounts as a single body of texts, utilizing colonial discourse analysis and the repertoire of tropes in order to find the rhetorical figures that form underlying patterns of cultural or social attitudes. But, as should be clear by now, my purpose is not to demonstrate the existence of a colonial discourse in Swedish radical travel literature, but to use them to investigate Sweden’s intellectual and political climate in the years from 1947 to 1966. That, of course, can be criticized as not pushing the academic or political ambitions of postcolonial studies far enough, as failing to draw the wider conclusions from my theoretical ambitions or my choice of subject, choosing for instance to find an object of study that is not confined by national borders or to at least leave the safety of the West. While that is a valid point, my focus is Swedish intellectual and cultural modern history, and in order to make sense of that and of the period, I need a postcolonial theoretical framework and I need the methodological tools. Of course, it is still interesting to have created

a situation that mirrors that of the travel writers and intellectuals I investigate and to a certain extent criticize: I can always be accused of not being critical enough.<sup>65</sup>

## Historical context

In the decades after the end of the Second World War, the role, and also the perception, of Sweden in an international setting changed significantly. It went from being a peripheral, small, non-aligned state in the outskirts of Europe to becoming what some academics, and some politicians as well, have called a moral superpower—still a small and non-aligned state, but with political ambitions that reached far beyond its borders. This shift is often described as the development of an ‘active’ foreign policy normally associated with the 1960s and 1970s, when a wave of radicalization, which supposedly peaked around 1968, affected not only the general outlook but also actual policymaking in Europe and the US. Political ambitions beyond one’s borders are normally interpreted as a sign of colonial or neocolonial aspirations, but that was never the idea. On the contrary, it was suggested that Sweden had a particular role to fill in the rapidly changing world after the Second World War precisely *because* it was devoid of a colonial past and colonial traditions.<sup>66</sup>

Two significant processes affected international developments after 1945. One of them was the ongoing Cold War, a metaphor that describes an ideological conflict characterized by demarcation, to paraphrase Anders Berge, towards something worse, direct confrontation, but also towards something better, meaning working relations between the Soviet Union and the US, the two great powers who came out as the winners of the war.<sup>67</sup> The Cold War was not a static period, though, but rather a state of shifting tension and detente between the two superpowers and their respective allies. The second is the decolonization process, in which former colonies reached independence, either through negotiation or through force. So, on the one hand two strong powers, both nuclear-weapons states, divided on each and every ideological and political point possible, at least in a rhetorical sense, yet sharing the ambition to bind other states and regions to their own sphere of influence, and on the other a fast-growing group of new states, mainly in Asia and Africa, searching for their place in the world. Sweden supported the decolonization process, perhaps

65 This situation can be interpreted as a postcolonial predicament, or the dilemma of never being entirely able to free oneself from a privileged position created by the history of colonialism. See Carol A. Breckenridge & Peter van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, University of Pennsylvania Press (Philadelphia, 1993).

66 Marie Demker, *Sverige och Algeriets frigörelse 1954–1962: Kriget som förändrade svensk utrikespolitik*, Nerenius & Santérus (Stockholm, 1995), 11–15; Hans Lödén, ‘För säkerhets skull’: *Ideologi och säkerhet i svensk aktiv utrikespolitik 1950–1975*, Santérus (Stockholm, 1999), 128, 140.

67 Anders Berge, *Kalla kriget i Tidens spegel: En socialdemokratisk bild av hoten mot frihet och fred 1945–1962*, Carlssons (Stockholm, 1990) 13.

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not in so many words initially, but most definitely after 1959, when it was the only Western country to vote in the UN in favour of the independence of Algeria.<sup>68</sup> The recognition of Algeria as an independent state was the first of many declarations of support and recognition: between 1960 and 1963 more than thirty new states, mostly African, were recognized by Sweden.<sup>69</sup> The relationship with the Soviet Union and the US was more complicated, as Sweden, while non-aligned, nevertheless had strong ties to America, both culturally and politically.<sup>70</sup>

It was in this 'frozen' and at the same time fluid international situation that Swedish politicians began to formulate a more active and yet still non-aligned foreign policy, based partly on security measures, but also on the notion of Sweden as a model or pattern for others to follow.<sup>71</sup> The welfare state was implemented as the Swedish economy and industry expanded in the wake of the ending war: the export of steel, iron, and timber to Europe for the necessary reconstruction of infrastructure and housing projects (to a great extent financed by the Marshall Plan) made the country rich. Sweden, with its cooperation between the worker's movement and employers, was viewed (and viewed itself) as a middle way, a fruitful combination of socialism and capitalism. The broad national self-understanding centred on concepts such as democracy, consensus, progress, and modernity, and the national narrative described its trajectory from darkness to light, from misery and poverty to progress and welfare in a fairly short period of time. The process was presented as harmonious and driven by a concerted will to solidarity and reform.<sup>72</sup>

New wealth and the historical experience of progress, combined with non-alignment and a non-colonial past, gradually formed the rhetorical and ideological base of a newly active foreign policy, signified by its ambition to form alliances with the new postcolonial states through cooperation and aid. The idea was that Sweden could offer support with the recently started modernization processes in the new states, and so steer these states away from the siren call of the superpowers (while at the same time establishing new markets, of course). The situation in the postcolonial states and in colonies fighting to become states, or the Third World, also caused concern: reports of war, famine, and oppression reached the Western media from the early 1960s onwards. Development aid policy therefore became an increasingly

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68 Demker, *Sverige och Algeriets frigörelse*.

69 Löden, 'För säkerhets skull', 219.

70 See, for example, Kjell Östberg, *I takt med tiden: Olof Palme 1927–1969*, Leopard (Stockholm, 2008), 310–11, 314.

71 Löden, 'För säkerhets skull', 100–101, 127–8.

72 See Martin Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap: Historisk orientering och kritiska berättelser om det moderna Sverige mellan 1960 och 1990*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 2006), 111–38 for an exposé and analysis of the master narrative of Swedish contemporary history.

important part of Swedish foreign policy. The nation of the ‘middle way’ wished to set an international example.<sup>73</sup>

Many intellectuals, writers, journalists, academics, students, and activists, however, were demanding more radical measures in order to create justice between the rich countries and the poor, between the First World and the Third, or the North and the South. Berge claims that the war in Algeria was the first conflict that was to be interpreted in Sweden with the North–South perspective, as rich France sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers to crack down on a nationalist and popular movement among poor Algerians. The most significant consequence of this North–South perspective was the questioning and dismissal of the West’s moral superiority: Western nations and colonial powers did not adhere to those very same values—democracy and freedom—that were supposedly the basis of their moral superiority to the Soviet Union and the East.<sup>74</sup> The war in Vietnam, which became an issue for Swedish politicians in around 1964–1965 when the American war effort escalated, was also understood in terms of North and South, in which the US was criticized for attacking a poor, agrarian people fighting for their independence. The American *raison d’être* for the war, as a necessary measure to fight Communism in Asia according to the East–West logic of the Cold War, was simply dismissed.<sup>75</sup> This was a significant shift: it was increasingly harder to argue that Sweden was a third alternative between East and West, as a social model to follow. Sweden became one rich nation among many rich nations. We have now reached the beginning of the Vietnam movement in 1965.

This is a brief presentation of the period that constitutes the outer, historical framework of my dissertation: Sweden’s changing attitudes and ambitions in the international arena from 1947, the year in which the second-wave postcolonial era began with Indian independence and the relationship between the two superpowers and former allies froze into ideological war, to 1966, the year in which, to world outrage, the American war in Vietnam escalated. I am, however, less concerned with the political aspects of Sweden’s growing willingness to participate in international politics in order to support the one—decolonization—and ameliorate the other—the Cold War. Instead, I am interested in the cultural and intellectual developments that sometimes followed, sometimes propelled a change in attitudes towards the growing ‘Third World’ and international issues.

<sup>73</sup> Lödén, ‘För säkerhets skull’, *passim*.

<sup>74</sup> Berge, *Kalla kriget i Tidens spegel*, 146.

<sup>75</sup> Lödén, ‘För säkerhets skull’, 147.

## Travel and radical internationalism

When the radicalization of Swedish opinion concerning colonialism, decolonization, and the Third World is discussed in academic settings, certain intellectuals and travel writers are always mentioned as particularly inspiring as forerunners and anti-colonial intellectuals. They were (relatively) young leftists and liberals—Jan Myrdal, Sven Lindqvist, Anders Ehnmark, Per Wästberg, and Sara Lidman—who travelled in different parts of Africa and Asia in the late fifties and early sixties, writing and publishing reports on their experiences. These reports attracted great interest both in Sweden and internationally, and gave the travel writers a position as truth-tellers and radicals, as they presented a refreshing and critical view of the postcolonial world. It is also pointed out that this group had its own antecedents and sources of inspiration; they were not the first young Swedish radicals to set out to travel the world in order to truly experience it.<sup>76</sup>

Back in the late twenties and early thirties, a new generation of Swedish writers, poets, and intellectuals had emerged. They came from working-class or rural backgrounds, were in many ways self-taught, and represented something new, unfettered by what they scorned as bourgeois restraints. An integratal part of their expansionist, modernist programme was the importance of travelling. One should anticipate the coming global citizenship by travelling, not as a tourist but as a nomad. Their purpose was to create a sharing relationship with foreign cultures, where the European traveller would be able to contribute, but also to bring back all that was useful and good in other cultures and countries. In this way, they hoped to erase xenophobia. Travelling could also entail a more spiritual dimension, where the journey somehow represented the exploration of the inner self.<sup>77</sup>

The writers' revolutionary and utopian programme came under strain as the Depression reached Sweden in the thirties. Their utopian internationalism and optimistic view of technological progress had to be reformulated. One of the writers, Artur Lundkvist, did however continue his travels. He left Sweden for Africa, in a search of alternative ways of life, but presented a very gloomy picture of 'social misery and repulsive colonialism' instead of the pure 'primitive' cultures he had expected to find.<sup>78</sup> Lundkvist continued to travel and published several critical travel ac-

76 Tomas Forser & Per-Arne Tjäder, 'Strömkantringarnas tid—1960-talets nya debatt och prosa', in Lars Lönnroth, Sven Delblanc & Sverker Göransson (eds.), *Den svenska litteraturen: Från modernism till massmedial marknad 1920–1995*, Albert Bonniers Förlag (Stockholm, 1999), 391, 394–5; Bernt Olsson & Ingemar Algulin, *Litteraturens historia i Sverige*, 6th edn, Studentlitteratur (Lund, 2013), 481, 485, 512–13, 518–20.

77 Martin Kylhammar, *Frejdiga framstegsmän och visionära världsmedborgare: Epokskiftet 20-tal och 30-tal genom fem unga och Lubbe Nordström*, Akademeja (Stockholm, 1994), 53–8.

78 Ibid. 148, 163–5. Margareta Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 139 interprets the travel

counts from Africa, Latin America and Asia in the forties, fifties, and sixties.

Along with Lundkvist, I have chosen to include the travel writer Eric Lundqvist in my study. He is not as well known as Artur Lundkvist, but they both contributed to the magazine *Folket i Bild*, a publication with radical and educational ambitions and with close ties the labour movement. He is also described as an 'early anti-racist advocate' in Sweden.<sup>79</sup> There were other travel writers in this circle of contributors to *Folket i Bild*, for example Rolf Blomberg and Sten Bergman, but none of them discussed racism or colonialism to the same extent.

Given the role and significance of these radical and anti-colonial travel accounts, those that were more modernist and those published in the early sixties offer an opportunity to explore the limits of what was considered radical and critical, just as Sweden underwent its transformation from neutral nation in the far North to active participant in the international system—to what the representatives of the Third World would call a 'like-minded country'. There is, however, yet another twist in this search for anti-colonial and critical travel literature, and it takes us through the complications of how the representation of the fifties has to a certain degree been constructed in the shadow of the sixties, as described by Martin Wiklund.<sup>80</sup>

The general understanding of the sixties, that most radical of decades, has become a subject of dispute among historians in recent years. At first there had been a tendency to regard the sixties as a turning point, with the introduction and peak of new ideologies (the New Left), new social movements, new cultural and social forms, new political and intellectual ideas, new artistic expressions, and so forth. It has been described as a form of revolutionary awakening—a casting-off of bourgeois constraints and a simplified worldview of the Cold War that no longer applied in a changing world. Part of this change was the founding of the postcolonial states as well as the struggle by former colonies to gain independence. The radicals in the West identified with this struggle, making it part of their own fight against what was considered the establishment, and they offered their support through demonstrations and boycotts in order to pressure on those in power. All this willingness to change found an outlet in the Vietnam movement.<sup>81</sup> When historians and other academics, not to mention different representatives from the movement itself, have described this wave of radicalization, they have tended to place its beginning either in 1965, when the first demonstrations took place and when Olof Palme first criti-

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accounts from Africa differently, describing A. Lundkvist's enthusiasm for the vitality and sensualism he encounters.

79 *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*.

80 See Martin Wiklund, 'Kalla kriget som motbild i 60-talsvännerns berättelse', in Salomon, Larsson & Arvidsson, *Hotad idyll*, 241–66.

81 See, for example, Forser & Tjäder, 'Strömkantringarnas tid', 372–4, 389–91.

cized the war in a public speech, or around 1960, when the aforementioned anti-colonial travel reports were published. In this narrative or understanding, the fifties were ignored as a decade when nothing happened, as opposed to the sixties, when everything supposedly happened.<sup>82</sup>

This understanding has of course been discussed and partly, if not fully, revised by different researchers. Lena Lennerhed, Bo Stråth, Anders Berge, Marie Demker, and Hans Lödén have all offered new perspectives on the fifties as a period of learning for Swedish politicians and intellectuals, when the anti-Communist worldview of the Cold War most certainly restricted people's political and intellectual scope of action, but not to the point suggested earlier. On the contrary, there were several occasions when anti-colonialism and solidarity with the struggle for independence in the former colonies trumped the interest of the two superpowers, where the ideological and moral map of the Second World War and the Cold War was revised: it was not for nothing that intellectuals accused Europe and the West of not living up to their high moral standards in for instance Asia or Africa.<sup>83</sup> It was also in the early fifties that various popular movements, in cooperation with the Church of Sweden, free churches, and political parties, established Swedish bilateral aid.<sup>84</sup>

Lisbeth Larsson has also presented a compelling interpretation of the unusual literary climate in the fifties.<sup>85</sup> Yet another indication that the general view of the fifties has been too simplistic is the number of anti-colonial travel writers who made their debut in the late forties and fifties: Elly Jannes, Signe Höjer, Åke Sparring, Olle Strandberg, and Herbert Tingsten. None of them can be considered obscure or in any way extreme—they were all established writers, academics, intellectuals, and journalists, widely read and reviewed—but their travel accounts have not survived the hegemonic narrative of the sixties. The genre of radical, critical, anti-colonial travel reports now considered an indicator of growing radicalization in the early sixties, and which is sometimes traced back to the travels of the modernist writers in the thirties, was clearly more cohesive over time than earlier described. Still, I have chosen to organize and analyse the travel books according to a (somewhat overlapping) chronology: the works by Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist are

82 Agneta Edman, "Herrgårdslandet": När välfärd blev överflöd i svenska reseskildringar', in Salomon, Larsson & Arvidsson, *Hotad idyll*.

83 Berge, *Det kalla kriget i Tidens spegel*; Demker, *Sverige och Algeriets frigörelse*; Lena Lennerhed, 'Det är rätt att göra uppror!' in Nils Runeby (ed.), *Framstegets arvtagare*, Natur och kultur (Stockholm, 1998), 194–222; Hans Lödén, 'För säkerhets skull'. There are others, however, who find it relevant to draw the contrast between the fifties and sixties, for example Eva Block, *Amerikabilden i svensk press*, Gleerups (Lund, 1976); and Östberg, *I takt med tiden*, 120–2.

84 Bertil Odén, *Biståndets idéhistoria: Från Marshallhjälpen till millenniemål*, Studentlitteratur (Lund, 2006), 52–5.

85 Lisbeth Larsson, 'Tvånget att berätta', in Salomon, Larsson & Arvidsson, *Hotad idyll*, 36–55; See also Wiklund, 'Kalla kriget som motbild', 241–66.



discussed in Chapter 2, Signe Höjer, Elly Jannes, Olle Strandberg, Åke Sparring, and Herbert Tingsten in Chapter 3, and finally Anders Ehnmark, Sara Lidman, Sven Lindqvist, Jan Myrdal, and Per Wästberg in Chapter 4. Each group share a certain context that underpins the analyses, but there are of course instances where patterns of attitudes and ambitions stretch across the groupings I have constructed.

## Cultural radicalism

In order to create a setting from which the entire group of travel writers, both leftists and liberals, can be read and understood, I turn to *kulturradikalism*, or cultural radicalism.<sup>86</sup> Characterized by a strong belief in rationalism and materialism as the lodestar of human existence, cultural radicalism breaks with what it holds to be obsolete moral convention, hypocrisy, authoritarian rule, and superstition. Cultural radicals often argue on the basis of reason or science, which of course makes it hard to spot the values and norms they adhere to themselves, while they accuse their opponents of being controlled by values instead of reason. Martin Wiklund, however, suggests that cultural radicalism aimed at instilling independence, open-mindedness, objectivity, and critical thinking. He also points to a preference for authenticity and simplicity in style and form.<sup>87</sup>

Cultural radicalism can be traced back to the so-called modern breakthrough in Denmark in the 1870s, and to a series of lectures by the author George Brandes. Inspired by Nietzsche and Darwin,<sup>88</sup> Brandes argued against idealism, metaphysics, the influence of the Church, Conservatism, and Romanticism, and for the Enlightenment and reason, in the hopes of creating an intellectual climate where problems, any problem, would be brought to light and debated openly. The lectures were published, and Brandes soon became highly influential among radicals and budding socialists in Scandinavia, along with his brother Edvard Brandes and the Danish philosopher Harald Høffding. A movement was formed.<sup>89</sup>

Scandinavia became, for the first time, an intellectual scene with the eyes of Europe upon it, and Brandes was joined by Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg as the most influential of these young radicals, widely read and discussed. The main target of their critique was the growing middle class in Scandinavia, an only recently for-

86 Crister Skoglund, 'Kulturradikalismen—arvet och förnyelsen', in Bertil Nolin (ed.), *Kulturradikalismen: Det moderna genombrottets andra fas*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 1993), 126.

87 Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 149.

88 Carl Erik Bay, 'Kulturradikalismen i nordiskt perspektiv: Definition og problemorientering', in Bertil Nolin (ed.), *Kulturradikalismen: Det moderna genombrottets andra fas*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 1993), 18.

89 Crister Skoglund, *Vita mössor under röda fanor: Vänsterstudenter, kulturradikalism och bildningssideal i Sverige 1880–1940*, Almqvist & Wicksell International (Stockholm, 1991), 54–5.



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med social group, still relatively small and somewhat insecure as to their role, and now thought of as the guardians of all those patriarchal institutions that the cultural radicals raged against: the Church, the sanctity of marriage, the ideology of separate spheres, the monarchy, morality, and social convention. The intellectuals pitted the supposed falsity of bourgeois piety and family life against an idealized counterpart: the true, 'natural', poor, hardworking peasant class of the past, a rhetorical trope inherited from the liberals of the 1840s. Sweden, like the rest of Scandinavia, was still mainly an agrarian country, but new innovations brought fast economic development. The combination of old agrarian cultural traditions and an economic boom created prime conditions for the cultural radicals to attack the weak new middle class, which, without the historical urban roots of, say, the German *Bürgertum*, French *bourgeoisie*, or the middle class of Great Britain, were still casting about for their role in society.<sup>90</sup>

There was a second wave of cultural radicalism in the 1920s and 1930s, represented by both students and established intellectuals. The tradition from the 1870s and 1880s was brought back to life by a growing labour movement and Marxist ideas, along with the introduction of Freudian thought to Scandinavia.<sup>91</sup> Crister Skoglund points out that this the new wave of radicalism can be related to the political development in Europe at that time, as anti-democratic and authoritarian ideas and movements were established. There was a growing interest among Swedish students in conservative ideas too, and various conservative organizations saw a surge in membership. While reading articles and other texts considered to be expressions of cultural radicalism, one tends to forget that these often were part of a bigger debate with two radically different and opposing sides.<sup>92</sup> Another significant part of the renewed interest was the establishment of new academic disciplines, such as sociology and social psychology (along with psychoanalysis), considered instrumental for the creation a radically different society.<sup>93</sup>

To some radicals, as in the case of the group of young architects who published the journal *acceptera* [Accept] in the wake of the functionalist exhibition in Stockholm in 1930, one of the characteristics of a new and fully modern society was the emancipation of women. The 1930s was in fact a significant decade for Swedish women, having gained political and legal rights, and was also a period when several

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90 Henrik Berggren & Lars Trägårdh, *Är svensken människa? Gemenskap och oberoende i det moderna Sverige*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 2009 [2006]), 136–9.

91 Bay, 'Kulturradikalismen i nordiskt perspektiv', 18; see also Leif Longum, 'Psykoanalysen og kulturradikalismen: Freud og Reich i skandinavisk kulturkamp 1920–1940, in Bertil Nolin (ed.), *Kulturradikalismen: Det moderna genombrottets andra fas*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 1993), 30–1.

92 Skoglund, 'Kulturradikalismen', 117–19.

93 Bay, 'Kulturradikalismen i nordiskt perspektiv', 18.

female writers came to public attention.<sup>94</sup> Not to say that the feminist struggle was over. Annika Berg, Christina Florin, and Per Wisselgren point out that radical intellectuals such as Axel Höjer (Signe Höjer's husband) and Gunnar Myrdal (Alva Myrdal's husband and father of Jan Myrdal) readily supported the rights of women on a theoretical level, but they were distinctly reluctant to make sacrifices concerning their own careers in favour of their wives'. The home and children remained the responsibility of women, and if they were to be released from it, it would be thanks to the commitment of other women. Berg, Florin, and Wisselgren go on to state that the level of equality was relative to the situation earlier, and that many respects it was a middle-class issue.<sup>95</sup> There was an idea that they should support and educate women from the working class among different left-wing and liberal female intellectuals, among them the Fogelstad group. They organized courses for women based partly on ideas inspired by one of the members, the journalist and writer Elin Wägner—ideas that in hindsight had much to do with environmentalism and social sustainability. This group, along with other leftist feminists, met with general scepticism,<sup>96</sup> but they are considered of great importance as the antecedents of the next wave of feminism in the 1960s.

In Sweden, the organization *Clarté* gathered many of those who sympathized with cultural radicalism, and the journal *Clarté* was established as the mouthpiece of these intellectuals. *Clarté* was founded in the early 1920s on the pattern of the French organization, with the aim to promote and contribute to people's 'material and spiritual' emancipation. They combined Marxist theory with that of Freud to construct an all-encompassing theory that could inspire the liberation of all from external and internal oppression alike.<sup>97</sup> However, it is important to note that cultural radicalism was not an organized movement or organization per se; it was more of a tradition of thought. Another aspect to consider is the particular character of Swedish cultural radicalism. Many of the Swedish radicals became part of the social-democratic state apparatus, as the reformist policies of Social Democratic Party were often based on public inquiries commissioned by the government, work that was often performed by some of these academics and intellectuals. The prominent Social Democrat Ernst Wigforss also often defended *Clarté* against the Social De-

94 Ebba Witt-Brattström, *Moa Martinson: Skrift och drift i trettioalet*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 2011 [1988]), 178–9.

95 Annika Berg, Christina Florin & Per Wisselgren, 'Par i vetenskap och politik', in id (eds.), *Par i vetenskap och politik*, Boréa (Umeå, 2011), 35.

96 Lena Eskilsson, 'Kvinnlig vänsterhållning och radikalism i 30-talets kultur- och samhällsdebatt', in Bertil Nolin (ed.), *Kulturradikalismen: Det moderna genombrottets andra fas*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 1993), 166–7.

97 Bay, 'Kulturradikalismen i nordiskt perspektiv', 18; Longum, 'Psykoanalysen og kulturradikalismen', 30.

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mocratic Youth League (SSU), on the grounds that Clarté provided a setting for provocative and innovative debates and an exchange of ideas across party lines.<sup>98</sup> The situation was very different in Denmark and Norway, where the very definition of cultural radicalism implied intellectual freedom and independence from any political party. There are researchers, among them Tomas Forser, who hesitate to use the concept in a Swedish context for this reason.<sup>99</sup>

Lena Lennerhed describes cultural radicalism as a series of basic features. Again, it was not a party, not an organization, but a loosely bound tradition characterized by certain common traits. Its ideological base was an absolute belief in the freedom of the individual, combined with an enthusiasm for social commitment and social reform. This combination was something both liberals and socialists alike could agree on. There was also a strong belief in humans as fully capable and rational agents, along with a rationalist, scientific worldview: it was science, both the natural sciences and the social sciences, that held the promise of societal change and development. It followed that there was considerable scepticism towards metaphysics in general, and religion in particular. In order for societies to change, there had to be a constant and free exchange of ideas among independent intellectuals and critics, which in turn would develop into new ideas and guidelines for a better future. Lennerhed emphasizes the significance of youth in this context: young people were expected to provide the new ideas that would question the established perceptions of society.<sup>100</sup> It was in many ways an anti-authoritarian movement, constantly attacking whatever was considered conservative and mendacious: the Church, the monarchy, the state, and tradition, including traditional family structures. Lennerhed also demonstrates the double perspective of cultural radicalism: that the weight put on rationalism and the connection to the Enlightenment did not preclude sentiments or ideas that were very much part of the Romantic tradition, making the subject of sexuality a case in point. Many intellectuals argued for a radically different perception and praxis concerning sexuality, both from a scientific perspective (full sexual expression is necessary from a medical point of view) and from a more Romantic perspective emphasizing individual emotional and sexual freedom.<sup>101</sup> This seeming paradox has been discussed by Wiklund, who distinguishes between two versions of cultural radicalism: rationalist radicalism, oriented towards the Enligh-

98 Bay, 'Kulturradikalismen i nordiskt perspektiv', 22; Tomas Forser, 'Oavhängiga kulturradikaler och reformradikala socialdemokrater: Utopi och besinning i folkhemmet', in Bertil Nolin (ed.), *Kulturradikalismen. Det moderna genombrottets andra fas*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 1993), 150–1.

99 Forser, 'Oavhängiga kulturradikaler', 153.

100 See also Longum, 'Psykoanalysen og kulturradikalismen', 29.

101 Lena Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta: Sexualdebatten i Sverige på 1960-talet*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 1994), 26–7.

tenment; and romantic radicalism, characterized by *Zivilisationskritik* and an interest in spirituality and aestheticism.<sup>102</sup>

As for the resilience of cultural radicalism, apart from its advent in the 1870s and 1880s Skoglund discerns further a period when cultural radicalism dominated public discourse in Sweden: the second wave in the twenties and thirties.<sup>103</sup> He does add that there are indications that this particular tradition of thought will prove more tenacious throughout the fifties and sixties.<sup>104</sup> Wiklund also mentions the significance of cultural radicalism in the fifties, but points out as that rationalist cultural radicalism did not come to dominate public discourse in Sweden until the end of that decade.<sup>105</sup>

One expression of cultural radicalism in the early fifties, however, was the debate about faith and reason/knowledge that was initiated by Ingemar Hedenius, professor of philosophy at Uppsala University. He was a regular contributor to *Dagens Nyheter*, a daily newspaper, having been recruited along with other intellectuals by the editor-in-chief, Herbert Tingsten, as controversialists. And Tingsten succeeded. Svante Nordin describes how *Dagens Nyheter* became the most prominent medium of cultural radical debate from the end of the war onwards. One of Hedenius' objectives was to end the significance of religion in society, in part by proving that Christian doctrine simply was not true, but he was also intent on redefining the understanding of education and *Bildung*. Hedenius described the ideals of education as too conservative and idealistic, too bound up with the cultural heritage of Europe, which, he lamented, had been the wellspring of German Nazism. Instead, he argued for a 'modern' educational ideal based on rationality, reason, science, and values and morals that were the result of intellectual choice, not blind faith in an authority. He describes how religious belief forces one to 'sacrifice reason on the altar of faith', leaving one prepared to go against the demands of the intellect to accept the absurd and impossible. This debate on faith and knowledge dominated the public discourse from 1949 on, engaging intellectuals and representatives of the Church. And the general opinion is that the cultural radical side won.<sup>106</sup>

I am particularly interested in the oppositional character of cultural radicalism—the fact that the intellectuals constantly argued for the absolute opposite of what was considered the prevailing or the established norm. Lena Lennerhed demonstra-

102 Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 151–2.

103 Skoglund, *Vita mössor under röda fanor*, 6.

104 Skoglund, 'Kulturradikalismen', 126–7.

105 Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 153; see also Bay, 'Kulturradikalismen i nordiskt perspektiv', 16.

106 Svante Nordin, *Ingemar Hedenius: En filosof och hans tid*, Natur och Kultur (Stockholm, 2004), 139–46; see also Johan Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral: Svenska erfarenheter i det andra världskrigets efterdyning*, Atlantis (Stockholm, 2008).

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tes that this position had an interesting side effect: that critiques were shaped, even decided, by whatever one was arguing against. She exemplifies this with the determination of certain Clarté members to create a more open and less inhibited climate concerning sexuality and sexual expressions: they argued against what they considered Victorian prudery and the Christian doctrine on sin: ‘The Victorian ideas were so to speak adopted by the ... liberals and radicals but with other overtones; evil was turned into something good and biological instincts and physical pleasure became something positive in themselves’. Their anti-Victorianism was thereby an inverted version of Victorianism.<sup>107</sup> This resonates with Scott’s reasoning as to the paradoxes of critique, and, as we will see, the oppositional stance did affect the strategies of anti-colonial critique among the travel writers.

### Popular travel writing

Before delving into anti-colonial and critical travelogues by Swedish intellectuals and writers, I will give an overview of the characteristics of ‘average’ travel writing, describing what ‘normal’ travel stories were like in the period. To find one possible backdrop against which the anti-colonial and/or critical travel books stood out as different from what was expected, one can take the travel writing published in one of the most widely read weekly magazines in Sweden, *Året Runt* [Year-Round]. Helena Tolvhed has studied travel writing published in *Året Runt* between 1946 and 1960, and concludes that the travel articles, profusely illustrated with photographs, were an important part of the magazine’s success in the early and mid fifties.<sup>108</sup> Tolvhed notes a change of tone towards the end of the decade, when the travel stories were partly replaced by reports on poverty and social problems in different parts of the world. There were also appeals to support and help those in need (often children). By 1960 the genre of adventurous travel writing seems to have lost its appeal entirely, which Tolvhed interprets as an expression of a greater political awareness,<sup>109</sup> and certainly it coincided with a ‘feminization’ of the magazine, as its content veered towards a female target group, and not families as earlier.

Looking to the actual articles, Tolvhed can enumerate countless instances of racialized stereotypes. The travel writers repeatedly emphasized the supposed backwardness of the peoples and regions they visited, especially in Africa and South America: ‘Difference and deviances are consequently emphasized.’ Some are simply

<sup>107</sup> Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta*, 251.

<sup>108</sup> Helena Jönsson [aka Helena Tolvhed], “Hemmet sol och den sensuella vildinnan”: Den vita och svarta kvinnan i familjetidningen *Året Runt* 1946–1960’, unpub. BA thesis, Department of History, Lund University, 18 Jan. 2001, 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* 30.

termed ‘cannibals’, while “‘The savages”, “the primitives”, and “darkies” are other regulatory names that imply a radical difference between these peoples and an imagined “us”, the narrator and the reader, those of us who are white.’<sup>110</sup> The writers tended to place people and tribes on an evolutionary ladder as well, suggesting that those they described lived in the past, usually the Stone Age, or the writers depicted people as animals, devoid of rational thought and wholly dependant on instinct. There are also instances of sexualization, where ‘the deviant, free understanding of sexuality’ among ‘indigenous peoples’ is played up in great detail, focusing on, for example, ‘sexual dances’ that ‘always lead to sexual orgies’.<sup>111</sup>

Apart from pointing to the blatant debasement of those described in the articles, Tolvhed enlarges on how women, white as well as black or of colour, are appointed very different roles from the outset of the binary relationship between the Madonna (white skin) and the Whore (dark skin). Considering the ideology of sexuality in the fifties, according to which sex was confined to within wedlock, it fell to women to guard the sanctity of marriage, and pornography was prohibited, it is astonishing that *Året Runt* repeatedly illustrated its travel stories with photographs of naked or semi-naked young women with dark skin, often focusing on their exposed breasts, hinting at their sexual availability and ‘freedom’. Tolvhed notes that these illustrations started to appear in 1951 and that a majority of the travel articles were so illustrated in the first half of the fifties, especially reports from Africa or the South Pacific. She states that ‘It is not any of the local women who illustrate the travel reports. The women in the photographs are consequently young (but not children, they are old enough for their bodies to have developed) and beautiful with ample breasts.’ It is also of great importance that the women were considered beautiful according to Western norms. They were often photographed from below, ensuring that their breasts were in focus, and Tolvhed notes that the pornographic associations were occasionally ‘tragicomically obvious’, with ‘black women’ at the ‘white man’s sexual disposal’.<sup>112</sup> This should be set against the depiction of white women in the same publication, which centred on family values and motherhood.<sup>113</sup>

Given that almost half a million copies of *Året Runt* were sold every week by 1955 and, like Tolvhed, assume that each copy was read by perhaps 3 or 4 people, and one can easily imagine magazine’s reach and, presumably, its influence.<sup>114</sup> Given the variety of contexts, it is noteworthy that the depiction of peoples and regions outside Sweden and the West/North is so coherent.<sup>115</sup> It is obviously not the entire picture—

110 Ibid. 27.

111 Ibid. 27–9.

112 Ibid. 36–7, 40.

113 Ibid. 40.

114 Ibid. 5.

115 See also Magnus Berg & Veronica Trépagny (eds.), *I andra länder: Historiska perspektiv på svensk förmedling av det främmande*, Historiska Media (Lund, 1999); and Granqvist, *Villfarelsens*

the travel books that I study prove that point—but as a backdrop, as I said, it makes the anti-colonial stance of the radical travel writers and intellectuals all the more vivid and remarkable.

## Presentation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. This introduction is followed by three empirical chapters and a summarizing chapter in which all the findings are discussed. The organization is not strictly chronological, as the empirical chapters overlap in time, but they are distinct thematically, with each ideological or intellectual aspect addressed separately. Indeed, each chapter is organized according to three themes: the first two, gender/sexuality and resistance, speak to the theoretical framework and historical context already discussed in this introduction, and the third theme is characterized by the source material itself. That is, I have discovered a set of similar tropes or rhetorical strategies among each group of travel writers, which can be described as fragments or elements of modernist narratives. I would not argue that any of the writers explicitly acknowledge themselves to be wedded to a certain philosophy, but there is nevertheless a discernable pattern in their descriptions and interpretations that can be assigned or related to a certain understanding or ideology.

In Chapter 2, I investigate the travel books by Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist, both highly influenced by primitivist or vitalist ideas. The second group presented and discussed in Chapter 3—Elly Jannes, Signe Höjer, Åke Sparring, Olle Strandberg, and Herbert Tingsten—is somewhat less coherent in terms of ideas and approaches, but the majority of the writers share a certain incredulity towards modernization and rationalism. Chapter 4 is an investigation of the travel books by Sara Lidman, Anders Ehnmark, Sven Lindqvist, Jan Myrdal, and Per Wästberg, who shared common ground when it came to cultural radicalism, but also, to different degrees, reinterpreted the Cold War worldview along a North–South axis, which in turn defined a new role for Sweden and for Swedish intellectuals.

Irrespective of the slight ideological differences that constitute the basis for chapter divisions, all the writers share an explicit anti-colonial and critical stance, as well as a (formally) non-colonial past and present. They also share a collection of colonial tropes—part of a colonial mindset that connects them with a much larger European and global historical context. The overarching theoretical and methodological framework, colonial discourse analysis, is the backbone of the entire investigation, of course.

Finally, a note on the translations. My research began as a dissertation project in a Swedish setting, at the Department of History of the University of Lund. It was then transferred to the international context of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, where I perforce changed language. I chose English, and have continued to write in English to make my work accessible to readers outside Scandinavia. If nothing else, the subject itself demands it.

All the translations of excerpts from the various travel books are my own, as well as translations of quotes from academic works written in Swedish, and my ambition has been to be as literal as possible where retaining some of the flavour of the original. While in certain cases there are contemporaneous translations into English available—some of Jan Myrdal's work, for example—I found that the English or American editions had often been restructured, moving too far away from the original for my purpose. I do not in any way consider myself a professional translator, but at the same time, I find argumentative texts and reports significantly easier to translate, than, for example, poetry or more literary texts.





## 2. Visions of life, 1947–1965

Eric Lundqvist and Artur Lundkvist both started to publish their travel accounts before the Second World War and both were associated with the weekly magazine *Folket i Bild* and its eponymous publishing house, which in turn was owned by the Social Democrat Party.<sup>116</sup> Eric Lundqvist mainly travelled in present-day Indonesia and in India, while Artur Lundkvist travelled in African countries, the Soviet Union, parts of South America, India, and China. Eric Lundqvist (1902–1978), who has been described as an early precursor of the radical travel writers of the sixties,<sup>117</sup> was the son of a rich landowner. In the thirties he started to work for the Dutch government in Borneo. He also married an Indonesian woman, named Sari. Lundqvist stayed in Indonesia on and off until the early sixties, by when he was a professor at the University of Jakarta, after which he worked for the UN in India as a forestry expert. Lundqvist published at least fifteen travel books, along with two novels and a collection of short stories from 1946 to 1972. The Swedish publishing house, Albert Bonniers Förlag, initially published most of his books, but many were republished in huge, cheap and easily accessible editions by *Folket i Bild* in the fifties.<sup>118</sup> Lundqvist wrote new prefaces for the later editions in which he developed his ideas on racism and colonialism and on his own role as a Westerner among ‘the primitives’. Lundqvist became more and more explicit in his socialist views in the sixties, publishing articles in the left-wing journal *Clarté*. He also wrote about the difference

116 The periodical *Folket i Bild* was founded in 1934. Its purpose was to support the educational ambitions of the popular movements of the period (the labour movement, the temperance movement, and so forth) by providing well-written literature and instructive articles. Harry Martinson, Moa Martinson, Artur Lundkvist, Eyvind Johnson, and Per Anders Fogelström were all contributors at some point of their careers. It was sold through people’s workplaces, and its circulation rose from 15,000 copies in 1935 to 110,000 copies in 1936 and on to 251,000 in 1946. *Folket i Bild* was initially owned by Esselte, but in 1947 was sold to Tiden, a publishing house owned by the Social Democrat Party (ARAB, Stockholm, catalogue of the *Folket i Bild* Archive, introduction by Hans Hällgren).

117 *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*. For reviews commending Lundqvist for his anti-racist standpoint, see Artur Lundkvist, ‘I fjärran länder’, *Morgon-Tidningen*, 15 Dec. 1949; and id., ‘Österns vildar och västerns’, *Morgon-Tidningen*, 1 Oct. 1951.

118 Ebba Witt-Brattström, *Moa Martinson*, 178 states that the launch of *Folket i Bild*’s book society and ‘folkbibliotek’ [people’s library] in 1947 played a significant role for the reading habits of the working class.

between the Western world and Indonesia in sexual terms, saying that the soft-spoken feminine culture of the East was more peace-loving and humane than the hard, rational male culture of the West. The travel accounts by Eric Lundkvist that I discuss in my study are *Djungeltagen* [Entranced by the Jungle] (1954 [1947]), *Sawah* (1952 [1949]), *Vildarna finns i väst* [The Savages Live in the West] (1955 [1951]), *Rani och andra historier från Indonesien* [Rani and Other Stories from Indonesia] (1955), *Öarna och morgondagen* [The Islands and Tomorrow] (1961) and *Moder India* [Mother India] (1964).

I have already touched on Artur Lundkvist (1906–1991) in the introduction, especially his significance as a critical voice and one of the prominent working-class poets of the late twenties. He is considered by many to be one of the most distinguished Swedish writers and poets of the twentieth century. His influence was only confirmed in 1968, when he became a member of the Swedish Academy. His first travel account, *Negerkust* [Negro Coast], was an account of his travels in Africa, mainly South Africa, published in 1933. The second, *Negerland* [Negroland], was published in book form in 1949, but had already been published as a series of articles in *Folket i Bild* in 1948. In the fifties he travelled in China, India, and parts of South America, and in the sixties he visited Cuba. I discuss *Negerland* (1949), *Indiabrand* [India on Fire] (1950), *Den förvandlade draken* [The Dragon Transformed] (1955), *Vulkanisk kontinent* [Volcanic Continent] (1957), and *Så lever Kuba* [How Cuba Lives] (1965). The book on China in particular sparked a fiercely polarized debate among liberal and conservative intellectuals on the responsibility of an author to provide objective and non-political representations of the world.

The investigation of the travel accounts is organized in three main sections. The first section deals with the issue of gender relations in the primitivist travel writings, pointing to how the dichotomy of nature and culture is played out in the context of gender relations. I must also point out that I return now and then to issues concerning masculinity and femininity throughout the chapter. The second section is a discussion of the notion of ‘life’, which is essential in primitivist (vitalist) thought. In the last section, I discuss the tensions between an anti-colonial standpoint and the ideologically permeated language. All three sections draw on the brief account of the particularities of Swedish primitivism with which I begin.

## Primitivism among Swedish intellectuals

In order to describe the establishment of primitivism in Sweden, there are two phenomena that must be taken into account: the introduction of Freudian thought, and the significance of the concept ‘life’ as an alternative, secular lodestar in a mo-

dern human existence.

It is said that the psychiatrist, writer, and sculptor Poul Bjerre introduced psychoanalysis to Sweden, even if it was with certain reservations. For example, he found Freud overly preoccupied with matters sexual, and when he participated in a meeting for the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1911, he was much happier talking to Alfred Adler, one of Freud's disciples, than Freud himself. In time, Bjerre developed his own version of psychoanalysis, and by the twenties he had distanced himself from Freud. Per Magnus Johansson notes that Bjerre in certain respects perhaps used Freud's name in order to promote his own ideas.

Even though Bjerre was the one to present psychoanalysis to the medical profession (in a lecture in 1911), there were others in Sweden who took interest in the new theories, among them Emmanuel af Geijerstam, a doctor from Gothenburg. He in turn trained Iwan Bratt, who reached the same level of fame as Bjerre. Iwan Bratt ran a psychoanalytic clinic outside Alingsås (the poet Karin Boye was one of his patients), and in 1925 he published *Kultur och neuros* [Culture and Neurosis], a book on the significance of sexual expression and the need to act on one's instincts, otherwise neuroses would ensue. *Kultur och neuros* was widely read among young and radical intellectuals in the thirties and forties.<sup>119</sup> Annika Berg emphasizes the significance of Bratt for those who went on to advocate sexual liberation: their arguments were based on the notion that neuroses degenerated the race, and that it was therefore of great importance that 'life forms' were adapted to the natural instincts of humans.<sup>120</sup>

Among the others who contributed to the establishment of psychoanalysis in Sweden was a group of radical doctors and medical students, all members of Clarté. Their interpretation of Freud and psychoanalysis was in line with Bratt's, with an emphasis on sexual liberation. Following Clarté's emancipatory and educational line, in 1933 they founded RFSU [the National Association for Sexual Education] together with Elise Ottesen-Jensen, a syndicalist journalist and agitator. Elise Ottesen-Jensen, aka Ottar, was not in the least interested in Freud, whereas two of the others, Gustav Jonsson and Nils Nielsen, were very much inspired by Freudian thought. A year earlier, in 1932, the group founded (through Clarté) a journal about sex education, *Populär tidskrift för sexuell upplysning*, to which another of Freud's disciples, Wilhelm Reich, contributed.<sup>121</sup>

119 Per Magnus Johansson, *Freuds psykoanalys: Arvtagare i Sverige*, Daidalos (Gothenburg, 1999), ii, 281, 289, 293, 370–1.

120 Annika Berg, 'Det politiska privatlivet: Samarbete, konflikter och kompromisser i Signe och Axel Höjers äktenskap', in Annika Berg, Christina Florin & Per Wisselgren (eds.), *Par i vetenskap och politik*, Boréa (Umeå, 2011), 287.

121 Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta*, 29–33.

By this point, *Clarté* was shifting focus from its radical cultural critique to more mundane subjects in the field of economics and social policy, and as a consequence some of its original contributors, among them Karin Boye, left in 1931 to found a new literary journal, *Spektrum*. Where *Clarté* became a voice for the Marxist–socialist element in the cultural radical nexus, *Spektrum* was the radical alternative, with its emphasis on other, more utopian, romantic aspects often closely connected to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysts such as Anna Freud, Carl Müller-Braunschweig, Wilhelm Reich, and Erich Fromm all contributed to *Spektrum*. As did a young doctor, Pehr Henrik Törngren.<sup>122</sup> Törngren's essay 'Psykoanalys och samhälle' [Psychoanalysis and society], published in one of the last issues of *Spektrum*, was described as the credo of the young generation of radicals. His vision was of a liberated, open, and healthy society, and psychoanalysis was presented as the model for its realization: 'The dark powers of the old society will be brought into the light and be incapacitated as if they were repressed complexes, and a utopia for liberated individuals beckons in the future'.<sup>123</sup>

Part and parcel of this liberated society was an ideal of the uninhibited expression of 'life', often understood in terms of the expression of sexual instincts. Törngren's essay became (yet another) source of inspiration for a specific group of working class poets and writers, 5 unga [5 Young Ones], known for their primitivist position and working-class background.<sup>124</sup> Inspired by Walt Whitman, D. H. Lawrence, Finnish and Russian modernists, and this particular vitalist interpretation of psychoanalysis, the young writers, among them Artur Lundkvist, established themselves as a new cultural force—rough, masculine, true, potent—against what they presented as an effeminate, emasculated, and dying civilization based on bourgeois conventions.<sup>125</sup>

These conventions became the basis on which the intellectuals constructed a vision for a new world, although with the value system reversed: the dichotomies (for instance soul–body, civilized–primitive, culture–nature, human–animal, adult–child, man–woman, idealism–materialism) were turned on their heads and the primitive, the natural, and so forth became the ideals to strive for. The idea of the female was central to this ideology as a 'de-individualized' entity or element—an idealized 'sign' of the liberating force one hoped to find among 'primitives', those not yet civilized. The ideal woman was described in novels, articles, and poems as a creature of nature, always open to sexual encounters.<sup>126</sup> Ebba Witt-Brattström has

122 Longum, 'Psykoanalysen og kulturradikalismen', 31–2; see also Johansson, *Freuds psykoanalys*, ii. 383.

123 Franz Luttenberger, *Freud i Sverige*, Carlssons (Stockholm, 1989), 360–1.

124 Longum, 'Psykoanalysen og kulturradikalismen', 33–4.

125 Kylhammar, *Frejdiga framstegsmän*, 8–12, 104–105. The '5 unga' consisted of Artur Lundkvist, Erik Asklund, Harry Martinson, Josef Kjellgren, and Gustaf Sandgren.

126 Longum, 'Psykoanalysen og kulturradikalismen', 34–5.

interpreted this construction from a feminist perspective, regarding it as a reaction to the budding liberation of actual women. As stated earlier in the context of cultural radicalism, the thirties saw women acquire rights in several domains in society. They began to a larger degree to claim their place. The creation of a silent, compliant, natural (as in not intellectual) sexually available ideal by newly established working-class male intellectuals can most certainly be understood as a reaction to a supposed threat. Their ‘raw’ and ‘natural’ masculinity, based on their social background, became the capital they could use as they launched themselves as a new (natural) cultural force, but one which was based on male supremacy. They had no interest in losing that privilege.<sup>127</sup>

The vision of sexually liberated women as natural elements, not actual living, breathing, and thinking individuals, also met with opposition from different intellectuals at the time, among them the writer Moa Martinson, who did not hold back as she ridiculed the ‘glandular functionalism’ of the male primitivists.<sup>128</sup> Nic Waal, another prominent intellectual and cultural radical, also declined the ‘honour’ of being idealized, of being appointed a utopian token, in this case by her husband, the novelist Sigurd Hoel.<sup>129</sup> And the primitivists often voiced their disappointment in real-life women. To quote Artur Lundkvist, ‘as an individual I found the woman as small and tiring as myself, I looked to her as an element’.<sup>130</sup>

Another central concept in this ‘sexual Romanticism’ is *life*. It is a concept with a long and convoluted history. Jan Stenkvist quotes the German philosopher Heinrich Richert as he traces the German equivalent *Leben* from Herder and Goethe, via Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, to Bergson and on to Simmel, Husserl, and Spengler. Stenkvist continues that the genealogy of the concept is just as complex and confusing in a Swedish context. He points out that life was less of a philosophical concept in Sweden, and instead different writers adopted it. It became especially relevant in the twenties when it was presented as a secular lodestar, an alternative to a religious worldview. Ellen Key and Pär Lagerkvist but particularly Erik Blomberg discussed their different visions of a new and improved society with life as a starting point and ideal. The concept was incorporated and developed by primitivist writers, such as Gustav Sandgren and Artur Lundkvist, and they combined it with D. H. Lawrence’s ideas of sexual liberation and the expressionism of Walt Whitman, among others. Blomberg insisted bitterly that his vision of life as a more harmonious human cul-

127 Witt-Brattström, *Moa Martinson*, 191, 195.

128 Ibid. 179, 186.

129 Øystein Rottem, ‘Sexualromantikern Sigurd Hoel: En blick på en representative kulturradikalers kvinnosyn—med ett sideblick på Nic Waal: ‘Kulturradikalismens førstedame’ og Kvinnen i Hoels liv’, in Bertil Nolin (ed.), *Kulturradikalismen: Det moderna genombrottets andra fas*, Symposium (Stockholm/Stehag, 1993), 220.

130 Espmark, *Livsdyrkaren Artur Lundkvist*, 233; see also Kylhammar, *Frejdiga framstegsmän*, 106.

ture had nothing to do with the ‘reactionary individualism’ of primitivism; he even complained that he had been ‘robbed’.<sup>131</sup>

The primitivist version of life, inspired as it was by Blomberg, Lawrence, and Whitman, was also characterized by a more vivid and even violent tone that Kjell Espmark traces to the influence of Nietzsche and a Dionysian tradition (via German and Finnish literary expressionism). Looking at Lundkvist’s poetry from the late twenties and early thirties, for instance, the recurring theme of the joy of life tended to evolve into vivid descriptions of the pulsing of young, red, hot blood, of inarticulate cries to the sky. There was clearly a strong element of ecstatic expression in this period.<sup>132</sup>

For Lundkvist, as for the other primitivists, the road to a new society and a new truly liberated man went through the liberation of the libido and a total acceptance of life as it is. The movement was characterized by a strong belief in progress and a better future, reflecting twenties’ optimism, but also the evolutionism of Marxist theory.<sup>133</sup> The combination of primitivism and Marxism did cause a bit of a dilemma, however: how was one to combine a total acceptance of life as it is with hopes for change and revolutionary upheaval in society? In the case of Artur Lundkvist, Espmark finds him oddly lacking when he tried to write poems with proletarian themes. The dilemma became a conflict Lundkvist could not resolve.<sup>134</sup> When hard-pressed, he did define himself as inspired by Marxism, but he did not consider himself a Communist: ‘I am not a Communist, but anything else that radically turns the world, the life, this mutilated, constricted, bleeding life that belongs to us, upside down.’ His vision was clear: ‘I wish to expose the naked, pure, beautiful life along with the ditto human.’<sup>135</sup>

This brief account of Swedish primitivism touches on its links with the international modernist literary movement. I have also shown that the primitivists mainly had working-class backgrounds, making theirs a somewhat special case compared to other modernist writers and poets in a broader, international setting. They were generally affiliated with the left as well, wishing for a revolution. Their vision of a radically different society was constructed on a reversal of what they considered bourgeois values, and one of the most significant figures in the process was the female—the woman as a marker or sign of purity and primitiveness.

131 Jan Stenkvis, *Den nya livskänslan: En studie i Erik Blombergs författarskap till och med 1924*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 1968), 11–12, 286–8; see also Espmark, *Livsdyrkaren Artur Lundkvist*, 110; Henrik Berggren, *Seklets ungdom: Retorik, politik och modernitet 1900–1939*, Tiden (Stockholm, 1995), 168–9.

132 Espmark, *Livsdyrkaren Artur Lundkvist*, 109, 113–15, 131.

133 Ibid. 135.

134 Ibid. 103.

135 Ibid. 83–4.

And yet, it might be problematic to read and interpret texts within a certain tradition, pinning down a production in time, reading later texts in the light of a thirties' literary movement. I would not suggest that the travel writers in question were unaware of international developments after the Second World War, but still they tended to discuss and understand the decolonization process and the Cold War in terms of primitivism, or primitivism combined with Marxism.<sup>136</sup>

## Gender/sexuality

As earlier stated, Meyda Yegenoglu has argued for a far greater awareness of the gender perspective in colonial discourse analysis. Particular criticism is reserved for Edward W. Said and *Orientalism*, and she points out the need to concentrate on questions of sexuality, desire, and fantasies when discussing the construction of an Oriental Other. She argues for a feminist and psychoanalytical reading of the orientalist discourse, as it could reach further.<sup>137</sup>

The gender perspective is also essential in this primitivist context. While creating a space, a position, for themselves as a new cultural elite, the primitivist working-class writers relied upon a system of dichotomies in which class and gender became primary means of control, in close connection to nature and culture. As has been pointed out earlier, the primitivist standpoint reflected a strict division between masculinity and femininity.

So, what happens when the primitivist dichotomy travels? When the ideas of essential masculinity and femininity meet the exotic Other, and the categories of race or difference enter the equation? In the following section I will discuss how colonial tropes concerning sexuality and Otherness are utilized by the travel writers, and how the nature–culture binary affects the uttermost Other, the 'primitive' woman, creating an intersection of race and gender.

## Women in sight

Artur Lundkvist travelled through Africa between December 1947 and May 1948. His accounts of this journey were published in *Folket i Bild* and the journal also financed the trip. The reports were later compiled and published as a book with the title *Negerland*, a title that echoes Lundkvist's first travel account from Africa, *Ne-*

136 Interestingly, Eric Lundqvist used the term 'primitivist' for the first time in a travel account in 1961, applying the term to himself and his longing for a simple life on an island. The travel account in question is *Öarna och morgondagen: Om människor och djur, om brytningstider och framtidsproblem i Indonesiens övärld.*, Bonniers (Stockholm, 1961). in which he discusses postcolonial nationalism and the modernizing process in Indonesia.

137 Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 25–6.



*gerkust* (1933). Lundkvist travelled quite extensively in Africa, visiting the British colony of Nigeria among many other places. His description of the Nigerian landscape is charged with sexual innuendo:

The human fertility on this tropical coast has been and still is almost incredible: the delta of the Niger, including the majestic river system formerly called the Oil Rivers, and the ten-mile-wide marsh zone, extending to the Cameroon Mountains, the incessantly wet jungle vulcano, constitute a black uterus, hotter and damper than almost any other place on earth.<sup>138</sup>

Fertility is decidedly ‘human’ at the beginning of the quote, but as the reader is invited to follow the rivers, we end up in a ‘black uterus, hotter and damper’ than almost anywhere else. The Nigerian landscape is clearly gendered and feminized. Espmark demonstrates how the depiction of women as landscapes and landscapes as women is a repeated pattern in Artur Lundkvist’s *oeuvre*, and Espmark interprets this pattern as a form of dream, an idealization of woman as an element, not as actual individuals.<sup>139</sup> However, this metaphor can be interpreted within a colonial discourse as well.

Anne McClintock and David Spurr have both investigated the significance of sexualized tropes. McClintock, for example, considers the adventure novel *King Solomon’s Treasure*, which is set in Africa. Three Englishmen are searching for diamond mines in the heart of Africa, following a treasure map. The map is included in the novel and McClintock points out how the structure and design of the map correspond to a woman’s body. A mountain pass, for example, is called ‘Sheba’s Breasts’ and the mines represent the female genitals.<sup>140</sup>

Spurr also discusses the familiar trope of the sexualized landscape of the alien continent. He stresses how common it is that unknown territory is described and thought of as a woman’s body; he even calls the trope a ‘colonial cliché’. Spurr takes the trope to be an attempt to disarm or gloss over the unequal relationship between colonizer and colonized: ‘The erotically charged language of these metaphors marks the entrance of the colonizer, with his penetrating and controlling power, as a natural union with the subject nation’.<sup>141</sup>

Eric Lundqvist utilizes this cliché abundantly, too,<sup>142</sup> but in this particular in-

138 Artur Lundkvist, *Negerland*, Albert Bonniers Förlag (Stockholm, 1949), 118.

139 Espmark, *Livsdyrkaren Artur Lundkvist*, 232–3.

140 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 1–4.

141 Spurr, *Rhetoric of the Empire*, 171–2; see also Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 177–8.

142 For example, Eric Lundqvist, *Öarna och morgondagen*, 37, when he is travelling in Java in 1958: ‘A landscape who in loving desire lifted the volcanoes like maturing breasts against the sky.’

stance he uses it with a twist, expressing his own frustration with the situation as he found it. In the following excerpt he describes his return to Indonesia after the Second World War. He had been forced to leave his bride-to-be and the country during the war for fear of being shot or interned by the Japanese forces. The book begins with his arrival in Java, and the writer is filled with despair. Nothing is the same:

This is no interchange, no encounter. I can only observe the country, which in turn makes me yearn for it even more. But I cannot reach it. I get out of the jeep and step down into the mud of a rice paddy to create some kind of contact with the earth itself and not even then do I succeed. Somehow, steel and bullets and hatred have come between the country and me. It does not give in like it used to do, with an open smiling face. I cannot see its face anymore. If I were to get hold of it now, I would end up raping it.<sup>143</sup>

The Western dream of the licentious, beautiful women of the South Pacific is often expanded to include the landscape itself. This is not an innovation in the travel literature from this area: the islands were often described as ‘welcoming’ and ‘smiling’. What is new, however, is the way Lundqvist transforms the trope to express the horror and destruction that meets him in Java. The landscape does not smile and give in as usual—it does not confirm the dream of a natural and equal meeting between the Western man and the exotic woman. On the contrary, steel, bullets, and hatred, the tokens of a perverted ‘civilization’, have maimed paradise. The equal relationship or intercourse between the primitivist Western man and the primitive exotic woman has been rendered impossible by the brutal introduction of modernity gone wrong. If he tries to get hold of her/it, the result will be rape. Lundqvist manages to make his sorrow and despair touching and comprehensible to the reader by using such a familiar trope, but he also confirms and underpins his own self-image as being different from other Western men. He does not stay in the car like others. Observation is not enough. He literally grabs at the soil, yearning. But no, not even he can reach out and truly touch the feminine landscape.<sup>144</sup>

Both Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist without doubt use the colonial trope of a sexualized landscape/the eroticized and accessible Other woman, though with

143 Eric Lundqvist, *Vildarna finns i väst*, Folket i Bilds Förlag (Stockholm, 1956 [1951]), 13.

144 Lundqvist repeats this version of the trope, in a less desperate situation, when he travels by boat to Sumatra in 1958. As they approach land and can see the beaches, he says that the boat follows the coast ‘as if carressing it’, and adds, ‘A beautiful woman who dares to tease boldly. She knows that I do not stand a chance to possess her’. He is hinting at the regulations in independent Indonesia that says that foreigners are not allowed to own land (Lundqvist, *Öarna och morgondagen*, 101).

somewhat different results. Artur Lundkvist is almost aloof in his depiction of the Nigerian wetlands and the moist vulcano, however vivid and rich the description might be. His is an observation. Eric Lundqvist, on the other hand, invests himself in his account, instead of employing the trope full-on. The thought of mere observation is painful to him, standing in a field, desperately sifting the mud between his fingers.

Eric Lundqvist is not only discussing the women of the South Pacific as metaphors—he repeatedly describes the beauty and grace of the women in Indonesia; he sometimes, although not always, connects them with animals, placing them in a state of nature. In the following, he is describing an incident at the beginning of the Second World War. He and his wife Sari have left Borneo for her home village, where they are supporting themselves as farmers. This particular incident takes place when Eric walked through the forest to village bathing spot after a hard day's work in the rice paddies. The village prostitute, Ota, is washing her clothes by the river, and when she sees the author, she undresses and walks up to him.

She is standing in front of me, stark naked. Her big almond-shaped eyes are narrowed, black fire shooting through the slits. The nostrils of her tiny straight nose are trembling. Her full cheeks are blushing repeatedly. She has raised her long and beautiful hands to her chest and the tiny, firm breasts. The high, rounded shoulders are shaking a little. I notice that the ribbon of the sarong has left marks on her incredibly small waist. I notice the silkiness of her skin, with the exception of her feet where the skin is tanned and rough. She has no hair on her body. There is something carnal and desirable about her full lips, smiling, showing the white, sparkling teeth. The entire girl is on heat, steaming with desire. She is the perfect child of nature, in both passions and body. There is nothing dirty or crude about her. She knows nothing else but pursuing her desires. She neither thinks nor calculates. She is only waiting for me to give her the look, disclosing my surrender to her as a female beast. ... She has no idea of love, I think to myself. She is only a healthy animal on heat.<sup>145</sup>

Eric Lundqvist often creates a dichotomy in which men represent culture, civilization and rationalism, and women are depicted as emotional and close to nature. When the dichotomy is extended to comprise the Other men and women, the 'brown' men are seen as feminine—intuitive, emotional and close to nature—and the Other women are thereby implicitly pushed even further into nature, crossing the border between human and non-human. Lundqvist, however, is always eager not to condemn the naturalness of the Other; anything but.<sup>146</sup>

Yet, it is alarming to see the correspondence between the bestial Ota and the anti-

145 Eric Lundqvist, *Sawah*, Folket i Bilds Förlag (Stockholm, 1952 [1949]), 105–106.

146 Ibid. 13.

feminist tendencies of the primitivist authors of the 1930s. The distinguishing characteristic of the authentic, true women in the novels was sexual instinct, not intellectual ability, according to Witt-Brattström. The primitivist men could be interpreted as despising bourgeois male intellectuals for being too civilized and for being emasculated. They claimed their own masculine naturalness in opposition to these intellectuals, which in turn makes me think that this perhaps could have led to the primitivists pushing what they considered laudable femininity over the line and into the natural state (the bourgeois, intellectual, and emancipated woman was either sexually perverted or completely asexual).<sup>147</sup>

Apart from the connection to the primitivist tradition, McClintock points out another context in which the passage on Ota can be read. McClintock explores the long history of ‘porno-tropics’, the transfer of fantasies about sexual abundance to unknown continents outside Europe. She shows how these ideas can be traced all the way back to Ptolemy. The main protagonists in the stories were mainly women. Their sexual behaviour was often described as so excessive and promiscuous that the women had ceased to belong to the human race. They had crossed the border between man and beast.<sup>148</sup>

Artur Lundkvist also hints at these issues in his travel book on Africa. At one point he discusses the fears of African women: ‘The native women are very much afraid of apes, particularly chimpanzees and baboons, and they run screaming from the fields whenever a pack of apes appears.’ He continues: ‘They believe firmly that the male apes lust for women and hence they fear being kidnapped and incorporated in the pack for good. Or, the women think that they will be raped and forced to give birth to a half-ape.’<sup>149</sup>

Sander L. Gilman writes about European science and the role of the African woman. He refers back to the early era of travel writing, when writers described African women’s sexual appetites as non-human. To prove their point, they claimed that African women had sexual intercourse with apes. Artur Lundkvist is evidently echoing a long European tradition in his account of the fleeing women.

Gilman also describes how this myth was replanted in a scientific and medical context at the end of the eighteenth century. The Great Chain of Being had been replaced by natural science and empiricism. The black man and woman, denominated ‘Hottentots’, had earlier been placed at the very bottom of the chain, together with the apes. Now, a new paradigm was introduced and established, but the Africans, and especially African women, were still considered alien and non-human. Gilman is careful to point out how the ideology remained the same, though the

147 Witt-Brattström, *Moa Martinson*, 181–3, 193–5.

148 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 21–4.

149 Lundkvist, *Negerland*, 207.

discourse changed significantly.

Instead of merely repeating the myth of lusty African women, European scientists were trying to substantiate the belief by observation. The supposedly primitive sexuality of the women was explained through a careful mapping of their genitals. Scientists claimed there was a correspondence between what they considered primitive genitals and primitive sexuality. Gilman also discusses a growing interest among Europeans in the supposedly rounded buttocks of African women. He shows how depictions of these women, from behind, were very popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which he interprets as an outlet for persistent fantasies about the sexual perversions of Africans. The ‘exaggerated’ physiognomy of the women was believed to indicate an exaggerated sexuality.<sup>150</sup>

The supposed connection made between physiognomy and sexual appetite is hinted at by Artur Lundkvist in his travelogues from Cuba and Africa. While visiting a brothel in Kano in Nigeria, he meets a woman:

She is offering herself without any signs of inferiority, and when I decline she replies by raising her skirt and turning her back to me. This is not meant as impudence, it is an attempt at persuasion. She is expecting me to admire her behind. It is undeniably on the large side, protruding like a shelf, and in all senses overwhelming.<sup>151</sup>

Looking at the description of Cuban women in *Så lever Kuba* from 1965, there are similarities in the connection made between physiognomy and sexuality. He states (while claiming to quote others) that the Cuban women’s bodies are S-shaped, ‘describing the rounded tummy and dramatically protruding backside. An S that naturally stands for Sexuality: the sign is directly included as a symbol in the vision’. He then goes into a detailed description of how Cuban women accentuate their figures by wearing extremely tight clothes: ‘The shapes are quite sculpted, trembling in a constant state of tension. The thighs, the swelling double pear of the backside, the curved vagina under the inclined tummy: everything is exposed, tantalizingly explicit, especially in profile. The Cuban woman is in a way more than naked when she is dressed.’ Lundkvist continues to describe Cuban women in detail, claiming that foreigners mistake them for prostitutes,<sup>152</sup> which he thinks understandable, as these women cannot walk up a set of stairs or get in to a car without creating something the author describes as ‘erotic acrobatics’. However, any foreign men who try to approach Cuban women will be disappointed: ‘her effusive baroque nature is

150 Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of sexuality, race and madness*, Cornell University Press (Ithaca, 1985), 83–8; see also Thompson, *Travel Writing*, *passim*.

151 Lundkvist, *Negerland*, 97.

152 Artur Lundkvist, *Så lever Kuba*, Tidens (Stockholm, 1965), 58.

kept in tight rein by the patriarchal morals inherited from Spain and still applied. She is situated in the middle of the intersection between tradition and modern liberation.<sup>153</sup>

There is a hint of a movement from tradition to modern liberation in the descriptions of Cuban women that is lacking in those of African women. Margareta Petersson states that Lundkvist had appropriated the evolutionist stage model to the full, and that he ranked the countries and continents he visited according to this model. She also makes the observation that Africa represented the past for the author, just as China would later represent the future.<sup>154</sup> I find this a relevant and helpful observation, since Lundkvist is so reluctant to praise the sexual candour he claims to have witnessed in Africa. It does not seem to lead anywhere, as opposed to the situation in Cuba. And yet the colonial trope of mapping and observing women's bodies in order to discern inner qualities, such as the expression of sexuality, is at work in both instances.

### Women out of sight

Yegenoglu, among many things, discusses the representation of the veil and of the Oriental woman in the West. She points out that the veil forms a barrier between the woman and the Western gaze, making the woman unapproachable. The invisibility and elusiveness of Oriental women create a frustration in the West, which in turn leads to an obsession with the veil. The veil becomes a topic around which speculation and discussion revolve.

Yegenoglu refers to Foucault when developing her argument about the Western preoccupation with the veil and veiled women. She claims that frustration with the veil has two sources. The first is that the Oriental woman is escaping the empiricist ambition of the Westerners: she is out of reach for observation and hence also the production of knowledge. The second source is that the eyes of the woman cannot be seen. She can watch from behind the veil, her gaze an inversion of the Bentham gaze. The superior, observing surveillance of the West is challenged.<sup>155</sup>

In almost every travel account I have studied I find examples concerned with the veil in one way or the other. Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist clearly condemn the custom. Artur Lundkvist encounters veiled women at the very end of his journey through Africa. He is in Zanzibar, an island he depicts according to an orientalist discourse. Zanzibar belongs to the past, characterized by 'timeless orientalism', and

153 Ibid. 59.

154 Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 145.

155 Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 39–43.

the author can sense the traces of a mythological age.<sup>156</sup> This is the setting in which he observes a group of veiled women:

Sometimes you see groups of Arab women, characterized by anxiety and bustle, as if they are unaccustomed to the street and the daylight. However, their vision is scant, because they are covered in black from top to toe, without even a slit for the eyes. Gloomy figures of the night amidst the light, women of the darkest of shadows: impossible to tell the daughter apart from the mother, the beauty from the shrew.<sup>157</sup>

Following Yegenoglu, I would say that Artur Lundkvist tries to resolve the problem of the women's invisible gaze by denying them vision altogether. He also expresses his frustration at the covering veil—he cannot see the women, he cannot evaluate them. He obviously needs to classify them according to age and looks, and this is not granted him. Instead, he dismisses them as darkness, night, shadows, representatives of empty nothingness caught in the daylight. They are dark shapes, shunning the light, also so shunning his gaze and right to observe.

The elusive figure of the veiled woman is frequently contrasted with her opposite, the accessible woman. Lundkvist encounters her too during his travels. The boat trip to India, on which he embarks immediately after his journey through Africa, is described as a fragmentary sequence of impressions:

The Indian Ocean in the trade wind: desolate ocean, almost asleep, cooler than expected, an emptiness that is the emptiness between continents. On the fourth day coral islands appear, the Laccadives to the north, the Maldives to the south: the outposts of the South Seas, reaching to India, in the great belt of coconut palm trees of the world. A mythical land of women: islands where men are never at home and the lonely, unveiled women welcome shipwrecked men in their paradise of palm trees.<sup>158</sup>

I am interested in the way Lundkvist is at pains to reassure readers that the women are 'unveiled'. Why this additional attribute, or rather lack of it? Why is it not enough to say 'lonely women welcome'? What does the negated veil indicate?

Eric Lundqvist contrasts veiled women with unveiled women in his account on India from 1964, in his case Indian and Indonesian women. The author explicitly states his predilection for Indonesian women. Their self-assurance appeals to him and he is attracted to the way they confidently 'look the stranger straight in the face

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156 Lundkvist, *Negerland*, 258.

157 Ibid. 256.

158 Artur Lundkvist, *Indiabrand*, Bonniers (Stockholm, 1950), 10.

with a friendly smile. The Indian woman never looks a man straight in the face. Most of them hide behind a veil. They seem endlessly distant. ... Like many other Westerners I found her uninteresting, lacking sex appeal'. Lundqvist continues by describing how he regained hope during a stay in Kerala, where he saw women of the Nayar people. These women reminded him of the Indonesian women. They 'looked just as self-assured and independent. And they dared to look a man in the eyes, even smile at him'.<sup>159</sup>

Evidently the veil is associated by the author with oppression and constrained sexuality. He is also denied the flirtatious recognition or validation he so obviously craves. In the following, it becomes evident that the veil is also redolent of hypocrisy:

Next day we visited a Purdja village and I noticed that they were frank, proud and that the women had the courage to look straight in the faces of us men. There were no veils, there was no reserve, no hypocrisy. When the forestry officer asked them to dance for us, they did it without any shuffling, all the women of the village in one long bowing row. They carried peacock feathers in their hands and their shapely bodies were wrapped in red cloths.<sup>160</sup>

This section is representing the very opposite of the Arab women in Zanzibar, as described by Artur Lundkvist. Flattering, colourful sarongs have replaced the black, covering veils. The women look at the Western visitors, they do not shun their attention or their observing gaze, and they oblige immediately when asked to perform. Eric Lundqvist links this readiness to please with pride and frankness, positioning these qualities against the veil that is supposed to signal reserve and hypocrisy.

The meaning of 'hypocrisy' could be interpreted in two different ways. One possibility is that Eric Lundqvist is hinting at religious hypocrisy: that the veil represents a public display of female piety, and that public displays of religiosity per se are considered to be flauntingly feigned rather than humbly observant. One of the main pillars of the modernization process, according to the ideology (and later the theories), is secularization, which does not entail the abolition of religion. It does, however, mean that religious beliefs and practices are supposed to be a private matter. Looking at the novel *Ingen tobak, inget hallelujah* [No tobacco, no hallelujah], published by Eric Lundqvist in the mid fifties, it is clear that he opposed any form of ostentatious religious worship, finding the worshippers self-righteous and hypocritical.<sup>161</sup>

159 Eric Lundqvist, *Moder India*, Bonniers (Stockholm, 1964), 187.

160 Ibid. 151.

161 Eric Lundqvist, *Ingen tobak, inget halleluja*, Bonniers folkbibliotek (Stockholm, 1956).



The second possible interpretation has to do with pretended prudery. To make that argument, I need to take a detour through the writings of Artur Lundkvist.

Artur Lundkvist also writes about Indian women, the veil, and hypocrisy, though he does not use the term hypocrisy itself. The following quotation is taken from *Indiabrand*, in which the author describes a visit to Taj Mahal, a monument to which he ascribes feminine qualities: he calls the building ‘a queen’ and an ‘Eastern fantasy about the perfect, motherly, ample female breast’.<sup>162</sup> He is less impressed by the emphatically this-worldly women and their children who visit the monument at the same time as he did:

Crowds of veiled women, holding children by the hand, flutter around, jabbering. Somehow strongly excited in the presence of this memorial to faithful, child-rearing, connubial love. As if this was a monument to their own honour. They are careful not to show their faces, but they are less scrupulous about their behinds: they sit down in a row by the barrier at the river and urinate, the bare buttocks like full moons.<sup>163</sup>

Now, it is a coincidence, but I still find the parallel to the earlier quotation interesting: the women at the Taj Mahal form a line, a row, as they expose themselves for the Western man. The dancing women of the village also form a line while being assessed and evaluated by the Western visitor. The main difference, and this is why the judgements differ, is that according to the writer these women do not pretend to be anything else than mere bodies, but the women at the Taj Mahal do: they see themselves as mothers and faithful wives. They cover their faces, hide their female bodies while trying to deny their essential quality as Other women. Yet, they expose themselves, in both senses, by the river. And this is where the hypocrisy comes in.

Since the image of the Other woman seems entirely connected to nature, as opposed to culture, her true nature is to be natural, instinctive, and sexually accessible. This why Artur Lundkvist is so sarcastic while denying the women the right to feel honoured by the monument. To flirt, on the other hand, is to be honest, simply because it confirms the primitivist ideology of the Other woman. Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist feel free to accuse the Indian women of being hypocrites, because these primitivist travel writers ‘know’ what the women are really like, underneath the veil and the affectation.

There are two points to make here. One is that ‘the primitive’ is an answer to a question posed elsewhere, in the West. To quote Marianna Torgovnick, ‘the primi-

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162 Lundkvist, *Indiabrand*, 122.

163 Ibid. 123.

tive can be—has been, will be (?)—whatever Euro-Americans want it to be. It tells us what we want it to tell us'. She describes how the present in the West is constantly posed against this Otherness: 'Is the present too materialistic? Primitive life is not ... Is the present sexually repressed? Not primitive life, primitives live life whole, without fear of the body'.<sup>164</sup> So, whenever the primitivist discourse, with all its expectations and hopes for a pure, alternative world somewhere else outside the West, encounters those who do not live up to its expectations, who do not answer the primitivist question in the proper manner, what happens then? This is my second point, and I turn to Nicholas Thomas, who considers the perils of idealization, and that one is exposed to the risk of the very opposite—debasement—if one does not meet expectations; if, for instance, one is not 'primitive' enough.<sup>165</sup>

Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist both assess the women they meet: covered or not, flirting or not, demeaning descriptions or not. It is also possible to interpret this assessment as a time-knot, where veils most definitely do not point ahead to a pure and liberated future.

## Life is elsewhere

The concept of life is firmly placed within a whole system of dichotomies, in which 'life' is associated with 'nature', as opposed to 'culture'. The idea of the untarnished and true Other, whether this Other is represented by the working class or by the noble savage, is part of an old tradition. It is not my aim here to unravel the long-standing idealization of the Other,<sup>166</sup> or the sense in which the (attributed) Other can use this notion, but it is quite clear that the trope of idealization is at work in this context. This is not surprising since life is a positive, normative concept—indeed, *the* positive, normative concept in this particular setting—and those held to represent life will of course be automatically idealized.

## Life and blood, reaching the Other

Eric Lundqvist repeatedly discusses life in his books, particularly in those written and published in the late forties and fifties. The concept of life, sometimes written with a capital L and sometimes written in italics, always appears in relation to the 'primitive' or 'savage' condition.

<sup>164</sup> Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, 8–9.

<sup>165</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, travel, and government*, Polity (Cambridge, 1994), 170–5 discusses the perils of such a strategy in relation to the Aborigines in Australia; see also Rottem, 'Sexualromantikern Sigurd Hoel', 208.

<sup>166</sup> See Spurr, *Rhetoric of the Empire*, 128–40 for the history of the trope.

One of the recurrent life situations that the author describes is when he is invited either to watch or to participate in the Papua villagers' dancing. His participation in these all-night sessions is often depicted as a merger, as dissolution of borders: 'I feel how I am simply gliding along, becoming just as primitive, just as desirous, just as pleased with life, just as mad about dancing, about the night, about feeling the bodies of the others. We are one.'<sup>167</sup> Later in the same chapter, he recalls the evening when he and a Dutch colonial civil servant witnessed Papua people dance. The author had seen this before, but it was the first time for the civil servant. They were both very much caught up in the scene and with the intensity of the dance and the sound of the drums:

the savagery, sensuality, the magic of the jungle and that red joy of life immediately got into our blood... It was touching art, art that affected the dancers to the point where they did not notice the spectators. To the point that they were entirely living within themselves, living the red, trembling life, which they were now interpreting.<sup>168</sup>

The connection between life and red/blood is one made elsewhere too. As when Eric Lundqvist and one of his native employees at the sawmill in Borneo have gone hunting in the jungle. They have followed the trail of a deer, and the author is getting nervous, since he is only carrying a spear and not a gun, which means that he needs to get very close to the animal in order to kill it. They track the deer, and while he is watching the stag and planning his move, something happens to him: 'Then, all of a sudden, a different person stirred inside me. Pushing my normal self aside.' He continues: 'The conscious self dispels like fog and smoke. Now a savage is standing there with the spear in a firm grip. The savage who has been hunting and hunting for thousands of generations'. The author/savage attacks the stag in a trance and kills it: 'The savage wrenches the spear from the falling deer. It falls heavily, groaning. The blood gushes and colours the green leaves and the naked body. The savage is dancing, enjoying himself. He squeezes the spear, his nerves are still there. With this, he can feel how he kills and lives. He understands that this is the only true meaning of life to him. That this is fulfilment.'<sup>169</sup>

It is noteworthy that the blood, spurting onto the trees and the body of the author/savage, is central, even necessary, to the event. It is not until he is dancing, covered in blood and no longer in a trance, that he fully experiences the hunt—the killing and the 'fulfilment' of life. I will return to the significance of the blood later.

My point here is that the account of the Other awakening within corresponds

<sup>167</sup> Lundqvist, *Vildarna finns i väst*, 207.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 210.

<sup>169</sup> Eric Lundqvist, *Djungeltagen*, *Folket i Bilds* (Stockholm, 1954 [1947]), 170–1.

closely to the Freudian notion of the divided self, where the id is kept in place by the ego and the superego. The idea of an ever-present primordial savage was already long established by the time Freud introduced his theories, of course, as we will see. In order to discuss the fear of (and fascination with) this primordial savage and the critical potential of this fear, I turn to the debate about *Heart of Darkness*, and whether Joseph Conrad succeeded in his critique of imperialism.

In 1975, three years before *Orientalism* was published, the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe gave a talk at an American university. His purpose was to criticize the position of *Heart of Darkness* in the Western canon. Achebe contested the notion of *Heart of Darkness* as one of the finest achievements in world literature by pointing out that this opinion was only possible if you chose to ignore the blatant racism of the book. The ease with which this racism was ignored by academics and others was a sign of how racist Western thinking is. Achebe regarded Conrad as yet another contributor to the prevailing image of Africa as the antithesis of Europe: a continent populated by savages without language and without power of initiative. The author thus rejected Conrad's critical capacity: 'Conrad did not originate the image of Africa which we find in this book. It was and is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination, and Conrad merely brought the peculiar gifts of his mind to bear on it.'<sup>170</sup>

The main focus of Achebe's critique was not directed at Joseph Conrad himself—Achebe was more interested in the way *Heart of Darkness* had remained part of the canon, on school and university reading lists all over the world. He pointed out that it was standard for the artists and writers who had supported the Nazi regime to be condemned and forced to apologize for their collaboration. And yet the West's imperial past had never been dealt with in the same manner. This lack of self-criticism and failure to come to terms with its past had left the European image of Africa intact, which in turn might explain why the book was still so highly regarded and a fixture on academic reading lists.<sup>171</sup>

Anthony Fothergill has attempted to understand the imperialist anti-imperialism of *Heart of Darkness*, he is particularly interested Conrad's social standing. He claims that Conrad's position as an outsider in British society, being Polish and having grown up under Russian oppression, resulted in a particular sensibility and a 'capacity to view the culturally familiar with an estranged eye'. This capacity in turn enabled him to distance himself from the constraints of his British contemporaries' racism, helping him to discern the ideological presumptions of imperialism.<sup>172</sup>

170 Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa', *Research in African Literatures*, 9/1 (1978), 13.

171 Ibid. 2–9.

172 Anthony Fothergill, 'Of Conrad, Cannibals and Kin', in Mick Gidley (ed.), *Representing Others: White views of indigenous peoples*, University of Exeter Press (Exeter, 1992), 45; echoing Sara

According to Fothergill, *Heart of Darkness* must be read in the light of the recent establishment of Darwinism in the UK. His claim is that Darwinism could be used as a vehicle to criticize the racism that permeated British society, since it established the shared and conjoined origin of all mankind. Darwinism could also, however, be used for the opposite purpose—to argue that the Africans were backward, primitive, and ultimately the living ancestors of the Europeans.<sup>173</sup> The main objective of the British in relation to Africa was to maintain their distance and safety. The image of Africa as the uttermost Other was sustained through a system of dichotomies, which laid out the ‘natural’ borders between civilization and savagery, human and non-human. The mere thought of crossing these boundaries, Fothergill emphasizes, was an abomination.<sup>174</sup>

Fothergill argues that Conrad could make use of the prevailing ideology in order to articulate his critique against racism and imperialism. Conrad used the concept of the African as the origin or the ancestor of the British by implying that there might be remnants of savagery lurking under the civilized veneer. The insinuation that theirs was a frail civilization, constantly threatened by savagery from within, scared his British audience more than anything else, since it undermined the whole notion of racial supremacy. The problem arises when Conrad must construe the Africans as the objects who can evoke this fear. He could articulate the feared transgression that in turn was intended to undermine racism, but this could not be accomplished without reinforcing the racist stereotypes.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, Fothergill recognizes that Conrad vacillated between the reinforcement of these stereotypes and questioning the same: the stereotypes themselves seem to dissolve.<sup>176</sup> Admittedly, Conrad was in one sense a racist, but Fothergill goes on to argue that Conrad, thanks to his social status as an outsider, was able to turn this ideology against itself, deploying racist stereotypes to exert influence on his contemporaries.

Even though Eric Lundqvist is racist in the sense that he adheres to the notion of race, his standpoint is anti-racist in that he refuses to rank races according to a hierarchy. Hence, he does not shy away from the suggestion that he harbours an inner savage. On the contrary, he describes the hunt as a turning point, as a moment of deliverance: the inner savage allows him to fully grasp ‘life’. The reversal of the dichotomy of civilized versus savage/primitive, noted in my discussion of Swedish primitivism, is in full play here, as is the concept of life.

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Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An analysis of women's travel writing and colonialism*, Routledge (London, 1991), *passim*, on the relationship to women travel writers—that exclusion creates qualifications for a critical standpoint.

173 Fothergill, ‘Of Conrad, Cannibals and Kin’, 46–8.

174 Ibid. 49.

175 Ibid. 52–4.

176 Ibid. 50, 57.

The author not only uses ‘life’ as a signifier of primordial authenticity and of his merging with the Other when dancing or hunting, he also uses it in relation to sexual desire and baser instincts, discussing them in terms of the ‘red desire of the jungle’.<sup>177</sup> In the chapter on Ota, the young prostitute at the bathing place, Lundqvist continues his musings on her healthy attitude: ‘You never feel as fully alive as when you passively follow Life’s own law. And I do not think that the joyful birds and little Ota, being in heat, ever will get less out of life than so-called civilized people and their belief in a higher, eternal, bittersweet love.’<sup>178</sup>

In this example, the author is contrasting the healthy instincts of the birds and Ota with the refined and rather pathetic longing of ‘civilized people’, to the disadvantage of the latter. In a chapter entitled ‘Philosophy of the Jungle’, he develops his ideas of civilization, culture, and savagery, claiming that civilization inevitably creates unhappy people. The only true happiness can be found in nature, by leading a primitive life. He continues: ‘The man of culture can certainly also experience some kind of refined happiness, in the midst of his high culture, but this happiness is not unmediated and it is generally fairly bittersweet.’ The tragic situation of the man of culture is immediately underlined with a comparison:

I know that both animals and savages enjoy life to the full. Most of all when they fulfil the demands of the most primordial instincts in intimate contact with nature. Only then will you become one with the genuine, throbbing *Life*, which only can be perceived at that contact. And no reflecting, refined mind is needed. On the contrary!<sup>179</sup>

So, civilization and culture are both entirely associated with complexity, inhibition, and privation. Explore further the dichotomies that Lundqvist constructs when comparing a primitive way of life with a civilized one, and we discern a familiar pattern:

But one aspect of leadership does not have any drawbacks: I have the opportunity to meet an infinite number of people and may live their lives and have an influence on their destinies. Through them I get so close to the red, trembling life, enabling me to learn so much and experience so much of the truly human, enabling me—sometimes—to imagine how much life can offer us, when it is at its fullest, when it hits us in the hardest way. Because the people here are so easy to get close to. They are naked in mind and body. They have not been taught how to hide behind the armour

177 Lundqvist, *Vildarna finns i väst*, 241.

178 Lundqvist, *Sawah*, 106.

179 Lundqvist, *Vildarna finns i väst*, 255–6.

of education, conceit, or efficiency. And the jungle soon tears off what little you can possibly have brought with you. Of all the people I have met here, I prefer those who dare to sin against their God or their powers. Those who dare to say yes to life and no to convention.<sup>180</sup>

Interestingly, one could interpret the references to ‘the armour of education, conceit, or efficiency’ as a form of veil, something that true, raw life in the jungle ‘tears off’ you, stripping you bare ‘in mind and body’. Thinking of the relationship between Swedish primitivism and literary modernism, this is a recurring theme in Walt Whitman’s poetry, the tearing away of veils to expose our true nature.<sup>181</sup> But to sum up: on the one hand there is culture, civilization, the West, inhibition, education, conceit, efficiency, love, convention, religion, obedience, and reflection, while on the other there is nature, instinct, bravery, blood, honesty, reality, humanity, defiance, savagery, the East, the jungle, and joy, all of which can be summarized as ‘Life’ or ‘the red, trembling life’. The bloodless, Western-educated man or woman is contrasted with passion and the flowing of actual and metaphorical blood, which in turn explains the recurring notion of ‘life’ as being red.

This dualistic construction, in the version presented by Eric Lundqvist, is close to the vitalist ideas presented by Artur Lundkvist, Harry Martinson, and the others from 1929 on. Eric Lundqvist was truly a product of his time, and he stayed a primitivist even when it was considered very much out of date.<sup>182</sup> Later, in the sixties and early seventies, his primitivist outlook was often hailed as ‘wisdom’, ‘Eastern wisdom’, or radical internationalism in articles and interviews.<sup>183</sup>

### Life and joy, touching the future

Artur Lundkvist is more theoretically informed in his travel accounts than Eric Lundqvist, in the sense that he is inclined to evaluate the cultures and nations he encounters during his travels according to Marxist thinking—usually a stage theory where nations, regions, or even entire continents are ranked in stages, each leading to the next, as if a flight of steps. Referring back to Chakrabarty’s work, it is clear that Lundkvist is less concerned with local or situational time-knots, and instead concentrates on larger entities.

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180 Lundqvist, *Djungeltagen*, 207–208.

181 Espmark, *Livsdyrkaren Artur Lundkvist*, 153.

182 Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 36.

183 For example, Eric Lundqvist, ‘Vi behöver en kvinnlig Gud’, *Röster i Radio-Tv*, 32/12 (1965), 29–31; Eric Lundqvist, ‘Den vite mannens överlägsenhet är en myt’, interview with Annmari Lindh, *Röster i Radio-TV*, 40/4 (1973), 104.

Margareta Petersson discusses how Lundkvist's worldview was entirely dependent on this nexus of Marxism and psychoanalysis. It was this combination that guided his understanding of India, where inner oppression, represented by Hinduism, corresponded with the socioeconomic oppression and destitution of the proletariat. Lundkvist used the concept of the joy of living, as opposed to the denial of life that he ascribed to Hindus, while contrasting an uncorrupted primitive way of life against the Hindu lifestyle.<sup>184</sup> 'Joy of living' is therefore a quality, an indication of progress and modernity. But how is the actual concept of life used, in combination with other concepts than joy, in order to chart what he thought of as different time layers? Furthermore, what happens when a gender perspective is introduced? What is the relationship between 'joy of living', sexual emancipation, and conceptions of masculinity and femininity?

I will start with one instance in his book about China in which Lundkvist draws a distinctly primitivist, and not altogether primitivist–Marxist, connection between joy, blood, and life. While discussing the contemporary situation in the country, he describes the two most important Chinese Communist leaders besides Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh and Chou En-lai. Chu Teh, the commander-in-chief in the Communist army since 1931, is depicted as follows:

Chu Teh has remained the ordinary warrior and the frank comrade, preferably dressed in an old field uniform without any insignias. He is sturdy and a go-getter, enthusiastic and loud, worshipped by his men, he adores women as always, full of appetite for life ... If Mao to some extent is the detached thinker, the Spartan visionary, then Chu Teh is the fully present life-worshipper, the full-blooded man of action. But, his flourishing, virile temperament notwithstanding, he is not alien to disciplined, penetrating thought.<sup>185</sup>

So, the elements that constitute a man, a life-worshipper, are virility and action. The 'blood', as in passion and directness, is also present in this description, positioning him closer to nature than to culture. The aspects of class and hierarchy are also touched upon: he is a simple man in that he refuses to signal his status and he is a true comrade, recognized by those he leads. And yet Lundkvist is not prepared to dismiss intellectual ability in this context; an ideal man, as represented by Chu Teh, is thoroughly competent in all fields.

Apart from this specific occasion, 'joy of living' signals progress emancipation on a collective level, whether social, cultural, or political. Lundkvist describes an incident in India, when, standing by a river, he notices a group of Jewish girls on a

<sup>184</sup> Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 136–9.

<sup>185</sup> Artur Lundkvist, *Den förvandlade draken: En resa i Kina*, Tiden (Stockholm, 1955), 268.



ferry. The girls attract a lot of attention, evoking ‘astonishment’, ‘envy’, and ‘indignation’ among Indian onlookers. Especially the young Hindu women stare at these Jewish girls, and the author likens the Hindu girls to prisoners, staring ‘as through the openings of a wall, shuddering and marvelling’. He continues:

So, what is so striking about the Jewish girls? Nothing else than that they seem emancipated Western-style, putting their arms around one another and singing together to their hearts’ content. Furthermore, they are wearing shorts and see-through blouses: extremely bold. An isolated colony, who demonstrate their modern joy of living. Alas! brave young Jewesses on the gloomy Hooghly, under the red, inflamed twilight sky of Calcutta!<sup>186</sup>

The spontaneity of the young Jewish women, combined with their bare legs and sheer blouses, spells modernity (‘Western’ modernity) and progress to Lundkvist. The freshness and joy of these women play out against the Hindu women: covered, oppressed, and belonging to the past.

There is only one additional situation in which Lundkvist use the concept ‘joy of living’ in his book about India, and that is while discussing the non-Hindu tribes, the Adivasis. He quotes an English anthropologist, Verrier Elwin, who arrived in central India in the twenties as a missionary to convert the ‘primitive tribes’ of the area. The situation was reversed, as he claimed that these groups converted him instead. He stayed with the people in order to ‘learn the art of social life, the art of married life and perhaps not least the joy of living’. Lundkvist also quotes Elwin in his descriptions of the controlled yet liberated premarital promiscuity of the tribal young, a social system that both Elwin and Lundkvist find worthy of imitation in the West.<sup>187</sup>

As Petersson points out, Lundkvist is not sure what to make of India. It does not fully represent the past, like Africa, nor the future, like China, but sits in between, somewhere on his sliding scale.<sup>188</sup> His aversion to religion in general will be discussed in depth later, but it is already obvious that Lundkvist regards Hinduism as an anachronism, slowing or obstructing the progress that was so needed. He did see pockets of hope, however—uncorrupted and sexually liberated tribes, or Jewish girls showing off their legs, to whom Lundkvist ascribes ‘joy of living’ or ‘modern joy of living’.

The significance of ‘joy of living’ is further emphasized if one reads his account on India in the context of his account of China. Lundkvist is very positively disposed towards China’s Communist regime, which of course is in line with his socialist

186 Lundkvist, *Indiabrand*, 77.

187 Ibid. 179–83.

188 Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 145.

standpoint. China has taken the necessary step forward, its progression represented in terms of ‘joy of living’: ‘The most striking of all the impressions of the new China is the general joy of living. Most people smile and laugh easily, they shout cheerfully to one another. ... The new, emancipated joy of living is often joined with optimism, enthusiasm, liberated energy.’ That said, Lundkvist does feel the need to ensure the reader that ‘These are qualities that at least largely can be a product of dictatorial training, but they have to be an expression of released forces, of a wave of life instincts and expectations running high.’<sup>189</sup> The string of primitivist keywords is very familiar: emancipation, release, liberation of energy, instincts, and joy of living, all creating an ideal society characterized by enthusiasm and optimism.

Given the significance Lundkvist ascribed to sexual emancipation in the overarching concept of ‘life’ (nature, passion, and so forth), it is telling that here he is trying his best to interpret asexual behaviour among the Chinese women he encounters in a favourable light. When describing their usual dress, he declares: ‘Outwardly, Chinese women lack any sign of sexualization. Sexual desires are not at all manifested in public among the Chinese’; but he goes on: ‘A seeming puritanism, which perhaps is due to a complete absence of puritanism.’<sup>190</sup> This an example of expectations not fully met. If China is supposed to represent the highest stage, there should be no reason for Lundkvist to organize his experiences and impressions as ‘backward’ and ‘forward’, since his entire worldview and political standpoint hinges on the belief that everything in China points forward, representing a state of the future already in the here and now. He could deal with their supposed puritanism as part of a time-knot, as a remnant of their past, but that would not agree with his theory. Instead, their ‘puritan’ behaviour is interpreted as its exact opposite, but with a reservation—‘perhaps’. Possibly Lundkvist himself felt that the manoeuvre smacked too much of wishful thinking, and that he had allowed theory to override his actual experience of China.

## Resistance

Richard Candida Smith, like those already mentioned, points to the tension between a dominant ideology, and the attempts to escape this ideology and formulate a critique against it. Smith writes about twentieth-century Californian artists and how their art and way of life were part of a wave of social change that peaked in the late sixties. The artists often expressed their critique of society, conformity, and convention by starting out from their personal experiences, which in turn meant

189 Lundkvist, *Den förvandlade draken*, 271–2.

190 Ibid. 14. He claims that younger women in China, the ones ‘swinging their hair’, are the ones most free and brave.

that they returned to the selfsame conservative idea of domesticity that they railed against. Candida Smith continues: 'This critical omission caused utopian projects to collapse back into the repressed material of their origins. To state that a highly subjective aesthetic ideology did not escape the limits of its contradictions is not to deny its importance as a source of ferment and change.'<sup>191</sup> How, then, do colonial tropes work in two directions simultaneously? For the tropes confirm a colonial episteme at the same time as they undermine it.

### Tarred with the same brush

I have already mentioned the recurring comparisons in Eric Lundqvist's writing, where he emphasizes the sense in which the 'primitive' or 'Eastern' way of life and that of the West differ, always to the advantage of the 'East'. I will now turn to the comparisons he makes between the worst in both the West and the East.

Throughout the account of his visit to Papua New Guinea, *Vildarna finns i väst*, Lundqvist ponders the issue of cannibalism. He sometimes hints in a flippant tone at the custom among the people they meet: 'These cannibals are happy, open, and friendly people. Radiantly happy to see us. Not because we are prey for a feast, arriving at the right moment, but because they think that we are normal, friendly people.'<sup>192</sup> He also tries to play it down by discussing it as a religious tradition or habit that 'all human tribes' have practised 'sometime during their stage of development', pointing out that 'a human life is usually of very little value to these human beings, just like among all peoples on Vogelkop and in all of New Guinea. Almost of as little value as a couple of million human lives are to the atomic-bomb-manufacturing white Westerners'.<sup>193</sup>

The same comparison between cannibalistic savagery and the Cold War is one he makes in the preface to the book, where he discusses whether people really are that different in the West and the East. He refers to Sari, who claims that people are basically the same the world over ('and she probably knows this better than me'). He agrees, but adds:

what distinguishes the East from the West at this moment is that the Westerner is in possession of much better tools for the killing of his neighbour than the Easterner. And this is of course of immense importance since we all are spiritually on the level of the caveman. Whether we bare our teeth at each other in a modern great-power

191 Richard Candida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, poetry, and politics in California*, University of California Press (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1995), xxiv–xxv.

192 Lundqvist, *Vildarna finns i väst*, 191.

193 Ibid. 195.

smile or in a more primitive wolf-like grimace makes no difference. But it does matter whether the grinning ones are hiding a stone club or a hydrogen bomb behind their backs. Perhaps it is because my friends in New Guinea content themselves with a stone club that I like them so much.<sup>194</sup>

The critique of West and the superpowers that Lundqvist articulates in these passages is entirely dependent on a Western understanding of the savage and cannibalistic Other—the debased Other, to use the term proposed by Spurr.<sup>195</sup> Lundqvist does very little to undermine this situation; however, while underpinning the colonial discourse, he does in one sense direct the reader's attention back to the West. He even alludes to the Bible in this context: 'What it is that makes us see the arrowhead in the eye of the little Papuan and not the atomic bomb in our own?'<sup>196</sup>

Returning to the debate about *Heart of Darkness* initiated by Chinua Achebe, Patrick Brantlinger elaborates on Achebe's critique in a study of the relationship between British imperialism and literature. Brantlinger states that many have tried to play down the importance of the racist stereotypes in *Heart of Darkness* by declaring them mere manifestations of the period, part of a commonly held worldview. There was also a general feeling that if Achebe had not been so busy pointing out these stereotypes, he would have realized that he and Conrad were on the same side over this issue.

Brantlinger writes that he cannot understand the need to pigeonhole Joseph Conrad. Why a definitive and final decision on whether he was critical enough or not? Rather, Brantlinger's interest lies in inherent contradiction of the fact that *Heart of Darkness* delivers a stinging criticism of imperialism and racism, but by using imperialist and racist representations and concepts. This contradiction, he states, reveals the ideological constraints of the period.<sup>197</sup>

In order to understand Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*, Brantlinger argues that we must consider the inherent historical tensions at the heart of the imperialist project. In 1889, reports were published in the British press of the atrocities and exploitation taking place in the Belgian Congo. Brantlinger interprets Conrad's critique as being directed at modern imperialism, but he suggests that it was not the violence as much as the rhetoric that provoked Conrad; rather, what he hated was the rift between the seemingly benevolent intent and the cruelty and greed on the ground—a greed camouflaged by propaganda. The idealism of earlier colonialism was obliterated. The

194 Ibid. 7–8.

195 Spurr, *Rhetoric of the Empire*, 77.

196 Lundqvist, *Vildarna finns i väst*, 247.

197 Patrick Brantlinger, *The Rule of Darkness: British literature and imperialism, 1830–1914*, Cornell University Press (Ithaca, 1988), 256–8.

benevolence of the colonial undertaking had been transformed into pure cruelty.

Conrad causes most of the contradictions with his account of the degeneration of imperialism. He represents the decadence and degradation of the colonialists by likening them to the Africans: 'He paints Kurtz and Africa in the same tar-brush. His version of evil—the form taken by Kurtz's satanic behaviour—is going native.' The repertoire of tropes that Conrad uses—the insinuations of cannibalism, the metaphors of death, darkness, madness, and desire—therefore connects Conrad to British imperialism. Brantlinger explicitly agrees with Achebe on this point.<sup>198</sup> Yet, not content with this assertion, Brantlinger adds:

Viewed one way, Conrad's anti-imperialist story condemns Kurtz's murderous, imperialist categorical imperative. Viewed another way, Conrad's racist story voices that very imperative and Conrad knows it. At the hollow centre of *Heart of Darkness*, far from the misty halos and moonshine where the meaning supposedly resides, Conrad inscribes a text that, like the novel itself, cancels out its own best intentions.<sup>199</sup>

Brantlinger interprets *Heart of Darkness* as an experiment, a determined manoeuvre to demonstrate a dilemma, but which only leaves a void behind. The book advocates a moral responsibility that not even the text itself can muster. Conrad's is thus a devastating self-criticism. Brantlinger adds that Conrad, even though he was only criticizing modern imperialism as it was manifested in Congo, was one of the first to write against any form of imperialism in the period before the First World War, an achievement that has to be recognized.<sup>200</sup>

I would say that Lundqvist is more cunning than Conrad, or at least Brantlinger's Conrad, for he creates a feeling of comfortable familiarity that is abruptly undermined and relativized again and again. Lundqvist literally leads the reader on, representing the debased Other as we already know him or her, and then drawing our gaze back to the West, juxtaposing cannibalism and the Cold War arms race. His aim is clearly to argue against nuclear weapons, and he uses the conventions and stereotypes of the travel account to achieve this. He also kicks against the colonial discourse and the exclusive right and privilege it gives to the Westerner to judge and rank cultures and peoples. How is it possible for us to ignore the atomic bomb, that beam in our own eye, while raising our hands in horror at the mote in eye of the 'cannibal'?

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198 Ibid. 257–62, quote at 262.

199 Ibid. 272.

200 Ibid. 274.

## A step ahead

Spurr considers the classification trope to be one of the most persistent of colonial tropes. He demonstrates how classification, as a scientific and political endeavour, can be traced back through the history of natural science and the colonial administration, and all the way to the modernization theories of today.

The ambition of the early scientists was to arrange different, yet similar, elements systematically, ordered according to their external properties. Later, the ambition was expanded to include internal properties in the determination of the order of precedence of the elements. Spurr points out how this operation, the assessment of external and internal properties for the purpose of ranking, was circular: 'To classify therefore meant no longer simply to arrange the visible, but to perform a circular analysis that related the visible to the invisible, its "deeper cause", then rose again toward the surface of the bodies to identify the signs that confirmed the hidden cause.' Systematic hierarchies were then constructed according to their 'complexity'. When a temporal aspect is added to the hierarchy of complex and less complex peoples and social structures, a global history is constructed where space is literally translated into time. Societies, peoples, cultures, regions, groups: all are classified according to their complexity, and the classification is also a construction of a history of Man. The West represents a temporal 'now' and the spatial 'centre', while 'primitive' societies are mere echoes of the West's remote past.<sup>201</sup>

Eric Lundqvist rarely discusses the people of Papua, or indeed Indonesia, in terms of time, of history. Primitiveness does not necessarily imply the past to him; it does, however, imply that social structures and behaviours are simple and uncomplicated. This is apparent in his account of the role of religion in different societies. He describes what he calls 'bobots', the medicine men and priests in Papua societies, as parasites, basing their power on fear and superstition: 'Same story as in every other society all over the world; magicians, priests, or whatever one chooses to call them, use poisons, spirits, or hell and damnation to scare their fellow beings into submitting themselves to their influence.' He continues by making a comparison: 'having seen the phenomenon completely cultivated in isolation among the primitive tribes, one recognizes the essential features all too well even in settings where the features have become complicated and tangled up with other societal functions.'<sup>202</sup> Primitive and modern societies therefore mirror each other in basic functions, though the Western world has become 'complicated' (and according to Lundqvist, complication is all but laudable). As always, Lundqvist is careful not to give an impression of

201 Spurr, *Rhetoric of the Empire*, 62–6, quote at 63.

202 Lundqvist, *Vildarna finns i väst*, 177.

Western superiority to primitive Papua people: ‘But what we should take pains to avoid is to imagine that we are superior to the black “savages” in New Guinea, that there is an essential difference between their believing and ours, or that we would have that much to teach them. Of course, we could teach them a great deal. Mainly evil. But we could learn even more from them.’<sup>203</sup> Later, after the liberation of Indonesia, when Lundqvist is teaching at Bogor Agricultural University, he refers to plans to invite Indonesian students to study in Sweden. He would much rather see a bilateral exchange programme: ‘Let the Indonesians come here and learn how to socialize with machines and let Swedes go to Indonesia to learn how to socialize with people’.<sup>204</sup> Again and again, the Others, in this case Indonesians and Papuas, represent a more humane and warm version of the West/Sweden.

As we have seen, Lundkvist, in keeping with his Marxist, progressive worldview, conceived of the world as a ladder, a set of stages. Each continent, even each country, was at a given stage, a stage that in turn represented a particular period in the history of the world. Lundkvist was not that concerned with the history of Man; he was more interested in social structures and technology, and advocated material and social progress. In my view, the stage theory also created a semi-scientific setting for him as a writer, which consequently reinforced his authority as an ‘objective’ eyewitness. Not everyone agreed with him, though, as will be seen in Chapter 3.

The result is that Communist China, standing for ‘social justice and productive progress’, is described throughout his book as a land of happy prospects. Accounts of the social emancipation of Chinese men and women are interspersed with details of their material progress and the industrial revolution in China. The growth of industry, by the way, is described in almost futuristic terms: ‘the air vibrates from the industrial development of forces, saturated with strong smells and corrosive particles.’ He exclaims over a steelworks, ‘What a steel symphony, what ringing as if from a gigantic piano of industry!’<sup>205</sup> The entire industrialization process is discussed in terms of harnessing the elemental forces: ‘All nature will, as far as possible, be submitted to scientific man, it will be remodelled and completed by serving the superior collective will of the human race of today.’<sup>206</sup>

The global role of Communist China is presented springing from a natural process, relentless and universal. The writer stresses Communism’s historical significance by claiming that ‘Communism is serving the future, a socialist age of justice and prosperity to come’,<sup>207</sup> and he continues this line of thought by stating that:

203 Ibid. 178.

204 Lundqvist, *Öarna och morgondagen*, 232.

205 Lundqvist, *Den förvandlade draken*, 64. Lundkvist points out how fresh-faced Chinese women work as managers and supervisors at the factories.

206 Ibid. 90.

207 Ibid. 275.

The crucial factors concerning the further development of the world can no longer be found in Europe or America, but in Asia, where half of the world population lives and the resources are immense. That China, the most prominent Asian country, has created a new, efficient social order and started a revolutionary change in itself stands out in every respect as a token of hope.<sup>208</sup>

Lundkvist also articulates his fear of the Cold War:

The existence of civilisation and mankind is threatened by the hysterically intensified antagonism between Communism and anti-Communism. It is high time to embark on another road, the one that leads to *détente*, disarmament, the peaceful co-existence of the different systems. The world has to change and it will change. Communism constitutes an inevitable contribution in this change that is a fact one has to adapt to.<sup>209</sup>

The inevitability of progress, the next step, is represented as a necessity, a fact that one has to adapt to. China's social justice and prosperity are contrasted with the Western idea of freedom, a concept that is of little consequence in Asia, according to Lundkvist, but the concept has also become obsolete in the West, where 'semi-fascist power politics weighs both down nations and individuals'.<sup>210</sup> The role of the West in Asia is also touched on in his discussion of the future of India: 'It would not surprise me if Communism were to triumph in all of Asia. The Western system is too compromised in the view of the Asians to appear enticing.'<sup>211</sup>

Lundkvist clearly accepts the notion of the West as representing the superior stage in the hierarchy of global social organization, but he also points out that its time has run out. The West no longer leads progress forwards and upwards. It has been rendered superfluous. By failing to recognize that history has moved on, the West poses a threat to China, Asia, Communism, and ultimately to the future of civilization and mankind.

I interpret his standpoint as an instance of radicalism within constraints, in the sense that he completely adheres to the widespread and established Western notion of the world as a temporal hierarchy. The radical part is how he twists and turns the prevalent worldview. The West has done its part and it is time to move on. A world's centre of gravity has shifted. Nevertheless, it is ironic that Lundkvist never recognizes that Communism is itself a political and philosophical construct with roots in Europe—that is, 'the West'.

208 Ibid. 281.

209 Ibid. 281.

210 Ibid. 277.

211 Lundkvist, *Indiabrand*, 286.



I will return to Lundkvist's travel account from China in Chapter 3, but here it suffices to say that reactions to the book, especially among conservative intellectuals, were harsh. There were evidently limits to the genre: it was possible for travel accounts to be overly political, and within a Cold War worldview the limits were rigid. This situation would change significantly in the early sixties, as we will see in chapter 4.

### Obstructing the path

The stagist theory also constitutes the framework of the author's critique against colonialism, neocolonialism, and international capitalism. They are all presented as obstructing the natural progress towards justice and prosperity for all mankind, as deviations from the universal path.

Lundkvist is very explicit in his critique of colonialism and neocolonialism. There are absolutely no redeeming features in his description of the actions of Westerners in Asia or South America. The railways in India he describes as 'instruments of rape', built by the British in order to 'exploit and bleed the vast country white'.<sup>212</sup> Thinking back to the discussion of the gendering of the landscape and Eric Lundqvist's despair at not being able to connect with Indonesia in the same way as before, the contrast between colonial 'rape' and the natural merging of the male travel writer with the female landscape is staggering.

Lundkvist also suggests that 'British imperialism has only changed its tactics and has arrived at a compromise with the Indian capitalists', continuing that 'The independent economic growth of India has been hindered by monopolies controlled by the British.'<sup>213</sup> The issue of neocolonialism is also discussed in his account of South America. He declares the relationship between the US and South America to be a colonial one: 'The US largely controls South America's foreign trade, just like they control its domestic development. Industrialization is obstructed or monopolized by the North Americans. They want South America to remain an agrarian area, to remain suppliers of raw materials and to constitute a unilateral market for American products.'<sup>214</sup>

He also describes the particular situation of the banana plantations in Ecuador. They are owned by a North American company, United Fruit, that in turn leases out the plantations to impoverished plantation workers. The company sets the price of the bananas, and the cost of the leases is so high that the workers rarely earn enough to survive. If the workers protest against the low prices of the bananas the

212 Lundkvist, *Indiabrand*, 26.

213 Ibid. 237–8.

214 Artur Lundkvist, *Vulkanisk kontinent: En resa i Sydamerika*. Tiden (Stockholm, 1957), 247–8.

army intervenes, on the orders of United Fruit, and people are killed. He ends this section by stating: ‘United Fruit is exporting bloodstained bananas.’<sup>215</sup>

His critique becomes harsher, verging on the relentless, when discussing the relationship between colonialism/neocolonialism and religion. Eric Lundkvist is also critical of religion, but his concern is priests and shamans, parasites all, who exploit the fears of the people for the sake of their own welfare. When it comes to Lundkvist, though, I would say that he presents a systematic programme of criticism, attacking all aspects of religion in all of his travel accounts—a critique that sits very well with his political standpoint. It is worthwhile to look in detail at the way he discusses the nexus of imperialism and religion in relation to South America, India, and China.

In the following passage, Lundkvist is describing a scene while travelling by taxi in Peru. The taxi driver, ‘our negro driver’, is depicted as a fanatic Catholic:

He seeks comfort (like many of our drivers) in listening to the constant radio broadcasts of the popular song *Que será será* or *What will be will be*, with its bilingual chorus. That song suits his superstitiousness perfectly; it suits the entire superstitious-Catholic South America perfectly. It is nice to listen to it in the car, while you close your eyes and let go of the steering wheel in between the abysses. *Que será será!* (This song can also be seen as the worst kind of capitalist export commodity, propaganda for a thoughtless fatalism and blind contentment. Everything is the way it is, nothing can be made to change this, man is powerless and can only resign himself, destiny and his masters decide.)<sup>216</sup>

Catholicism is described as an anachronistic superstition throughout the book. In this passage the role of Catholicism is to comfort people, luring them into a state of blind content, paving way for oppression and (neo)colonialism. Hollywood, the Catholic Church, and American capitalism work together to make the exploitation of South America possible. And the people sing along, while closing their eyes, shying away from reality. The situation in Cuba, however, differs: Lundkvist quotes Ricardo Porro, a Cuban architect, who claims that ‘one of the reasons of the swift victory of the revolution’ was that Catholicism could not put up any resistance: ‘Cuban Catholicism was undermined by the practice of voodoo; it was nothing but a frail facade, a social convention rather than a living force’.<sup>217</sup>

In the case of India, religion, or rather Hinduism, is even given precedence over colonialism. Lundkvist claims that India is the victim of manipulation by a ruling

215 Ibid. 140–1.

216 Ibid. 169.

217 Lundkvist, *Så lever Kuba*, 162.

class who constructed the religion to hide their exploitation of the people four thousand years ago. He enlarges on this suggestion by stating that ‘The foreign invasions of India by Alexander, the Great Moguls, and the British were possible because of Hinduism, since it had undermined society and reduced the people to passive, starving masses.’<sup>218</sup> The tropes used to depict Hindus throughout the book are in most cases extremely degrading: Hindus are slick, unreliable, fanatical, cowardly, and metaphorically asleep.<sup>219</sup>

His depiction of Indian Hindus can be contrasted with his views on Chinese people: ‘The Chinese are thinking people, not believing. A rational people, not a religious one.’<sup>220</sup> He continues his discussion of religion by saying that ‘Yes, religions seem anachronistic and irrelevant in the new China. But they are not persecuted, as far as you can tell, no attempts are made to wipe them out with force. ... [Religious belief] can hardly be of any significance in the new society of reality transformation with its belief in self-made wordly happiness’.<sup>221</sup>

In the same context, he remarks on the role of Christian missionaries in China, emphasizing that the foreign missions were crucial for the Western exploitation of China. His critique is mainly directed at the Catholic missionaries, since, he claims, Protestants simply failed to attract more than a million followers. He describes how Catholic missionaries participated in the oppression and exploitation of the people, how they cooperated with the Nationalists, and how they embezzled charity money and stole land from starving farmers.<sup>222</sup> He also describes an orphanage for girls, formerly run by Catholic nuns. Members of staff tell him about the horrors that took place while the nuns were in charge: the girls were fed waste and many died as infants. Those who survived were used as slave labour and they were later sold as concubines to ‘sick old men, sadists, syphilitics’. The author also goes into great detail, describing how the nuns tortured the girls; some of the girls even died from torture. He concludes the narrative by asking why the nuns behaved in this way. ‘Was it due to a perverted disposition, an ossified emotional life, a depraved urge for cruelty? Was it the bitter revenge of the nuns on life? A consequence of the inherent perversity of Catholicism? (There were no Protestant orphanages of this kind as far as is known.)’<sup>223</sup>

Now, the representation of the Catholic missionaries and nuns needs to be read not only in the light of the anti-religious stance of this particular writer: the extre-

218 Lundkvist, *Indiabrand*, 201. Hinduism is repeatedly described as a ‘neurosis’.

219 Ibid. *passim*.

220 Lundkvist, *Den förvandlade draken*, 19.

221 Ibid. 22.

222 Ibid. 37.

223 Ibid. 36.

mity of the depictions demands this. However badly run the orphanage might have been, or however corrupt the Catholic missionaries were, the reference to the ‘inherent perversity of Catholicism’ is harsh. Also, I find it interesting that the nuns are positioned against ‘life’, again an instance where goodness is described as ‘life’ as opposed to evil.

Bo Stråth has written about anti-Catholic sentiment among social democrats in Sweden in the 1930s and in the immediate post-war period to the beginning of the 1960s. He points out that ‘Catholic Europe’ served a useful purpose in several contexts as a contrast to ‘the (Social) Democratic North’. In the particular context of the post-war period, he explains that the fear of Catholicism was a half-hearted misunderstanding.

The Catholic Church’s commitment to social issues, not to mention the existence of Catholic workers’ movements, were hard to make sense of in Sweden, where religious (ethical) matters were considered separate from political matters. There was also a fear of the discord that caused heated debates between Christians, Christian socialists, and socialists in Europe. Swedish social democrats, who cared little for ideological or theoretical debates according to Stråth, responded to the European situation with hostility to Catholicism, a hostility that in its rhetoric was reminiscent of the propaganda of the Thirty Years War.<sup>224</sup>

Artur Lundkvist was by no means a member of the Social Democrat Party,<sup>225</sup> but he shared their suspicion of religion in general and Catholicism in particular. His writings about China are very topical in this sense.

## Self-scrutiny I

In 1949 Eric Lundqvist published *Djungeltagen*, a pun meaning that the author has been enchanted by the jungle. The book was republished in 1952 by Folket i Bilds förlag with a huge print run (120,000 copies, according to the colophon), and Lundqvist became one of the most popular authors in the series. The new edition of this and other books gave him the opportunity to discuss and revise his earlier standpoints in new prefaces. He says the following in the preface to *Djungeltagen*:

224 Bo Stråth, *Folkhemmet mot Europa: Ett historiskt perspektiv på 90-talet*, Tiden (Stockholm, 1992), 208–212. However, some of the most prominent Swedish poets and writers in the fifties and sixties were Catholics—think Barbro Alving, Birgitta Trotzig, and Ingmar Leckius. See also Yvonne Maria Werner, “Den katolska faran”: Antikatolicismen och den svenska nationella identiteten i ett nordiskt perspektiv’, *Scandia* 81/1 (2015), 40–61.

225 He did however lead the Social Democrat May Day parade in 1960 together with Prime Minister Tage Erlander, Kanyama Chiume, a nationalist leader from Malawi, and Sten Andersson (Sellström, *Sweden and the National Liberation*, 59).

I have noticed from the reviews that many think that I am advocating against racism. That was never my intention. It never entered my mind that Swedes could share their outlook on mankind with Anglo-Saxons or other colonizing peoples. ... I myself gave this book the title *Människor i djungel* [People in the Jungle] and I think that it says more than the title chosen by the publisher. One can also tell from this book that I also have been infected with the racial prejudice I despise so much.<sup>226</sup>

How then do we know that the author is ‘infected’? The author hints at the story about when he and his wife Sari first met while he was working as a forestry manager in Borneo. She was a young woman who did sewing and other menial jobs for his housekeeper. She eventually moved in and became his mistress and housekeeper, but she always had to hide when they had European guests. He explains that ‘Arrogance and prejudice on my part and scepticism and foolishness on her part’ obstructed their relationship and happiness. He continues: ‘I was too much of a coward to go against convention and ways of thinking to openly recognize Sari as my wife’.<sup>227</sup>

Later on in the book he describes the turning point in his and Sari’s relationship, as two events conspired to bring matters to an emotional climax. He was still working for the Dutch government and Sari was still his housekeeper. When a Dutch ship docks, Lundqvist has to spend his evenings with the Dutch captain, listening to his drunken ramblings about the pitiful state of his host’s life, and it is the final straw for Sari. She is hurt at not being invited to the ship and not being recognized as his wife, and she decides to leave him and return to her parents. The night before her departure for Java, the couple has a blazing row: Sari wants to be acknowledged and Eric is not sure whether he is prepared to do so. He does try to convince Sari that he really loves her, though:

I have been trying to convince her as much as I have tried to convince myself. To convince myself that I like her and that I am not ashamed of her because she is ‘coloured’. To convince myself that I am not regarding and using Sari exclusively as a toy for the moment. To convince myself that I am not as vile as I am. I was more successful in convincing her than myself.<sup>228</sup>

The discussion ends with Sari saying that everything will be OK as long as they stay in the jungle, referring back to their long excursions in the rainforest, when Sari did not have to hide and when they lived together like a proper couple. Lundqvist adds, ‘The concept jungle has a particular meaning to her. It not only denotes wilderness,

226 Lundqvist, *Djungeltagen*, 5.

227 Ibid. 68–9.

228 Ibid. 233.

it also implies that the person she is committed to is behaving like a human.’<sup>229</sup>

Lundqvist’s self-criticism is even harsher in *Rani*, published in 1955—a collection of articles that he had published in various magazines in the thirties and forties. Rani was a young woman he met when he first arrived in the Dutch East Indies. They fell in love and she even left her parents, wanting to live with him (knowing that she would never be taken back by her family). He promises to take care of her, but instead leaves her. After this story, Lundqvist adds:

This story shows clearly that I readily adapted to the role of a superior white man, who could treat a dark-skinned woman anyway I pleased. Just because she had dark skin. One did not reflect upon this. I suppose that one assumed that the way the whites in the country thought, acted, and led their lives was the correct one, making it easy to go along with it. Having constantly been told that one belongs to a superior race and that this affiliation entails privileges, one is easily prepared to agree. There are no lies we are so ready to believe as the lies of our own superiority.<sup>230</sup>

By going back and forth between old texts and stories and by reflecting on his experiences, having spent the better part of his life in Indonesia, the author skewers the system of prejudices that made him think and act the way he did.

Lundqvist also writes about himself as an absolute newcomer in a colony, ironically but somehow tenderly. Even during the passage he realized that his fantasies about his life overseas might not live up to his expectations. This was made clear to him when his wiser fellow passengers giggled at his pith helmet. And he makes not the least attempt to embellish his past as an employee of the Dutch authorities: ‘I was mostly interested in making money for my colonial masters’, and this in a context where he is very clear in his critique of those same colonial masters.<sup>231</sup>

Yet, his self-criticism is always presented in temporal terms: ‘this is the man that I used to be and this is the reformed man I am today’. The narrative of the self is clearly marked by a learning process. Carl Thompson calls this process ‘self-historicising’.<sup>232</sup> He discerns a difference between ‘Enlightenment travellers’ and ‘Romantic travellers’, where Romantic travellers were more inclined to describe how their experiences and encounters changed them fundamentally. This change is often triggered by an epiphany, a strong emotional experience, which in Lundqvist’s case is love.<sup>233</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time as Eric Lundqvist questions himself as an

229 Ibid. 235.

230 Eric Lundqvist, *Rani och andra berättelser från Indonesien*, Folket i Bilds (Stockholm, 1955).

231 Lundqvist, *Öarna och morgondagen*, 104.

232 Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 113.

233 Ibid. 115, 117.

objective and non-racist observer and scribe—and this is the irony—he reinforces his authority as travel writer and truth-teller. His self-criticism does not reach into the present; it is a thing of the past.<sup>234</sup>

## Concluding remarks

It is striking to see how consistently the two writers' primitivist standpoint is put in all their travel books, regardless of date. The modernist, Marxist, and primitivist understanding of the world that Artur Lundkvist adheres to, becomes a screen through which his travel accounts can be interpreted. Eric Lundqvist is less structured in his worldview—he does not adhere to a strict theory—but the idealizing primitivist outlook is always present in his writings. The concept of life in all its variations is a strong indicator of this.

Considering the importance of 'women' to primitivism, one would expect the writers to engage in the whereabouts of actual women, and they certainly do. Women become leads to how entire societies, cultures, nations, and regions ought to be assessed. They even represent landscapes, and entire nations. Moving away from primitivism to a more general level, Nira Yuval-Davis states that 'Women are often construed as the cultural symbols of the collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity's "honour" and as its intergenerational reproducers of culture.'<sup>235</sup> It is therefore not hard to understand why the unravelling of time-knots often depends on how the writers interpret women's behaviour, as well as how they dress. Veil or no veil, flirtatious reciprocity or not, eagerness to please or not, prudishness or not: the preferences of these two travel writers are fixed by the primitivist context. What they take as signs of sexual liberation signal the future and all that was advanced; integrity and covered bodies, the past and all that was backward. Whichever direction is chosen, Western, male privilege prevails: the Other woman is a token, an object to observe and evaluate.

When Lundqvist and Lundkvist argue against racism or colonialism, they are employing contemporary ideas about progress or racial differences, enlarging on them and in some cases inverting the norms or values associated with them. This reversal of dichotomies and values is central to both cultural radicalism and primitivism, as already shown. 'We all know that time and change can be understood as steps and that Europe and the West represent the present, the highest step, but what if the next step, the future, is taken somewhere else?' Or, 'We all know that Papuan

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<sup>234</sup> Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 233 notes that Lundqvist has a certain heroic tendency concerning his own role that clashes with his critique of other Westerners.

<sup>235</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, SAGE (Los Angeles, 1997), 67.

people are black savages who kill and eat their neighbours, but what is that compared to weapons of mass destruction, constructed by rational and civilized Westerners?' These endeavours do however entail a profuse use of colonial tropes, such as debasement, assessment, classification, and idealization.





### 3. In search of time lost, 1949–1962

The fifties in Sweden are sometimes said to have been the decade stuck between the modernist forties and the radical sixties, characterized by Cold War rhetoric and cultural and intellectual stagnation. This, of course, is a simplistic picture. On the one hand there was a growing economy, permitting modernization and social reform, combined with the development of a strong progressive hegemony in other areas, science, humanities, politics, debate, by a handful of prominent intellectuals. Johan Östling demonstrates how the learning process in the post-war years—as Nazism and everything even only faintly associated with German pre-war culture, was almost eradicated from Swedish political, cultural, and intellectual life—gave way to a new wave of rationalist, functionalist, progressive ideology known as cultural radicalism. Herbert Tingsten and the philosopher Ingemar Hedenius were influential proponents of this particular worldview.<sup>236</sup> Lisbeth Larsson describes the period as dominated by ‘the neo-modernist narrative of the Cold War and the welfare state’ centred on ‘progress, rationalism and Western righteousness’.<sup>237</sup>

Yet the fifties are often still depicted as an uninteresting decade from a cultural point of view. Larsson describes how the ‘fifties are something many mention in passing’, as an interlude between ‘the interesting modernist break through of the forties and the vitalizing commitment of the sixties’, and she adds that the negative assessment of its writers and literature as superficial and less committed was agreed on ‘even before the decade had passed’.<sup>238</sup> And yes, when each is read separately, Larsson adds, it is not difficult to characterize the writers as disinterested and detached. However, read as a group, she can discern common patterns, pointing to counternarratives and a commitment to finding alternatives to the strong prevailing understanding of Sweden as a haven of progress and modernity. In their ambition to undermine or at least question this understanding, the writers either used literary convention, playing with the authority of the narrator, say, or creating fragmented narratives or satire, or the set about telling the stories of the outsiders, those

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236 Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral*, *passim*; Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 149–53 states that cultural radicalism was more established as a dominant ideology towards the end of the fifties.

237 Larsson, ‘Tvånget att berätta’, 52.

238 Ibid. 45–6.

marginalized by the rapid modernizing processes, such as urbanization and industrialization. The accumulated impression is that cultural life in Sweden was dominated by a loss of meaning, of a sense of community. Larsson emphasizes that the concept of provincialism, sometimes used to describe the period disparagingly (as a synonym for detachedness or unwordliness), is accurate in that many writers sought the narratives of the periphery, whether represented by the hinterland of the far north of Sweden or the mines of South Africa. It was not their ambition to create idyllic or nostalgic depictions of something lost or left behind, however; their critical stance was stronger than that. Theirs was a refusal to play along with the dominant ideology of the period, and in order to do so, the writers turned their backs on it and cast about for different strategies, which in turn has made it difficult for literary historians to pinpoint this particular generation.<sup>239</sup>

Martin Wiklund puts it even more strongly in an essay on the New Left, in which he describes how the generation of 1968 in many ways rallied around a self-understanding that depended on their dismissal of the fifties. Intellectuals presented themselves as offering new political perspectives and solutions, overriding what they saw as the stifling restrictions of fifties Cold War culture.<sup>240</sup> The tendency of ‘new’ groups or generations to articulate themselves in reaction to earlier generations is common enough, but in this particular case, the narrative of the sixties became hegemonic. The description of the fifties as a period of introspection and non-commitment on the part of its writers and intellectuals has prevailed, and its radical or anti-colonial travel writing is a case in point.

However, there are instances that indicate that Swedes in the fifties were rather sceptical about international solidarity, according to Bertil Odén. He refers to one of the additional assignments given to officials at the Central Committee for Technical Aid, an organization tasked with coordinating the country’s international development aid: they were to lobby Swedes in favour of development aid. Officials travelled all over the country, giving talks on the subject, and often met with scepticism and outright resistance. People did not leap to support the idea of state-funded aid for newly established postcolonial states or other states in need. In order to change public opinion, two fundraising campaigns (‘Sweden helps’) were organized. There were also two polls on Swedish bilateral aid, one in 1956 and a second in 1960, and the result of the poll in 1960 showed considerably higher numbers in favour than in the first.<sup>241</sup>

There were also many indications in fifties Sweden of a growing interest in the

239 Ibid, 52.

240 Wiklund, ‘Kalla kriget som motbild’, 241–63.

241 Odén, *Biståndets idéhistoria*, 53–4; see also Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 62, 64–5.

so-called under-developed or developing countries. I have already mentioned the role of the popular movements, the non-conformist churches, and the Swedish Cooperative Union (KF) in the establishment of the Central Committee for Technical Aid to the Underdeveloped Countries in the introduction to this dissertation. One can also point to politicians such as Alva Myrdal, Ulla Lindström, Inga Thorsson, and Agda Rössel who all rose to prominence in the Social Democratic Party in the 1950s, if not without attendant controversy. They were all, in one way or another, advocates of disarmament, decolonization, development aid, and a stronger commitment to the UN.<sup>242</sup> Lindström in particular was influential in the Swedish context as a consultative minister whose extensive brief included development aid.<sup>243</sup>

Signe Höjer, Elly Jannes, Åke Sparring, Olle Strandberg and Herbert Tingsten made their debut as travel writers in the late forties and early fifties. They were to form a well-established intellectual group in the fifties—something of an understatement in the case of Herbert Tingsten. It is my opinion that if one does not take these authors into consideration when discussing the critical travel books of the sixties, one misses out on several important aspects. One of them is the fact that anti-colonial critique does not necessarily have to be articulated by broadly Marxist young men in order to be considered valid. Another is the somewhat different and less rigid interpretation of ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’ presented in some of these accounts.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first concerns depictions of women, and I concentrate especially on the issue of the veil, partly because it is interesting in itself, but also because I would like to compare with the primitivist travel writers. The second section is an investigation of notions and attitudes concerning progress, history, and modernity. I demonstrate how the colonial trope of classification might have been very persistent and strong, but it was also elastic. In the previous chapter, I showed how the primitivist writers could use the trope in a subversive manner, and so do these writers. The third section deals with anti-colonialism and how the authors found different ways of articulating their critique.

## Writers and books

Signe Höjer (1896–1988) was a well-known radical pacifist and Social Democratic politician. She was a trained nurse and had also studied at LSE in London in 1919 and 1920. In the fifties and early sixties Höjer and her husband lived in India and Ghana, where she founded childcare and daycare centres and worked as a volunteer

242 Bo Stråth, *Folkhemmet mot Europa*, Tiden (Stockholm, 1992), 202–203.

243 Odén, *Biståndets idéhistoria*, 52.

at different leper asylums. She also wrote articles and travel accounts. Tiden, another publishing house owned by the Social Democrats, published her travel books from 1955 onwards. Höjer wrote about the repercussions of colonialism in the newly founded postcolonial states, but also about the struggle of these new states to secure democracy and social justice. She is also mentioned as one of the most ardent advocates of Swedish bilateral development aid and she was member of the board that founded Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). In the following I will be discussing *Travancore—välsignat land* [Travancore—Blessed country] (1955), *På stråmatta i Japan* [On a Straw Mat in Japan] (1957), and *Afrika i våra hjärtan* [Africa in our hearts] (1962).

Elly Jannes (1907–2009) was a journalist and editor working for *VI*, a magazine owned by the Swedish Cooperative Union. She travelled in North Africa and the Middle East in the late forties and early fifties. Her travel reports, which were also published as books, were pioneering: she introduced the reports from the Third World that later became the distinctive feature of *VI*. I include three accounts by Jannes in the study: *Österland* [Land of the East] (1949) about Turkey, Iran, and Iraq; *Solnedgångens land* [Land of Setting Sun] (1953) about Morocco; and *Ökenen skall glädjas* [The Desert shall Rejoice] (1954), about Israel, Syria, and Lebanon.

Åke Sparring was born in 1927 in Leksand. He got a BA from Uppsala University in 1948 and taught at a folk high school between 1953 and 1957. He was one of the founders of the literary journal *Provins* [Province], a journal intended as a counterweight to the concentration of cultural life in Stockholm, constituting a literary medium for writers and poets in the north of Sweden. Sparring later became a researcher at Utrikespolitiska institutet, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs in Stockholm. In 1965 he contributed to the debate in *Dagens Nyheter* about the Vietnam War that in many ways can be seen as the starting point of the Vietnam movement in Sweden. Sparring was the only one not to condemn the US; instead, he called for a more objective debate that was less concerned with moral issues.<sup>244</sup> I have examined three travel accounts by Åke Sparring: *Med Emma till Indien* [With Emma to India], an account of a journey (in a bus named Emma, hence the title) from Sweden to India and back that was published in 1954; *Nepal* [Nepal] from 1956; and *Svart final* [Black Finale], published in 1958. *Svart final* deals with the situation in Central and East Africa, mainly Congo.

Olle Strandberg was born in 1910 and died tragically in a diving accident in 1956. He worked as a journalist at *Vecko-Journalen* and at *VI*, but was also a historian of ideas and had defended a thesis on Urban Hiärne at Uppsala University in 1942. His

244 Jens Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella: 68-rörelsen och svenska vänsterintellektuella*, Nordic Academic Press (Lund, 2009), 82–3.

best-known book, *En pegas på villovägar* [Pegasus Lost], is a collection of parodically bad poetry. Lars Ulvenstam, a writer friend of Strandberg's, describes him in the preface of *Lättjans öar* [Islands of Leisure] as a travel writer 'who let down his mask and took a stand: for the weak against the oppressor, for the coloured against the white'. Strandberg never completed *Lättjans öar*, an account from the Caribbean; instead, Rune Hassner, a well-known photographer and Strandberg's travel companion, finished the book. I have not included this account in the investigation; however, I have studied two other travel books by Strandberg: *Tigerland och söderhav* [Land of Tigers and the South Pacific] from 1952 and *Jambo!* from 1954. The first is an account from a journey through Asia (taking in India, China, and Vietnam), the second is an account of his travels in various parts of Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo, Kenya, Zanzibar, Rhodesia, and South Africa).<sup>245</sup>

Herbert Tingsten (1896–1973) was a professor of political science, specializing in the history of political ideas and ideologies, at Stockholm University College. He became editor-in-chief at *Dagens Nyheter* in 1946 and thereby established himself as one of the most prominent and ardent intellectuals in Sweden. He is less known as a travel writer, but I have included his book *Problemet Sydafrika* [The Issue of South Africa] from 1953, a report on institutionalized racism and apartheid policies in South Africa. Per Wästberg mentions this book as he himself visited South Africa in the late fifties and early sixties, and he describes how politicians and officials recounted the cooling in relations between South Africa and Sweden as a result of Tingsten's barbs.

## Gender/sexuality

I have already argued for the necessity of a gender perspective when considering travel accounts in the chapter on the primitivists. A gender perspective is needed in this chapter too, but for a different reason. The group of travel writers that I discuss in this part of the study consists of both men and women, which brings the question of difference and resistance to the fore.

Sara Mills has proposed that there are differences in the way men and women travel writers represent the Other, and that she is prepared to discuss travel writing by women as instances of resistance to a colonial ideology, whether this was intended by the writer or not.<sup>246</sup> Meyda Yegenoglu, on the other hand, recognizes the differences between men and women travel writers, but refuses to interpret these differences as resistance. On the contrary, she takes them as an indication of the strength

<sup>245</sup> See also Stig Larsson, 'Resenären Olle Strandberg är en författare av första klass', *Dagens Nyheter*, 9 Jan. 2012.

<sup>246</sup> Mills, *Discourses of difference*, 20–5.

and survival of the orientalist or colonial discourse. Variation is evidence of the discourse's adaptability, which in turn does much to explain its durability.<sup>247</sup> She also discusses the particular role of Western women travel writers in the Orient and she supports the idea of difference, at the same time pointing out how the travel accounts written by women supplemented the men's. Women had access to the most desirable objects of observation and investigation among the Westerners—the harem and Oriental women—and hence played an important role in the West as eyewitnesses.<sup>248</sup>

Since my interest does not extend to measuring the extent to which different travel writers supported and underpinned a colonial discourse, I start from a point on which both Yegenoglu and Mills agree: that men and women travellers write differently. I also assume that this difference is most interesting in the representation of the Other woman. Keeping the primitivists' standpoint on the veil in mind, I will concentrate on accounts of (Muslim) women and the veil.

### Women out of reach

Åke Sparring discusses the veil in connection with his visits to Syria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. His representations are not consistent in the sense that he clearly repudiates it. While in Syria he mentions how the women in the town of Latakia were looking at him and his fellow travellers 'from behind refined transparent black veils made of silk, which hide ugly faces and make the beautiful even more beautiful'.<sup>249</sup> This statement corresponds more with notions of exoticism and desert romance than with a modernist, secularist standpoint, although Sparring does adopt it too when discussing the position of women in Pakistan and Afghanistan, in a setting where he describes the veil as 'social atavism', or simply as the token and instrument of oppression.

Sparring notes that the veil is rarely worn in Pakistan and that young men and women study at the same universities, yet he points out that even though the material veil is gone 'there is another, invisible one. The male student and the female student live in two different worlds. They pass each other in the university courtyard without exchanging a word'. Sparring interprets this situation as a result of the religious, political, and social tensions in Pakistan, where the young may be modern, but they dare not free themselves from their patriarchal, traditional and religious families, since they are wholly dependent on them for support. There are simply no authorities outside the family that offer any kind of social security.<sup>250</sup>

247 Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 68–72.

248 Ibid. 72–94.

249 Åke Sparring, *Med Emma till Indien*, Bonniers (Stockholm, 1954), 33.

250 Ibid. 54–5.

The practice of *purdah*, the strict separation of women from men, in Afghanistan is analysed from many angles—social, political, religious, medical, and sanitary—but Islam constitutes the main explanation of the practice, ‘an understanding of ethics and a religion that reduces 50 per cent of its followers to breeding animals’. In this account, the veiled woman becomes a virtual nonentity, a void around which revolve greedy fathers, sexually frustrated unmarried men, sly mullahs (who ‘preach against the Western notion of the equality of the sexes’), medical doctors, homosexual officers, and deceived husbands.<sup>251</sup>

Sparring also expresses his own personal frustration with the veil and *purdah*, stating that women is such a rare sight in Afghanistan that he automatically turns around if a woman passes him. He continues: ‘If one glances furtively at the legs, it must be forgiven, because it is the only chance to see at least something of this woman, who according to the Afghans is so beautiful that no man can resist his instincts if he sees her with an uncovered face.’ These glances do not prove entirely futile because the author can often catch the sight of an ‘elegant tiny shoe from Paris and nylon stockings, with the seams perfectly straight’.<sup>252</sup>

After having spent some time in Afghanistan, Sparring and his friends return to Iran. Their first evening in Teheran they go out to a posh French restaurant, where Persian wine is served and where there are young women among the guests:

The young Teherani woman! (We had not seen unveiled women for months.) She is petite with big brown eyes, black shiny hair, and a complexion that seems slightly tanned. She is dressed according to the European fashion of today, moves confidently, talks, laughs, dominates the company at the table where she is seated. A bit affected perhaps, but her mother walked around in a veil with a horsehair visor covering her eyes.<sup>253</sup>

Later that night, as they leave the restaurant, they are ‘intoxicated with the wine and civilization’.<sup>254</sup> This description can most certainly be interpreted as a time-knot in which the temporal aspect is expressed in the mother–daughter relationship: the mother’s veil and daughter’s confidence and ‘big brown eyes’, the latter thought a mark of civilization as well as a phenomenon of the present. The endeavour pushes both the mother (the Iran of the past) and Afghanistan (in the present) backwards in time as the time-knot is unravelled.

Elly Jannes discusses her ambition to get to know Muslim women too, but for

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. 135–8, 195–7, quotes at 196–7, 135.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. 135–6.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. 207.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. 208.



entirely different reasons than Sparring's though. Jannes is well aware that her own actions will hinder her from accomplishing this. The Muslim women she encounters do not seem interested in her; they even avoid her. When Jannes is about to embark on a bus trip through Iran she notes her expectations of the journey, which she sees as an opportunity to get closer to Muslim women. This never happens. Jannes is simply shunned by the women, as always. She adds: 'I can understand her attitude, because whenever the bus stops somewhere, I and the men are expected to rest in a café or even in a beautiful garden, while she is sitting in a corner or at the side of the road with her lunch packet.'<sup>255</sup>

Jannes discusses the veil as a psychological phenomenon, while giving an account of a meeting with an 'emancipated' Moroccan woman, a teacher. The meeting is a disappointment. The teacher is reserved, listless, and uneducated, and she is wearing a veil: 'She accepted her position as a given, just like she accepted the veil. ... The emancipated Moroccan woman wears a veil, that is what I learned from that acquaintance. And the veil has left its mark on her soul.'<sup>256</sup>

Yet the concept of the veil is expanded by Jannes: it becomes a metaphor for the universal oppression of women:

Atatürk succeeded, within in a few years, to remove the veil from the face of the Turkish woman. But there are invisible veils worn by women in the North and by women in the South. When the day comes and a wizard succeeds in tearing them apart, billions of horsepower of human energy will be channelled into work and happiness.<sup>257</sup>

The metaphorical veil reappears in another setting, in a more specific meaning, when Jannes is travelling by train between Turkey and Iraq. She shares the carriage with a group of loud, vivacious students on their way home for spring holidays: 'As a matter of fact, I am the only one in the entire gathering who is wearing a veil, invisible yet most efficient; the rigid veil of Protestant puritanism, formalism, and Swedish frigidity, that will not be removed until after formal introductions, if even then.'<sup>258</sup>

The broad manner in which Jannes reflects upon the veil introduces new levels of understanding. In this way, the veil becomes a symbol that is given related but different meanings. First of all, she denies that mere removing the veil would matter

255 Elly Jannes, *Österland: Resa i Turkiet, Irak och Iran*, Rabén & Sjögren/VI (Stockholm, 1949), 347.

256 Elly Jannes, *Solnedgångens land: Resa i Marocko*, Rabén & Sjögren/VI (Stockholm, 1953), 64.

257 Jannes, *Österland*, 30.

258 Ibid. 119; see also Skoglund, 'Kulturradikalismen', 115 on Else Kleen's book of women's fashion in the nineteenth century—she points out that the actual corsets were matched with 'intellectual corsets'.

that much, since the veil ‘has left its mark on the soul’. Also, there are invisible veils worn by women all over the world that will probably never be removed. Second, she questions the idea that only Muslim women are oppressed, as opposed to the unveiled Western women. Third, Jannes interprets her own shyness, masked as distance and reserve, as a veil, again relativizing the notion of the veil as an exclusively Eastern trait. And when Jannes fails to make contact with Muslim women, she looks to her own behaviour and does not assume that the problem lies elsewhere.

Sparring does neither. His view of the veil is simple: it is a barrier, a religious invention that hides and hinders. Once the power of the mullahs has been broken and the veils have been removed, as in Teheran, women will be liberated—attractive, well-dressed, and confident, but above all available to him. Too be brief, his understanding of sexism is quite crude, even though he does his best to show his sympathy towards the women in Afghanistan. His concern for women does not extend beyond Afghanistan or Pakistan, though.

Jannes and Sparring do share a critical stance towards the veil as such; there are no instances in which the veil is discussed as a rational choice made by the Pakistani, Iranian, Afghan, or Moroccan women themselves. In this sense, one could suggest that what Jannes is doing while relativizing the veil, is to ‘paint with tar’, using the Western notion of the evils of the veil to point to similar oppression in the West. Muslim women then become signs or tokens in a Western feminist discourse in the same manner as discussed by Chandra Talpade Mohanty.<sup>259</sup>

### Matriarchy found

When Lena Eskilsson writes about the Fogelstad Group in the context of cultural radicalism, she points out how this group of women radicals were regarded with suspicion and/or a lack of interest. She states that their form of ‘diffuse’ radicalism was difficult to combine with ‘male’ party politics and ideological consensus, and that these radicals were searching for roads to a different version of the welfare state, one that did not depend on central and rational planning. Elin Wägner, one of the most prominent intellectuals in the group, argued for the pre-eminence of peace, environmental issues, and care as ideals that would lead to a social ethics. This worldview was set against a culture that was described as male and ‘predatory’; a culture that was abusing both humans and the environment.<sup>260</sup> Her vision of a different society was based on an idea of a (historical) matriarchy, a state of harmony where the wisdom and caring ability of women prevailed. Indeed, Wägner suggested

259 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Under Western Eyes’, in Menakshi Gigi Durham & Douglas M. Kellner (eds.), *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, Blackwell (Malden, MA, 2001), 464–84.

260 Eskilsson, ‘Kvinnlig vänsterhållning och radikalism’, 166–8.

that traces could still be found of this stage, which male culture had not managed to obliterate, but that it was late in the day: soon they would be gone.<sup>261</sup>

It is in this context that one can understand the significance of Signe Höjer's accounts of matriarchy in India, in the state of Travancore–Cochin (later a part of Kerala). She dedicates a chapter to the subject, but returns to it throughout the entire travel account.<sup>262</sup> She describes the matrilinear system in great detail, stating that it used to dominate India until the Aryan nomads, 'with patriarchal habits', invaded the continent, but that the system survived and thrived in the south, in Travancore. According to Höjer (who quotes a number of anthropologists and other social scientists to support her account), the tradition of having matriarchs as the head of the family has led to certain particularities in the state, for example the higher level of literacy among women compared to the rest of India. It is also noteworthy, according to Höjer, that more girls grow up to become women compared to the rest of India, where daughters might be considered a burden to their families. Here daughters are considered an asset in this culture, as prospective mothers. Höjer describes the culture in idealizing terms as characterized by consensus, tolerance, loving care of children, elders and animals, and cooperation, but she also describes how the system is under threat from changes to its social and economic structures, something that the men in the region also regret: 'They were happy with it, and there was no notion of men feeling in any way set aside.'<sup>263</sup>

In the chapter on Travancore, Höjer refers directly to Elin Wägner's book *Väckarklocka* [Alarm Clock] and her ideas on (historical) matriarchy as a radical alternative to the political and social status quo in Sweden. Höjer is careful to state that Wägner was extremely cautious in her discussions, but she gives the truth to Wägner's argument by pointing to the actual existence of a similar system in Travancore.<sup>264</sup>

Wägner's writings and ideas are represented in a very positive manner—unlike to the descriptions of the 'Scandinavian' women's movement. Höjer sketches a scene of Scandinavian feminists measuring the degree of liberation in other countries by investigating the quotas of women in politics, the existence (or absence) of equal pay, and the number of women's organizations, and the women of southern India have nothing to show for themselves according to these measurements: 'Maybe one is tempted to think of the women from Malabar as retarded. Out of pride, one

261 Katarina Leppänen, *Rethinking Civilisation in a European Feminist Context: History, nature, women in Elin Wägner's Väckarklocka*, Dept. of History of Ideas and Theory of Science (Göteborg, 2005), 91.

262 Signe Höjer, *Travancore – välsignat land*, Tidens bokklubb (Stockholm, 1955), 99–118.

263 Höjer, *Travancore*, 108; Signe Höjer, *På stråmatta i Japan*, Tidens bokklubb (Stockholm, 1957), 5 makes the same connection, when she writes that 'Periods of female influence have brought spiritual vitality and peaceful growth here as well as in other countries'.

264 Höjer, *Travancore*, 101.

might think that one should teach them some Western ambition.’ She ends the scene with the statement that ‘we are the ones that are ‘retarded’. Travancore and Cochin and all of Malabar has had a matrilinear system for thousands of years.’<sup>265</sup>

There are three points to be made here. One concerns the debasing and temporal concept of ‘retardation’: it is first used to describe Indian women, with a accompanying ‘maybe’, and then there is a switch and those ‘retarded’ are Westerners, unduly proud and prepared to teach without listening, without learning. The binary relationship between ‘retarded’ and not is still intact, however, as in so many of these instances where the writers express their critique by switching the ranking of idealization and debasement. Another reflection concerns the nature of Höjer’s reasoning, as she implicitly compares the living experience of matriarchy in Travancore (invoking the romantic ideas of Elin Wägner) to more rationally informed Scandinavian feminism. In the manner in which she presents these two strains of feminism, one becomes more radical than the other: Wägner represents an essentialist stance, where inherent femininity (as difference) would change society fundamentally, as opposed to the feminism that is concerned with equal participation in current political and economic systems, with the consequence or risk of perpetuating these systems. The last point is about the search, longing even, for alternative routes to the ones offered by the modernization processes of the West, discussed in terms of more loving, harmonious, or humane cultures found elsewhere. This will be developed in the next section.

## The world orchestra

One recurring theme in the travel accounts is the writers’ preoccupation with different routes to modernity, and with finding and comparing different modernization processes. The travel writers discuss state-directed modernization policies in postcolonial countries such as India, Iraq, Pakistan, and Ghana, and in countries with semi-colonial pasts, such as Turkey and Iran. They also visit colonies, where the modernization ideology advocated by intellectuals is closely linked to nationalism and anti-colonialism. Whether the travel writer is interviewing a civil servant in a modernizing postcolonial state, or whether he or she meets a member of a resistance group in secret, Sweden remains the starting point in any comparison between different paths to modernization. Where did we falter? What can they and we learn from our mistakes? Do we have a role to play in the modernization of the postcolonial world?

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265 Höjer, *Travancore*, 99.

## Welfare fatigue

Signe Höjer is very explicit in discussing and sometimes questioning her own role in the modernization process. This perhaps stands to reason since she and her husband were literally participating in the process: Axel Höjer was contributing to the establishment and development of a national health service in both India and Ghana on behalf of the UN, while Signe Höjer founded nurseries in India and worked as a volunteer in leper colonies in Africa.

Her account from India in 1955 shows very little self-doubt and does not question development aid and modernization, perhaps since the articles were originally meant as reports to Swedish and international organizations who supported the nurseries. The tone of voice is very different in her account from Ghana and Africa, published seven years later. In the introduction to the book Höjer expresses her self-doubt and growing concern at recent developments in Sweden:

Is it a sign of old age that one has become surfeited with the blessings of technology in Sweden, with radio programmes, television, telephones, car models, advertising, and an increasingly commercialized celebration of Christmas? That one longs to get away from all this and go to the technologically underdeveloped countries! It sounds schizophrenic, because at the same time one is leaving in order to assist in the technological modernization.

She continues:

It was a long time ago that one felt a tourist's delight at picturesque mud huts with straw roofs. One's longing rather concerns something that our civilization has wiped out, that is, people without too many belongings who experience a natural joy of living and who are able to laugh loudly, uninhibited by shyness or convention.<sup>266</sup>

The writer is expressing her discomfort with an affluent society, and her standpoint coincides with many younger intellectuals in the same period. The difference is that Höjer belongs to the Social Democratic establishment, the very thing many young radicals eschewed. Höjer, however, does not shy away from confronting with the contradictions, the schizophrenia that her own position entails. She finds no solution to this contradiction; she only emphasizes her longing for a simpler life, with Ghana and Africa as a model. Her line of argument is based on opposing concepts that are all so familiar by now, with 'civilization', 'shyness', 'inibitions', 'com-

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266 Signe Höjer, *Afrika i våra hjärtan*, Tiden (Stockholm, 1962), 7-8.

mercial' and 'convention' on the Swedish or Western side, and a people 'without too many belongings' who are able to 'laugh loudly'—that is, to express their feelings freely—and experience a 'joy of living' described as 'natural' on the other.<sup>267</sup>

The relationship between technology, joy of living, and Western modernity is also discussed by Åke Sparring. He expresses his discontent with the Western way of life, referring to the cold and heartless bustle of the streets in Stockholm, where stern-faced people shoulder their way along. Stockholm is contrasted with the friendly atmosphere of Nepal and especially Kathmandu, which is depicted as paradise on earth.<sup>268</sup>

What Sparring does do, however, is to defend the technological progress of the West by saying, 'Nobody has been more thankful than I for a Primus stove while staying in the dripping wet rainforest, or for a bottle of antiseptic when I have been badly bitten by ants or leeches'. He continues this line of thought by supporting Western development aid in Nepal, because the country is 'sadly behind the times'. This is yet another instance of a time-knot, according to which the writer travels in time and space with Sweden/Europe representing a fixed now, and the destination a fixed then. At the same time, Sparring emphasizes that the learning process is by no means unilateral, but rather bilateral. The people of Nepal can provide 'wisdom' in this exchange with the West: 'I am not thinking of Hindu or Buddhist speculation. ... I have something else in mind: a bit of social skill, a bit of insight into the art of living.'<sup>269</sup>

Sparring does not touch upon the issue of the West representing an affluent society, a modernization process out of hand. Instead, he places two familiar objects, both indications of technological and scientific progress, in a new and formerly unknown context, suggesting a universal need for these innovations. The demand for antiseptic and Primus stoves is perhaps even more acute in the rainforest. Yet the contribution of the West is limited to those practical innovations, suggesting that progress has come at the cost of life and the art of living. Life, on the other hand, can be found in the East, in Nepal, in pockets of 'backwardness'.

Sparring develops his thoughts on technological progress in an account of a visit to a mountain village. The village is owned by a prominent 'Chinese' lama, and the

267 Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral*, 276–7 characterizes Signe Höjer as a rationalist cultural radical, one of the 'generation of 1945', along with the likes of Herbert Tingsten, Ingemar Hedenius, Gunnar Myrdal, Alva Myrdal, Artur Lundkvist, Ulla Lindström, Axel Höjer, and Tage Erlander. While I would not argue with this, but I would suggest that Höjer at least in this context showed leanings towards a more romantic version of cultural radicalism. The same could be said generally of Artur Lundkvist.

268 Åke Sparring, *Nepal: Landet under jordens tak*, Rabén & Sjögren/VI (Stockholm, 1956), 9, 13, 21.

269 Ibid. 12–13.

lama's son, Tupt-den (Thubten), sometimes accompanies the writer when he takes walks through the village and the surrounding area. Sparring describes how the 'practical, planning, efficient Westerner' within himself is brought to life. He insistently tries to convince Tupt-den that the 'blessings of civilisation', such as electricity and soap, can turn the village into an 'glorified Europe right in the very centre of a Stone Age country'. He adds, 'I continued to make my observations and churn out suggestions. Tupt-den enjoyed the days and laughed all the time. ... I think that it was this passive kindness that irritated me the most.' He ends his account with the conclusion that 'Man should be somewhere in between the two of us.'<sup>270</sup> Sparring suggests a melding of the West (energy and technology) and the East (contentment and wisdom), in which both extremes will be balanced.

There are two points I would like to make here. Firstly, both Höjer and Sparring use the notion of 'life'—'joy of living' and 'art of living'—to describe the advantages of the African or Nepalese cultures they visited. Referring back to the context of cultural radicalism, I would say that the same idealizing trope is at work here. 'Life' here denotes unmediated, uninhibited joy, an attitude or ability that has been forgotten as a consequence of Western civilization. Secondly, the fifties writers repeatedly express their doubts, even fear, at the relentless and unavoidable changes. Yes, like their predecessors they still unravel the unknown, the time-knots, according to a stagist or modernist timeline, but they evaluate the stages differently, questioning the expected content or characterization of each stage. Höjer and Sparring both write about what they consider to be the darker side of modernization, and both lament the things that have been lost along the way.

Elly Jannes is more specific when criticizing the path modernization took in Sweden. She directs her criticism at the pride and joy of the Swedish model, the social security system and public healthcare. When travelling in Morocco, she witnesses a holy man known for his ability to heal people. He is in the street, literally kissing the illnesses away. Jannes compares it to the situation in West: 'It is superstition, all right. But it is also a scene that many doctors, working as if the hospital were an assembly line, should witness. Here you can sense sincerity and a human touch, despite the noise and racket from the streets.'<sup>271</sup>

Jannes also considers what it would mean to leave everything behind and join one of the caravans in the Sahara Desert: 'Steady monthly incomes, pension insurance, and health insurance gone, everything that lulls us into a sense of illusory safety and that cheats us out of something else that we are too domesticated to grasp.'<sup>272</sup> She talks about this welfare fatigue in relation to Turkish child welfare centres, where

<sup>270</sup> Ibid. 146–9.

<sup>271</sup> Jannes, *Solnedgångens land*, 58.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. 177.

mothers are taught how to care for their children according to modern and scientific methods. Jannes, somewhat exasperated, observes that the women are taught ‘how to feed their babies at fixed times, in order that the scientific research of yesterday will confuse the sound instincts of the Turkish mothers, just like it has already confused American, German and Swedish mothers.’<sup>273</sup> The frigidity of the medical assembly line and the scientifically valid feeding times, not to mention social security, all constructed to lull people into a state of mental paralysis, are contrasted with warm-hearted humanity and sound instincts. Considering the key concepts of cultural radicalism, it is interesting to see that Jannes is arguing for the protection of ‘instincts’, and that ‘science’ (another key concept in certain versions of cultural radicalism) is the threat.

The contrast between coldness and warmth is further emphasized in the passage where she is watching, longingly, as a caravan leaves and slowly disappears into the starry darkness of the desert night: ‘[They] do not know that they have excited a longing for those wide open spaces that will never be hers in someone from a faraway frosty land.’<sup>274</sup> The frost has perhaps less to do with the actual climate and more to do with the mental and societal climate of her homeland.

The dichotomy of North and South is further developed when Jannes encounters advocates of an all-encompassing modernization process in Morocco and Turkey and notions of modernity and tradition enter the scene. An official guide, a young man, accompanies Jannes during her stay in Istanbul. His task is to take her to different social institutions in the city, all of which signal the progress made by Turkey in establishing itself as a welfare state. It is during one tour that Jannes catches a glimpse of a greengrocer’s stall. She notices how beautifully and elaborately the fruit and vegetables are displayed:

When confronted with such a sight, one is prepared to reconcile with everything that necessarily shocks a Westerner in a city like Istanbul. ... And then, the answer to your glance from the charming gentleman feels like a dash of cold water: Madame, I will be very disappointed with you, if you only put pictures like that in your book. This time I answered by giving an entire lecture. On the fortune of belonging to a people who are so near to beauty and on the good reputation that such a stall could earn Turkey abroad.

Jannes continues, ‘But the question does not leave me: What is it that my friend in Istanbul wants me to tell and how do I avoid hurting his feelings?’<sup>275</sup>

<sup>273</sup> Jannes, *Österland*, 51.

<sup>274</sup> Jannes, *Solnedgångens land*, 91.

<sup>275</sup> Jannes, *Österland*, 13–14.



The conflict that arises between the Westerners' longing for exoticism and the modernizing ambition of the nationalists in the colonies and postcolonial states is played out in another context. In the following passage, Jannes encounters a group of nationalists in Marrakech. They meet in secret and Jannes is asked not to mention any names in her account, since the nationalists fear the French police, and on very good grounds according to Jannes. The men tell her stories of sabotage and insubordination, and she is reminded of the resistance in Norway during the war. I will return to this comparison later, but suffice it for now to point out that Jannes recognizes the enthusiasm of the nationalists, making them appear very similar to the Norwegian resistance.

There is, however, one fundamental difference that has to do with the nature of colonialism. Jannes describes the Western colonial occupation of Morocco as an occupation of minds, not only of territory. This in turn has led to a westernization of the Moroccan nationalists, leading them to adhere to the same policy as Reza Shah and Kemal Atatürk—they ensure their survival by becoming more Western than the West itself. 'They have suffered so much having been branded natives that they have adopted the views of the European average Joe on any custom that differs from the customs of Europe, and they have not been able to see through the mechanism.'<sup>276</sup>

The nationalists' willingness to adopt modernity is made very clear when Jannes tells them how much she appreciates Djemaa el-Fnaa, a square in Marrakech known for its storytellers and street performers. Her hosts become visibly agitated and explain to Jannes that the square is nothing but a tourist trap, and that the French authorities insist on keeping it the way it is: 'We can feel that they are losing faith in us, do we belong to those who wish to keep their country in denigration?' Jannes realizes that everything she appreciates in Moroccan culture is dismissed by these young men as mere obstructions to progress. They think that she is nostalgic, that she is trying to force them and their homelands to lag behind, even to remain part of a colonial state. Their unravelling of the time-knots is straightforwardly modernist, while Jannes suggests alternative (modernist) paths where there will (in time) be space for beauty and specific and local cultural expressions. Yet she remains hopeful. When she leaves the meeting, she is accompanied by one of the youngest of the nationalists. Before he leaves her, he tells her that he used to sneak out and go to Djemaa el-Fnaa as a boy in order to listen to the storytellers. When he leaves, Jannes is looking at him, hoping that he

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276 Jannes, *Solnedgångens land*, 125–7. Quote at 127.

all through the political struggle will be able to preserve that little boy inside ... Does he represent a coming generation, a generation that will understand that Morocco also has a distinctive character worthy of preservation and that Djemaa el-Fnaa has its own tune to contribute to the world orchestra?<sup>277</sup>

Jannes describes colonialism not merely as a geopolitical phenomenon, but also as a psychological condition, a connection similar to the one made by the psychoanalyst Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* from 1952. Jannes laments the indifference demonstrated by the nationalists towards Moroccan culture, evidently while keeping developments in Sweden in mind. She does however reserve the right to define Moroccan culture—‘its own tune’—and hence to decide what should be preserved for our sake as well as theirs. Again, the trope of idealization does not mean that the travel writer renounces her or his privileges.

Jannes also touches on the conflict between westernization and cultural traits while she describes the situation in Israel in the early fifties. She discusses how the wave of Jewish immigration from Tunisia, India, and Egypt has caused a national identity crisis among Israelis. Jews from all over the world arrived in Israel for all sorts of reasons, mainly because they were threatened by persecution in their home countries, not because they were dedicated Zionists. The cultural clash between the European and Oriental Jews led to misunderstandings and suspicion between different groups. Jannes also points out that the strong sense of solidarity among Israelis might have stemmed from having common enemies—the British, the Arabs—and now they have to rely on other sources of concord.

She illustrates the problem with a story about a young boy who complained that when he and his class were sent out to help save babies from flooding, his classmates from Iraq just stood and watched. He could not understand why he had to work, but they did not. And she adds: ‘He is not the only one wondering.’ She continues: ‘It does not have to be indolence. It might be the paralysis that could affect anyone who stumbles into an environment that appears to him to be overly energetic.’ Jannes concludes: ‘There is a tendency among Western Jews—this concerns the entire West by the way—to look down on Easterners and regard them as primitive; it is a kind of intolerance that refuses to recognize that a different culture is not necessarily a non-culture.’

Jannes, for her part, appreciates Yemeni culture. She claims that one only has to look at the posture and grace of the Yemenis in order to understand that their culture and way of life could become an asset in Israel. This is why she gets so upset when she hears young Yemeni boys claiming that their own culture is worthless, that

<sup>277</sup> Ibid. 127–8.

there is no Jewish culture, and that Israeli culture must be created from scratch in Israel. Jannes does point to people in Israel who try to save the Yemeni Jewish culture, and she refers to them as ‘the few who understand the danger in too hasty a destruction of [different] ways of life.’<sup>278</sup> Signe Höjer expresses similar concerns when she visits Japan in 1957, stating that ‘There is so much that is beautiful and valuable in this old island culture that you wish to see preserved, but that is on its way to disappearing.’ She is aware of the particular situation where the US more or less forced its ideals on Japan after the war, and she recognizes the advantages, especially concerning conditions for women and for the peasantry. However, quoting J. B. Priestley, Höjer does question whether it is ‘the amount of cars, television sets, refrigerators and washing machines that creates happiness? The question is also valid for Sweden.’<sup>279</sup> Again, she cautiously warns against too materialistic a development in the welfare state of Sweden.

The nationalists/modernists in Morocco, Iran, Israel, and Turkey, along with the American presence in Japan, considered material and social progress as a whole, as an all-encompassing culture, while Höjer, Sparring, and Jannes present a more pluralist vision of the future. They hope for technological and material progress that does not interfere with cultural authenticity and tradition.<sup>280</sup> Mikela Lundahl describes a similar ambition in the writings of Aimé Césaire. The objective of his book *Discourse on Colonialism*, published in 1950, was to analyse and criticize European colonialism, but he also articulated his ambitions for postcolonial societies, hoping they would have access to all the advances of modernity, defined as technology, science, and productivity, yet at the same time retain the fraternity and emotional warmth of ‘the old Africa’.<sup>281</sup>

Olle Strandberg differs radically from the standpoint of the other writers concerning tradition and modernity. More than anything else he makes fun of the longing for exoticism and authenticity among Westerners. There is an entire chapter in *Tigerland och söderhav* in which he ridicules the primitivist sentiments of American tourists visiting Hawaii. Honolulu is depicted as a primitivist Disneyland ‘ready to sell everything that people have come for: romance, friendliness, tiny complete paradises with palm trees, bathing nymphs, moonlight and happy, dancing natives’.

278 Elly Jannes, *Öknen måste glädjas: Resa i arabvärlden och Israel*, Rabén & Sjögren/VI (Stockholm, 1954), 178–9. Jannes makes a comparison with the situation in Sweden, pointing to the divide between Swedes and Sami peoples, 177.

279 Höjer, *På stråmatta i Japan*, 159–60.

280 For a discussion of different notions of modernity among Third World intellectuals, see Rouzbeh Parsi, ‘Reforming Society. Intellectuals and nation-building in Iran and Turkey’, in Almut Höfert & Armando Salvatore (eds.), *Between Europe and Islam—Altering the boundaries of community and self*, Peter Lang (Brussels, 2000)

281 Lundahl, *Vad är en neger?* 150.

He continues with the following observation:

There is a divine justice in the fact that the pale-faced descendants of those sea dogs and pious men who came ashore on the island hundreds of years ago and bought land, valuables, and love for glassbeads and scrap iron are fooled today into handing back their hard-earned dollars by purchasing objects that are basically just as worthless. And culture works according to such complicated patterns that the tourist does not notice that the South Sea romance and primitivism that he is buying at great expense is created by himself.<sup>282</sup>

Strandberg goes on to describe a luau arranged by an American bar-owner called Don Beachcomber. The supposedly traditional luau attracts ‘sturdy widows of butchers from Chicago’ and ‘businessmen who pretend to be escapists and lotus eaters’. The guests drink enormous quantities of rum and eat pork roasted whole. They get increasingly drunk and the men start to play baseball with the pineapples while the ladies dance the hula-hula.

In the meantime, the natives who attended the party have withdrawn to the bar in order to have a refreshing cup of bitter Kona coffee. They are wearing nice civilian suits and Western-cut flowery summer dresses, and they observe the wild, white dancing men and drunk, cuddly ladies wearing strange rags, smiling indulgently and somewhat scornfully at the representatives of the race that brought civilization to Honolulu.<sup>283</sup>

Strandberg’s casual touch, his particular style, is often interspersed with rather cynical and critical observations, which tended to provoke reviewers, who thought that he should make up his mind and decide whether he was a serious reporter or not.<sup>284</sup>

However, I read Strandberg in the context suggested by Lisbeth Larsson, where irony and a fluent subject position of the narrator are taken as a form of critique. Strandberg is interesting because of this intermingling of styles and intentions, which makes his critique subtle and subversive. And yet he does not invest himself in international matters like a Tingsten, Sparring, Höjer, or Jannes; he tends to keep his distance, to remain the cynical observer. That does not mean his observations are not valid, though. I find his critique of the Americans especially interesting, since he sides with the ‘natives’ in this account: he and the ‘natives’ join in a scorn-

282 Olle Strandberg, *Tigerland och söderhav*, Wahlström & Widstrand (Stockholm, 1952), 148–9.

283 Ibid. 150–2.

284 See, for example, Gunnar Frösell, ‘Plock bland reseböcker’, *Aftonbladet*, 5 Nov. 1952; Sven Lindqvist, ‘Förförisk Afrikabok’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 4 Dec. 1954.

ful dismissal of the Americans, representatives of the bastion of modernity and progress, at least in the minds of many Westerners at the time. The Americans' need for primitivism, tradition, and authenticity is made fun of, and, ridiculed, they are reduced to children.<sup>285</sup> However, the binary system of primitiveness and civilization is intact, albeit inverted.

### Exporting history

All the travel writers I have included in my study adhere to an evolutionist understanding of time and space—all the sixties radicals, the primitivist travellers, and Signe Höjer, Herbert Tingsten, Olle Strandberg, Åke Sparring, and Elly Jannes too. I will now turn to the writings of Strandberg, Tingsten, and Höjer in which this evolutionist ideology is represented in a very specific manner.

Höjer repeatedly classifies what she experiences in temporal and spatial terms, unravelling her life in India as a time-knot: 'We play Stone Age among the tribes in the mountains, only a couple of hours by car from town, and then, at the Medical College it is the advanced 1950s. ... We lead a British colonial life of the 1880s here in our bungalow'; 'Strange country, India. Stone Age, the Middle Ages, the modern age, all at the same time'; and 'India is a country where many ages exist side by side.'<sup>286</sup> However, she does not construct a static set of stages that exist side by side; she clearly believes in change and progress. She seems to suggest that the 'underdeveloped countries' are passing through the same stages that Sweden and the West had to. This claim is closely related to the modernizing theory coined by the sociologist Talcott Parsons in the 1950s.

The trope of classification, or unravelling a time-knot, is given specific meaning by Höjer when she discusses how Kwame Nkrumah, the president of Ghana, started to take an interest in pan-African issues while he was still in the UK. When Ghana was liberated and Nkrumah became the first president in 1957, he invited the heads of the other African states to Ghana. Höjer describes those meetings as follows: 'The gatherings built up a sense of solidarity, the eight states that were already independent would support those still not liberated in the struggle. The atmosphere at these gatherings often reminded me of when the worker's movement was in its infancy in Sweden—it was enthusiastic and resolute.'<sup>287</sup> The same comparison—between (African) liberation movements and the Swedish labour movement—is made by Herbert Tingsten when describing the situation in South Africa: 'Among blacks one finds, in short, all those [political] nuances that distinguished the workers'

285 Lagerkvist, *Amerikafantasier*, 143–82.

286 Höjer, *Travancore*, 18, 28, 194.

287 Höjer, *Afrika i våra hjärtan*, 67.

movement before the implementation of democracy’ and he continues, somewhat cautiously, that ‘it is still possible that the moderate option, “Social Democracy”, will win.’<sup>288</sup>

Höjer also compares the establishment of national healthcare in Sweden with that in India, pointing out that the Church used to monopolize healthcare in Sweden as too: ‘The state, county councils, and local authorities took over healthcare comparatively early in Sweden ... to the benefit of the patients. ... Developments will follow the same path in India, though the vastness, backwardness, and penury of the country will slow down the process.’<sup>289</sup> She points out as well that ‘If we think it over carefully, then the problems in East and West Africa are the same ones that we had in Sweden, even though they often seem so different’.<sup>290</sup> Margareta Petersson discusses the account from India in her dissertation, but not the book about Africa. She interprets Höjer’s allusions to Swedish circumstances as a way of ‘making India less strange’, and of creating a ‘Swedish template’ that covers ‘Indian reality’.<sup>291</sup>

I would put it more strongly, and interpret the comparisons made by Höjer—and Tingsten—in a more political manner. I do not think that Höjer tries to make India more familiar to Swedish readers in order to make her book comprehensible, but rather that she argues that we are all the same, wherever we live. She does not stop at that, though. She tries to mobilize a sense of international solidarity that transcends national borders.<sup>292</sup>

I would suggest the existence of a particular set of pasts, or rather instances when the past is considered a promise or an indication of a better future. One of these ‘good’ pasts is framed in the hegemonic narrative of Swedish history: the rise from darkness, poverty, and oppression to light and a welfare state based on consensus and reason, with the organization of people into popular movements, especially the

288 Herbert Tingsten, *Problemet Sydafrika*, Albert Bonniers (Stockholm, 1954), 92; see also Ulf Zander, *Fornstora dagar, moderna tider: Bruk av och debatter om svensk historia från sekelskifte till sekelskifte*, Nordic Academic Press (Lund, 2001), 235 ff. for Tingsten’s relationship with the history of social democracy and as a member of the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

289 Höjer, *Travancore*, 135.

290 Höjer, *Afrika i våra hjärtan*, 125.

291 Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 43.

292 Signe Höjer seems to have very well aware of the political significance of her writing. In 1958 she wrote from Accra, Ghana, to her editor Alfons Gidlund at Tiden to say that she wanted to write a book about leprosy. ‘Now, when the Swedish subsidies for underdeveloped countries are about to be discussed, I would like the eradication of leprosy to be discussed in this context. Everybody seems to agree on a considerable increase in subsidies and the Swedish Cooperative Union is doing its own fund-raising. But the hesitance seems to be related to the fact that one does not know exactly how the means could be used in the best possible manner. The Riksdag [Parliament] will supposedly take up the question this spring. This is why I am in a hurry to get the book published and it will not be suitable for the book society’ (ARAB, E1:63, Tiden archive, incoming correspondence).

workers' movement, as a starting point.<sup>293</sup> Höjer and Tingsten echo this narrative in their descriptions of political organizations and meetings in Africa, and it is also used by Strandberg in China, as we will see. As they unravel this specific time-knot, they displace the entire timeline, pushing it backwards, and so create a parallel to developments in Sweden. This is how the historical starting point can be placed in the present, without it becoming a remnant, soon to be disposed of as time moves on.

Höjer's standpoint is even more explicit in a course book entitled *Is India of our concern?*, used in study circles on underdevelopment organized by Kvinnogillesförbundet [the Association of Women's Guilds]. In this book, Höjer argues that the Swedish welfare state has created a sense of solidarity and community among Swedes in general, which in turn means that Swedes feel obliged to step in and interfere when someone is suffering. Now, Höjer would like to extend that beyond Sweden. She reminds the reader of the political and historical development in Sweden in the last century or so and adds: 'The nation of Sweden has become a landed estate compared to many slum countries in Asia and Africa. And now our sense of community has been extended from the village, from our own country, from our neighbouring countries to the world.'<sup>294</sup>

Höjer does not stop at her belief in international solidarity; she seems to hint at political action that overrides mere non-committal rhetoric. She is alluding to the recent past in Sweden, as described by Harry Martinson, Ivar Lo-Johansson, and Moa Martinson, among others. Their novels paint a vivid picture of rural destitution and social injustice, and rich estate owners exploiting farmers and labourers. To suggest that Swedes, as a nation and a people, occupied the position of landowners and thus imply that they are light-heartedly exploiting the impoverished is a very strong metaphor indeed, for people in general, but especially for Social Democratic politicians. Höjer, herself a social democrat and a politician, is arguing for an expansion of the Swedish welfare system to the underdeveloped countries. She represents Sweden as a 'landed estate', which can easily afford it.<sup>295</sup> Interestingly, Olof Palme argues along the same lines in an article in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* in 1960, in which he discusses the significance of Sweden's working-class writers in instigating a will to change (see p. 196).

I also interpret Höjer's insistence on describing Africa's nationalist and pan-African movements in terms of Social Democratic historiography as an attempt to

293 For a useful overview of this master narrative, see Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 111–38.

294 Signe Höjer, *Angår Indien oss?* Kvinnogillesförbundet (Stockholm, 1958), 6.

295 The Social Democratic Party was divided over development aid to Africa and Asia; things went so far that in 1966 the Minister of Development Aid, Ulla Lindström, resigned over the matter (Östberg, *I takt med tiden*, 229).



write against the colonial discourse. This seems warranted given the findings by Tor Sellström and Åke Holmberg, discussed earlier, concerning racism and the decolonization process in Africa. These attitudes, dressed up or not, were what Höjer and Tingsten are writing against when they inscribe African nationalism into Sweden's (Social Democratic) historiography and modernization. On the one hand, this entails the anti-colonial struggle in Africa being made understandable and worthy of support, provided of course that the reader is sympathetic towards this understanding of Swedish history and development. On the other hand, it also means that Sweden's modernization, expressed as the narrative of an ascent from darkness to light, is naturalized and made universal, which in a roundabout way could be interpreted as an argument for continued social reform in Sweden.<sup>296</sup>

As I indicated earlier, Höjer and Tingsten were not the only ones to treat international events and conditions by screening them through the history of the labour movement in Sweden. Strandberg does something similar when he describes his visit to China in the early fifties. His Communist China is anything but a heavy-handed dictatorship. Strandberg's tone of voice is ironic, as always, but paints a pretty picture of China, and the Chinese are described as friendly and hospitable. In order to defuse the Cold War rhetoric concerning Communism, Strandberg constructs parallels to Swedish phenomena, often connected to the tradition of the workers' movement or social democracy. When he is invited to a 'big political celebration', he says that the party is held at a place he calls 'a sort of Chinese people's park that differed little from those to be found in Bräcke or Kattarp'.<sup>297</sup> He notes that the pine fences you find enclosing public parks in Sweden are replaced by bamboo fences in China, and that the Chinese equivalent of Sweden's café is a tea and rice buffet. He even finds an equivalent to the minigolf course, compulsory for people's parks in Sweden: a stall where you can throw darts at 'famous capitalists, warmongers, and imperialists'. The author continues with this line of comparison by declaring that the busts of Branting, the first Social Democratic Prime Minister, are equal to the busts of Mao and Stalin. He adds that 'Stalin in the Chinese version does not at all look like the ill-intentioned master butcher who stares dismally at us in the Western inflammatory propaganda press.' The account of the celebration and the people's park is brought to a close with the statement that the party was a 'demonstration of social bliss that would even have done credit to a May Day speech in Ladugårdsgärde'.<sup>298</sup>

Strandberg's style is noted for its ironic distance, but even if this passage could be

296 See, for example, Zander, *Fornstora dagar, moderna tider*, 325.

297 Strandberg, *Tigerland och söderhav*, 67.

298 Ibid. 64–5. Kattarp and Bräcke are villages in Sweden and Ladugårdsgärde is the final destination for the traditional May Day demonstration in Stockholm.



interpreted as belittling both the Communist regime and the traditions of the workers' movement in Sweden, I read it differently. Since Strandberg supports what he calls the New China, as will be seen, I take the section above as his way of playing down the Communist regime and the differences between Swedish and Chinese ways of life. His aim is to engender sympathy, not distance. But, again, this procedure entails the universalization of Swedish history. We all seem to be good social democrats.

### Democratic virtues or technology

The recurring theme in this particular section is the presence of home, Sweden, in the travel writings as a starting point for the authors' discussions of progress and tradition. I will now turn to Sweden's actual presence in the world. This presence can be manifested as products or technical innovations, but 'Sweden' seems to be linked to ideas and expectations as well. Elly Jannes, Signe Höjer, Olle Strandberg, and Åke Sparring all confirm that Sweden really is present in the world; a presence manifested in its consumer goods or technological innovation, or through its reputation as a democratic welfare state.

Strandberg and Sparring both inform their readers of the success of the Swedish export industry. Strandberg comes across Swedish exports when in China, where he is offered tea 'in big enamel mugs manufactured by Kockums, which for some inscrutable reason have ended up here.'<sup>299</sup> Sparring, meanwhile, was travelling by bus to India with a group of students, researchers, and adventurers. Wherever they stopped they attracted a good deal of attention and all sorts of people came to see. Word got about that a Swedish bus was passing through, and rumour preceded them, so that once they reached the villages and towns along their route, they found they were expected: 'When we stayed at places, we had several visitors a day. It might be a couple of students who happened to pass by, a gym instructor who had learned arms-up-and-stretch! at Bosön, or a businessman who was selling Primus stoves and ball bearings.'<sup>300</sup>

Elly Jannes and Signe Höjer do not refer to Swedish technology, or indeed to Swedish-trained gym teachers; they talk of Sweden's reputation as a democracy. Jannes quotes the group of nationalists she met in Marrakech, who speak admiringly of Sweden: 'The atmosphere is tediously formal at the start. Someone breaks the ice by praising Sweden as one of the few truly democratic countries in the world. When will Morocco ever reach that far?'<sup>301</sup> This is yet another instance of a time-knot, or

<sup>299</sup> Strandberg, *Tigerland och söderhav*, 62.

<sup>300</sup> Sparring, *Med Emma till Indien*, 31. Bosön is a sport and adult education centre outside Stockholm, run by the National Association for Athletics and Sports.

<sup>301</sup> Jannes, *Solnedgångens land*, 125.

a linear understanding, where certain nations, cultures, or groups are ahead of others.

Jannes also encounters young nationalists in Iraq, one of who told her about a sheikh, who contrary to many of his peers took a sincere interest in his people:

He had seen trough the entire bluff and wanted to participate in the reforms, even if that would entail less prosperity for him, because he was a true patriot who wished the best for his people. You would have called him a social democrat in Sweden, but here he was accused of being a Communist.<sup>302</sup>

Höjer, too, readily quotes those who praise Sweden and Swedish democracy. When she interviews Kwame Nkrumah, she asks for his views concerning a cooperative exchange between Ghana and Sweden. He is positive towards it, and continues by saying that:

I have always admired your country, it provides a model for us in many areas. The way that you have organized the economy through private enterprise, cooperation and nationalisation of power plants and ore and such. And politically... you are neutral, independent and disposed to cooperation in all directions just like we are.<sup>303</sup>

Strandberg and Sparring both confirm the success of the Swedish export industry. Technical innovations such as the Primus stove and ball bearings have reached the entire world—the Swedish industry has succeeded in conquering markets outside Europe, including China and Pakistan. Also, well-known everyday commodities, like the enamel mugs manufactured by Kockums, found in exotic settings offer an interesting contrast for the reader.

Jannes and Höjer are more inclined to emphasize the image of Sweden as a democratic and non-aligned haven. This can be interpreted as a vote of support for the Social Democratic foreign policy suggested by Prime Minister Tage Erlander in 1954. He discussed Sweden's new role in a speech to the metalworkers' union in Eskilstuna, when he presented the idea of Sweden as an international model, partly because the welfare state was something good in itself, and welfare fosters peace, and partly because economic, scientific, and industrial progress would generate the resources necessary to end poverty everywhere. Löden points out that this speech might have been an isolated occasion, but in the light of later developments it can be taken as a step towards a more active foreign policy.<sup>304</sup>

302 Jannes, *Österland*, 157.

303 Höjer, *Afrika i våra hjärtan*, 73.

304 Löden, *För säkerhets skull*, 101.

Throughout the fifties, Sweden's ambitions expanded. The Swedish model was not only to be held up as an example for the postcolonial states to follow, but the model should be spread actively.<sup>305</sup> Tage Erlander developed this notion in a debate in 1961, where he suggested that not only should material resources be distributed across borders, but ideas and values as well. Quoting a German politician, he emphasized Sweden's non-colonial history (indicating that Swedes therefore had no ulterior motive) as the springboard for an 'educational programme' for poorer nations that would encourage 'solidarity' and 'harmonious progress'. According to Erlander and several others, the welfare state was a result of two different traits: solidarity with the less fortunate and a willingness to compromise. Sweden's historical experience of progress and state-building, in conjunction with its supposed colonial innocence, made its particularly well suited to be an ally and support for the new nations.<sup>306</sup> Östen Undén, the foreign minister, even talked of Swedish development aid as a form of 'international social policy', making it sound as if it were a mere extension of the country's existing welfare system.<sup>307</sup>

Considering Jannes and Höjer, I think that there might have been an educational motive behind their reports of how Sweden was perceived by young fighting nationalists and anti-colonialists—it was a salutary reminder for the reader of the responsibility that such an image entails.

## Resistance

This section is about reassessments; about the will and ability to reinterpret one's experiences in order to articulate a critique, and to enable new ways of thinking about the world and the future. Elly Jannes, Signe Höjer, Olle Strandberg, and Åke Sparring, along with Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist, tend to rely on what they took to be common knowledge, which they then 'stretched' and transformed to a small or dramatic degree in making their arguments against racism, colonialism, and sometimes even the traditional authority of the Western travel writers themselves.

305 Ibid. 127.

306 Ibid. 128.

307 Berge, *Kalla kriget i Tidens spegel*, 145. Sweden's nationalist self-image as a peace-loving and humane model for the rest of the world started to develop during the Great War, but became more established during the Second World War, especially towards the end of the war. See Max Liljefors & Ulf Zander, 'Det neutrala landet Ingenstans: Bilder av andra världskriget och den svenska utopin', *Scandia*, 69/2 (2003), 211.

## Democratic Nazis

Elly Jannes repeatedly expresses her critical views on colonialism. A telling example is her discussion of British colonialism, in which she tries to rethink the role of the British, distancing herself from the worldview of the Second World War, yet using it to further her argument.

Jannes begins by saying how surprised she was by her Iraqi friends who insisted on warning her about the British, because the British were constantly accusing people of being spies, and these ‘spies’ tended to disappear in one gruesome way or another. Jannes cannot grasp how her friends can accuse the British of such atrocities:

At first it has a perplexing and shocking effect on someone who sat wedged within the borders of Sweden during an entire world war, fearing Nazism, considering each of England’s victories one’s own since it made it possible to continue living by those norms one considered fairly decent. We have got used to regarding England as a protector of democracy. But for the Iraqis—not those few in the upper classes who depend on England, and not the vast masses who follow wherever the wind blows, but for the others, the young ones, the new class of effendi that grows and increasingly influences public opinion, even if mostly from underground—the word England has the same ring as Germany had for the Danish and Norwegians during and after Nazism.<sup>308</sup>

The historian Åke Holmberg discusses how the ideological dichotomy of the Second World War affected the interpretation and representation of the decolonization process in a Gothenburg newspaper, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning*. He describes how the newspaper, known for its anti-Nazi stance during the Second World War, tended to interpret events in Asia and Africa in terms of the ideological struggle of the thirties and forties—in terms of a conflict between democracy and dictatorship. Britain was considered a beacon of democracy, and hence the newspaper was hesitant and sometimes critical of the dissolution of the British Empire.<sup>309</sup>

Considering the context presented by Holmberg, Jannes’s insistence on describing sentiment in Iraq makes sense. Having tried to explain Iraqi anti-British feeling with a comparison to the situation in Norway and Denmark during the German occupation, Jannes continues by suggesting a mind game, asking the reader to imagine a corresponding situation in Sweden. How would it feel if a foreign power were to

<sup>308</sup> Jannes, *Österland*, 172.

<sup>309</sup> Åke Holmberg, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidnings syn på kolonialismens sammanbrott i Asien och Afrika 1946–1965*, Kungliga Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället (Gothenburg, 1999), 21–3.

control the railways and the mines, if representatives of this power were found throughout government and the civil service as ‘advisers’, if they considered Swedes to be an inferior race, and if they, on top of it all, they said this situation was for the good of the Swedes?<sup>310</sup>

The reference to Danes and Norwegians seems to have hit a sensitive nerve in the Swedish context. Henrik Berggren points out that Danes and especially Norwegians tended to express certain bitterness towards Swedes in the years after the war. It was not unheard of for Swedish visitors to Norway to be accused of having been Nazi collaborators who had profited from the war.<sup>311</sup> Johan Östling describes a similar, yet much more subtle, situation when the lawyer Per Olof Ekelöf discussed the establishment of natural law (*ius naturale*) with a Norwegian colleague. Ekelöf said that their differing experiences during the war affected their varying perspectives: “You see”, the Norwegian said, “we all adhere more or less to natural law—those of us who were there.” “That bullet hit its mark,” Ekelöf admitted.<sup>312</sup>

Strandberg also explores different ways of arousing sympathy for the anti-colonial and nationalist struggle, and of making the readers aware of the situation in the European colonies. One method is to refer to German Nazis, to which I will return; another is to allude to literature.

The author visits Indochina/Vietnam during his tour of Asia. He describes his arrival by boat as almost a fever dream, a delirium. The feverish ambience is not dispelled; on the contrary, when Strandberg embarks on a second boat journey, this time on a river, taking him to Saigon, the river is sluggish and meanders through dense dark woods, ‘soft as snakes and hard as metal, with leaves sharp as lances, flukes and fangs, aerial roots pale like sick worms, parasites living off parasites, chlorophyll rising like a piece of dough or a cancerous tumour’.<sup>313</sup> All of a sudden, the author notices a faint smell of burning rubber, and eventually the boat passes a burning rubber plantation where a couple of French soldiers are trying to get the fire under control. At the very moment when Strandberg is about to hand over the binoculars that he has been using to watch the soldiers

something else catches my attention: three severed, gaping heads spiked on bamboo stakes down by the loading jetty. A black soldier—a Moroccan or Tunisian from the Foreign Legion—is standing nearby, and even from a distance we can see his white teeth when he grins at us and points to the heads.<sup>314</sup>

310 Jannes, *Österland*, 172.

311 Henrik Berggren, *Underbara dagar framför oss: En biografi över Olof Palme*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 2010), 190.

312 Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral*, 187.

313 Strandberg, *Tigerland och söderhav*, 127.

314 Ibid. 128.

The author is plainly alluding to *Heart of Darkness*: the rubber plantations, the Congo, the severed heads. The description of the river also indicates sickness, perversion, ferment, barbarism, threat of violence; the debasing tropes are piled up, one on the other. Strandberg is clearly trying to demonstrate that the situation is anything but good. The colony is falling apart, and the colonial soldiers have degenerated into barbarians.<sup>315</sup>

However, it is alarming that the perversion and barbarism of the colonialists is represented by an African man, a soldier with dark skin, making Strandberg's account even more tarnished than Conrad's novel. Referring back to the discussion of racism against Africans in Sweden, one can only acknowledge that this is yet another instance of such racism, even as we remember the critical potential of *Heart of Darkness* at this point, twenty years before Chinua Achebe forced Western academics and readers to face the overt racism of the book.

Strandberg arrives in Saigon, a city he describes as once having been the 'Paris of the Far East':

The French used to call it their little balcony facing east. It was adorned with flowers and caught the morning sun, it was both picturesque and cosy. ... The whole thing was a charming and refined French chinoiserie—a beautiful screen made of Annamite lacquer that hid much of the violence and oppression and social injustice. Today, that screen has been knocked over and crushed underfoot.<sup>316</sup>

The idyll, however treacherous it might have been, is now a besieged city. A war of liberation is taking place in the midst of everyday life, on the streets of Saigon, and escalating at night. Europeans are being attacked both in Saigon and outside the city. Strandberg accompanies a convoy on its way out into the countryside to inspect the scene of a very recent attack where two French women were killed by the guerrillas. The convoy meets an army truck on the road. A group of soldiers have just been to collect the bodies of the two women. Strandberg is appalled to hear that the soldiers are singing the Horst Wessel Song ('Die Strasse frei den braunen Bataillonen, SA maschiert mit ruhig festem Schritt'): 'We met a ghostly remnant of Hitler's shock brigade right in the middle of the jungles of Indochina—the peculiar partisans of democracy, miles from anywhere.'<sup>317</sup> Strandberg continues:

315 Francis Ford Coppola also drew this parallel in his award-winning film *Apocalypse Now*.

316 Strandberg, *Tigerland och söderhav*, 128.

317 For a discussion of the presence of German soldiers in French legions, see Martin Windrow, *The Last Valley. Dien Bien Phu and the French defeat in Vietnam* (2004). Also, note that Strandberg is mixing two different verses of the song.

### 3. IN SEARCH OF TIME LOST, 1949–1962

The tragedy and absurdity of the white man's struggle in Asia is that he claims to defend virtues that he never has lived by: Christian culture, political democracy, peace, and economic equality. Asia has been exploited in ruthless way and when the positions of the exploiters are threatened, they resort to the most hazardous of all means—they obtain a short respite by establishing and supporting governments constituted by puppets, quislings, and has-beens—by Syngman Rhee, Bao Dai, and Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>318</sup>

Both Jannes and Strandberg point to the absurd paradox of the ideals of democracy and the situation in the colonies, to be laid at the feet of those who claim to represent democracy. The authors are not introducing something new in that sense—much of the anti-colonial critique since the turn of the last century had pointed out the discrepancy between the rhetoric of imperialism (its much-vaunted civilizing mission) and the uncivilized actions in the actual colonies—but what they do is end the distinction between the good Europeans (the Allies) and the bad ones (the German Nazis).

Tingsten, too, uses this strong, debasing comparison while travelling in South Africa, and in his case one has to take his role as an academic into consideration: Tingsten was a significant and early opponent of political developments in Germany in the twenties and thirties, and had published critical research on fascism and Nazism as early as 1930. He also alludes to his earlier experiences (and thereby buttresses his authority) when he describes a visit to the security police, 'meaning the political police': 'There I found the same milieu as in Germany twenty years ago: uniformed men at the desks, with an appearance of physically fit roughness and impudence.'<sup>319</sup> He also discusses the relationship between the 'attitude of the Boer' and Nazism, pointing to the common ground—'A vague air of anti-capitalism, as well as anti-socialism'—and he informs the reader that Jews were not allowed to be members of the South African National Party between 1939 and 1950.<sup>320</sup>

Again, returning to Holmberg's observations, one can easily interpret the accounts of the situation in Indochina, Iraq, or South Africa as ways of trying to shake the reader, to make him or her fully grasp the gravity of the situation in the colonies and former colonies. The British and French colonizers and their puppet governments, like the racist government in South Africa, were no different from the Nazis, the SA, or Quisling. Colonization is no different to the German occupation. And hence, the liberation movements and nationalists in the colonies are worthy of support, perhaps especially from those who consider themselves internationally re-

318 Strandberg, *Tigerland och söderhav*, 131–2.

319 Tingsten, *Problemet Sydafrika*, 28–9.

320 Ibid. 78.

nowned for being one of the few true democracies. Also, a sense of guilt among Swedish intellectuals, as indicated by Jens Ljunggren, might have played a role as well. The decolonization process and the creation of postcolonial states might be considered a worthy cause for Swedes who were looking to restore their reputation in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Sparring also discusses colonialism from the point of view of democracy and Western ideals. His travel book *Svart final* is an account from the Belgian colony of Congo, and his verdict on the Belgians is severe. He declares that the Belgian colonial powers, like the French and British, has to ‘maintain certain myths about their own excellence and the moral and intellectual shortcomings of the oppressed people’. This is partly accomplished through the education system in the colonies, where the pupils are taught about Napoleon and Cromwell. He adds, acerbically, that the Belgians may not have such a grand past, but they do their best to transform Leopold II into ‘a bearded old gentleman, who civilized their forefathers out of pure charity. When the foundation was laid, he gave Congo as a gift to his grateful Belgian people, who from that day on have sacrificed money and lives in order to provide the blacks with a decent standard of living.’ He continues by pointing out that ‘This is the double role of the Belgians, this is also the reason why foreigners find it difficult to feel happy and at home. When the security of the state demands that even schoolchildren are fed historical lies, then we are far divorced from Western democratic ideals’.<sup>321</sup>

Holmberg states that Belgium in the fifties was in fact very successful in marketing itself to Sweden as the benevolent colonizer. Several Swedish visitors to Congo wrote appreciative books and articles about the colony as a promising experiment.<sup>322</sup> This could explain why Axel Wennerling, a reviewer in *Dagens Nyheter*, is simply infuriated by Sparring’s provocative account. Wennerling finds Sparring too hasty in his judgement of the Belgian colonial power. Sparring is also criticized for only having interviewed drunkards and failures in Congo, people who by no means were typical: ‘The pillars that underpin his very critical report are an empty-talking beer-drinking priest and a Belgian alcoholic, who strangely enough has not been sent home yet.’ Wennerling does agree that the days of colonialism are numbered, but adds that ‘Perhaps even so the Belgians will be allowed to stay longer than Europeans in other places thanks to a combination of judiciousness and a tight rein. Perhaps they will even be allowed to stay on as advisers in an independent Congo’.<sup>323</sup>

It is quite clear that Sparring is referring to these two characters as people who have not been able to reconcile themselves to the situation in the colony. The point

321 Åke Sparring, *Svart final*, Rabén & Sjögren/VI (Stockholm, 1958), 50–1.

322 Holmberg, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidnings syn*, 78–9.

323 Axel Wennerling, ‘Om dagens Kongo’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 28 Oct. 1958.



that he is making is that it is almost impossible for a person of conscience to endure the hypocrisy in Congo, where the rhetoric claims interracial cooperation and everyday life entails keeping to oneself and getting back to Belgium as soon as one has earned enough money. Either way, it is interesting to see that a reviewer might be prepared to criticize a writer or reporter for having interviewed people who could be considered failures. Tingsten, for example, clearly prefers to interview ‘educated negroes’ when he discusses different forms of resistance to the situation in South Africa.<sup>324</sup> This was to change significantly in the sixties and particularly in the seventies, as Petersson remarks: she saw the sixties as the watershed, and from then on the quality of a travelogue was measured against whether the writer had had access to ‘the people’ or not.<sup>325</sup>

### Going over to other side

I have demonstrated how democracy, as an ideal, became a starting-point in the anti-colonial critique of the travel writers, and I have also suggested that the writers set democratic values against Nazism and ultimately all dictatorships. They repeated the Manichaeic worldview of the Second World War, but extended it to the colonies, thus creating a new dichotomy in which the democratic values represented by the former Allies became reversed, turned upside down; European democracies might have been democratic at home, but took on the guise of Nazis outside Europe and the West.

There was another war underway, however; one to be borne in mind when reading the travel accounts, The Cold War. And it added a third ideology to the existing dichotomy of Nazism and democracy—Communism. Colonialism, anti-colonialism, and postcolonial nationalism can therefore from the outset be described and understood as being matched by an ideological triangle, consisting of Communism, Western democracy, and Nazism. Tingsten, Strandberg, and Jannes thus discuss Communism in relation to past and present situations in South Africa (Tingsten), China and Indochina (Strandberg), and Iraq and Morocco (Jannes). In order to make sense of these discussions, I need to account for their wariness about Communism.

As we have seen, the particular Swedish post-war relationship with the world was largely characterized by guilt, shame, and a hoped-for rehabilitation.<sup>326</sup> The non-alignment policy, the lodestar of Swedish foreign policy, could and was interpreted

<sup>324</sup> Tingsten, *Problemet Sydafrika*, 90–1.

<sup>325</sup> Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 36–7.

<sup>326</sup> After the Second World War, some felt that Sweden should be a moral and humanitarian power, if not a superpower (Liljefors & Zander, ‘Det neutrala landet ingenstans’, 209–42).

as cowardly, a view that was shared by some Swedes, while others criticized the government for not being neutral enough, and that the principle of neutrality ought to be implemented in a broader, deeper sense.

This last interpretation was the one favoured by the Third Standpoint, a group consisting of left-wing intellectuals, who spent the first two years of the 1950s arguing against the Manichaean worldview of the Cold War while trying to formulate a third position. They suggested that Swedes ought to adhere to the doctrine of non-alignment on more levels than the political, to create a social, intellectual, emotional, economic, and cultural alternative to the ideological divide. The overarching ambition was the quest for world peace. The most influential among the proponents of the Third Standpoint were the established poets and writers Sivar Arnér, Werner Aspenström, and Karl Vennberg, who belonged to the modernist generation of the forties. Other proponents were Artur Lundkvist and Folke Isaksson.

They never constituted a formal group per se, but shared a common fear and distaste for the harsh rhetoric of the Cold War, in this particular case initiated and led by Tingsten, who was joined by Stig Ahlgren, Ingemar Hedenius, and Eyvind Johnson and others, mainly from the liberal or conservative press. Back in 1948 Tingsten had argued fiercely that Sweden ought to abandon its doctrine of neutrality and instead join what later became the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in order to find protection from an imminent Soviet attack. He also published articles where Swedish Communists were presented as potential traitors, while Ingemar Hedenius, professor of philosophy in Uppsala, accused those who refused to take sides as 'semi-Communists', which according to him was more damning than going all out.<sup>327</sup> According to this viewpoint, the Cold War was not a deadlock between two former allies against Nazism and fascism, but a struggle between democracy and dictatorship, freedom and oppression. The West, of course, represented freedom and democracy; the Soviet Union, the opposite.<sup>328</sup>

The tone adopted by the parties to the Third Standpoint debate, which began in the late 1940s but with new impetus in the spring of 1951, when the war in Korea reached a peak, was remarkably harsh, especially towards the Third Standpoint. Tingsten and Hedenius tended to suggest that the unwillingness to choose sides could be related to the unmanliness, weakness and intellectual laxity of the writers. Anders Frenander, who has investigated the post-war debates in Sweden, demonstrates that similar accusations were not unheard of in the other camp: when Artur

<sup>327</sup> Frenander, *Debattens vågor*, 95, 128.

<sup>328</sup> Berge, *Det kalla kriget i Tidens spegel*, 14–15; Frenander, *Debattens vågor*, 102; Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella*, 53; however, Frenander does make the point that the non-alignment policy in itself was supported by the majority of Swedes as well as by Parliament (103).

Lundkvist reviewed a play by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1946, he explained what he considered the flaws of existentialism, and they were many and grave, with Sartre's supposed repressed homosexuality. Frenander finds this reaction surprising.<sup>329</sup> I do not, considering the masculinist tendencies among primitivist writers, as discussed earlier.

It was this worldview of the ever-evil East and ever-good West that the representatives of the Third Standpoint found provocative and suffocating. They never made common cause, and they all proposed slightly different alternatives to the divide. Some tried to reformulate a new vision of Europe as a possible counterweight (Aspenström and Vennberg), while Artur Lundkvist instead tried to initiate a more elaborate discussion on democratic socialism, in which he claimed that no true democracy could exist without the economic and social equalization that socialism would bring. Lundkvist met with outrage, possibly because he used Marxist terminology in his articles, which were therefore dismissed as 'Communist propaganda'. Frenander even suggests that the reaction against Lundkvist caused a decade-long fear of Marxist theory and terminology, a 'de-ideologization' process that lasted until 1964.<sup>330</sup> Ulf Zander demonstrates that even if prominent Social Democratic politicians had dismissed the Third Standpoint, they soon incorporated some of their ideas. The official political rhetoric of how Sweden ought to represent a third alternative between Communism and capitalism, and as such become a model for others presumably, can be traced back to the Third Standpoint.<sup>331</sup>

The European colonial wars, Communism, and nationalist struggle for independence were also a concern of the Social Democratic journal *Tiden* [Time], a fifties' forum for intellectual debate that did not necessarily adhere to the party line. Anders Berge shows how events in the colonies and former colonies called for a discussion of nationalism, Communism and democracy: how to respond to the colonies' nationalist ambitions when those fighting for freedom and justice were professed Communists and those who resisted, through violence and oppression, were professed democrats? How did this correspond with the Cold War worldview? Berge states that this was a recurring theme for contributors to *Tiden*, writers and politicians alike. They criticized French colonial policy in Tunisia, likening it to the German occupation during the Second World War, suggested that the struggle against Communism was a cover for colonial policy, and pointed out that the regimes in Asia supported by the US and France were incapable of democratic and social reform. All this was presented as a moral dilemma for Westerners, but anti-Communist

329 Frenander, *Debattens vågor*, 91.

330 Ibid. 127, 138, 157.

331 Zander, *Fornstora dagar, moderna tider*, 320.

sentiment remained strong, and *Tiden* continued to express its support for the war on Communism in Asia in the fifties.<sup>332</sup>

Considering Tingsten's clear position on Communism in the Third Standpoint debates, I find his views on the subject in relation to the situation in South Africa especially interesting. He said that the country's Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 defined Communism in such a manner as to include *any* ambition for social and political change. Also, it sufficed to fear or suspect adherence to Communism for the law to be applicable to those considered the enemies of the state and government.<sup>333</sup> Tingsten adds that 'A Communist in South Africa is often a liberal, according to [established] terminology; for many, therefore, it is handy to consider the liberals as Communists'.<sup>334</sup>

Jannes seems slightly ambiguous concerning Communism. She evidently shares Tingsten's understanding of Communism as a pejorative label. She points out that Western media were too ready to interpret anti-colonial and nationalist sentiment as Communism. Thus in a passage where she describes how many of those fighting in the resistance in Morocco have had to endure torture, imprisonment, and deportation, she adds: 'If they were Europeans we would sympathize deeply with them. But now they are Africans. They do not have their own news agencies, and whenever something important happens in their country, it is censored. That is why it is so easy to describe them as Communists or victims of Communist propaganda.'<sup>335</sup> Another instance can be found in her discussion of the situation of Iraqi intellectuals and nationalists, and they relate to Europe, and Britain in particular. She quotes them saying: 'Brave democracies that exploit backward peoples! When we demand democratic reforms and social welfare, English journalists brand us as Communists.'<sup>336</sup> And yet she discusses Communism as an intelligible choice for nationalists in Iraq, a sensible one even, saying that many students consider the Soviet Union a model worthy of imitation in Iraq: '[it] would not be that strange if the students were hoping for a Communist Iraq. They have only experienced the most repugnant aspects of the democratic states, those that they tend to show in relation to the so-called coloured parts of the world.'<sup>337</sup>

Strandberg too takes Western colonization as his starting point when describing

332 Berge, *Det kalla kriget i Tidens spegel*, 89–90, 124–8, 144. For a discussion on how anti-Nazi and pro-British sentiments during the Second World War, complicated the discussion on the anti-colonial struggle for independence after the war, see Holmberg, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidnings syn, passim*.

333 Tingsten, *Problemet Sydafrika*, 68.

334 Ibid. 89.

335 Jannes, *Solnedgångens land*, 165.

336 Jannes, *Österland*, 181.

337 Ibid. 168.

the political and economic situation in China in the early fifties. He describes Mao as representing an entirely new version of Marxism–Leninism that Mao himself calls New Democracy. Strandberg quotes Mao's claims that he is a democrat and that socialism was the goal, if only in the long term. Strandberg also emphasizes how complicated and difficult the situation is in China, given that the economy is based on farming and that the country has been exploited by the colonial powers:

The white man's burden of guilt in China is immense: the cultural achievements of colonialism are slight compared to the sowing of the dragon's teeth of oppression and brutality that are being reaped in Indochina, the Malay states, Burma, and Korea. (A truth does not cease to be a truth just because it sometimes coincides with a statement from Moscow, and a fight for liberty should not escape respect and sympathy because it happens to coincide with Soviet interests.) ... Who can wonder that China, now when it strikes back, is turning to those who offer efficient help? The great powers of Western Europe have lost face, and America is considered to have lost its head completely.<sup>338</sup>

The writer continues to criticize the presence of the US in Asia, this time in Indochina, and he ridicules the French colonial authorities for having chosen Bao Dai as a puppet leader. The French may be working hard to secure Bao Dai's position as a heroic leader, but no one seems convinced, not even Bao Dai himself, who prefers the Americans to the French. The US is also exporting arms to the French troops in exchange for the Indochinese market: 'The US avail themselves of the opportunity to do good business while it is defending the West against Communism.'<sup>339</sup> Strandberg then holds up all of them—the American cars on the streets of Saigon, the French soldiers, and Bao Dai—alongside Ho Chi Minh: 'Uncle Ho of the entire Vietminh, recognized by the Soviet Union, recognized by China and India, recognized by the people of Indochina.'<sup>340</sup>

Strandberg explicitly sides with the Communist liberation movements of Asia against the European colonial powers and the US, and not one reviewer even mentions it. They would sooner comment on his ironic and dramatic touch as a writer.<sup>341</sup> This becomes even more peculiar when we remember the reception of Artur Lundkvist's account of his travels in China, *Den förvandlade draken*. When it was published in 1955, many reviewers accused him of serving as a propagandist for the

338 Strandberg, *Tigerland och söderhav*, 83–4. Quote at 84.

339 Ibid. 132–4. Quote at 134.

340 Ibid. 133.

341 Gunnar Ekelöf, 'En skvader', *Dagens Nyheter*, 9 Dec. 1952.

Chinese Communist regime. Birger Christofferson, a literary critic at *Stockholms-Tidningen*, started his review by saying that Lundkvist was undoubtedly an excellent reporter, that he possesses an outstanding ability to get close to his subject and register ‘the most illusive images’. He likened the competence of the author to a pair of binoculars, but warned against the perils of looking through the wrong end. Lundkvist’s China book is an ‘illustrative representation of an important political metamorphosis. But when it comes to the critical completion of this picture, Artur Lundkvist turns his binoculars around and sees the most naïve miniatures.’<sup>342</sup> Another reviewer, Ivar Harrie, the editor-in-chief at *Expressen*, vents his displeasure with the book by stating that it is ‘propaganda’. Harrie recognizes and even sympathizes with its aim—to ‘shock the delusions out of us’—but he does not think that Lundkvist has succeeded in this.<sup>343</sup> Discussion of the book also reached the liberal *Dagens Nyheter* and conservative *Svenska Dagbladet*. The reviewer for *Svenska Dagbladet*, Gunnar Unger, called Lundkvist ‘the parrot from Beijing’, and Sven Öste over at *Dagens Nyheter* announced that the writer had been wearing blinkers throughout his travels in China.<sup>344</sup>

Lundkvist published his answer to the allegations in *Morgon-Tidningen*, the Social Democratic newspaper for which he was a reviewer, and which had first published his account before it was issued in book form. He protests at being called a Communist:

Let me immediately declare unequivocally: I am not a communist, have never been one, and will certainly never become one. I lack the requirements. What I strive to be is an independent socialist. But when I encounter a communism in real life that indisputably has made a great difference and improved the lives of several hundred million people, then I will neither be a coward nor a liar; instead I recognize this openly. And it is this lack of dishonesty that I am blamed for.

He continues by challenging his critics, asking them to tell the difference between his account and contemporary international literature on China—the ‘concrete progress’ China has made is described in many other accounts, therefore he himself cannot be a liar. He then accuses the reviewers of hiding the truth about China—

342 Birger Christofferson, ‘Artur Lundkvists kikare’, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 20 Sept. 1955.

343 Ivar Harrie, ‘Artur Lundkvist har valt kommunismen: Reportaget från Maos Kina är en rentrosbekännelse’, *Expressen*, 20 Sept. 1955.

344 Quoted in Per-Anders Fogelström, ‘Resenären och de små mönsterrecensenterna’, *Folket i Bild*, 47 (1955), 4. Sven Öste himself wrote several politically coloured travel reports from Algeria and other parts of Africa and from Vietnam in the late fifties and sixties. He was described as ‘a Herbert Tingsten of the Third World’ (Olsson & Algulin, *Litteraturens historia i Sverige*, 520).

that it was they who were wearing the blinkers, ‘American blinkers’—and that they have discredited him and his account by claiming that he is a Communist: ‘But what does such conduct imply but McCarthyism on Swedish soil?’<sup>345</sup>

Taking this and the Third Standpoint debates together, one can of course understand the severity of tone given the apocalyptic atmosphere of the early fifties. However, as Frenander remarks, the immediate legacy was that no one could use Marxist terms in political or scholarly debate for the rest of the decade.<sup>346</sup> Again, it is noteworthy that these restrictions did not seem to apply to Olle Strandberg.

### An African model

Considering the strength of the Africanist discourse, of the racism towards Africans, and the persistent notion of Africa as the Dark Continent, the subject matter of the next section could be seen as various attempts to rewrite and change the narrative of Africa. The travel writers set out to establish new attitudes by questioning and undermining the idea of perpetual darkness.

Olle Strandberg thus plays with the concepts of darkness and light when describing a journey through Kenya and Tanganyika. It is the early fifties and the Mau Mau Rebellion is at its height in Kenya. Strandberg describes the war as confused, barbaric, cruel, and unpredictable, and he clearly supports the British against Mau Mau. In one passage he witnesses a British officer brutally manhandling a group of African prisoners:

I believe I know what he was thinking of; those shocking images we were shown in the police archive in Karatina. Burnt down huts with the distorted bodies of old women left behind, men with their feet and hands hacked off, infants cut in half with a single blow from a panga. ... Perhaps while on patrol he had come across a remote place, where a mau mau gang had celebrated their holy oath with their faces turned to Mount Kenya. Perhaps he viewed the paraphernalia of the ritual with horror: the cat that has been hanged, the bloodstained banana leaves, the slimy eyes of sheep...<sup>347</sup>

The debasing tropes abound: fear, insanity, violence, horror, unpredictability, rituals, burning bodies, infants cut in two. The fateful and intimidating nature of the chapter is confirmed by its title, ‘Dark clouds over Kenya’—a telling juxtaposition with

<sup>345</sup> Artur Lundkvist, ‘Kinaboken och kritiken’, *Morgon-Tidningen*, 24 Sept. 1955.

<sup>346</sup> Frenander, *Debattens vågor*, 88–112. He makes an interesting comparison with France and the UK, where similar sentiments were expressed in political and philosophical contexts (in terms of a ‘third force’) and where these debates never became as polarized as in Sweden, 139–141.

<sup>347</sup> Olle Strandberg, *Jambo!* Rabén & Sjögren/VI (Stockholm, 1954) p.135.



the title of the subsequent chapter, ‘Sunshine over Chagga land’. That chapter begins with a description of his journey from Kenya, ‘a landscape of hatred and threats’ to the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro. He and the photographer ended up staying for a full month, and

during that period, we realized that the future of Africa will not be determined by the bitter and treacherous war in the bamboo forests of Mount Kenya but by the mild and sensible tribes on the southern hillside of Kilimanjaro. There a dignified, independent African culture is growing; even the most ossified English imperialist and colonizer admires it, reluctantly. The Chagga people have in fact managed, by their own efforts, to create one of the most happy and harmonious societies in the world—close to the border of the harrowed and blood-drenched soil of Kenya.<sup>348</sup>

He continues with a history of the Chagga, which in his account is that German missionaries taught the people to grow coffee and that they eventually started a company, the Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union Ltd. Strandberg describes this process as having been on the initiative of only one person, ‘a thinker and a man of action—the Chagga equivalent of Albin Johansson’, who one day approached the council and suggested that the coffee farmers should collaborate in order to be able to compete with the British and German traders.<sup>349</sup> The cooperative is described as an immense economic success, and Strandberg is taken by the fact that ‘the Chagga people have not been affected by the recklessness of the newly rich, instead they continue their joint construction programme with an almost religious reliance on cooperation as a way of life and as the only possible alternative to colonial slavery’.<sup>350</sup> Their leader of the successful Chagga people is also presented: Thomas Marealle II, a man who also appears in Åke Sparring’s account of his travels in Africa, *Svart final*.

Sparring’s account covers his travels in Central and East Africa in 1957, three years after the publication of *Jambo!* He hears of King Marealle, or Chief Tom as he calls him, in Nairobi, where plantation owners speak of him with ‘indignation and fear’. Sparring says he cannot understand why the plantation owners in Kenya might fear and loathe this man, who does not even live in Kenya, but in Tanganyika, and who does not advocate national independence. Sparring finds this even more astonishing since rumours are spreading that a new Mau Mau Rebellion is flaring up on Mount Kenya. He continues: ‘Slowly I started to understand that the colonizers were right.

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid. 140.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. 146. Olle Strandberg also made a film about the Chagga people for the Swedish Cooperative Union.



Now I am wondering if they understand how right they are. For me, Chief Tom and his Chagga people represented [*the*] promising experience in Africa'.<sup>351</sup>

Sparring attributes the Chagga people's social and economic success to their coffee plantations and cooperative. The cooperative is described as a trade organization comprising 40,000 coffee farmers, but Sparring notes that it offers agricultural education as well. Rational farming is taught, which means that the coffee farmers can produce more than the white coffee farmers in the same area. The cooperative also houses a library, a publishing firm, printing works, and a newspaper office in their main building in Moshi, the capital of the Chagga people. This building is described as 'the biggest, most elegant and modern ... in Moshi'. Added to this, the cooperative has founded a school of economics and business administration, which is open to everyone, including European students, and a theatre is under construction.<sup>352</sup>

Following an interview with Marealle, who emphasizes that he wishes to cultivate good relations with the Europeans in Africa, Sparring declares that he has finally understood why the white plantation owners and other Europeans in Kenya fear Marealle and the Chagga people. Marealle has proven that 'the colonial mythology' is just that—mythology:

— You cannot grow coffee, the Europeans said, it is far too complicated for Negroes. That was forty years ago. Today, the Chagga people harvest just as much coffee per hectare as the Europeans, and the quality is in no way poorer.

— Negroes cannot organize, the same Europeans said. The Chagga people have organized the most efficient cooperative in East Africa. ...

— Niggers are uneducable, they still claim. The Chagga people founded a business school and made it multiracial. ...

Moreover, Chief Tom is extending his hand, offering cooperation. That is when the mask drops, has to drop. He has revealed, by deed, that the myth of the inferiority of the Negro is a lie. Actions speak louder than words. The situation in itself has brought the Europeans to face a choice.<sup>353</sup>

Both Strandberg and Sparring essentially pose the Mau Mau Rebellion and events in Kenya and Tanganyika against each other. Strandberg is perhaps the more vivid in his description of the two: the evil of the Mau Mau Rebellion is contrasted with the virtues of the Chagga people and King Marealle. Darkness and light, clouds and

351 Sparring, *Svart final*, 171.

352 Ibid. 176–7.

353 Ibid. 180.

sunlight, madness and sense, chaos and harmony, nature and culture are all invoked to symbolize each extreme.

Nicholas Thomas has written about the juxtaposing of inherently bad Others and good Others in colonial culture as a common trope, developing his argument in an analysis of the American movie *Dances with Wolves*. The film was commended for its ‘unprecedentedly’ sympathetic depiction of native Americans; Thomas, however, is critical of this interpretation, stating that the film is ‘strikingly unoriginal in its reiteration of primitivist tropes’. He demonstrates how the Lakota Sioux community is represented as the idealized Other (living in harmony with nature, noble, courageous), while all the negative attributes associated with savagery are placed elsewhere, with another group, the Pawnee. They are described as ‘lawless barbarians’ according to Thomas, and he adds that those who praised the movie must have overlooked this. To his mind, the ‘liberal texts’ deploy the very ideas they wish to subvert, and in the end reaffirm them instead.<sup>354</sup> I am less concerned with judging ambitions of subversion or critique, but Thomas points to an interesting relationship between idealization and debasement. Idealization seems to dominate the experience of the reader or spectator, which enforces the notion of how rare these instances must have been. While the Mau Mau Rebellion represents the darkness of Africa, an image the readers are already familiar with, the Chagga people and their cooperative represent the continent’s hitherto unknown future. The derogatory account of the one confirms what is already known; the idealizing account of the other reverses this.

Sparring is less expressive in his discussion, but he too constructs and enforces dichotomies while arguing against racial prejudice. He sets lies (myths) against truths, words against deeds, fear against hope. He is also less interested in the Mau Mau Rebellion as such; it is the Africans and the Europeans who constitute the main opposites in his account.

African cooperation is described as a constructive and productive form of socio-economic organization by both authors. Strandberg even draws a parallel to the history of KF, the Swedish Cooperative Union, by using the name of Albin Johansson as a positive marker.<sup>355</sup> Both Sparring and Strandberg published their travel re-

<sup>354</sup> Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, 178–9.

<sup>355</sup> Nils Thedin, *A Moral Commitment*, Rabén & Sjögren (Stockholm, 1988), 18–23 gives an account of Johansson's life. Johansson was chairman of the board and managing director of KF from 1924 to 1959. He had no formal higher education but had worked his way up. Apart from helping found several industries and making KF one of the leading companies in Sweden, he was known for his keen interest in international issues and his advocacy of free trade. When the International Cooperative Alliance, ICA, organized an international conference in Stockholm in 1957. To honour Johansson, who was about to retire, his vision of ‘a world without boundaries’ was chosen as the motto of the conference. An exhibition was organized too, to which artists, photographers, and architects were invited to elaborate on this idea.

ports in *VI*, the weekly magazine owned by KF, before they were published in book form by Rabén & Sjögren/*VI* or Vingförlaget.<sup>356</sup> Nils Thedin and Elly Jannes were editors of *VI* in this period. I would not go so far as to suggest that Sparring and Strandberg felt obliged to represent the cooperative movement in a favourable light—other travel writers such as Artur Lundkvist and Signe Höjer were doing so too—but either way success stories involving cooperation must have been welcome.

## Self-scrutiny II

Elly Jannes's travel books can in many instances be described as participating in an orientalist discourse. One of the tropes she uses is that of the timeless Orient, existing outside time and history, or simply lagging behind. She writes, for example, about the Middle East as a group of countries where the Stone Age and the technologically advanced present meets.<sup>357</sup> She also describes her stay with a group of nomads as a journey thousands of years back in time.<sup>358</sup>

The temporal axis she uses can also be turned into an evolutionist flight of stairs, where different societies are placed in a hierarchy. One example of this is her doubt that public life and government in Turkey can reach the level of that in Sweden.<sup>359</sup> Jannes also translates her stage theory into an age metaphor, in which non-Westerners are depicted as immature, undeveloped, unable to tap the resources of their countries (as in the case of Iran and the exploitation of the oil wells).<sup>360</sup> She talks about education and guiding the less fortunate. At the same time, as I have shown, Jannes insists that the West has a great deal to learn from the East.

Yet, the feature of Jannes's writings that interests me most is the way she relates to herself, constantly questioning her own position, doubting her own motives, arguing with herself, subjecting herself to relentless self-examination. In this sense, unlike the judgements she passes on the temporality of the places she visits, she does not claim an elevated position from which she can observe and comment. She wades right in.

One instance of this self-doubt is her awareness of her own presence and the meaning of that presence. She complains, wishing that she could make herself invi-

<sup>356</sup> Strandberg's first travel account, *Tigerland och söderhav*, was published in *Vecko-Journalen* as a series of articles and later anthologized by Wahlström & Widstrand in 1952. The second and third accounts were published in *VI* and later by Rabén & Sjögren/*VI* and Vingförlaget (owned by the Swedish Cooperative Union, Norstedts and LTs Förlag). Sparring's first travel account was published by Bonniers, and the other two were also published by *VI* and Rabén & Sjögren/*VI*.

<sup>357</sup> Jannes, *Österland*, 9.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.* 222.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.* 82.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.* 390.

sible, because wherever she arrives her presence creates a hostile atmosphere.<sup>361</sup> Her skin colour leads people to assume she is English and they think of her as cold and superior, and she clearly does not feel welcome in any setting.<sup>362</sup> Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan note that the Irish travel writer Devla Murphy also found herself ‘a reluctant memsahib’ when travelling through India: Murphy was plainly irritated by being referred to as a memsahib, but ‘[she] nonetheless recognizes that her bohemian demeanor cannot mask her Western privilege’.<sup>363</sup>

Jannes not only mentions how her Western appearance has an impact the very things she is supposed to study and depict—the people, the environment—but she also describes how her experiences during her travels created contradictory feelings and reactions. She narrates an entire chapter as an inner dialogue between her Western, spoilt and grumbling self (I) and someone she calls ‘She Within Me’. The chapter, which deals with a long bus trip between Iraq and Iran, begins:

So, now I know that I am not up to the mark, the She Within Me said. I flaunt my speech with democratic slogans without really meaning what I am saying. The Englishmen in the Near East, isolated in their own neighbourhoods, only socializing among themselves, exasperate me. And then, all I need is a bus for Teheran, crammed with Muslim priests and their veiled wives, and I am put out of spirits.<sup>364</sup>

‘I’ complains about the route the bus takes: that they never stop close to the archaeological sites that might have been of interest; that they always stay in expensive but dirty hotels with unwashed sheets; that her fellow passengers are strange and smelly; that the bus did not keep to the timetable. ‘She Within Me’ tries to argue that Jannes should not be so arrogant and that she is being difficult and rude all through the trip: she does not appreciate the care shown her by the other passengers, especially one family who always made sure that Jannes got the best room, the best seat, the best food. Instead of thanking them, she insults them by complaining about every little detail about the trip. ‘She Within Me’ suggests that the journey would have been so much more enjoyable and interesting if she had had the good sense to relax and mind her manners. Jannes ends the inner dialogue by saying that:

361 Jannes, *Solnedgångens land*, 46.

362 Jannes, *Österland*, 148.

363 Holland & Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, 115.

364 Jannes, *Österland*, 290.

The discomfort of the heat and being rattled around and the struggles with the yellow, worn sheets are slowly being sifted out of my memory. What is left is something that no flight and no luxurious car trip could have provided me, something that might had given me my share of community spirit, if it had not been for my European feeling of superiority, covering a rather pathetic, pitiful, and puny core.<sup>365</sup>

The narrative is dialogic and argumentative, constructing a dual representation of the journey, which in turn becomes a parody of the self-assured and inaccessible 'I' of the travel writing genre. Thompson interprets this, the fissured subjectivity of certain travel writers, as an expression of the influence of Freudian thought on modernist intellectuals. He mentions Graham Greene as a case in point.<sup>366</sup>

Comparing Jannes to Eric Lundqvist, she appears more radical than Lundqvist in the sense that she does not create a safe distance in time between 'Me' and 'She Within Me' (the equivalent of 'the man that I used to be')—Lundqvist's self-criticism and learning process are in effect fused into one ongoing process. I would not go so far as to claim that Jannes manages to tear down the barriers between the Western Self and the non-Western object/Other, but she gives them a good shake in some parts of her books.

Tingsten, too, describes how his position as a white, European man in South Africa influences him, whether he likes it or not. He describes his feelings as a 'kind of unreflective satisfaction of needless privilege, being let in everywhere, served with reverence everywhere'. He blames himself for 'cheap feelings of goodness' and draws the conclusion that 'In this way, personal vulgarity grows in the soil of the social system'.<sup>367</sup> Tingsten does not undermine his own position as a writer, as far as I understand it, but I do take his open self-criticism to be his way of describing how easily one adapts to a social setting, especially when it offers benefits, which in turn opens to some kind of understanding of white South Africans. His critique of South Africa is strengthened by this, however. He casts the first stone—at himself.

## Concluding remarks

The most significant feature of this period and its travel writers is the persistent presence of Sweden in what was written: Sweden the industrial nation, the welfare state, the rich and prosperous country ('the landed estate'), the representative of a modernizing process gone too far or gone wrong, the social-democratic model of history and change. I site this preoccupation within the context of Sweden's chang-

365 Ibid. 290–6.

366 Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 114.

367 Tingsten, *Problemet Sydafrika*, 28.

ing role in the international system, a change that not only took place at a political level, but apparently also on a different level, pointing to a cultural change in Sweden that accompanied a slew of political developments.

The second unusual feature is how the Second World War dominates the travel books as a common framework and moral compass. That the writers could set out to shock by comparing Western colonizers and soldiers to Nazis and Germans demonstrates how enduring the war would be as a moral touchstone—and not only in the fifties, as the construction of Nazism as the Other remains valid in Sweden to this day. I would go so far as to claim that the Second World War was just as significant as the Cold War, at least in the context of travel writing. And again, there is a reversal of values: the democratic Briton or Frenchman becomes a Nazi in the colonies, goodness turns to evil.

Compare the depictions of the veil in the work of the two primitivist travel writers, and in Åke Sparring's and Elly Jannes's work, it is noteworthy just how much men and women can differ in their perception of the world. I am well aware of that the sample is too small to draw firm conclusions, but the impression still remains. Jannes's subject position is so different to that of the male writers: she is more sensitive to the situation of other women, obviously being a woman herself. Her accounts of the veil, whether visible or invisible, signal a feminist standpoint that is very refreshing in comparison to the primitivist view, whether of the veil or of women full stop.



## 4. Youth, truth, and a new world, 1960–1966

Some have argued that the political radicalization of Sweden started in 1968, others that it began in 1965, while yet others claim that one could see the beginnings in 1960. As I indicated earlier, one can easily follow explicit internationalist and anti-colonial sentiments as far back as travel books go, but something did change around 1960: the Cold War axis of West–East lost its value as a frame for meaning and interpretation, and was consequently replaced by a new axis, one that divided the world into rich and poor, North and South. New global perspectives suggested that the affluence of the North depended on the exploitation of the South.<sup>368</sup> Johan Stenfeldt presents the change in worldview as a shift from a Cold War ‘trilemma’—with its three fixed points of Nazism–Fascism, Western–liberal democracy, and Communism—to a model that included a fourth point: imperialism.<sup>369</sup>

Concerning the divisions between rich and poor nations, there are several aspects to take into account, one of them their actual affluence. When Paul Hollander describes the radicalization of the US in the sixties, he emphasizes that “affluence”, and the associated sense of security’ were its prerequisites. He argues that affluence first became a problem in the late fifties, when the contrast between exaggerated private consumption among the upper and middle classes and meagre public expenditure, causing social injustice in North American society, met with a growing wave of criticism. Eventually, in the sixties, affluence became more of a spiritual problem: ‘being materially comfortable’ was associated with ‘self-centeredness, emotional torpor, and stagnation’.<sup>370</sup> For Hollander, the counterculture of the sixties was characterized by ‘romantic individualism’, the urge to take risks and live life to the full,

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368 Wiklund, ‘Kalla kriget som motbild’, 242.

369 Johan Stenfeldt, *Dystopiernas seger: Totalitarism som orienteringspunkt i efterkrigstidens svenska idédebatt*, Agering (Höör, 2013), 105, 132. Stenfeldt suggests that the first proponent of this expanded model was Artur Lundkvist in his contributions to the Third Standpoint debates.

370 Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Western intellectuals in search of the good society*, 4th edn, Transaction (New Brunswick, 1998 [1981]), 179; see also Jens Ljunggren, *Den uppskjutna vreden: Socialdemokratisk känslopolitik från 1880- till 1980-talet*, Nordic Academic Press (Lund, 2015), 211–12.



and ‘dashes of Marxist social criticism’, where political activism offered an ‘arena for excitement’.<sup>371</sup>

One soon gets the impression that Hollander finds this generation of middle-class students who had grown up knowing nothing but progress and security extremely spoilt, rejecting everything their parents had worked for. Kay Glans is much more nuanced in his discussion of Swedish political pilgrims in the sixties. He points to alienation and to a perpetual crisis of meaning in modern society, which pushed people into a search for alternatives outside the West.<sup>372</sup>

Sixties radicalization was a youth movement in a literal sense, but also in the sense that the idea of youthfulness became a necessary signifier of radicalism. To Hollander, the generation of 1968 and the American/Western counterculture of the period stood out for their veneration of youth, which led to a devaluation of ‘adult authority and competence’. This, in turn, led to the rejection even of those authority figures, college and university professors for instance, who wished to demonstrate their support for the upheavals and protests.<sup>373</sup>

Thinking back to cultural radicalism and primitivism, obviously this was not the first time youth signified radicalism and a revolutionary spirit. Henrik Berggren, for instance, has specifically investigated how the concept of youth, as a political and cultural concept, developed in the Swedish political discourse between 1900 and 1939. His theoretical framework is based on ideas coined by Reinhart Koselleck, that the tracing of the origins and development of certain key concepts necessarily discloses central values and practices in different historical contexts. Thus Berggren does not look at youth as a category or social group, but as an extensible and central concept. Several of his findings are useful when discussing the reasoning of the travelling intellectuals in the sixties.

Berggren demonstrates how youth became a catchword for a range of movements and organizations at the turn of the last century. Writers and intellectuals, such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Ellen Key, contributed both to the introduction and establishment of youth as a new social group, but also as representing the utopian vanguard. The rhetoric and the ideas concerning this new force and societal asset were not tied to a particular political school or organization; rather, the lure of the concept was a result of its adaptability and applicability. The professed vitality and drive of the younger generation proved useful to nationalist, conservative movements and to socialist and radical organizations alike. Many claimed to either represent the young or simply to be young.<sup>374</sup>

371 Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, 184, 188.

372 Kay Glans, ‘I österled—svenska politiska pilgrimer’, in Per Ahlmark et al. (eds.), *Vänsterns moraliska skuld*, Timbro (Stockholm, 1991), 34.

373 Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, 190.

374 Berggren, *Seklets ungdom*, 40–51.

The concept of youth remained important as an attribute in political and cultural contexts throughout the period 1900 to 1939. The meaning of the concept did change slightly, however. Berggren discerns a shift in the interwar years, when the modernist understanding of youth entered the scene. There was a stronger eschatological streak in the early, or romantic, version of the concept. The younger generation was supposed to lead humankind into a state of utopian bliss, to release us from a given, Hegelian, historical process. In the modernist ideology, the future had already begun, it was already here. The young were considered to be closer to this immediate future, by nature or instinct, and therefore more apt to handle this brave new world. Their mission was to interpret and to lead. This modernist standpoint and version soon became the credo of the Social Democratic Youth Organization or SSU. That was not in any way a given, since the modernist concept of youth was as extensible as the romantic.<sup>375</sup> This is an important point to consider in the context of political will and the travel books: the concept of youth is inclusive enough to instil positive sentiments even in those who do not share a leftist worldview or political position. It is an alluring, idealizing trope, suitable for all.

The veneration of youth also played a role in the renewed interest in travel books in the early sixties. Anders Ehnmark, Jan Myrdal, Sara Lidman, Sven Lindqvist, and Per Wästberg all represented a new generation of travel writers, supposedly younger, angrier, and sharper. The travelogue was transformed into a new and growing genre: the report.<sup>376</sup> Formerly acclaimed travel writers such as Eric Lundqvist and Signe Höjer suddenly received bad reviews or were simply ignored.<sup>377</sup> New requirements were introduced: the travel book, or travel report, had to be politically informed and offer a more general picture of the country visited. Facts concerning the social systems and structures were preferred to chatty accounts of the writer's personal experiences. The emphasis, as we have seen, was on whether the writer had been in close contact with 'the people' or not.<sup>378</sup> However, one should perhaps not overestimate this turn or break, it being one of the major points of this thesis. Elly Jannes

375 Ibid. 180–1 *et passim*.

376 Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*; Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*.

377 Sven Lindqvist worked as a literary critic at *Dagens Nyheter* in the fifties and wrote a very enthusiastic review of Signe Höjer's book about Travancore in 1955. Almost ten years later he criticized her and her husband's book about Assam for providing a false impression of the situation there. He refers back to his positive review of 1955 and explains that he was impressed by Höjer's work among people of Travancore; now, however, having been to India himself, he sees her accounts as too diplomatic and less truthful. Sven Lindqvist, *Indisk by*, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12 June 1955; id., 'Assam utslätat', *Dagens Nyheter* 19640512. Annika Berg writes about this in her dissertation *Den gränslösa hälsan: Signe och Axel Höjer, folkhälsan och expertisen*, Uppsala Studies in History of Ideas (Uppsala, 2009). Eric Lundqvist's book about India, *Moder India*, was described by one critic as adhering to an old and hackneyed formula (Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 36).

378 Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 37.

or Åke Sparring, for example, were never particularly chatty: they wrote about ordinary people and they discussed political and social issues. Even so, the objective of this particular chapter is to discuss the travel writing which has been described as seminal, or groundbreaking, or significant for the political radicalization that eventually resulted in the Vietnam movement.

## Writers and books

Anders Ehnmark, born in 1931, is a journalist, playwright, travel writer and essayist. He made a career for himself as a journalist and travel writer, but these days is better known as an essayist and playwright. Ehnmark was closely affiliated with the cultural radical student organization Verdandi and still makes the case for cultural radicalism. Two of his travel books, *Angola/Moçambique* and *Cuba Cubana*, are included in this study.

Sara Lidman, who died in 2004, is considered one of Sweden's finest novelists. She was born in 1923 in Missenträsk, a small village in the far north of Sweden. Her studies at Uppsala University were interrupted when she caught tuberculosis and instead she started to write. Her breakthrough came in 1953, when her debut novel, *Tjärdalen* [Valley of Tar], was published. In 1960, she left Sweden for South Africa and Johannesburg in order to write a travel book. A couple of months later, in 1961, she was arrested in her flat together with a South African friend, a former secretary of the ANC Youth League. They were both charged under the Immorality Act. The Swedish government managed to get Lidman out of South Africa before the trial, and as a consequence all charges against the friend, Peter Nthite, were dropped.<sup>379</sup> Her stay in South Africa resulted in two novels: *Jag och min son* [Me and My Son] (1961) and *Med fem diamanter* [With Five Diamonds] (1964). Her anti-colonial, internationalist, and socialist convictions earned her an almost iconic status within the Vietnam movement. Lidman has remained one of Vietnam's most vocal advocates in Sweden. I have chosen to concentrate on her travel book from North Vietnam, *Samtal i Hanoi* [Conversations in Hanoi], published in 1966.

Sven Lindqvist is another intellectual who made his debut in the fifties, but who became fully established as a major influence on the cultural and political agenda in the sixties. Born in Stockholm in 1932, he published his first collection of essays in 1957. Lindqvist was also working as a journalist at *Dagens Nyheter* in this period. In 1961 he and his wife, Cecilia Lindqvist, left Sweden for Asia. Sven Lindqvist had been offered the position as cultural attaché at the Swedish embassy in Beijing. He

<sup>379</sup> Birgitta Holm, *Sara Lidman—i liv och text*, Albert Bonniers (Stockholm, 1998), 213, 236; Sellström, *Sweden and the National Liberation*, 152–3.

was assigned to writing political reports on the situation in China, and these reports inspired him to write newspaper reports that were published in *Dagens Nyheter* and *The Guardian*. The reports were later collected in a travel book, *Kina inifrån* (*China in Crisis*), published in 1963, reaching an international audience. Cecilia and Sven Lindqvist continued to travel in Asia and *Asiatisk erfarenhet* [Asian Experience], a report from India, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Japan, was published in 1964.<sup>380</sup> Cecilia's contribution to their publications—the photographs—added to the documentary style. As Annika Olsson says, it would be interesting to explore the relationship between Sven's texts and Cecilia's illustrations, comparing its a similar situation in the case of Jan Myrdal and his wife Gun Kessle, also included in my study. Olsson notes that Cecilia Lindqvist's own travel report from South America, *Resa med Aron* [Travel with Aron], constitutes a shadow narrative of her husband's reports from the same period and continent: while Sven ponders the big issues and the political and social problems facing South America, Cecilia describes the effort and the beauty of travelling with a small child.<sup>381</sup> However, their travel reports from South America were published in the seventies, and therefore fall outside the framework of this dissertation.

Sven Lindqvist still occupies the particular position in the Swedish intelligentsia that he carved for himself in the fifties and sixties, combining personal confessions with abstract, political reasoning in travel books, articles, and essays. He has gained international recognition, especially for his book *Exterminate All the Brutes*, partly based on *Heart of Darkness*, while his travel book *Desert Divers* was short-listed for the Thomas Cook Prize. Cecilia Lindqvist continued to study Chinese and went on to become a renowned sinologist.

Jan Myrdal was born into social-democratic aristocracy in 1927. His father, the internationally renowned economist Gunnar Myrdal, and his mother, the feminist, social politician, peace advocate, and diplomat Alva Myrdal, both belonged to the inner circle of the party. Jan Myrdal tried his luck in a very different field and published two novels in the fifties, neither of them particularly well received. At the end of the fifties he and his partner Gun Kessle travelled in central and southern Asia, mainly in Afghanistan and India. The journey resulted in one travel book, *Kultururs korsväg* [Crossroads of Cultures] (later renamed *Resa i Afghanistan* [Travels in Afghanistan]) published in 1960. In the autumn of 1962, having revisited India and travelled through Burma, Myrdal and Kessle spent a month in a Chinese village in order to chart the grass-roots consequences of the Chinese Revolution. Their travel report, *Rapport från en kinesisk by* (*Report from a Chinese Village*), was publis-

380 Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 151

381 Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 141–2.

hed in 1963 and it was immediately translated into several languages. The third travel book included in my study is a report from Turkmenistan published in 1966, *Turkmenistan: En revolutions övergångsår* [Turkmenistan: Transitional Years of a Revolution].

Per Wästberg was born in Stockholm in 1933 and is one of the most prominent writers in Sweden; he is also a member of the Swedish Academy as of 1997. He published his first book in 1949 and was considered an infant prodigy among Swedish literati. Having received a BA in comparative literature from Harvard University in 1955, he applied for a Rotary scholarship in order for him and his wife to go to Southern Rhodesia and study African literature at the university in Salisbury. The open and often crude racism they encountered among their hosts, businessmen, and farmers in Southern Rhodesia led to a series of articles published in Swedish dailies. These articles came to the knowledge of the Rhodesian authorities, who consequently deported the couple. Olsson pointedly describes Wästberg as the ‘Rotary ambassador from hell’.<sup>382</sup> The writer and his wife went to South Africa instead, and again his articles, not to mention the couple’s close affiliation with the ANC, attracted the attention of the regime and they had to leave the country. Two accounts of their stay in Southern Africa were published in 1960: *Förbjudet område* [Entry Prohibited] and *På svarta listan* [On the Black List]. They were translated into nine languages and have sold about one million copies. Wästberg also co-wrote a travel book about Angola and Mozambique with Anders Ehnmark in 1962.

### Marxists and liberals

Of these five travel writers, Jan Myrdal, Sven Lindqvist, and Sara Lidman hold an exceptional position in Sweden’s cultural, literary, and political history, according to Jens Ljunggren. They became the high priests and icons of the Left in the sixties and early seventies.<sup>383</sup> Per Wästberg, on the other hand, was highly influential in the early sixties a campaigner against apartheid, but his role changed when the intellectual and political climate hardened and Marxist, and later Leninist and Maoist, theories became paradigmatic. I would not suggest that Wästberg did not continue to influence Swedish debate and opinion regarding South Africa and the ANC, but it was not as a travel writer. On the whole, historiography and the mainstream opinion that the protests of 1968 were a leftist phenomenon has obscured the fact that liberal youth and student organizations were an important pressure group concerned with Swedish development aid and other global issues in the late fifties and especi-

<sup>382</sup> Ibid. 97.

<sup>383</sup> Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella*, 27.

ally in the early sixties. Kjell Östberg, who emphasizes the significance of the nuclear disarmament movement of the late fifties and early sixties as a forerunner to the Vietnam movement, points out that certain political youth organizations lost ground over the issue of a Swedish disarmament, especially LUF, the Liberal Youth of Sweden, since the Liberal Party was in favour of constructing a Swedish atomic bomb, as was the SSU, the Social Democratic Youth League. They were unable to retain leadership of disarmament movement, which in turn was organized as a campaign and part of an international network against all nuclear weapons, not only the theoretical Swedish ones.<sup>384</sup>

In order to analyse the writings of the entire group, leftists and liberals alike, one term to consider is hypermodernism, as used by Erik Tängerstad when investigating the winding journey of the concept of the Third World. Tängerstad discusses how European left-wing and anti-colonial intellectuals, no matter how critical they were of imperialism and the global order, never ever questioned or criticized the modernist paradigm as a part of a European or Western imperialist worldview in the early sixties. On the contrary, the intellectuals suggested that the modernist project in its entirety would finally be implemented by the new postcolonial states that were springing up in the wake of liberation.<sup>385</sup>

In the following I will explore the ways in which modernist narratives informed the travel writing by this particular set of authors. Admittedly, it is not easy to disentangle all the sub-narratives and tropes that are part of a dominant understanding of modernity, because, as we will see, ideas of progress, development, modernity, and the future permeated the travelogues of this group. This chapter follows the same outline as the two previous ones. The first section is on gender and sexuality; the second revolves around the concept of youth as a normative marker, an indication of direction and of modernizing potential; and the last concerns different rhetorical strategies in the formation of anti-colonial common ground, which inevitably tends to latch on to a colonial discourse, yet carries its own political will.

## Gender/sexuality

The sixties saw a growing interest in women's issues in Sweden that later bloomed into second-wave feminism, the 'new' women's movement of the late sixties and early seventies. Several scholars, among them Lena Lennerhed and Kjell Östberg, underscore the significance of the essay 'Kvinnans villkorliga frigivning' [The Pa-

384 Östberg, *I takt med tiden*, 212.

385 Erik Tängerstad, "'The Third World' as an Element in the Collective Construction of a Postcolonial European Identity", in Bo Stråth (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, PIE Lang (Bruxelles, 2000), 157–93.

role of Women] by the journalist Eva Moberg and published in the anthology *Unga liberaler* [Young Liberals] in 1961. A year later Kristina Ahlmark Michanek published her book on sexuality and gender, *Jungfrutro och dubbelmoral* [Virginal Faith and Double Standards], in which she argued the case for free love. The same year, 1962, 'Kvinnans villkorliga frigivning' was republished, this time with other essays by Moberg in an anthology with the ironic title *Kvinnor och människor* [Women and Humans]. These texts, stemming from a liberal tradition (Berggren and Trägårdh point out that Social Democrats and the labour movement had for some time considered feminism 'a distraction', a bourgeois idea that stole the thunder of from the class issue),<sup>386</sup> sparked a heated debate about the role of women, especially married women in the home and the workplace. Another significant contributor was the radical feminist Barbro Backberger, the future co-founder of Grupp 8, who published a critical article on the traditional nuclear family in *Dagens Nyheter* in 1965 that provoked several and inspired in equal measure.<sup>387</sup>

Women might have started to enter the labour market in the early sixties, but they were still expected to remain the main caregivers in the home, and responsibility for child-rearing and childcare rested solely with them. The ideology of sacred motherhood and the mission to create a comfortable home, what gender historians dealing with the Victorian era would call the ideology of the Angel of the House, was still strong. In somewhat simplified terms, the feminists' objective was the emancipation of women from these social, economic, and cultural expectations that tied them to the home and, by extension, the children. Emancipation was not discussed in terms of revolution, however; not yet. In the early sixties, feminism was mainly a liberal project, but in the course of the radicalization and renewed interest in Marxism (the New Left) and later Maoism, feminists became more apt to interpret gender inequality as a logical consequence of capitalist society. Equality was to be reached through a complete upturning of society, not by adding legislation, information, and reforming policies to an existing societal structure, as was suggested earlier by liberal feminists. This is the beginning of the new women's movement.<sup>388</sup>

Given that the writers in question are often hailed as the harbingers of the radicalization of the intellectual and political climate of Sweden, did they somehow participate in this radicalization too? And, as a general question, how do gender relations play out in the travel books? Looking back at the previous two chapters, there are two things to be noted: the role and whereabouts of women are significant

386 Berggren & Trägårdh, *Är svensken människa?* 266.

387 Ibid. 263; Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta*, 99, 112–17; Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 47; Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 232; Kjell Östberg, *1968—när allt var i rörelse*, Prisma (Stockholm, 2002), 51.

388 Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 233–4.



for travel writers when they evaluate the culture or country they write about, and yes, there seems to exist certain discrepancies between women and men writers, although my material is somewhat too thin to make any grander statements on the issue.

Another theme to develop in the case of gender and sexuality in the travel writing by this particular group is the concern with male homosexuality. Jens Ljunggren has pointed out how the climate among certain intellectuals in the early sixties was markedly masculinist and heteronormative—he mentions Jan Myrdal along with Göran Therborn. This rhetoric seems to be central as a new role for the intellectual was formulated in the sixties.<sup>389</sup>

### Liberation of our women

Jan Myrdal and Gun Kessle visited Afghanistan at the end of the fifties and the resultant book was published in 1960, a year before Eva Moberg's article. I find it interesting that Myrdal's opinions in some, but not all, ways coincide with Moberg's. In a long disquisition on the historical and present situation of women in Afghanistan, he draws comparisons with the West and states 'In our countries women's emancipation became a pretence and a deception. Only a handful of women have entered the labour market and become humans'. He continues: 'She has not become more free. She has become more restricted. Most of our [*sic*] women are kept (and stay of their own accord) on the level of the reproducing animal, the inefficient cleaning device, and the reluctant provider of emotions and pleasure.' And further on: 'She never became a human. Only a housewife, despite all suffrage. Around this warped state of affairs an entire ideology has been built. Home, security, wellbeing.'<sup>390</sup> There are of course many things that could be said about Myrdal's attitude towards Western women—the debasing tropes abound (animals kept for reproduction, indeed)—but for now it suffices to say that Myrdal counterposes this failed emancipatory project in the West with his observations and expectations in Afghanistan. He assures the reader that things look quite different there:

In Afghanistan, however, the woman will be emancipated through a necessary change from a contributing peasant woman to a contributing worker. Afghanistan is too poor to be able to keep unproductive elements. It has no colonies, no underdeveloped regions it can exploit for its own leisure. Their emancipation, however, will be more crucial. Their opportunities greater. Where we have locked ourselves into the narrow circles of false prosperity, they are pushed forward by hard and bitter necessity towards true freedom.<sup>391</sup>

389 Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella*, 75–7.

390 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 283–4.

391 *Ibid.* 284.



There are two concepts I would like to elaborate on here. The first is poverty, often set in opposition to the ‘false prosperity’ and affluence of the West/North, of Sweden; the second is the figure of the peasant woman.

Poverty seems to represent the core of the *Zivilisationskritik* that one finds in all Myrdal’s travel books, a phenomenon that instigates change and, at the same time, ensures that this very change will remain pure and good and uncorrupted. Myrdal shares this stance with many, of course, as the idea of poverty as protection against corruption is a significant part of Swedish, modern culture, and self-understanding, as demonstrated by Lars Trägårdh and Henrik Berggren. They have traced and investigated what they consider the roots and outlines of a modern Swedish national identity. In order to pinpoint this identity, they have connected it to a variety of writers and intellectuals, who in different ways have all contributed to ‘Swedishness’ in general, and to the deeper ideological foundations of the Swedish welfare system in particular, the combination of individualism and collectivism, independence and social solidarity, that makes foreign observers curious. These ideas are presented as rooted in the crisis caused by the loss of Sweden’s territories in Finland to Russia in 1809 during the Napoleonic Wars, the decisive end to the Swedish Empire and Sweden’s position as a European great power, for, as the authors state, ‘loss and political incertitude may however create favourable conditions for philosophers and poets’.<sup>392</sup>

Two of those philosophers and poets were Erik Gustaf Geijer, to whom I will return later, and Carl Jonas Love Almqvist, both of whom argued for change and liberal reform. They founded their arguments on an inverted narrative of Swedish greatness based on climatology—Montesquieu’s ideas that connected each and every climate with the general and shared character of the people living there. The harsh winters and short summers of the north were thought conducive to an impoverished yet strong and industrious people. Sweden, of course, being a northern country, therefore produced independent, self-sufficient people, whose freedom and independence was based on the simple fact that they had nothing to lose: no one could force them to do anything by threatening to take or destroy their property. Freedom was hence directly related to poverty. The loss of Sweden’s status as a great power was ameliorated by this inversion of values, by which poverty, modesty, and independence became virtues as lofty as heroism. Those who represented this core of supposedly Swedish values were the peasants, a class of politically and economically independent farmers, who, in line with old customs, constituted a separate and equal Estate in Parliament. The history of the Swedes—the common people, whether the Vikings of the distant past or the free peasants of the present, as opposed to the

392 Berggren & Trägårdh, *Är svensken människa?* 80.

upper classes or the elite—became a cornucopia from which Almqvist and Geijer could pick and choose motives and inspiration in order to flatter, and thereby try to convince, their contemporaries.<sup>393</sup>

Geijer used these narratives in his discussion of the Swedish proficiency in democracy courtesy of the class of free peasants; Almqvist, to develop his central notion of love and relationships, individualism, partly inspired by Rousseau, but mainly by the idea of a Swedish, historically founded *Sonderweg* in marriage and equality. Here we meet the figure of the strong and self-sufficient peasant wife, the second thread of interest in the Myrdal passage quoted earlier.

In arguing for liberal reform and change in Sweden, Almqvist's main focus was the family and the relationship between men and women. His objective was to attack the bourgeois family structure, with its separate roles for wife and husband and the wife was fully dependent of her husband, which was slowly becoming the norm in Sweden in this period, the first half of the nineteenth century. Almqvist followed Rousseau to the extent that he believed authentic relationships cannot be based on dependence, and in his insistence that true love demands two independent individuals, each fending for themselves; however, he not include Rousseau's emphasis on the complementarity of the sexes, where the woman was to bring certain values to the marriage and the home—love, warmth, tenderness. The ideal marriage to Almqvist's mind was one of two socially androgynous people, each financially independent and self-sufficient; under those circumstances the relationship would work and the couple's feelings would remain true. He particularly stressed women's right and obligation to contribute to the economy and provide for themselves. And Almqvist used peasant culture to give his argument thrust, demonstrating in his stories of the lives of the Swedish peasantry how people in the countryside had always had to live according to this: wives had worked alongside their husbands and had their own areas of responsibility. Conditions—poverty and necessity—created a situation where no one could be spared to complement any supposed male values. Again, radical ideas were bolstered by invoking the past and one particular social class, who were chosen to represent true Swedishness, the heart of the Swedish nation.<sup>394</sup>

Given this, it is perhaps not surprising to see that the antithesis or counter-image of the unsuccessfully emancipated Swedish housewife is not only the future woman of Afghanistan, according to Jan Myrdal, but also her own nominal predecessors: 'From having been the mistress of peasant society, the woman has changed into a housewife in a two-room apartment. She has not become freer. She has become more restrained.'<sup>395</sup> A few lines further on, he repeats himself: 'From having been a

393 Ibid. 79–82, 85–91, 93, 107.

394 Ibid. 109–125, 138–9.

395 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 283.

contributing and productive peasant wife with an active and open life, the woman has become a drone of suburban flats.<sup>396</sup> Again, the force of this argument is found in a glorious past, however poor and harsh—a subject to which I will return when discussing ‘primitive modernity’.

Per Wästberg describes English housewives in South Africa in a similar vein, emphasizing the unworldly and disconnected character of their lives:

Drinks on the porch, playing the stock exchange for fun and profit, and off to tennis for yet another day of leisure—a piece of English South Africa, and helplessness hides behind the comfort. The women seemed to spend their lives in mothballs, protecting themselves from the vermin of the surrounding world and from their own impulses. Fruitcakes and design journals and reflecting on what kind of family the son’s girlfriend came from.<sup>397</sup>

Yet this kind of description is very rare in Wästberg’s writing, and has more to do with his view of the former elite, the British, than of a thought-through stance on feminism and women’s liberation. On the contrary, home for Wästberg is a beacon of hope and love, especially in *På svarta listan*, the travel report from South Africa. He describes many South African families and homes in positive terms, but especially African households. By his account, home is not a trap for anyone; if anything, it represents everything that is good, if constantly under threat from the racist regime. One home that the writer and his wife repeatedly return to is that of their friends Willie and Liza Kosange and their children.

When Willie drives through the township, Wästberg gets slightly depressed, as they pass thousands of drab houses, all identical. He also picks up on the instability and impermanence of the area: people never know how long they can live there, since they are not allowed to own land or even their house, and if they lose their job, they lose the right to live there altogether. But the drabness of the township is then set against the conviviality of Kosange’s home: ‘We came straight into a small living room with beds along two walls, but there was a rug on the floor, a radio and a record player, and the chairs were pale as if made from Karelian birch tree. ... I could look around this room and understand that it was a home worth living in. It was not because of any affluence but of the people who had made it theirs.’<sup>398</sup>

It is also to the Kosanges’ home that Per and Anna-Lena Wästberg choose to go on their last night in South Africa, when the regime is about to deport them as undesirables. They take a taxi to the township, where they change to an African taxi,

396 Ibid. 284.

397 Per Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, Wahlström & Widstrand (Stockholm, 1960), 41.

398 Ibid. 25–26.

‘and hid in each corner. It was unnecessary to take any risks the last evening’.<sup>399</sup> It grows late and they need to leave, something the writer regrets: ‘It felt oddly enough like going into exile, a small and insignificant exile. There were people in South Africa we would forever miss, and life would feel smaller if we were not allowed to meet them again.’ He then adds: ‘But before it became too late, before everything turned to colliding numbers, emotions and abstractions, we had wished to look in on a home, the woman in the kitchen, the children on the floor, the man with his newspaper—quite similar among blacks and whites.’<sup>400</sup>

The idealization of the home and traditional family life as a counter-image and refuge cannot be underestimated in Wästberg’s account of South Africa, but it is also notable that he never gets to a point where he questions the role of African women as mothers, wives, and homemakers. This is further underscored throughout the book by his descriptions of women, and especially African women, as motherly or maternal, regardless of whether they are mothers or not. Hence Lilian Ngoyi, the first woman to hold a leading position in the ANC—‘She was 46 years old and looked like 30, her face motherly and naughty at the same time’—or a woman he meets in Windermere, a slum outside Cape Town, who he describes as ‘wide’ and ‘motherly.’<sup>401</sup>

Wästberg’s objective is plainly to engage the reader and to plead the cause of the ANC and other resistance movements in Southern Africa, and one of his strategies is to depict Africans, the people worthy of support, as being as familiar as possible, stressing the normalcy of their lives in the slums and townships. He takes the reader inside the houses and shanties, and demonstrates that ‘their’ lives, as long as they can shut out the workings of the regime and the police, are as normal as ‘ours’. And part of the normalcy is a traditional family structure—‘the woman in the kitchen, the children on the floor, the man with his newspaper.’

### The veil, again

Turning to Afghan women and their hoped-for liberation, it is noteworthy that the issue of the veil is still of great significance, making it one of the most consistent themes in this study. Jan Myrdal writes extensively on the issue, clearly in order to place the phenomenon within a context that can explain the veil’s existence. This is needed, he writes, since ‘sheikh romances and dreams of the harem’ prevent Westerners from understanding the function and meaning of the veil. Throughout the book he discusses the veil, the burqa, and purdah in the past tense, underlining for

399 Ibid. 300–302.

400 Ibid. 304.

401 Ibid. 69, 279.

the reader that this is a thing of the past. Myrdal also insists that it is an urban tradition entirely, only affecting women in the major cities and among the elite: ‘The women of the farmers were not veiled. ... Not even the strictest form of religiosity can put a woman in a burqa as long as she has to work. One cannot harvest while wearing a tent.’ This is a clue to the reason why the women in the cities are veiled and it is not because of Islam, but for the same reason, says Myrdal, for Swedish men to be reluctant to allow their wives to find a job outside the home, and that is prestige. Women in purdah or a burqa are a sign of wealth and power, a means by which a husband can demonstrate that he is wealthy enough to forgo the labour of his wife. He does not mince his words when he describes the burqa as being anything but a fad or a fashion: ‘It was an attitude towards life. The unworthiness of woman. Her incapacity to work. Her absence of humanity. But we should not be exultant. Not long ago our upper-class ladies wore wire cages around their nether regions’.<sup>402</sup>

Myrdal continues by describing how the forced abolishment of purdah in the thirties led to civil war, placing the blame on an unholy alliance between mullahs and British agents, but he insists that the new reform, introduced in 1959, is different. Not necessarily because politicians have acted differently this time, but because the reform is less a result of conscious policy and more ‘direct results of the country’s focus on development and industrialization’: put simply, it was too expensive to keep half the population outside the labour market.<sup>403</sup> Myrdal clearly adheres to a Marxist understanding here, with changes in the base leading to changes in the superstructure. Afghanistan’s burgeoning economy and incipient industrialization will decide its cultural and social structures, in this case the role of women in society, just like Engels explained the subordination of women in general as resulting from the introduction of property in a distant past. In this respect, Myrdal foreshadows the more revolutionary, and less liberal, women’s movement normally associated with the end of sixties. And yet he writes in terms of ‘our’ women and ‘their’ women, unable to see how one-dimensional his own perspective is.

In Chapter 2, I discussed how Eric Lundqvist’s and Artur Lundkvist’s primitivist outlook influenced their understanding of veiled women and their counterparts, unveiled women—two different figures who clearly stood for far more than themselves, the one representing access and progress, the other seclusion and backwardness. Myrdal, like Sven Lindqvist, shares the same train of thought. He admits that even though the women in the Afghan villages, the wives and sisters of farmers, do not wear burqas since they are needed as workers, they still hide their faces and look away when he arrives.<sup>404</sup>

402 Myrdal, *Kultureres korskäg*, 277–8.

403 Ibid. 278–80, quote at 279.

404 Ibid. 277–80, quote at 277.

The women and girls who hide from the writer or look away are compared to other Afghan women, for instance when Myrdal and his partner visit Nuristan Province in the east of the country, which he describes as being entirely different: ‘Everything is different here. Here wood is being carved. Here you can see strawberry-blond Viking types sitting on carved chairs with dragon-like ornaments. The culture and language, traditions, history, and up until recently also religion make Nuristan differ from the rest of the country.’<sup>405</sup> And even though Nuristan became Islamic in the end of the nineteenth century, the writer can still see traces of the old, less differentiated culture, where men were fighters and warriors and women work and worshipped the land, and ‘Therefore the women had greater power. The position of women in society, in the village community, created a moral that in many ways was different from the Islamic.’ This moral standpoint included, and here Myrdal quotes a British agent who lived in the area in 1889, that married women were able to take lovers. There had been a change after the conversion to Islam, though, as Myrdal points out, since the women in the villages were less forward in relation to foreigners than he expected, but ‘they still look at you with a sparkle in their eyes. They have a reputation for beauty and the beauty is a function of freedom. In a society where the woman has been free, she moves differently, her eyes speak a different language.’<sup>406</sup>

Another occasion when Myrdal encounters women who do not shy away from him is when he and Kessle are invited to share a meal by a group of Kuchis, Pashtun nomads, in their tents. Myrdal describes how beautifully dressed the nomad women are, in red-and-black gowns with silver embroidery, and he adds: ‘The women are bold. Far bolder than their stationary sisters in the white villages built from clay. They wear their black chadri over the head, but no chadri hides the face. Their features are sharp and beautiful.’<sup>407</sup> Myrdal continues: ‘The nomadic women are freer than their sisters. Since more is demanded of them and their lives are harder. ... They can also receive strangers as guests. The nomadic woman will not be suspected of infidelity the moment she speaks to a stranger, as is the case for the village woman.’ He also makes much of how nomad culture has a different understanding of love, compared to the people who live in the villages: ‘Here love can already be/is still a relationship between people, and not one between properties or between master and love slave.’<sup>408</sup>

405 Ibid. 202.

406 Ibid. 203–204.

407 Ibid. 207. Jan Myrdal, *Turkmenistan*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 1965), 53, is also taken with the proud nomadic Turkmens: ‘A people of riding, fighting men and women—dressed in red’. Note the marked preference for red clothes.

408 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 208.

There are several threads that bear discussion in these representations of women. One is the significance of the gaze: not only the need of the writer to be able to see the faces of women, but also to be seen and validated by those women he meets, which of course can be related to the exact same insistence of Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist, as discussed earlier. Another is the description of love in nomadic societies, which resonates well with how love is described within what Berggren and Trägårdh have named the Swedish ideology: the ideal relationship of man and woman as equals. The last point I would like to make is the play of time that Myrdal suggests in his construction ‘can already be/is still’, which touches on the timelessness that characterizes tribal, or primitive and nomadic, life. It is evidently thought a remnant of the past, ‘still’, yet it seems to point forward to the future, ‘already’. Myrdal poignantly describes the nomadic tribes as being in ‘the vanguard of progress’,<sup>409</sup> unravelling a time-knot in which (our) past and (their) present point to a true, modern future, untarnished by a bourgeois, corrupt civilization.

Something similar is present in following quote from Sven Lindqvist’s travel account from India, in which the accessibility of women indicates more than just the character of gender relations among certain peoples, and where perceptions of the past are considered the future:

The step into the present day seems to be the easiest to take for certain marginalized groups in Hindu society. The Sikhs can be found in each and every situation where modern ideas and vigour are necessary, and the audacity of their women astounds India. And there is a fund of vitality intact among the primitive tribes, which one day will be beneficial to India: the women have still not covered their breasts, they laugh and tease while they carry heavy burdens along the roads, hips swaying and heads steady.<sup>410</sup>

Margareta Petersson remarks that Lindqvist’s statement can be connected to Artur Lundkvist’s work.<sup>411</sup> I agree, as I find it hard to understand in what sense flirting and laughing ‘primitive’ women with swaying hips and bare breasts might be thought signifiers of a modernizing potential (pointing ahead in a time-knot), unless you place it in the context of primitivism and a cross-reading of Marx and Freud, where true liberation has to encompass not only the economic and social conditions of the people, but also the emotions, with a focus on sexuality.

Both Myrdal and Lindqvist look to the women in order to assess the modernizing potential of certain groups, observing the degree to which women cover their bodies

409 Ibid. 212.

410 Sven Lindqvist & Cecilia Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 1964), 184.

411 Petersson, *Indien i svenska resebildningar*, 265.



or look at the writers, or even flirt and tease. But why women? Meyda Yegenoglu, after all, demonstrates that the Western understanding of the Orient depended on access to Oriental women, which is to say that the Other women and the Other culture were (are?) wholly interconnected in the Westerners' eyes. To reach beyond the veil is to reach into the core of the Other, since the Other woman is the ultimate Other in a colonial discourse.<sup>412</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis's point that 'Women are often construed as the cultural symbols of the collectivity' supports this observation.<sup>413</sup>

### Non-men

In *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, Sven Lindqvist explains that what he considers a prudish Indian culture has tried to obliterate a less prudish past by reinterpreting and reinventing artistic expressions such as dance or art. He describes how Indian classical dance, developed from rituals in the temples, once was characterized by different sexual or erotic themes, but 'the increasingly sexual prudishness in Hinduism degenerated the art'. In order to reinstate the status of dance in India, he claims, it has developed into a disciplined and stylized version where the sexual elements have been reinterpreted as allegories. He likens the performance by the highly accomplished dancer Krishnaveni to yoga, and he appreciates her art, but laments at the same time that 'dance as an expression of sensual freedom seems to be forever lost in India'.<sup>414</sup> When Ashis Nandy discusses British colonial ideology in India, he touches upon a parallel standpoint: the British imperialist argument of the 'civilizing mission' was less credible in India, which was so evidently an old and venerable civilization, and that led to two inconsistent rhetorical strategies. The first was to claim that there was a 'clear disjunction between India's past and its present. The civilized India was in the bygone past', and Nandy adds that the India of the present 'was a senile, decrepit version of her once-youthful creative self'. The second strategy was to put the blame not at the feet of colonial rule, but on 'aspects of traditional Indian culture'.<sup>415</sup> Lindqvist mirrors this ideology in as much as he points to a glorious past, where dancing in Hindu temples developed into a fine art, and yet by his account it is Hinduism itself that has led to the degeneration of the same art form. And when there is an interest in restoring themselves to some former glory, the Indians fail, obviously having interpreted their past differently to Sven Lindqvist.

412 Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 39–40, 43.

413 Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 67.

414 Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, 154–6.

415 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and recovery of self under colonialism*, 2nd edn, OUP (New Delhi, 2009 [1983]), 17.



According to Lindqvist, this desire for ‘purification’ even stretches back into the past, but he points out that ‘the greatest pieces of art in India speaks a frighteningly obvious language’, being traces of ‘a past greatness of the senses’.<sup>416</sup> Lindqvist mentions several examples, but the two most spectacular and well preserved are the ‘places of erotic worship’, Khajuraho and Konark, two former temples richly, if not abundantly, adorned with sculptures of people making love. He describes these sculptures in great detail, clearly fascinated by the joy and love expressed by the artists. There seems to be a difference between the two temples, however: the faces of the sculpted lovers in Khajuraho are characterized by ‘grim determination’ and he notes that there are instances of ‘shyness and exposure’ where women ‘look through their fingers or let the veil fall in a manner that covers everything but breasts and sex’. Konark, on the other hand, ‘disdains such coquetry, everything happens in archaic openness there’, and he continues that ‘There is nothing furtive in this world of the sexes. The sun and the stars surround it, love is the natural foundation of a cosmic awareness.’<sup>417</sup> This can be read not only as yet another sexualized trope, with India the eroticized Other, reminding the reader of the sexual affluence of the East/the Orient, but also as a situation characterized by insubstantialization. David Spurr discusses this trope as a state of dissolution, marking the Other space as otherworldly, a fantasy, not quite real, and ultimately outside time.<sup>418</sup>

Having described Konark’s erotic scenes in great and appreciative detail (no veils there, unlike Khajuraho), he then laments that India was overlooked during the Renaissance and the neoclassical period, when ‘Nordic Hellenists’ travelled to Rome to be ‘dazzled’ by the beauty of the naked male body. He wished that they had travelled further: ‘In India they would have found the love between man and woman expressed with the same proud innocence as the creations of the Greek worship of the young man. In Konark they would have experienced a sensuality without wry homoerotic charge.’<sup>419</sup>

Since I have decided to focus on travel accounts from what is considered the Third World, I have not included Sven Lindqvist’s *Hemmaresan* from the late fifties, which is an account of his travels in Greece. Yet, there are a few instances in *Hemmaresan* that reflect this aversion towards male homosexuality: ‘The Greeks have other tra-

416 Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, 156–7.

417 Ibid. 157. It is not particularly surprising that Artur Lundkvist is similarly enthusiastic about visiting Konarak: ‘Konarak represents the unknown, lost India, enigmatically alluring. The India of brave attempts, of staggering thrusts, that also exists or has existed among all the oppressive conventions. But can one be brave enough to consider Konarak a promising symbol of the future?’ (quoted in Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 139). Eric Lundqvist is also very positive when describing his visit to Konarak (233).

418 Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 141–55, esp. 152–3.

419 Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, 159.

ditions. Is that the reason why we hold back and do not know them? The men dance as couples, pushing their hips towards each other and sliding lovingly close. This surrounds young Greek men as a faint revolting scent even in completely normal everyday settings. It is disaffecting.<sup>420</sup> Lindqvist continues: ‘Greek gay culture had a disgusting relationship with the naked human body, which characterizes all the sculptures you can see in Athens—apart from Zeus-Poseidon, who is grown up and proper.’<sup>421</sup>

These expressions of heteronormativity—well, homophobia—mirror the new masculinist role for (male) intellectuals as described by Jens Ljunggren. The masculinist and heteronormative norms were present in the early sixties, as Lars Gyllensten and Björn Håkanson tried to introduce a new dialogical, tentative role for intellectuals. They were met with accusations of unmanly ambivalence by left-wing intellectuals such as Jan Myrdal and Göran Therborn, who talked of ‘manly’ and ‘hard’ determination. Ljunggren demonstrates the significance of this masculinist rhetoric in the construction of a new intellectual role in the sixties.<sup>422</sup> In his travel writing, Myrdal is almost obsessed with ‘hard’ manliness, especially among Afghan men. Even the patterns of Afghan rugs are praised for their ‘masculinity’, as opposed to the more elaborate and colourful patterns of the Persian rugs.<sup>423</sup> (By way of contrast, one can turn to Herbert Tingsten and his critical description of the Afrikaner/Vortrekker culture under apartheid. ‘Pronounced, “manly” characteristics are emphasized and praised: courage, firmness, strength, inflexibility, persistence, extreme force, strictness. Humanity, refinement, a sense of beauty, warmth, tolerance are never mentioned. The watchwords are intended to adorn one single idea—the will to power.’)<sup>424</sup>

Myrdal sets the manliness of Afghan men against India’s princes, who (to quote ‘the great Emir’ Abdur Rahman) were ‘non-men wearing tiny bells on their feet who betrayed their peoples to the English in order to live lives of meaningless leisure and abundance’, and hints at a femininity that is often associated with homosexuality.<sup>425</sup> By distancing themselves from any association with supposedly feminine men, both Lindqvist and Myrdal assure the reader of their own identity as ‘proper’ masculine men. Again, there are parallels between the new role of the thirties’ intellectuals (the working-class writers) and the role of intellectuals in the sixties.

420 Sven Lindqvist, *Hemmaresan*, Bonniers (Stockholm, 1959), 120.

421 Ibid. 214.

422 Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella*, 75–7.

423 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 128.

424 Tingsten, *Problemet Sydafrika*, 15.

425 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 193.

When Lena Lennerhed discusses homosexuality in relation to cultural radicalism and left-wing intellectuals, she points to the apparent paradox in the objectives of many radicals. On the one hand there was the struggle for individual freedom and choice, especially in areas concerning sexuality; on the other hand, there were many instances of blatant homophobia among the same radicals, the Kejne and Haijby affairs in the early fifties being cases in point. These two political scandals exposed a particular nexus of class, age, and sexuality where (male) homosexuality was associated with the upper classes, and where rich men were described as preying on poor and vulnerable young working-class men and boys, forcing them to prostitution.<sup>426</sup> One of the most vociferous in accusing the politicians and even members of the royal family and, by extension, the judicial system and the police, was the syndicalist newspaper *Arbetaren* [The Worker], which argued that young working-class men needed protection from the risk of corruption posed by homosexual upper-class men. The scandals eventually petered out, as no actual proof was ever presented (which in itself was interpreted by some as evidence of how deeply the government and monarchy were involved).<sup>427</sup>

It is not my intention to claim that Myrdal and Lindqvist were in any manner connected with these events, but the cross-reading of class and homosexuality facilitates an understanding of especially Myrdal's depiction of the Indian 'non-men': their upper-class status seems to open a door to racist and homophobic attitudes, soon followed by derogatory tropes.

There are other connections to be made here beyond the particularities of Swedish radical culture, for as Carl Thompson points out, there seems to have been certain masculinist tendencies among many male travel writers, irrespective of nationality. He points to a 'striking convergence of patriarchal and colonialist attitudes' and he also states that there was a 'strongly heteronormative aspect'.<sup>428</sup> It is as if the genre and its history in itself encouraged and offered opportunities for male travel writers to assure the reader of their manliness.

426 See also Holm, *Sara Lidman*, 203.

427 Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta*, 70–3, 84–7.

428 Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 178, 179; for expressions of masculinity and emasculation/femininity in colonial culture (particularly Anglo-Indian), see Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*; and Mrinalini Sihna, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century*, MUP (1995, Manchester).

## Youth and a new world

I discern two different strategies concerning the narrative of youth in the travel books. One is to concentrate on the position and doings of the young in order to reflect the ambitions of the modernizing regimes. The other strategy operates on a more metaphorical level, where the author uses the trope of youth and youthfulness to communicate a certain impression to the reader.

There seems to exist a connection made by many of the travel writers between youth and modernity, where mere youthfulness indicates a closer bond to the future. It is one of the tropes or metaphors that gives the (Swedish) reader, already schooled in the temporality of the world, a sense of temporal direction. Youth then is an important marker in the untangling of time-knots. For example, when Åke Sparring describes ‘modern’ young women and men in Pakistan (see Chapter 3): they attend the same universities and the young women are released from having to wear a veil. And yet, Sparring notices that these young men and women seem to exist in parallel universes, for even if they spend their days in the same lecture halls, there is no contact between them, there are no relationships. The writer puts the blame on the families, which are described as ‘traditional’ and ‘religious’, and as long as the young students are reliant on their elders, they cannot act in accordance with their youth. Their direction forwards is compromised by old age, patriarchal tradition, and religion.

## Children of past, present, and future

Anders Ehnmark, Jan Myrdal, and Sven Lindqvist are all occupied with the actual social and political status of young people as a distinct group. Ehnmark, when discussing the new post-revolutionary masters in Cuba, somewhat matter-of-factly claims that Havana has changed significantly after the revolution, with a noticeable generational shift. Young people from the countryside have moved to Havana in order to study and even to apply for positions in government and the civil service. Ehnmark observes that ‘the ruling classes have transformed into a ruling generation’. These groups of youngsters constitute the backbone of the everyday toil of the ongoing revolution, according to the author. They have taken it upon themselves to pursue literacy campaigns among farmers, they guard Havana and the official buildings, and they land cargo in the harbour, but they also take part in the ritual aspects of the revolution ‘with the certainty of boy scouts whose good deeds can change the world, which may very well be true during such an upheaval’. This particular generation, which grew up during the revolution and seems to be most at home in this

new era, according Ehnmark, is openly favoured by the regime: ‘The scholarship holders live in the grand villas in Marianao. A scent of fried pork lingers over the neighbourhood, its parks, and stately passages. Food-rationing does not apply here.’<sup>429</sup>

There is a certain ironic distance in the representation of this ‘ruling generation’. Ehnmark seems quite impressed, even touched by the efforts of the young. Yet equally he uses the term ‘stripling’ [spoling] to describe the aforementioned young boys in Marianao, and he refers to the young female students running the literacy campaigns in the countryside as ‘little girls’.<sup>430</sup> Furthermore, Ehnmark uses the almost stereotypical image of the sexy revolutionary Cuban, while claiming that Cubans harbour some kind of weapon fetish: ‘Guns are magical in Cuban everyday life. They rest against the bosoms of the young women drinking Coca-Cola. Boys grease them while standing in the doorways facing the street.’<sup>431</sup> This image, however alluring it might be, reinforces the impression of distance on the part of the writer.

Myrdal is far more enthusiastic about the children and the young people of Afghanistan. He describes how he and Gun Kessle are invited to attend a school performance. One of the younger teachers has written an epic morality play in which the rise, fall, and final rise of an Afghan family is supposed to encourage the younger generation to stand up to the traditional evils of their elders. Myrdal praises the play, finding it simple and original, expressing an ‘Oriental oral tradition and youthful joy of performance’, yet he is even more impressed with the didactic purpose of the event. He sees how the young pupils, mere boys, are indirectly lecturing their audience, their fathers and grandfathers, on the importance of education, national pride, and progress:

The moral of the piece is clear and distinct. It is not only a question of old versus new; it is a question of reason versus unreason. It is a question of the young one’s entitlement to their own lives. The entitlement of the young to put their own future—which coincides with the future of the nation—before traditional reverence for antiquity. This [the play] demonstrates how the old cannot manage without assistance from the young who choose their own path.<sup>432</sup>

Myrdal is referring to a given relationship between a present generation, freed from tribal bonds and traditional duties, and a future modern nation-state. The school-boys and the young teacher are radically revolutionary by nature, and hence natio-

<sup>429</sup> Anders Ehnmark, *Cuba Cubana*, Söderströms (Stockholm, 1963), 20–1.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid. 81.

<sup>432</sup> Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 66–8. Quote at 68.

nalists and modernists. Their mission in the wider context of a given historical process is to lead their elders (the young saviour in the play, the returning son who restores the family, is of course an engineer).

Sven Lindqvist expresses a similar standpoint during his visit to Benares: youth and youthfulness might serve as an antidote to what he considers traditional, irrational, and ‘old’. His depictions of the religious acts and rituals one so readily associates with Benares and Hinduism reveal the extent to which the writer abhors the role Hindu religion and culture plays in India. He wallows endlessly in the dirt, the smell, and the darkness—both figuratively and literally—of the religious customs, declaring the social, political, and economic future of the Indian nation bleak as long as Hinduism has it in its grip. However, Lindqvist does meet a young university teacher in Benares, who expresses his frustration at the situation in Benares, claiming that things need to change, but that Nehru has asked for forbearance, and Lindqvist adds: ‘Yes, I can understand a young man itching to clean up the ancient prejudices in a city like this and to put all these spiritual bunglers and profiteers to work, making them cleanse the heart of Hinduism.’

Lindqvist is taken aback, though, when the young man decides to show the writer what he considers offensive in Benares. They walk through the alleys, pass the ‘blood-red Siva bull, moist like saliva in the moonshine’, and finally reach a mosque, guarded by the army. The young teacher trembles as he points at stones built into the wall, explaining how they were once part of demolished Hindu temples, and how this is yet another instance of the persecution of Hindus. Lindqvist tries to argue that this must have happened hundreds of years ago, but the teacher does not seem to take any notice; he retorts that it is only the presence of the army and the appeals made by Nehru that are restraining the people from tearing the mosque down.<sup>433</sup>

The young university teacher, who Lindqvist expects to be a fellow modernist, indicating a movement forward in a time-knot, turns out to be anything but. Lindqvist offers an explanation further on, when describing a temple to Kali as a nightmare, as limbo where Hindus, reduced to the level of mere animals, enter to worship. The metaphors and allusions used by the author hint at sexual perversion and infanticide. He then adds that this particular atmosphere is even tenser in the narrow lanes of the city: ‘The eyes of the small children down here are still bright. Yet, the spiritual metabolism is complete somewhere around puberty, the Hindu membrane has covered their eyes and you know that this person cannot be reached anymore.’<sup>434</sup> The young teacher is simply too old; he cannot represent hope for India. You have

433 Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, 90–1.

434 Ibid. 95.

to look even further, to small children, in order to find brightness. But then again, Lindqvist equates inevitable biological processes with Hinduism, creating a sense of irrevocability, a sense of nature's way, which of course thwarts any hopes of a brighter future. There are two further points to be made here. The first is the relationship between Hinduism and physical and sexual maturity, referring back to the depiction of the metaphorical intercourse at the Kali temple, and suggesting that Hinduism fulfils carnal needs unheard of among bright-eyed innocent children. The second point is that Lindqvist inverts the common image of religious belief as a consequence of a spiritual awakening. Lindqvist presents the opposite, where Hindu beliefs literally cover the eyes of the young, putting them to sleep. There is no future in India as long as the children grow up to become Hindus, and as long as growing up means becoming Hindu.

The connecting thought in *Asiatisk erfarenhet* is a comparison of China with other Asian nations. Mongolia comes out of it very well, but Japan and Taiwan, not to mention India, fail miserably. This preference for China, though never entirely naïve or unclouded,<sup>435</sup> is reflected in the description of the Chinese national commemoration day. The author points out:

It is a great relief when the official version for once is accurate, when supposedly spontaneous expressions of joy and true enthusiasm also turn out to be just that, even after critical scrutiny. This is the reason why one can walk light-heartedly among the crowds enjoying themselves by the gateway in Tiananmen Square on the eve of the national day. One can hardly spot a grown-up, elderly people are even more rare—this is a celebration for the young, for the new China.<sup>436</sup>

Further on there is a photo taken by Cecilia Lindqvist of young children, crowding in front of the camera, some smiling, others more occupied with just remaining on their spot. In the centre of the picture is a boy wearing a cap. He smiles, yet he ap-

<sup>435</sup> Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, 290 mentions the Lindqvists' book about China when listing travel reports published in the sixties that did not varnish the truth about the social, cultural, and economic situation in China. Hollander regrets that these books did not become influential enough among the sort of American and European intellectuals who later went to China, came back captivated, and published complimentary accounts. In Sven Lindqvist & Cecilia Lindqvist, *Kina inifrån: En preliminär rapport*, Bonniers (Stockholm, 1963), 11–18 Sven Lindqvist discusses his somewhat ambivalent view in the first chapter, arguing that his critical remarks are not to be taken as a repudiation of the Communist regime. In fact, he repeatedly assures the reader of the justifications for the social system, since he has witnessed how variable it can be. He claims that there are significant differences between a jackbooted dictatorship and a dictatorship wearing fabric shoes. I find Hollander surprisingly positive towards Lindqvist given his merciless critique of other travellers to China and the Third World.

<sup>436</sup> Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Kina inifrån*, 29.

pears hesitant, or simply shy. The caption reads: ‘The face of the new China: the peak is slightly dented but the eyes are bright [alive]. Energetic, curious children in Tientsin.’<sup>437</sup> As a matter of fact, fourteen of the thirty-nine photographs by Cecilia Lindqvist published in this book are of children. They are either the immediate focus of the pictures or they are simply present in the foreground or at the edges of the composition. There are no photos of malnourished, ill, or badly dressed children; instead, they play or laugh or pose proudly, sometimes even solemnly. On the whole they seem represent hope, energy, and life force. This is further enhanced in the text. For example, the Lindqvists visit Wuhan, where Sven offers a vivid street scene: ‘The warmth of May, the air of May. And a lively bustle, which, again, reminds one that Beijing is a cleared city, whose official strictness is not typical of China. Children, who play hopscotch, play cards and marbles, read illustrated classics sitting on small stools, or play carrom on folding boards.’<sup>438</sup>

The relationship between China and its uncorrupted, playful children can also spill over in a metaphor that transforms the New China into a fountain of youth. This, more metaphorical use can be discerned in Lindqvist’s assertion that there are two different types of visitors to China: ‘A traveller returns home from China. He is stimulated, rejuvenated, enthusiastic—as if he has taken part of a demanding yet refreshing sailing trip. Another traveller returns. He is critical, worried, frightened.’<sup>439</sup>

### From the old continent

If Anders Ehnmark, Jan Myrdal and Sven Lindqvist are quite literal in their use of ‘the rhetoric of youth’, as Henrik Berggren calls it, then Sara Lidman and Per Wästberg are more concerned with youth as a quality ascribed to those who inspire the travel writers in their quest for a good society. There is no connection made to actual biological age unless in passing, and then it often serves as an ironic fact, however improbable.

Lidman was invited to China in 1965 and she accepted, hoping that she could travel from China to North Vietnam. While staying in China she managed to visit Hanoi, where she stayed for a month, resulting in a couple of articles published in *VI* and later, in 1966, the book *Samtal i Hanoi*. The book was well received, especially by the reviewer at *Dagens Nyheter*, Sven Lindqvist.<sup>440</sup> By then, Vietnam had become the focal point of political and intellectual debate. There had been opposition to the colonial war in Vietnam since the late fifties, but the actual Vietnam

<sup>437</sup> Ibid. plate between 120 & 121.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. 72.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>440</sup> Holm, *Sara Lidman*, 281, 289, 290–1.



Movement took shape in 1964–5, as the US sent ground troops to Vietnam. The escalation was met with protests all over the world, including Sweden. In February 1965, the poet Göran Sonnevi published 'Om kriget i Vietnam' [Concerning the war in Vietnam] in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, a critical and highly acclaimed poem about the contrast between everyday life in Sweden and the horrors of war. In the same period, protesters began to gather outside the American embassy in order to express their discontent. In May, Swedish Radio broadcast a debate between supporters and opponents of the war, among them Sara Lidman and Artur Lundkvist; in June, a lengthy and acrimonious debate about the Vietnam War began which, to quote Kjell Östberg, established the war as 'the central point of reference'.<sup>441</sup>

The Vietnam debate ran throughout the summer of 1965, mainly in *Dagens Nyheter* (Sara Lidman, Sven Lindqvist, Jan Myrdal were all significant contributors, as was Åke Sparring), while the demonstrations outside the American embassy relocated to the very centre of Stockholm. The demonstrators also started to make the headlines as the police tried to disperse them by force. And at the end of July Olof Palme, the acting foreign minister while Torsten Nilsson was on holiday, was the first Swedish politician to openly and officially condemn America's war in Vietnam. This was the beginning of a strained relationship between Sweden and the US, which led to several diplomatic crises. Sweden's active foreign policy was truly active.<sup>442</sup>

Returning to Lidman's travel account, Birgitta Holm suggests that she felt entirely at home in Vietnam: her enthusiasm was not founded in a longing for the exotic, but rather in the feeling of having arrived in the village of her childhood. Lidman grew up in the very north of Sweden, in the small village of Missenträsk, a farming community that was always present in her literary works in one way or another. Holm claims that *Samtal i Hanoi* stands out for its lack of colonial or orientalist sentiment. Holm refers to Edward Said and his critique of Susan Sontag and her book about Vietnam, which he said reinforced the boundaries between us and them, the West and the East. Holm argues that Lidman never considered Vietnam or the Vietnamese to represent the unknown; on the contrary, Lidman always emphasizes common ground.<sup>443</sup> One could argue, though, that Holm has underestimated or simply ignored the significance of idealization as yet another colonial or orientalist trope when she chooses to claim that there is no 'we' and 'they' in Lidman's account of North Vietnam. Vietnam may not represent the Oriental unknown in Lidman's writings, but it clearly represents a utopian state of social bliss.

441 Östberg, *I takt med tiden*, 266–8.

442 Ibid. 268.

443 Holm, *Sara Lidman*, 282.

One instance of the idealizing character of the travel book is the insistence on representing or depicting the Vietnamese people as children. People are repeatedly described as either girls or boys: ‘a frail girl’, ‘a youth from the area’, ‘Four girls’, a ‘boy who might be an engine driver’, ‘Boys and girls are gathering around the lathes and spiral drills’, ‘Little boys who wear helmets’, ‘girl police in white directing traffic’, ‘Four boys guard the anti-aircraft defence in shifts’, and ‘a crumpled boy in dust-grey khaki ... this frail lad ... this ruffled boy’. The writer paints a beautiful picture, a tranquil idyll, inhabited by the young and youthfulness. While the reader might start to question or even tire of the insistence on the childlikeness of the Vietnamese, Lidman herself reflects on the relationship between appearance and biological age when meeting a group of Vietnamese men: ‘And their boyishness that never ceases to amaze, one can hardly believe it when they mention their sons who are drafted’.<sup>444</sup>

Lidman is of course trying to argue the case of the North Vietnamese against the American war by emphasizing the innocence of the people. Images of youth in general conjure up all sorts of other positive connotations. If one places the image of the childlike Vietnamese in the context of the discourse of modernity, it evokes sentiments of hope and a better future. Lidman, in the manner of Myrdal and Lindqvist, brings together all different strands of emotion and cultural convention in statements like ‘the young Vietnam, which is triumphing every single minute’.<sup>445</sup>

Lidman also creates counterparts in her account of the situation in Vietnam and in the world at large. One is of course the American bomber, who releases his load over the pastoral countryside. Another one is the writer herself as a representative of the West/North. She meets a man in a high position in the Vietnamese administration, ‘a lanky natural lad, by no means looking like a “boss”’. He has that enchanted expression one often encounters in Vietnam, which makes a Northerner feel old and burdened by the evils of the world. How dare they look so happy’.<sup>446</sup>

Thus far, I have discussed youth as an idealizing trope, as opposed to the classification presented by David Spurr.<sup>447</sup> Spurr considers the endless depictions of non-Western people as children to be an act of degrading Othering—something with which I do not agree. There are instances where debasement and idealization meet and clash, however. This particular opposition can be found in the writings of Per Wästberg. In his account from South Africa, *På svarta listan*, Wästberg explains that a white matron might have had the same African servants in her house for years and

444 Sara Lidman, *Samtal i Hanoi*, Albert Bonniers (Stockholm, 1966), 8, 9, 10, 11, 24, 43, 45, 81, 128, 37.

445 Ibid. 116.

446 Ibid. 55–6.

447 Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*.

years without knowing them as people: ‘Mrs Robinson did not know where the last stop of the bus was, when she saw them leave for the day: ‘the girl’ who might be 40 years old and mother of five, ‘the boy’ who might be a grandfather and over 50 years old.’<sup>448</sup> The author also recounts a story told by Betty, a white member of the anti-apartheid resistance. The South African police had entered her home and harassed her and an African politician while they were having a conversation in her living room. As the police later left the house, one policeman asked in passing ‘What is that boy up to in here?’ and Betty retorted ‘He is not a boy, he is an educated man’.<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, Wästberg notes, in the context of the Bantu Education Act, an African pupil ‘may grow old and dignified, yet he will never become more than an ignorant child in the eyes of the whites’.<sup>450</sup>

Wästberg is evidently aware of the derogatory use of ‘girl’ and ‘boy’ by the white community to refer to Africans, still he employs the trope while discussing principally African members of the anti-apartheid resistance. The writer describes a Southern Rhodesian friend, Stanley Samuriwo, recently released from prison, looking like ‘a boy who has learnt a new game’.<sup>451</sup> Another friend, Willie Kosange, is described as ‘barely 40 years old but looked younger’.<sup>452</sup> This particular image is emphasized further on in the text, where Wästberg states that Willie ‘was the boy for whom no movies were for adults only, because he was so good at walking on stilts’ and that Willie was ‘the city boy who knew all the tricks’.<sup>453</sup>

The relationship between political resistance and childlike mischief is played out in a scene when Per and Anna-Lena Wästberg went to an ANC meeting: ‘Someone appointed us to be delegates from a friendly nation and we made our way to the pillared rostrum with strips of paper and streamers, colourful as a children’s play’.<sup>454</sup> This relationship is reinforced in another scene, when Anna-Lena, Per, and their friend Willie leave an illicit bar in Orlando, a meeting point for all sorts of people, many of them radicals. They have spent the evening together, and are on their way to Willie’s car when they hear the screeching brakes of a police car. All three of them react instantly and hide behind some dustbins: ‘The policemen were poking around somewhere in the vicinity, probably not looking for us. We were giggling as if we had pulled off a good prank. I sat down on a thistle. It never occurred to us to remain on the road, like grown ups with clear consciences. One hides in South Africa—just like one used to hide from the angry caretaker as a child.’<sup>455</sup>

448 Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 45.

449 Ibid. 140.

450 Ibid. 99.

451 Per Wästberg, *Förbjudet område*, Wahlström & Widstrand (Stockholm, 1960), 144.

452 Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 24.

453 Ibid. 37, 84.

454 Ibid. 66.

455 Ibid. 171.

Wästberg employs all sorts of textual strategies in his descriptions of the white regimes in Southern Rhodesia, Mozambique, and South Africa, but apart from anger and despair, it was irony and *faux naïf* disbelief that set the tone in his travel books, which calls attention to the sheer absurdity of colonialism and apartheid. The narrator and the different characters more often than not make fun of their oppressors, and I interpret the use of the youth trope in this particular light, especially since the author hints at general mischief. Wästberg depicts the whites as the pompous and pathetic parents/caretakers in this stereotypical relationship, knowingly or (even worse) unknowingly cruel and always represented as left behind, living in some colonial antiquarian past, as opposed to his African friends, who represent the present, and more importantly the future.

In order to further emphasize the significance of the concept of youth in a Swedish context, I turn to the article on politics and literature in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* from 1960 to which Olof Palme contributed. He starts out by referring to a meeting he had had with a group of teenagers at a jazz club. He claims that they seemed rather uninterested by his talk, until he began discussing the international situation. Suddenly they sat up straight and participated in the discussion. Palme then continues that there seems to be a growing commitment to international issues in Sweden in general and then he discusses whether an international angle or approach is always beneficial. Palme illustrates this with a recent British election, where the Labour Party was defeated, because of its opponent's readiness to allude to the country's grand imperial past, which in turn made the Labour Party's foreign policy appear less attractive, at least according to Palme. He adds: 'We Swedes are devoid of both traditions and attitudes concerning international issues, which is to our advantage. That should mean that we could remain open and susceptible like the young people at [the jazz club].'<sup>456</sup>

I find it interesting that Palme tries to mobilize support for financial development aid by pleading Sweden's supposed colonial innocence, in contrast to the British. He is making use of the nationalist myth of the truly modern Swede: unsophisticated and plain, yet rational, objective, and healthy.<sup>457</sup> It is a case of flattering false modesty, directed at a new era in which the Swede's supposed innocence and plainness will be to their advantage in a new postcolonial global setting, as opposed to the British who are set in their colonial ways. The metaphorical youthfulness of the Swedes is intended to flatter, appeal, and influence through its positive connotations

<sup>456</sup> Palme, 'Politiker och författare', 231.

<sup>457</sup> Billy Ehn, Jonas Frykman & Orvar Löfgren, *Försvenskningen av Sverige: Det nationellas förvandlingar*, Natur & Kultur (Stockholm, 1999/1993), 180–200; Per Olov Qvist, *Folkhemmets bilder: Modernisering, motstånd och mentalitet i den svenska 30-talsfilmen*, Arkiv (Lund, 1995), 454–5.

to the concept at the turn of the last century, irrespective of political ideology. The political elasticity of the concept of youth remained the same over half a century later, as is demonstrated by the fact that confessed socialists (Lidman or Myrdal), social democrats (Olof Palme), and liberals (Wästberg) could all employ the same figure or image in their writings.

Furthermore, the article by Palme gives ‘youth’ a twofold meaning: he traces the source of budding internationalism to a group of actual youths, the group he met at a club in Stockholm, while also using the concept as a metaphor, as an indicator of radicalism and commitment, making the two aspects feed into each other.

## Resistance

One of my ambitions as I began this project was to find ways to discuss the use of colonial tropes in an anti-colonial discourse without condemning the writer. This ‘paradox’ evaporated the moment I concentrated on interpreting the books as a means of influence and political will. The profuse presence of colonial tropes thereby ceased to be a problem to be solved, but an issue of interest in itself. This does not necessarily mean that I can relieve the writers’ colonial guilt, or indeed my own. I do, however, choose to place the mere existence of colonial tropes and discourses on a societal and cultural level and less on the individual level. As I have stated many times before, one has to remain within the boundaries of the discourse in order to introduce new ideas.

## Another step

This chapter deals with those moments when the writers strive quite literally to write against a colonial ideology or mindset. They question and re-interpret both the past and the future of the world in their quest to create broader understanding and initiate change. In this section I will again investigate the rhetorical use of the colonial trope of classification and the understanding of the world that can be related to social Darwinism/evolutionism, historicism, and the notion that the world unfolds itself, both in time and space, beneath the privileged observer. This is an instance where the writers latch onto a colonial cliché, only to turn the established narrative inside out. Further, it is worth remembering, as Åke Holmberg has pointed out, that when evolutionism started to lose its hegemonic status as a scientific model, it was reintroduced in radical circles in the thirties as an expression of stagist Marxist theory—a reminder of how political ideologies can bear the traces of earlier historical periods with them.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Holmberg, *Världen bortom västerlandet*, ii. 72–4.

No one is as programmatic and consistent as Jan Myrdal regarding stage theory and the future of the Third World. He fully embraces the idea of stages and inevitable change, but refuses to let history end, while the West represents the highest step. In this particular scene he is sitting in his car in Afghanistan, listening to the radio. He manages to tune in on a Swedish radio channel. Myrdal pays careful attention, but is immediately disappointed: it is a story about a woman in Säfte, a provincial town in Sweden, who had been frightened by a mink that had managed to enter her bathroom through the toilet. Myrdal is furious: the technological sophistication of Sweden, the base of its self-proclaimed superiority, is not accompanied by any cultural or spiritual sophistication. He continues:

We settle on our place in the development of the world. But it will not be the highest. It is a step on the way up. ... Technology will be our only heritage. And we have not been able to use it for other things than spreading bombs and coarseness. Others will employ it differently in order for us to learn how to use it wisely and move on. ... our future grows out of their progress.<sup>459</sup>

Myrdal is very clear in his employment of stage theory, discussing the actual ‘steps’. And he does not shy away from interpreting global history according to the theory. In this sense, Myrdal latches on to a well-established and even paradigmatic theory of progress and development, with connections to Darwinism, modernization theory, and Marxist theory, only to expand the idea and turn it against Sweden and the West/North. He develops the theory in favour of the Third World, placing the West on a sideline of progress, ‘we settle on our place’, drawing a gloomy picture, which alludes to some general law of nature, ‘muscles without brains perish. The era of the reptiles has passed’.<sup>460</sup> All the West/North has to show for itself are its technological advances, its one contribution to global development. I will return to the significance of technology, but first I wish to discuss the combination of stage theory and the threat (or the hope) of a dwindling West/North. Mikela Lundahl points to the same rhetorical strategy in her study of *Négritude*. She demonstrates how the global development that Oswald Spengler presented in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918/1922) became the inspiration for anti-colonial intellectuals in the post-war years. Spengler’s thesis was that each civilization followed a certain trajectory and inevitably went into a decline, only to be replaced by another civilization. The anti-colonial intellectuals applied this theory to the West, suggesting that room was to be made for a new civilization, as the West was expected to dwindle.<sup>461</sup>

459 Myrdal, *Kultureres korskäg*, 286–7, quote at 287.

460 Ibid. 286.

461 Lundahl, *Vad är en neger?* 134–5.

Sven Lindqvist also makes use of an established theory, this time the suggestions by the German American historian and sinologist Karl Wittfogel. In 1957 Wittfogel, a critic of the regimes of Soviet and China, published *Oriental Despotism: A comparative study in total power*, a book in which he introduced his theory of political development and hydraulic states in Asia. Lindqvist is quite thorough while presenting the major point of the book, which is to discuss the difference between the historical and geopolitical development in Europe to that in Asia, especially China. Wittfogel demonstrated how certain geographical and geological circumstances, in this particular case access to water, decide the social and political map. He claimed that hydraulic states—states where the supply of water was controlled by a central power that contained both divine and profane aspects (the Chinese emperor was also ‘son of heaven’)—tended to develop anti-individualistic and totalitarian traits, ‘Oriental despotism’. In this sense, Communist China was not a result of European Marxist theory and praxis, but a historical extension of an Asian social and political system that was already established during the Liao dynasty.

Lindqvist argues against Wittfogel, saying he had overestimated the importance of certain periods in the history of China, yet Lindqvist states:

one has to accept the main feature of Wittfogel’s depiction of the historical China as despotic state of functionaries based on hydroregulated agriculture. It is also true that the present regime has restored the vital aspects of hydraulic society’s principles. The question of evaluation remains: should this be considered a regressive or progressive development? Wittfogel does not hesitate. He considers every step away from a multitiered society a relapse into barbarism.<sup>462</sup>

Lindqvist accepts Wittfogel’s thesis, but draws the opposite conclusion, stating that hydraulic civilization has proved its political and military strength and stamina on many levels down the centuries.<sup>463</sup> He also states that if Chinese Communism proves to live up to the standard of its historical predecessor ‘Westerners will perhaps face the same choice as the nomadic peoples along the Chinese border once did: to surrender to the Chinese system and loose individual rights—or to decline into a state of material and political insignificance’. He reminds the reader of how hydraulic states in Asia have influenced Europe—ever since Emperor Augustus learnt how to tax his part of the world—and he suggests that the organizational demands of technological progress, such as the development of nuclear power, yet again forces the West to learn from the East: ‘We do not think of this as something Eastern, only

<sup>462</sup> Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Kina inifrån*, 175.

<sup>463</sup> I would like to thank Lars Berggren for making this point.



as inevitable steps towards a higher civilisation.’ Lindqvist reverses the statement by Wittfogel that a Chinese model would entail regression by posing a ‘higher civilization’ against Wittfogel’s fear of Europe relapsing into ‘barbarism’.<sup>464</sup>

Lindqvist does not hesitate. Everything will change; ‘our’ time is over; the wheels of history and progress will turn. Jens Ljunggren describes how Lindqvist’s writings in this period are characterized by a desire for the apocalypse, for an emotional intensity that is normally associated with war. He longs for drastic change.<sup>465</sup> I would say that the characterization is valid for both Lindqvist and Myrdal. They both claim that everything will change fundamentally out of necessity, and it will, despite the hardship, be for the best. The writers employ exactly the same strategy: they base their account of the near future on a well-established and perhaps even paradigmatic theory—stage theory—and a theory of totalitarianism introduced during the Cold War, and revert it in terms of evaluation. But the writers stretch their theories to include the possibility that the future lies elsewhere, outside Europe and the West, and that ‘our’ time and ‘our’ way of life are obsolete, a passed stage. In this sense, both writers echo the forecast and expectations Artur Lundkvist presented in 1955, which caused uproar among centrist and conservative newspapers (see Chapter 2). And in the case of China and Afghanistan, the trigger that will change history and the global balance of power, according to Lindqvist and Myrdal, seems to be the demand of technological advance. It is the ability and readiness to embrace technological progress in the Third World that will ensure that it is ‘their’ turn to lead, to secure their position on the highest step.

The issue of technology is also of paramount importance to Wästberg when he discusses the present and future of South Africa, Mozambique, and Africa in general. Wästberg shares Myrdal’s and Lindqvist’s conviction that the world is organized temporally and geographically—that time and history can be observed in actual, geographical settings, the past exists either far away or in atavistic pockets in the metropolis, and that there are certain stages one has to pass through in order to attain ‘progress’, ‘the present’, or ‘the future’. He does seem to think of Africa as a continent of progress and revival, but, and this is how he differs from Myrdal and Lindqvist, this does not imply that the West will perish while Africa shakes off poverty and injustice. The West, often represented by Britain and supposedly English values like democracy and liberalism, remains fully intact as a beacon of reason and progress in his account. Those who will perish are South Africa’s apartheid regime and the Boers, since they stand in the way.

Wästberg and his wife attend a ceremony at the Voortrekker Monument just outside Pretoria. The Nationalists erected it in 1948, the year they came to power.

<sup>464</sup> Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Kina inifrån*, 177–8.

<sup>465</sup> Ljunggren, *Den uppskjutna vreden*, 212.



The objective of the monument is to preserve the spirit of the pioneers, those who began the Great Trek in the 1830s (1834 to be precise), when the Boer population left the southern part of South Africa, ‘escaping English liberalism’, to found their own colony of Transvaal further north. Boers have turned up in their thousands for the ceremony, wearing their leather aprons and pioneer hats, in order to celebrate their culture and their language. The Prime Minister, Verwoerd, and his wife are also present:

The monument, looking like an idol, watched over us from above, and girls and boys from the Vortrekker Movement were marching below on the stage. The pitch torches, the anonymous people and their strange language, the entire dusky atmosphere, made us think of winter sacrificial feasts of the Old Norse period or of Germanic parades of a later date.<sup>466</sup>

Wästberg enlarges on this last remark, listing different connections between South African politicians and Nazi Germany. (Nazi Germany is repeatedly used as a warning example and rhetorical device.) Wästberg calls to mind that ‘When the law on population registration was passed, the yellow star of Nazism was lit over South Africa’.<sup>467</sup> He then returns to the ceremony and looks at two elderly men sitting next to him, wondering what this event means to them: ‘A village play, rich in memories in the middle of the mechanized present, or does it confirm that their sons have realised their fathers’ dream of greatness, a South Africa governed by the Afrikaners?’ The writer makes it clear that all the talk from the stage about ‘Herrenvolk’ and ‘Volkswil’ cannot obscure the fact that the Boers are about to be left behind: ‘No way back for the Africans to Bantustan, no way back for the Boers to the patriarchal farms. Trade and industry have divided both the small, self-sufficient native tribes and the isolated farming villages.’ He continues: ‘The machines demand new communities and different grips than the hunting spear and the plough. The cities are the reformatory schools of South Africa.’<sup>468</sup> Wästberg is unravelling a time-knot in which the white Boers without a doubt represent the past, unable to ‘move with the times’, forcing their antiquated ideas on an entire nation, halting the march of progress into the future.

Later in the book, Wästberg returns to his friend Willie Kosange, who is presented as being of ‘the second generation of industrialism’, and in him the writer finds

<sup>466</sup> Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 159.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. 272; Wästberg, *Förbjudet område*, 94, 127 offers an outright comparison between the racist ideology of Hitler and South Africa’s white nationalists, and mentions the Gestapo in relation to a visit to a prison for political prisoners outside Salisbury.

<sup>468</sup> Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 160–1.

‘an elasticity and a flexibility that belong to the swarming metropolis’. He continues by stating that Willie does not long for Zion or Mecca; he wishes to stay in Johannesburg and fight apartheid:

That struggle had, more than anything, brought the Africans up to our day, and the more the Boers tried to teach them to despise the gifts of this century, the more the Africans sided with progress. ... Loads of us should move to London and Paris instead of the reservations, Willie would say. We know how to behave there. But the Boers would find it hard to live in the cities of Europe—isolated farmers, Calvinists, a couple of centuries behind us! They belong in a reservation.<sup>469</sup>

Elsewhere, Willie is reported as saying ‘We have inherited the same things as you, you only received them a little earlier ... There are Boers who have never left their village. Yet they act as if they are related to Dante and Rubens and Lincoln, just because of their skin, and because of my skin, I’ll never be related to them, no matter how much I study’.<sup>470</sup>

As I pointed out earlier, Wästberg shared his views on progress and time with Myrdal and Lindqvist, but not their political standpoint, and he also differs in his steadfast belief in the West. He does not equate Europe and the West with colonialism and exploitation, nor does he treat technology as a separate entity, released from so-called Western values. Industrialism, urbanization, science, education, art, literature, and democratic values—all seem to originate in Europe, and they have created ‘not only a small elite, but a significant black population, which is entirely sophisticated and at home in our time’.<sup>471</sup> The key, according to Wästberg, is industrialization: ‘What the merchants and conquerors ignored, what nearly all the missionaries shied away from, that happens overnight in a machine society’.<sup>472</sup> And he nurses great hopes for Africa: ‘This continent represents the most munificent opportunity on earth to see a new civilisation take shape’.<sup>473</sup> This relates back to the idealizing rhetoric of youth, as ‘new’ and ‘young’ can be interchangeable.

Wästberg and Lidman both write about people who fight oppression, and they both describe their subjects as Davids facing Goliaths. Lidman also touches on the issue of technology in order to describe the Vietnamese, making their use of tech-

<sup>469</sup> Ibid. 174–5.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid. 177.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid. 176.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid. 178; see also Per Wästberg, ‘Moçambique’, in Anders Ehnmark & Per Wästberg, *Angola/Moçambique*, Bo Cavefors (Malmö 1962), 115–16.

<sup>473</sup> Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 294; Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 272–5 also describes how newly established industries and the construction of new roads in Afghanistan spread ‘reason’ to the countryside, creating a ‘new’ people.

nology yet another instance where they excel. Lidman is invited to visit a factory where they produce diesel engines: ‘We walk through the factory and are far away from the stage of assembly lines. Boys and girls are standing around turning lathes and spiral drills, many are still learning. ... No hurry, a calm cheerful atmosphere. The girls keep their long hair in chignons made of blue material. They say that they would like to become engineers.’<sup>474</sup> The writer then accounts for the disposition of the working day: twice a day, workers take a break and they exercise together, after which everyone sits down, has a cup of tea, smokes cigarettes, and listens as one of them reads the newspaper aloud.<sup>475</sup>

She also visits an anti-aircraft installation south of Hanoi, a construction she describes as ‘starry-eyed’. The defences are dug into the ground and paved with stones, with ‘room for an anti-aircraft gun, a machine gun, binoculars and a couple of men. ... Everything is bright and pure, brittle, unreal. As if the slightest wind would make it all drift away.’<sup>476</sup>

Two phenomena associated with different aspects of technology, a mechanical factory and a defence facility with guns and artillery, are presented with the same poetic and inspired language that sets the book apart. The factory is depicted as a place far away, both temporally and geographically, from the pressures and boredom of Western modern industrial organization—assembly lines and rationalization. The Vietnamese workers (again ‘boys and girls’) are happy, content, and fulfilled by the purpose of their work. There is no competition, no stressful pressure; they work together and they learn together. Consideration has also been given to the physical and intellectual needs of the workers. Lidman paints a pretty picture of how industrial production can and should be carried out in a utopian state. Technology itself is thereby isolated from Western culture; it does not threaten the specific nature of the Vietnamese. This suggests that there are alternative paths, away from the ‘stage of the assembly line’. Kylhammar would perhaps describe this as a case of ‘pastoral technology’, as Lidman expresses both optimism and pessimism concerning the role of technology: ‘One is turning against technology that is inextricably connected to its negative consequences ... and arguing for the case of natural technology, a technology that benefits from nature, not exploiting it.’<sup>477</sup>

Lidman here is indirectly connecting to the great narrative of progress and evolution, using the concept of stages, interestingly enough in a spatial sense, though she is not nearly as explicitly programmatic as Myrdal and, to a lesser extent, Lindqvist.

474 Lidman, *Samtal i Hanoi*, 24–5.

475 Ibid. 26.

476 Ibid. 81–2.

477 Martin Kylhammar, *Maskin och idyll: Teknik och pastoral ideal hos Strindberg och Heidenstam*, Liber (1985), 19–20. Quote at 19.

Yet she shares the hope that there will be alternative options in the world outside the West, where the ‘Western heritage’ (that is, technology) will be managed in a more humane spirit. The case of Vietnam is perhaps more acute than that Afghanistan and China, in that the Vietnamese ‘way of life’ is under threat. There is an ongoing war, but Vietnamese machine guns and soldiers are not in the least terrifying: ‘Everything is bright and pure, brittle, unreal.’ Nothing can undermine Vietnam as an ethical utopia, not even war.

### The modern primitive

What then makes the Afghans, the Vietnamese, and the rest ideally suited not only to climb the ladder of modernity, but to surpass Europe and the West in the process? Which qualities do they possess that enables them to embrace technology differently, not to become corrupt or indolent from comfort and convenience? The quality that the writers return to, over and over, is purity—or rather primitiveness. In Chapter 3, I discussed the use of ‘a good past’, as Signe Höjer, Herbert Tingsten, and Olle Strandberg viewed events in Ghana, South Africa, India, and China through the lens of Swedish historiography, the historical narrative leading from poverty and oppression to welfare and democracy, from darkness to light. This section will also end up dealing with the good past and its final passing, but also the hope of resurrection.

While they were studying and working in Beijing, Sven and Cecilia Lindqvist travelled through Asia by car, comparing the road of social, economic, and political development in China with the situation in other countries in Asia, in particular India along with Japan and Taiwan. Mongolia is another country Sven and Cecilia Lindqvist visited during their journey, and their impression is very positive: ‘[a] high standard of living, freedom, a people consisting of shepherds and intellectuals, who had managed to bring their past as nomads into the present’.<sup>478</sup> Lindqvist continues by discussing the influence the Soviet Union exerts on the region, and the want of freedom that results. He points out that this is a country where none of these indications of progress and individual freedom—being able to travel the world or read foreign magazines and newspapers—had been available at all before. The constraints that Soviet Communism entail do not represent a break with the past in that sense. Instead, Lindqvist presents all those perks of modern life as prospects that the Mongolians can and perhaps will realize by and by.

What Lindqvist does worry about, however, are other aspects of Soviet Communism and its possible influence on the Mongolian lifestyle—political and financial

<sup>478</sup> Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, 43.

interventions by the state and the Communist Party. ‘They [the interventions] are characterized by an administrative inability to leave things alone, which is a consequence of a people not having the means to keep the authorities at bay.’ But the want of democracy has not kept the Mongolians from keeping an almost blunt carelessness in their relationship with the powers that be. This carelessness, represented as a form of freedom in relation to the authorities, is associated with the particularities of the Mongolian culture, ‘based on the temperament and customs of an old nomadic people’. Later Lindqvist adds: ‘I have hardly ever felt this presence of personal integrity and cheerful hearts among any other people.’<sup>479</sup>

While Lindqvist accounts for the historical significance of the Mongolian people, especially in relation to the Chinese, he asserts that the Mongolians contributed to the diffusion of Chinese patterns of civilization (again the hydraulic state) in the past, but that the Mongolians themselves stayed unaffected:

they have stayed, even to the present day, a primitive people. ... Mongolians do not have that deep foundation of culture that makes a proletarian Chinese construction worker into a representative of a great civilization, but they have kept some of the equivalents concerning life as symbols of freedom such as the grassy plains and the fragrant wooded grove.<sup>480</sup>

The supposed primitiveness of the Mongols, their purity of heart, ensures that technological development neither corrupts nor distorts Mongolian culture, hence Lindqvist’s obvious enthusiasm at industry and mechanized farming opening ‘intoxicating prospects’: ‘The son of the herdsman on the harvester, the pioneer who for the first time reaps the crops on the grass plains of his ancestor, also reaps the freedom of a new era.’<sup>481</sup>

Myrdal mirrors much of this in his travel accounts, and especially in the travelogue from Turkmenistan. He is clearly impressed with the Turkmen, describing them as a people of ‘riding, fighting men and women—dressed in red’. He continues: ‘The fiercely fighting manhood and the proud women were one aspect of the social setup; poverty, deep and stubborn, the other. ... In less than a generation a modern society has been constructed. In a few years time they have created a new way of life.’ His explanation for this hasty progress is that Turkmenistan does not have a history of bourgeois, urban culture: ‘But the very absence of an educated middle class seems to have helped the Turkmen to quickly profit by both their own traditions and

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479 Ibid. 47–8.

480 Ibid. 58.

481 Ibid. 46.

modern technological culture. They have maintained their pride.’<sup>482</sup> And then comes a passage that seems familiar: ‘In one generation a people can take the leap from poverty and misery to a new society, a technological and rational society. Appropriate all the innovation with an intoxicating hunger for life and after one generation being able to say—Tell everyone that there is a Turkman running the newest oilfield in Turkmenistan now.’<sup>483</sup>

Now as we have seen, it is Margareta Petersson’s contention that Sven Lindqvist in certain ways reflects Artur Lundkvist’s ideological standpoint.<sup>484</sup> I could not agree more, and I do not hesitate to interpret these writings by Sven Lindqvist as neo-primitivist: his way of understanding the world is clearly rooted in the thirties. So, come to that, is Jan Myrdal’s. Both interpret successful developments in Mongolia (Lindqvist) and Turkmenistan (Myrdal) as a result of pure, uncorrupted modernization: technological progress has been applied to a straightforwardly primitive society, poor perhaps, but proud. Neither has been corrupted and tarnished by a ‘foundation of culture’, ‘an educated middle class’ or ‘urban culture’. And in both instances, the writers even use the primitivist or modernist concept of ‘life’ to describe the enthusiasm encountered among the modernized population, those who have mastered the new technology without being sullied by Western culture. The vision of cultural radicalism—the entirely liberated human, creating a better society through rationality and scientific and technological advances—has met its ideal, the already liberated human.

What the writers seem to prescribe is the notion of successive shortcuts: the leap past ‘necessary steps’ on the way to modernization is not only possible, it is desirable. This idea connects with two separate contexts. The first of course is the Maoist reinterpretation of Marxism, where Mao claimed that a revolution did not necessarily have to originate among the proletariat in the working class, hence the expression ‘peasant’s revolt’. The second is the ideology that underlies the idea of development aid, for by transferring assets from rich countries to poor, one can jump-start a modernization process at the receiving end. Both the interest in Maoism and China among young radicals<sup>485</sup> and the discussions concerning bilateral development aid were very much to the fore in the sixties.

There is another instance where Lindqvist and Myrdal share common ground: they privilege similar objects when they compare the primitive, vital culture they

482 Jan Myrdal, *Turkmenistan*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 1965), 53–4.

483 Ibid. 57.

484 Petersson, *Indien i svenska reseskildringar*, 256.

485 See Kim Salmon, *Rebeller i takt med tiden*, Tiden (Stockholm, 1995), 108–111; Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, *Transformations and Crises: The Left and the Nation in Denmark and Sweden 1956–1980*, EUI/Dept. of History and Civilisation, diss. (Florence, 2004), 136, 139, 141–4.

encounter in Mongolia and, here, Afghanistan with something closer to home. I will come to Myrdal shortly; Lindqvist's is the following comparison:

Iceland and Mongolia: bare, sparsely populated countries with short summers and severe winters, sheep country and horse country, where wealth by tradition has not been a question of money, but animals and books. Both countries have had a wild and glorious past, which they regard with ironic pride, they have gone through a dark period of foreign oppression, and they have recently entered the world as modern states.

Lindqvist continues by comparing Mongolia and Iceland through two famous writers, and states that 'Laxness's sheep farmers are related to the herdsmen of the Gobi in the stories by Damdinsüren'.<sup>486</sup> There are two interconnected phenomena that link Lindqvist and Myrdal in this particular example: the interest in the wild and glorious past of Iceland, and the idealization of the peasantry. And it is this last that calls for a brief digression into the Swedish historical context.

I have already discussed the notion of Swedish national identity or Swedish ideology, as outlined by Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh, when trying making sense of the somewhat paradoxical combination of strong collectivism and equally strong individualism that signify Sweden's culture and hence its politics. This recurring theme of freedom and individualism is often attributed to the Romantic poet, historian, philosopher, composer, and nationalist Erik Gustaf Geijer. They describe Geijer's ideas of Swedish freedom as a 'matrix for future discussions on the individual, the state and society'.<sup>487</sup>

The Swedes, Geijer insisted repeatedly, were poor, yes, but above all independent and strong, because poverty and hardship create people who do not have to yield to anyone, since they have nothing to lose. This did not include all Swedes, however, and certainly not the idle upper classes, who were not forced to work and therefore resembled to the sloths of the South. No, it was only the peasants, politically and economically independent, who were considered the fount of true Swedishness and this tradition of independent peasants was traced back, not entirely inaccurately, to the age of Vikings. The Viking era became the canvas upon which Geijer could project his political ideals, the topos of an entire *oeuvre* of poems. Geijer wrote extensively on the bravery of old: heroic Swedish Vikings and free men who stood up to unjust rulers and righted wrongs, always pressing the theme of independence and

<sup>486</sup> Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, 48.

<sup>487</sup> Berggren & Trägårdh, *Är svensken människa?* 93.



self-realization. And his poems were included in the textbooks of several generations of Swedish schoolchildren.<sup>488</sup>

Åsa Linderborg has investigated the same strain of ideology, but in the more narrow context of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. She demonstrates that the narrative of Sweden's Vikings and the free peasants was used to create an identity within the party, but also in its communications with the wider community. Her theoretical grounding, and hence her conclusions, is different to that of Berggren and Trägårdh, for they tend to regard common ground as the site for the production of meaning and the creation of a modern national identity, while Linderborg applies critical theory and defines the same common ground as an expression of nationalist, but above all bourgeois hegemony, luring the worker's movement away from revolutionary Marxist ideals.

Linderborg traces the rhetorical destiny of Torgny the Lawspeaker, a mythological character in *Heimskringla*, an Icelandic saga written by Snorri Sturluson about the Norwegian kings of the thirteenth century. According to the story, Torgny was a *lagman* [lawspeaker], a sort of judicial leader, who represented the peasants of an area called Tiundaland and was considered to be the wisest man in all the land. When the king, Olof Skötkonung, suggested at the Uppsala thing in 1018 that the Swedes ought to declare war on Norway, Torgny gave a famous speech in which, according to Sturlasson, he made it very clear to the king that the peasants would not follow him and that it would not be wise to embark on this expedition without the support of his people. He even threatened the king and reminded him of the ancestral tradition by which the peasants (meaning the people) were entitled to kill a king who acted against their will. And the king halted his plans.

Torgny the Lawspeaker's significance to Sweden's political discourse remained strong, but exactly what that significance was shifted. Lars Edgren, for example, describes how the figure was used by radicals in the 1850s to argue for democracy and against the king. As Edgren says, part of the allure was the revolutionary threat implied in the story: the peasantry had the right to kill a king who did not do its bidding.<sup>489</sup> Given this, it is somewhat ironic that Linderborg demonstrates how King Gustav V and other conservatives invoked Torgny the Lawspeaker during the political crisis of 1914, when right-wing parties gathered 30,000 farmers in Stockholm to protest in favour of militarism and *against* democracy and socialism. Linderborg

488 Ibid. 80–91.

489 Lars Edgren, 'The Uses of Scandal: Nils Rudolf Munck af Rosenschöld, and the radical democratic tradition in Sweden', in Lars Edgren & Magnus Olofsson (eds.), *Political Outsiders in Swedish History, 1848–1932*, Cambridge Scholars (Cambridge, 2009), 22–3; see also Victor Lundberg, *Folket, yxan och orättvisans rot: Betydelsebildning kring demokrati i den svenska rösträttsrörelsens diskursgemenskap, 1887–1902*, h:ström (Umeå, 2007).



adds that another objective was to emphasize that the right wing had the support of the people. When the king gave his famous speech (written by Sven Hedin, the explorer and well-known conservative), he mentioned Torgny the Lawspeaker as a proponent of rearmament and monarchism, against parliamentarism and universal suffrage. The left-wing press reacted immediately and insisted that Torgny the Lawspeaker represented the very opposite—that he was the proponent of revolt against the powers-that-be, especially if those powers threatened the supremacy of the people.

In the 1940s, Torgny the Lawspeaker was again reinterpreted by the left and the Social Democratic Party; no longer as a revolutionary peasant, standing up authority, his was now the voice of popular reason and the peace-loving and democratic Swedish peasantry. For Linderborg, this development reflects how the ambition within the Social Democratic Party to present itself as the governing party, not only a party for the working classes, led to the appropriation of bourgeois historiography, culture, and ideology.<sup>490</sup>

This was the background to Jan Myrdal's ponderings on the peasants in Afghanistan. He begins by comparing Afghanistan to Iran, India, and Pakistan, the countries he visited first. He quotes a general in Iran, a millionaire in India, and a chief constable in Pakistan, who all describe Afghanistan as poor and backward, and Myrdal agrees: it is indeed a poor and backward country, yet, and this is his point, the 'Afghan peasant leads a far better life than his brothers in Iran, India, and Pakistan, but the Afghan masters are worse off than their peers in the other countries. Also, the Afghan farmer or herdsman knows his worth as a human being and has opportunity to let others know this too. That is the real difference'. Myrdal continues by admitting that this might sound romantic, but that the situation is more readily understood if one thinks of 'our own background. Torgny the Lawspeaker would have felt at home in Afghanistan. They too know the art of humbling subordinate monarchs.'<sup>491</sup> And so, again, the meaning of Torgny the Lawspeaker changes. Myrdal has illustrated his point by referring to a well-known figure with positive connotations stretching back for more than a century; his is a journey through space and time in a metaphorical movement that would have been incomprehensible without the underpinnings of an evolutionist paradigm and of stage theory. The Afghans are like us, only better, and we ought to aim to become Afghans—we can,

490 Åsa Linderborg, *Socialdemokraterna skriver historia: Historieskrivning som ideologisk maktresurs 1892–2000*, Atlas akademi (Stockholm, 2001), 272–4. For a discussion of social democracy as ideology and political practice in relation to Marxism, especially in the context of Åsa Linderborg's book, see Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap*, 139–41.

491 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 215.

because at some point in history we actually could and did. The significance of the Viking and the Afghan in an international setting prompts Myrdal to conclude that

Barbarism is good. Whether you find it in the Iliad, the sagas, or in modern Afghan history you experience its freedom. It was deadly, brutal, and harsh, yet human. Caste society, feudal society, the conformist late Victorian society in which we live now is hardly good, and in any case not free. It is deadly, brutal, but without honour. It is a necessary stage. Man is more knowledgeable, has the option to prolong his life span. Will not. Yet barbarism is promising, foreshadowing the future.

He continues: ‘The confrontation between barbarism and civilization often becomes a confrontation between freedom and caste, freedom and feudalism. Barbarism offers an opportunity to develop. It scatters set and suppressive social structures and offers man new possibilities.’<sup>492</sup>

Johannes Fabian describes this unravelling of time as one where ‘The posited authenticity of a past (savage, tribal, peasant) serves to denounce an inauthentic present (the uprooted, évolués, acculturated).’<sup>493</sup> Myrdal connects ‘caste’, ‘feudalism’, and ‘late Victorianism’ to the West or Europe of the present, and poses it against the ‘promise’, ‘freedom’, and ‘development’ of Afghanistan, which is also of the present, but even more of the ‘future’. Considering the meaning of Victorianism in the context of cultural radicalism, I would most definitely describe the attribution as an act of debasement, but it is interesting that ‘caste’ is also used as a way to signal the failure of the West. This then becomes yet another instance where a travel writer tars everything with the same brush, as discussed earlier in relation to *Heart of Darkness*.<sup>494</sup>

Again, Myrdal and Lindqvist repeat the tradition of both cultural radicalism and primitivism. I agree with Forser and Tjäder, as well as Petersson when they emphasize the significance of Lundkvist and his travel writing, when they discuss sixties travel reports. What I find interesting, though, is that Per Wästberg seems to share a primitivist/modernist standpoint, when he explains why the black population of South Africa is more apt to embrace the technological and social demands of modernity and the future:

492 Ibid. 215.

493 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 11.

494 Brantlinger, *The Rule of Darkness*, 262.

Before Ghana and Guinea were liberated, it was possible for their demagogues to scream ‘Throw out the whites!’ since only a handful of whites holding an disproportionate part of the power ruled over them. No movement that extreme has demanded the same in the Union, so far, since nobody wishes for the old Africa. The blacks in the Union and Southern Rhodesia have been so thoroughly defeated, more than anyone else on the continent, and their national life has been as good as wiped out. There is no alternative for them but the West. ... There is no way back to distant memories. We never saw anything inherited in African homes. Everything they carry and own and observe around them is being created right now.<sup>495</sup>

This is an insistence on the advantages of purity and the lack of tradition obstructing the path forwards, towards ‘the West’. There is ‘no way back’.

There is another area, however, where Wästberg most certainly differs to Myrdal and Lindqvist, and that is in his representation of Sweden. In no way did Myrdal and Lindqvist pride themselves on being Swedes, nor did they see Sweden’s as a *Sonderweg* among other European or Western nations—this is where the shift from East and West to North and South takes place in a Swedish context. Wästberg, meanwhile, paints a rather different picture when describing colonial existence in Southern Rhodesia as a journey back in time, where you ‘eat and live well’ but ‘wake up with a foul taste in your mouth’. Many may dream of living the old life of the gentry, at least for a while, but his encounter with the Rhodesian way of life, which reminds him of the situation in Sweden in the 1840s, repulses him: ‘We have tried to practice equality for such a long time in Sweden that certain groups associate the concept with standardization and mediocrity. In Africa of the good old days there is no ideal I value higher.’<sup>496</sup> He returns to the question of Sweden in his book on South Africa when thinking about the virtues of travel, of exposing oneself to ‘new realities’: ‘Not until you have lived for a long time with others, can you discern your own way of life. ... I never longed for home, but the concept of Sweden changed meaning when I saw how oppression was buttressed by an old social structure that we had abandoned, and how it in turn was buttressed by oppression.’<sup>497</sup>

The welfare state and *Folkhemmet* [the People’s Home] do not fare well in the eyes of the two leftist/socialist intellectuals, but are defended by the liberal. The shift from welfare to affluence, from West to North, from pride to guilt, is even more prominent in Myrdal’s and Lindqvist’s work.

495 Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 177–8.

496 Wästberg, *Förbjudet område*, 39.

497 Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 189.

### Standing in the way

In the process of reversing and enlarging the set of steps or stages that the modernist paradigm relies on, the various travel writers map the forces that obstruct the Third World's path upwards and forwards. Interestingly, there seems to be little restraint among these anti-colonial intellectuals concerning one of the most significant colonial tropes identified by Spurr—debasement, the Western tradition of representing the Other in terms of dirt, backwardness, and disgust.

Wästberg does not mince his words when describing a visit to an isolated village. They meet an old man, 'a knobbly spine, a dark brown hollowed-out face and four crooked branches for limbs', and they ask him whether he would ever want to leave the village and move to the city, to which he says no, as he had no wish to leave his cows or land and he would be beaten to death in the city. The writer puts the same question to an elderly lady who explains that her three sons have already left the village for the city, but that she has never been there and has not met her sons' wives. Wästberg adds: 'She could not even picture the city to herself.'<sup>498</sup> During these two encounters the children of the village have gathered round the parked car. They touch it and peek through the windows, and the writer points out that 'They did not seem afraid of the city', a statement that aligns technology, the car, with a particular space, the city. The girls of the village later ask if they can perform for the visitors. They sing a song about having lost their sons to the city, and they dance 'just like the Nordic girls did during the Bronze Age'. Wästberg says that their visit did not cause that much of a stir, but that the car attracted the attention of the villagers and 'the looks of many of the youngsters clearly meant: Take me with you to factories and motors, to shops and bikes and watches! Take me with you to the city where life is exciting'. Wästberg continues:

Existence in the village is a slow folktale. An airplane passes at low altitude and the women continue to stir their pots without looking up at it. The African farmers have equals everywhere and at all times—they were born conservative, sceptical of change, suspicious of authority and bureaucracy, happily left alone, and with a fold at the back of their necks from staring at the sky, looking for rain.<sup>499</sup>

The village and its conservative inhabitants clearly represent an anachronistic corner or pocket, lost in the past and in a state of stasis beyond rescue. There are no connections whatsoever to the pure, proud peasants of Mongolia, Turkmenistan or

<sup>498</sup> Wästberg, *Förbjudet område*, 188–9.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.* 190.

Afghanistan, and there is no modernizing potential visible or even hoped for. The village and the countryside are beyond hope to Wästberg's mind, and as he untangles this time-knot the city appears as the sole engine and motive force in a rapid modernizing process—a modernist standpoint which is emphasized by the writer equating his car with the city. This metaphor is then connected with the idealizing tropes of youth and progress, with the children of the village described as unafraid and curious of the car/city, and the youngsters as silently begging to be swept off to an exciting life in the city. They want to move on, and those who stubbornly (and literally) stay behind, the elders, avert their eyes, ignore the signs of the times and look like 'old sheep'.<sup>500</sup> Thinking of the concept of youth in the representation of the Boers, the parallels are evident: the countryside and the villages/farms represent the past, irrespective of whether the inhabitants are white or black. This 'old Africa' is old, and nothing more.

If Wästberg considers conservatism and 'backwardness'—aversion to change—in the rural areas to be the main obstacle to modernization, then Myrdal and especially Lindqvist choose to emphasize religion, which I have already touched on in the chapter on the concept of youth. In the process of untangling time-knots and deciding where to place nations, cultures, and peoples along a timeline, religion is clearly an element of the past. Lindqvist and Myrdal share this classic rationalist and anticlerical standpoint—cultural radicalism to a T—with Artur Lundkvist.

Thus Myrdal simply declares in his book on Afghanistan that conservative Islam is 'a paralysing and constricting power that has glued itself to the minds of people, curbed their capacities, and limited their horizons', and later that 'One cannot reconcile rational know-how with religious orthodoxy'.<sup>501</sup> Lindqvist is more detailed, indeed very explicit, when he discusses the relationship between religion, progress, modernity, and, in a way, culture in Mongolia. He visits a temple in Ulan Bator, the last temple still in use in Mongolia, and describes the day-long service in a rather disinterested manner. That evening he and Cecilia are invited round to Mongolian friends living 'in a modern flat very close to the temple'. Their host is an artist and his wife is the daughter of a lama, but teaches at the medical school, 'an educated and broadminded person, alluding to Western literature and ready to discuss any issue'. They have dinner together and talk about 'the latest Mongolian film, *Tomnik*. We talk about the well-known Soviet realist motifs of animals and machinery that to the despair of my friend fill the walls of the Central Museum, and the nervous disorders that seem to increase at the same pace as urbanization'. Lindqvist continues with a question: 'You want modernization and end up with nervous dis-

500 Ibid. 190–1.

501 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 277, 280.

orders. Is that progress?’ He answers by recalling the scenes at the temple: ‘Horns, four metres long, calling as if from the bottomless abyss. Horse-like screams from cornets with silver fittings, made from human bones. The smell of the rancid butter cakes on the altar, the smell of damp rags, of old darkness, prejudice, and cruelty.’<sup>502</sup> The debasing tropes intensify as the representation reaches a crescendo: ‘Garlands of human bodies slit open with eyes torn out and genitals ripped off frame the Buddha smile of the peaceful mind.’ The writer then turns to his friend, the artist: ‘My friend laughed with invisible eyes. He was not a lama. With a plainness that made the blood pump in my veins I felt the value of progress and I was bubbling over with joy.’<sup>503</sup>

The scene from the temple is represented as a sensory cacophony of impressions: sounds, visions and smells are imposed on the writer, who does not seem to be able to defend himself against all this. The physical sensation of the smell of the rags and rancid butter leads to the ‘smell’ of abstract concepts such as ‘darkness’, ‘prejudice’, and ‘cruelty’. To top it all off, the writer finishes with a very strong hint at human sacrifice, something that he already alluded to in the first description of the service, in which a lama is described as having the cruel face of an executioner, an image that is softened by the lama’s ‘mild and meek eyes’.<sup>504</sup> The conclusion to be drawn from Lindqvist’s narrative is that any cultural loss one might experience in the context of modernization is fully compensated by the loss of religion. Nervous disorders and Soviet realist art pale in comparison with ‘darkness’, ‘cruelty’ and putative human sacrifice. Lindqvist’s rationalism and anticlericalism could not be plainer.

The cultural aspect is not entirely lost on Lindqvist, though, in the sense that certain countries which are modern in many senses—they are industrialized, urbanized, and secular—are criticized for being too dependant on the US, not only financially and militarily, but culturally. Japan, for example, is described as being willing to jump on any American bandwagon, however infantile. Formosa, or Taiwan, too. Both countries are depicted as cultures that have lost their bearings, which makes them vulnerable to westernization in general and American popular culture in particular. Their modernity is therefore shallow and hollow, and the writer employs expressions such as ‘castles in the air’ or ‘a sense of the unreal’ when discussing modern Japan and Taiwan.<sup>505</sup>

Myrdal also considers westernization, in a very specific sense, as an obstacle in the path of true progress and fully realized modernity. His book on Turkmenistan is interesting in many aspects, mainly because it covers a process of re-evaluation, both

502 Lindqvist & Lindqvist, *Asiatisk erfarenhet*, 51.

503 Ibid. 52.

504 Ibid. 50.

505 Ibid. 15, 25–6, 77–80.

of the writer's own position, but also of Turkmenistan's prospects of reaching the next stage in its modernization as part of the Soviet Union. Myrdal is favourably disposed towards developments in the country in the chapters written in 1960, but less so in the chapters from 1965. One of the issues that worries him in 1965 is the blatant racism among Russians towards the Turkmen people, Russians who claim that the Caucasian peoples are superior to those of Asia. 'The West', or 'Europe' in this context, has nothing to do with US relations with the Soviet Union and everything to do with Western or European relations with the Orient, as later described by Edward Said. Myrdal points out how 'rationality' and 'development' are always measured from a Eurocentric standpoint, and it 'upsets and fascinates' him that Russian Communists and Western European capitalists use the same yardstick. Myrdal insists that, as a socialist, he always considers societal change that leads to democracy ('in a wider definition') to be something positive, but he refuses to consider this change an expression of Europeanization, as he denies the existence of specifically Asian or European social, economic and political forms. All developments (in this case, social and political change in Burma and China, where the old royal dynasties lost their hold) can be 'interpreted by analogy with whatever happened in Europe. It is however far from considering this something positive and a given according to the economic development that the cultural pattern of Europe also has to become prevalent.'<sup>506</sup> He insists throughout the book that habits and traditions that express cultural belonging—the way people eat, sit, dress, build houses and live—is a question of locality and history, but never a gauge of progress or civilization, and it cannot be judged from a specific point of privilege.

In the case of Turkmenistan, Myrdal argues that the supposed supremacy of the Russian population has led to mistrust among Turkmens, and social, economic, and technological development has slowed or ceased altogether. He discusses this in terms of a clash of cultures, with the Russians the self-appointed progressives, and suggests it is a widespread phenomenon in Central Asia. He mentions a scene on a train when a drunk Russian was trying to force an old Uzbek farmer to sit 'properly' by Western lights, an act of aggression and humiliation.<sup>507</sup> Another example of many is modern Soviet architecture—'modernism on the surface, without function'—imposed on the country. The Turkmen point out that the architects are based in Moscow and oblivious of the climate, which leads to unbearably warm buildings in summer. Traditional building techniques, adapted to the environment and climate, are dismissed by the Russians as obsolete and 'backward', however rational they may be in that particular context.<sup>508</sup>

<sup>506</sup> Myrdal, *Turkmenistan*, 70–1.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid. 175.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid. 179.

On a related note, Myrdal is severely critical of those ‘foreigners’ in Kabul (often Europeans) who complain about the modernizing process in Afghanistan, claiming that the Afghan *Volksgeist* is endangered while the Afghan authorities rebuild the cities, tearing down the old covered bazaars, building new, wider streets and new blocks. This is described by the author, in contrast to the foreigners, as a cleansing process, ‘Clearing space for light and air’.<sup>509</sup> Myrdal himself admits that he wishes that the old cities, like the covered bazaar in Tashkurgan, could be saved for the future, but knows that he will be rendered speechless when Afghans ask him if it is worth sacrificing effort and resources to restore it, when they need the money for the construction of, say, power plants. Myrdal then accuses the Westerners of a nostalgia that they are not entitled to feel because it would deny the Afghans clean air, clean water, and comfortable, modern lives, interpreting this as an expression of guilt: ‘We contributed to the decline of their culture. We have not made an effort to sustain our own. That is the reason why we accuse them of hostility towards culture when they want to live in better conditions.’ Myrdal continues: ‘What is happening in Maymana and other Afghan cities is necessary clearance work. The country is preparing for an environment where new schools, new industries, and new people will grow strong enough to lift the cities and the country out of the last centuries’ misery.’<sup>510</sup>

In both Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, Myrdal takes stuttering progress to be the result of Western arrogance, with various representatives from the West—in which the Soviet Union interestingly enough is included, hinting at a new axis (North–South)—to some degree sabotaging their next step up the stairs of progress. However good their intentions might be, as long as Westerners and Europeans are too arrogant to discern their own fundamentally racist outlook and give up their privilege of power on all levels, from actual geopolitical power to the definition of culture and well-being, little will change. The image, or trope, of the arrogant, uneducated, brutish, nostalgic, narrow-minded and above all irrational Westerner is repeated over and over, somewhat ironically reinforcing Myrdal’s position as the exception.

It is not particularly surprising that Myrdal portrays Westerners in a demeaning manner. It fits well with the engaging drama he is creating, where the tables are turned and blame is placed firmly with the West. Given that, I find it even more interesting that there are two rare instances in his account of Afghanistan when the otherwise idealized Afghans are described in less flattering terms. On the first occasion, Myrdal describes an Afghan district medic he and Gun had come upon in

509 Myrdal is quoting August Strindberg’s enthusiastic comment on the modernizing of Stockholm in the early 1900s, reminding his Swedish readers of similar ambitions closer to home.

510 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 99–100.



Shibarghan. The doctor had trained in Germany, but returned to his home country in order to work in this provincial city. He tells them of his plans to ensure that the water is clean and he describes how the city has been torn down and rebuilt in order to get rid of ‘filth’: ‘Like cleansing an abscess. Let the sun in and burn away the filth’. When the doctor returns to the subject of water, he laments that people insist on drinking it, whether it is clean or not: ‘And it is hard to teach them otherwise. It definitely takes time to get people to understand what is dangerous and what is good. And people struggle against it. Want the old. The old habitual diseases. The old habitual misery. But you do not like them any the less because of it.’<sup>511</sup> The other instance is when Myrdal quotes Afghan newspapers:

In the papers one can read that it has been found that many people sell unnecessary products and offer unnecessary services in the bazaar. In this era of great building projects for the future of the country, projects that are threatened by labour shortages demand that each citizen contributes for the good of the country, and it is suggested that those who insist on sitting in poverty and filth without doing any sensible work should be sent out to road building and irrigation campaigns.<sup>512</sup>

There are two things to be said here. Firstly, evidently the use of debasing tropes is reserved for people who for various reasons will not or cannot participate in the modernizing process. No connection is made to religion, though, as in Artur Lundkvist’s or Sven Lindqvist’s writing. Indeed, no reasons of any sort are mentioned, apart from habit or stubbornness, reinforcing the impression of irrationality of those deemed backward or redundant. Secondly, Myrdal in both cases is quoting someone else (as in the case of the Indian princes). He has made the choice to include these two instances in the book, but he distances himself from them by neither commenting upon them directly nor developing them further.<sup>513</sup>

### The colonialist Nazis

The echoes of the Second World War were still reverberating loudly in the fifties, as we have seen. Elly Jannes, Olle Strandberg, and Herbert Tingsten all liken the colonial powers, French or British, to their enemy, the German Nazis. This was a common rhetorical figure among anti-colonial intellectuals and politicians in the post-war year, among them Aimé Césaire, so Tingsten, Jannes, and Strandberg were

<sup>511</sup> Ibid. 109–111. Quote at 110.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. 175.

<sup>513</sup> Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 128 points out, with reference to James Clifford, that the ‘quotations ... are staged by the quoter’.

by no means alone. The argument went that Nazism and colonialism shared the same ideological roots and the same methods. And also, if certain values were worth fighting for in Europe, why not elsewhere? How could the colonial powers among the Allies, who had fought Nazism, insist on keeping their colonies? Césaire argued that colonialism was as detrimental to Europe as it was to the colonies, and that the colonial system had to be dismantled, if not for the sake of the people in the colonies, then for the sake of the Europeans themselves. Césaire also suggested that Hitler's 'mistake' was that he exposed citizens of Europe to the same horrific treatment that the colonial powers used against their subjects in the colonies.<sup>514</sup>

Per Wästberg, Anders Ehnmark, and Jan Myrdal all use the comparison between colonial ideas of European supremacy and Nazi or fascist ideology in their travel accounts in order to illustrate the graveness of the situation in the former colonies or the Third World. This of course is a rhetorical device designed to draw in readers who have the Second World War fresh in their memories. In Wästberg's case, this is not far-fetched considering that he writes extensively about apartheid in South Africa, which intensified in the late fifties and early sixties. I have already mentioned that he states that the 'yellow Jewish Star was lit' all over the country the moment the public registration laws were implemented, describing in painful detail how families were torn apart because of each individual family member's skin colour.<sup>515</sup> On another occasion Wästberg wonders if the nationalist South African politicians even know what tragedies they are causing: 'I suppose Hitler perhaps did not know that it was people he hurt. He talked about the house mouse that wished to cohabit only with the house mouse, the field mouse with the field mouse. The Boers sometimes talk about it in terms of bull breeding.' This comparison is then followed by a description of the lives of his friends and their children in the township: 'But Willie, Liza, Angela and Robert ... people ... someone who turns down the kerosene lamp, washes one's face in the morning, brings in firewood and gets a splinter in one's finger, bets on the year a car was made—all this does not exist.'<sup>516</sup>

The question of Hitler and Nazism becomes even more topical and hands-on when Wästberg meets several people with Jewish backgrounds who had fled to South Africa before and during the war. One of these former refugees is a Professor Lachmann. The professor makes an outright comparison—'Many of us say the same thing about the Africans as the decent Germans said about us: Poor bastards, but what can we do about it?'—and then mentions how a friend of his, who also escaped Germany, is unable to engage in the suffering of others, he has 'suffered enough'. The writer and his wife ask themselves why Jews should have to be different, but

514 See Lundahl, *Vad är en neger?* 137–42.

515 Wästberg, *På svarta listan*, 272.

516 Ibid. 114.

Lachmann insists that they ‘ought to be different: they had been persecuted, they knew that the racial mentality in the end only protects the inner circle of the Herrenvolk’.<sup>517</sup>

The German side of the Second World War is clearly present in Wästberg’s narrative, but the other side, the allies, seem to be missing. Instead, he questions the moral stature of the UK when he discusses how South Africa gained its independence: ‘The Africans could not, despite everything, imagine that England, the advocate of liberty in the world, would abandon them to the mercy of a handful of whites with a thirst for power.’<sup>518</sup> Again, Wästberg, in the same manner as Tingsten, and indeed Strandberg and Jannes, forces the reader to engage in the situation in South Africa by reframing it in terms of the war; a war that became a moral standard, where ‘we’ ended up on the good side. Now, there’s something similar to a new war, with ideological fault-lines close the ones during the Second World War, only with new players.

Considering how often Wästberg uses Germany or Britain in his account, it is somewhat surprising how rarely he discusses the role of Sweden in South Africa. He only touches upon the economic ties between the countries twice. The first occasion is when an English family has invited him and Anna-Lena to party. One of the other dinner guests exclaims that her living room furniture is Swedish—‘Swedish design! Yes, it is amazing how you Swedes have infiltrated South Africa!’—and Wästberg makes a point out of vaguely admitting that yes, Sweden is doing big business in South Africa.<sup>519</sup> The second time is when he arrives in Cape Town and, in introducing himself to the head of information at the State Information Office, mentions that he has published articles in *Dagens Nyheter*. The officials are riled by this:

All hell broke loose because of the Scandinavian press. Everyone in the government knew of course that Herbert Tingsten is an insane hater, but what good is that? We invited him for dinner when he was here, he really disappointed us ... We know, and the minister of trade knows, that Swedish businessmen take the unprecedented behaviour of the Swedish press very seriously. We did not have to inform them, your countrymen are just as upset as we are.<sup>520</sup>

Wästberg’s comment on this tirade is to avoid discussing the relationship between Sweden and South Africa altogether. Instead, he makes much of how refreshing this

<sup>517</sup> Ibid. 53–5.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid. 225–6.

outspoken reaction is, compared to the ones he encountered at the federal home office in Salisbury. The moral drama is still safely locked into the conflict between Nazi Germany and liberal Europe, represented by Great Britain, and the relationship between South Africa and Sweden is not developed further.

In the case of Angola and Mozambique, Ehnmark and Wästberg both refer to Portugal's fascist colonial policies, and the absurd discrepancy between the colonial rhetoric of its 'civilizing mission' and the actual situation in the two colonies, with horrors almost unbearable to read about, especially in the case of Angola. The fascist ideology is, of course, not present in their discussion of Portugal on a metaphorical level; it is dealt with as a fact by the authors. It is not until Ehnmark and Wästberg demonstrate the similarities between conditions in the two Portuguese colonies and those in South Africa and South Rhodesia that fascism becomes a device, a figure with which the writers can underline how harsh the situation is, and that any condemnation of Portugal's actions in Africa should be extended to the South African and South Rhodesian regimes as well.<sup>521</sup>

The debasing figure of the Nazi colonialist is also used by Myrdal, but in two different situations. In a letter to an editor at the publishing house Folket i Bild written from New Delhi in 1958 he says that 'Learning a lot now. See the world as it is. And it is pretty scary. More and more convinced that there is nothing that separates a German SS officer from a British colonial officer. Well—apart from the fact that we never get upset by those in power.'<sup>522</sup> The allusion to the Second World War returns in *Kulturers korsväg*, but now it is Pakistani officers who are likened to Nazis. Myrdal discusses the pressing situation on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, where the Pashtuns play a significant role, and he insists on the righteousness of the Pashtuns' ambition to found their own nation, Pashtunistan, and of the Afghans to engage in this process: 'The Pashtuns are the same people as the Afghans. They are a people with a distinctive culture, an independent language. Their territory is geographically cohesive. They have an independent historical tradition. They have a distinctive social organization that still retains great parts of the freedom of barbarism through *ting* and the equality of armed men.'<sup>523</sup> Yet the Afghans are not prepared to go to war against Pakistan over the matter, even though Myrdal defends their right to 'take an interest in the destiny of their brethren on the other side of the border'. He continues: 'Their attitude can be compared to that of the Swedes towards Norway when it was occupied by German troops. We supported

521 Ehnmark & Wästberg, *Angola/Mozambique*, 82, 125, or 139.

522 Archive of Folket i Bild, Stockholm, E1:9, Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek, incoming correspondence.

523 Myrdal, *Kulturers korsväg*, 189.

the liberation movement, we wanted a liberated Norway.’<sup>524</sup> He continues to develop the trope by stating that Afghan ‘indignation at Pakistani assaults on Pashtuns is of the same kind as our indignation at German assaults on Norwegians.’<sup>525</sup> Again, the British are equated with Nazi Germans in the same way that Jannes did in the case of Iraq.

### Self-scrutiny III

In the introduction of this chapter, I touched on the issue of affluence and security in the context of sixties America. Much the same could be said of Sweden. Throughout the sixties, the Social Democratic Party had a majority government and could therefore realize three new reforms: a new elementary school system, a new secondary school, and a grand housing programme to build one million new homes in the decade starting 1965.<sup>526</sup> The economy was booming, peaking between 1960 and 1965 in the ‘Golden Years’ and industry suffered from labour shortages.<sup>527</sup> The standard of living had risen significantly in the fifties, and the Golden Years provided the financial means, while scientific and technological innovations made everyday life more comfortable. People could afford central heating, a fridge, a car, holidays abroad, a television set. Expectations for the future were high.<sup>528</sup> And at the same time, the recently introduced medium of television, as well as newspapers and the radio, supplied news on the harsh realities around the world: colonial wars, famine, and injustice. If one focuses on the years between 1960 and 1966, Annika Olsson lists trouble spots such as the war in Algeria, the crisis in Congo, the Sharpeville Massacre and apartheid in South Africa, nuclear bomb tests, the Cuban missile crisis, the murder of John F. Kennedy, race riots in the US, armed conflict in Kashmir, conflict between India and China, a *coup d’état* in Indonesia, crises in Zambia and Rhodesia, a *coup d’état* in Congo, and the American bombing of Vietnam.<sup>529</sup> Given Swedes’ security and affluence, the contrast with the diametric opposite, beamed straight into their living rooms, might very well have stirred their sense of injustice and even guilt.

Jens Ljunggren emphasizes the significance of Frantz Fanon’s book *Les Damnés de la Terre*, published in 1961, in this context. Ljunggren describes how Swedish intellectuals such as Jan Myrdal and Göran Palm were inspired by Fanon’s radical anti-

524 Ibid. 188.

525 Ibid. 189.

526 Anders Frenander, *Debattens vågor*, 64.

527 Torbjörn Nilsson, *Hundra år av svensk politik*, 107.

528 Berggren, *Underbara dagar framför oss*, 257–8.

529 Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 41.

colonialism and took it upon themselves to introduce a sense of guilt to the Swedish intellectual, political, and cultural debate. For them, Sweden was participating in the colonial oppression and economic exploitation of the Third World just as much as any other rich European or Western state.<sup>530</sup>

Ljunggren demonstrates how this questioning of the moral righteousness of Sweden or the West/North was very prominent immediately before, during, and after the radicalization in 1968. The intellectual is accorded the role of a truth-teller, almost a preacher, who expresses his or her despair with the situation in the world, in order to alert their readers and to encourage them in a change of attitude—and to take action. Ljunggren interprets this as an expression of a desperate need for meaning and purpose: the democratic welfare state had reached a peak, but what now? In order to fend off complacency and indifference, intellectuals conjured up a much-needed emotionally charged drama, in which the so-called Third World and later Vietnam played an indispensable role.<sup>531</sup>

Yet guilt was not only associated with the affluence and supposed indifference of the West/North, it also became a sentiment strongly connected to individual responsibility, especially for intellectuals. Ljunggren demonstrates how Myrdal in particular latched onto the classical role of the intellectual, often represented by Zola and the Dreyfus affair, in which the intellectual legitimizes his (or her) existence through accusations and critique, finding and describing inequalities and wrong-doing in society, and at the same time making himself (or herself) open to critique. It becomes the duty of the intellectual to be a righteous voice—independent and prepared to be tested. Myrdal comprises all these traits in his book *En europeisk intellektuells bekännelser* (*Confessions of a Disloyal European*) (1965), in which he emphasizes the significance of each individual's responsibility, and therefore exposes his own conscience and moral compass to scrutiny in order to create a position from where he is able to formulate critiques. He presents himself as an uncorrupted, hardworking, ascetic writer, uninterested in a comfortable life in his search for truth,<sup>532</sup> much along the same lines as in his travel reports from early sixties onwards.<sup>533</sup>

530 Ljunggren, *Den uppskjutna vreden*, 213–14.

531 Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella*, 77–81.

532 Ibid. 89–91.

533 Ljunggren claims that Myrdal thus introduced a more self-assured intellectual mentality, unlike those writers and journalists who in the late fifties and early sixties had expressed their concern at the situation in former colonies and the Third World, committed but still hesitant, doubtful, and even awkward. The only writer among them to be mentioned by name is Per Wästberg and his travel reports from South Rhodesia and South Africa in which he repeatedly states his frustration with a situation he cannot change (Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella*, 91). I can certainly agree on Wästberg's less programmatic and more reasoning style (not to mention Ehnmark, whom I presume is alluded to), but in my view Wästberg presents a consistent theory of progress and modernization, applied to African conditions. Yes, he expresses despair at the racist,

My interest in this is to explore how Ljunggren's discussion of the significance of emotions, confessions, and moral expressions can be related to the travel writing examined in this chapter.<sup>534</sup> I would argue that travel reports from the Third World constitute a case in point, partly because each writer is always visible in the accounts as the all-encompassing 'I',<sup>535</sup> partly because of the subject matter, the Third World, the benchmark against which Sweden, Europe, the West/North was tested in this period. How do the travel writers treat their roles as writers, travellers and Swedish intellectuals, whether explicitly or implicitly?

None of the writers in this period is as elaborate as Jannes in their discussion of their subject selves as a presence in the text; not for them an ongoing dialogue between the 'She Within Me' and the more reflective 'I'. Jannes had also speculated on the impression she made on those she encountered, and how she was perceived as a European woman in Morocco and Turkey, trying to see herself through the eyes of others. Lidman attempts something similar when she finds herself in a ditch in Hanoi, hiding from American bombers. She happens 'to look at [the woman] standing in the hole next to me. Sixty years of the ninth life. The black hair wrapped like a halo around her head. The mouth ulcerated from betel'. Lidman notes that this elderly woman does not look in the sky, searching for the planes, 'Her eyes were on me with a compact oblivion that made me transparent, completely ignorant'. She continues:

I felt dizzy the same way I did when I was a child ... Or that I had fallen down through time and earth and was standing next to the first mother, whose life had been on foot, thorough, bitter. I was too diluted to be able even to reach her as a scent or a faint trace. ... Yankee go home! We are making fools of ourselves here.<sup>536</sup>

This account is a reversal of the all-seeing I/eye of a travelling writer. From my material, it seems writers expected total attention from those they met or saw on their journeys, and to be denied that affirmation can, as in the case of veiled women, cause frustration. The old woman only confirms the feelings of guilt that the author professes throughout the book. Interestingly, Lidman constructs a connection between herself and the American forces, reinforcing her guilt—a feeling that is strengthened whenever she is greeted with enthusiasm among Vietnamese because

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conservative Europeans living in Africa, and yes, he does fear for the future, but no more than Myrdal does concerning the Russians in Turkmenistan. The main difference, as far as I can see, is that Wästberg does not place any explicit blame on Sweden as a whole.

534 See also David Andersson, *Med skuld känslan som drivkraft: Om svenska Israelvänner och västfiender*, Timbro (Stockholm, 2017), 24–38.

535 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, *passim*.

536 Lidman, *Samtal i Hanoi*, 101–102, quote at 102.



of her Swedish nationality, like the manager of a weapons factory who shows her around: ‘And you ... have demonstrated against the imperialists in Sweden as well. It delights us that you are thinking of us. The female student who got her hand hurt by a policeman because of us, we think of her like a sister.’<sup>537</sup> Having been shown the factory, Lidman is invited to join the workers on a break, where papers are read aloud and tea is served: ‘If they looked in my direction, it was entirely with pure kindness; to them I came from a world full of protesters. I blushed to think of the vast numbers of “analyses” I had read in which Vietnam was of no other significance than as an American dilemma.’ She continues by expressing her gratitude to the Vietnamese press, who did not quote these particular comments—‘the bombs might just be enough’. One of the workers, however, stands staring at her with a hostile look while he slowly pares his nails with a penknife, ‘as if he knew the crucial comments in the West, as if I had written them, as if I had been a puppet from the US.’<sup>538</sup>

The hostility comes as something of a relief for Lidman, and it is striking how readily, eagerly almost, she shoulders the blame for the war. So doing, she obliterates any differences among Westerners concerning nationality or background, and is somehow siding with the hostile Vietnamese man and the ‘first mother’, who do not cut her any slack because of her Swedish nationality. The theme of guilt running through the book is of course closely connected to the Christian faith, again reflecting Lidman’s particular background. Funnily enough, Lidman puts this into words when describing the endless political arguments she has with an Italian journalist she meets in Hanoi, and who is much less inclined to support the Vietnamese: ‘I can see in his eyes that he thinks that I am a highly strung, evangelist sissy.’<sup>539</sup> It is notable that Lidman insists on describing herself with debasing tropes: she is a dissolving object, ignorant, and she carries the blame for an entire war. She hastens to assume the role of the scapegoat, waiting for someone to chase her away, taking the horror with her.

Myrdal and Kessle also experience hostility, in much the same manner as Lidman, as they drive into Kandahar: ‘Only once we are spat on. The small children throw dirt and rocks at the car. They dislike us. We are *feringhi*. Franks. Foreigners. Perhaps Englishmen.’ The writer points out that the British had fought two wars in Afghanistan and that the armies had marched through this area, and he adds ‘Truly, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth have become crooked’, before he quotes extensively from the diary from 1842 written by I. N. Allen, army chaplain of the 41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot. The chaplain describes, oddly disin-

<sup>537</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. 26–7.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid. 104.



terested and in great detail, a massacre in which an Afghan village was ransacked and its inhabitants—unarmed civilians, children, and women—were slaughtered by the British soldiers. This account comes in almost the same breath as the same chaplain's sermons, in which he called on the soldiers to spread the joyous and loving message of Christ across the world: 'We have all seen the ruthless and wild evil, the shameless treason, the infamies that cannot be mentioned, found among the adorers of a false religion to whom the message of the pure and peaceful Gospels is unknown.' Myrdal returns to the children who throw dirt and rocks at them, adding 'I feel like a German in Lidice', and then ends the chapter with the following: 'Our culture is drenched in blood. Wherever you go and wherever you travel in the world you stumble upon graves. Herdsmen who wanted to protect their herds. Peasants who refused to let themselves be slaughtered'.<sup>540</sup>

Like Lidman, Myrdal makes no distinction, temporal or geographical. We, as in 'we the Europeans', share the blame for the atrocities committed by British soldiers in the mid-nineteenth century, making Myrdal feel the same guilt as a German in Lidice, the Czechoslovakian village that was obliterated by German troops in June 1942, its men, women, and children killed on the spot or sent to concentration camps, the village razed to the ground. Oscar Österberg says that this massacre became an important point of reference even during the war, the main symbol of Nazi brutality towards civilians, partly because the Germans filmed the events and spread it through official news channels. This footage was also used as evidence during the first trial in Nuremberg. Österberg describes how Lidice kept its role as a symbol of the horrors inflicted by Nazi warfare throughout the fifties and sixties, which explains why Myrdal chose to invoke it when describing his sense of repugnance.<sup>541</sup>

Where Myrdal and Lidman shoulder the original sin of the West/North, Wästberg develops the theme of confession on a much more personal level, especially in *Förbjudet område*. Per and Anna-Lena Wästberg had chosen Southern Rhodesia mostly because of its official policy on 'harmony between the races'. Wästberg claims that he imagined that 'the races lived separately so that conflicts were hidden and emotions spared' and that he 'was looking forward to a colonial lifestyle as one might encounter it in Kipling or movies from the West Indies'.<sup>542</sup> These expectations are ironically met in full when they are invited to stay with a British family who live

<sup>540</sup> Myrdal, *Kulturerers korsväg*, 220–3.

<sup>541</sup> Oscar Österberg, "Eftervärldens dom har fallit hård": Lidice, Oradour och Sant'Anna i berättelser om andra världskriget', in Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander (eds.), *Katastrofernas århundrade: Historiska och verkningshistoriska perspektiv*, Studentlitteratur (Lund, 2009), 133, 138, 141–3.

<sup>542</sup> Wästberg, *Förbjudet område*, 9.

outside Salisbury on their farm with two children and numerous African servants and workers. The overt racism of this family is a real shock for the Wästbergs, and the author quotes extensively from their first dinner conversation in which their host states that he ‘would never grant suffrage or participation rights to our cattle, but I feed and protect them and know that they are happy’. Wästberg adds: ‘Later we heard similar or worse things, but perhaps never anything less subtle. The first time is the worst. ... Now, at the beginning, we feel devoid of fighting spirit. My wife walks away, crying.’<sup>543</sup> This moment is an epiphany similar to Eric Lundqvist’s. Anger, sadness, disbelief—‘a state between powerlessness and despair’—characterizes the account up to the point where Wästberg and his wife leave the European colonizers, find their own flat, and get to know African Rhodesians, among them members of the African resistance. The journey from being a Rotary scholarship holder with dreams of colonial comfort to the full-blown dissident Wästberg eventually becomes, to the point where he and his wife are thrown out of the country, is described as a process of awakening; yet, he insists, ‘I am only half-awake.’<sup>544</sup>

Wästberg describes a similar learning process as Eric Lundqvist, like him enforcing his authority as a writer by turning away from the person he was, naïve and nostalgic, and allowing the reader to follow him every step into the present, where he stands, liberated and clear-sighted. The difference, though, is that Lundqvist presents his fault as a thing entirely of the past, while Wästberg retains an element of self-doubt into the present: he is half-awake, he has not reached enlightenment to the full. Ljunggren might interpret this as a state of doubt or insecurity, while I am more inclined to interpret it as an act of refreshing humility. Yet Wästberg does not push this self-doubt fully into the present, as in the case of Elly Jannes, who almost undermines the whole idea of the all-encompassing I, the self-assured ever-present centre of the account, by her dialogic, near schizophrenic description of her own racism.

In stark contrast to the deeply personal, confessional stance adopted by Lidman, Myrdal, and Wästberg, we have the writings of Anders Ehnmark. He represents a very different tradition: more academic and hence less emotional, holding the confidence of the reader with markers of objectivity rather than by subjective comments. He insists on almost never writing in first person singular, with eyewitness accounts presented from the viewpoint of a ‘we’. In the case of Angola he uses footnotes as well as in his book about Cuba, giving the texts a stronger authoritative feel, while latching on to an academic tradition. *Cuba Cubana* also ends with a bibliography.<sup>545</sup> The ambition is the same, though, whether the author chooses the

<sup>543</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid. 181.

<sup>545</sup> Ehnmark, *Cuba Cubana*, 199–202.

objective or the subjective route, and that is to enforce the authority and truth effect of the text, assuring the reader that the writer is a truth-teller.

Myrdal also associates himself with a formal academic tradition—he adds a bibliography to his book on Afghanistan, for example—but he also elaborates at length on his own role as an observer and intermediary for the people he encounters, partly in the first chapter of *Kulturers korsväg*, but even more so in *Turkmenistan*. Published in 1965, it was based on two visits to the country, one in 1960 and one in 1965, and the text is divided accordingly. The section from 1960 is characterized by optimism and great hope for the future in which the refreshing primitiveness of the nomadic Turkmen people fuses with the technological aid of the Soviets, creating the ideal modern state, free of bourgeois shackles. The section from 1965, as I have already discussed elsewhere about the issue of Soviet/Western racism, paints an altogether bleaker picture. This contrast is addressed in the very short introductory chapter:

This is a report. To describe reality is to take a stand. Every account is based on choice and evaluation. It is tantalizingly easy in our culture, for sure, to deceive oneself into believing in a linear existence. But the course of events is not linear, and one does not visit the same desert twice. ... I erase words and I change sentences. But I have not changed any expressions of ... evaluations. And I allow for my own contradictions. For precisely this double confrontation with reality forced me to new descriptions and therefore new positions.<sup>546</sup>

Myrdal continues: ‘The risk in what I have written is that I (through an intellectual somersault) seem to describe myself as the fixed point in a reality which transforms itself in leaps and bounds. I am not. I myself react to the reality and change position constantly.’<sup>547</sup> He is expressing the paradox in the explicit ambition of the report (this is reality) and the fact that the reader of course relies on the writer’s account. What does that make the writer? A mere intermediary? This is impossible, as Myrdal is obviously well aware, hence the introduction. Yet he does state his belief in taking a stand, he only seems to wish to ensure the readers that this stand is based on reasonable facts, which in turn can change. Again, this is a moment of confession, a ‘Zolaian’ act of opening up to criticism from an imagined judge and jury, as described by Jens Ljunggren. And even if it is a cheap shot, it is fascinating that the explicit aim of mere reporting on other people’s lives can lead to so much emphasis on the writer himself. Perhaps not so much in the case of *Turkmenistan* as in the case

<sup>546</sup> Myrdal, *Turkmenistan*, 7.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid. 8.

of *Rapport från kinesisk by*, the book that brought Myrdal international recognition, sparking a wave of similar reports by radical writers and journalists, and further buttressing his position as a leading intellectual in Sweden.

*Rapport från kinesisk by* was published in 1963 to somewhat hesitant reviews in Sweden. Annika Olsson, who has written extensively about the book, both about the Swedish and the international editions, shows that the reviewers seemed unsure what to make of it, since it was so different to *Kulturers korsväg*, especially concerning the position of the narrator.<sup>548</sup> The travel report from China consists of a seven-page introduction, where Myrdal in great detail describes the conditions and ambitions of his work. It is here he states that he is an ‘interpreter of reality, not its deformer’,<sup>549</sup> one of his most famous quotations. He starts by stating how the social and political change in China is one of the major upheavals in modern time, and that his book is an attempt to interpret and understand developments, stressing that the character of this upheaval makes it necessary for all and any to fully understand it. In order to offer that, the book presents ‘material’ from which the reader can draw conclusions, based on a complete mapping of life in one Chinese village, Liu Ling, the sort of material he himself wished he had had while travelling in Asia. Having described the negotiations with the Chinese authorities, he describes his and Gun Kessle’s living conditions: ‘Since we lived in caves in a cave village and ate food from the village and constantly socialized with the villagers it would be easy to say that we lived as the people, among the people. But that would be a romantic and mendacious way of putting it.’ He then adds: ‘We lived far better than the villagers. This way of welcoming strangers is not specifically Chinese, one finds it in all peasant cultures.’<sup>550</sup>

Myrdal distances himself from what he calls ‘romantic’ notions of how the travel writer ought to connect with ‘the people’, something that was praised a decade earlier in the case of Eric Lundqvist, when it was singled out as a sign of unaffectedness and anti-racism. Myrdal returns to this theme when discussing his ambition to stay emotionally detached from those he was writing about: ‘I do not wish to convey the impression that I have “sympathized” with Liu Ling. I consider any representation of that sort untruthful and unscientific, flattering to the readers and nothing more, a contribution to the common emotional mendacity one encounters all too often in books about foreign cultures.’<sup>551</sup> Myrdal is obviously making a point of how different this travel book is to the genre in general, and perhaps also to those who wish to present an alternative view of the unfamiliar, foreign, Other.

548 Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 116–118.

549 Jan Myrdal, *Rapport från kinesisk by*, Norstedts (Stockholm, 1963), 9.

550 Ibid. 11.

551 Ibid. 13.

The introduction is followed by a series of interviews with the inhabitants of Liu Ling, interspersed with statistics on its demography, education, and agricultural performance, and the like. The writer is not explicitly present in these interviews, of course, giving the impression that the interviewees are speaking for themselves. This represented a break with the tradition in travel writing, where the presence of the narrator was the mark of authenticity. The presentation of the book added to the reviewers' bewilderment, since the first edition was in many respects reminiscent of *Kulturers korsväg*, with a jacket illustration by Gun Kessle in the same manner as the book about Afghanistan. For the English and American editions, like the later Swedish edition, the cover illustration was replaced by a photograph, creating a documentary signal, a style that later became expected of the genre. It is also noteworthy that the report did not attract much attention in Sweden until after its international success, something that Myrdal himself has pointed out. Part of its success can be put down to the somewhat different marketing of the book: for the English and American markets, *Report from a Chinese Village* was presented by the publishers as an anthropological study, with references to the renowned Gunnar Myrdal, the father of the writer. In this way, the text was given a new frame that enhanced and made sense of its ambition and scope.<sup>552</sup>

At the same time, Myrdal does mention the significance of his father in the introduction, as well as his mother Alva Myrdal, along with Bertil Mathsson and Kusum Nair, as interlocutors who spent a great deal of time discussing the issues with him, and who 'contributed to shaping my attitude towards reality and the description of reality, the material, and the method to deal with the material'.<sup>553</sup>

Annika Olsson connects some of Myrdal's methodological reasoning to his father Gunnar Myrdal's highly influential investigation of American racism, *An American Dilemma*. Gunnar Myrdal had made it clear in the introduction that he harbours no illusions concerning his own objectivity, stating that his experiences and analyses are dependent on his position as an outsider, but also that this particular perspective can contribute to new insights.<sup>554</sup>

This idea about the writer's perspective is not new—in fact, it is no different from any other travel writer I have written about in this study—only the personal perspective used to be the charm of the genre (with the travel writer thought of as a cicerone), not a problem in itself. Now the stakes seem to be much greater, and I think it has to do with the political ambitions of the writer: it is no coincidence that Myrdal chooses to write about revolutionary peasants, given his belief in the potential for a true revolutionary modernity arising from an uncorrupted ideal, be it

552 Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 122.

553 Myrdal, *Rapport från kinesisk by*, 9–10.

554 Olsson, *Att ge den andra sidan röst*, 132.

Chinese farmers, Afghan schoolboys or Turkmen oilfield workers. He needs to create an open and explicit representation that virtually demands scrutiny in order to convince those who do not share his beliefs, but, thinking back to the ideas presented by Jens Ljunggren, also in order to present himself as a new breed of intellectual. There is a melange of hinted-at scientific aspirations designed to strengthen the authority and thus the political clout of the writer. Again, Myrdal's explicit ambition is to make the reader understand the upheaval, not make him or her take a stand, but, as Olsson says, this didacticism has a clear ideological bias: the revolution is not just the best alternative, it is the only alternative.<sup>555</sup>

There is also another thread that might be worth following, and that is to interpret the ambitions of this report in the context of Artur Lundkvist's travel book from China, *Den förvandlade draken*. Considering the severe critique Lundkvist's travel book was met with, as already discussed in Chapter 3, I cannot help but think that Myrdal's painstakingly detailed account of his preparations and the conditions under which he and Kessle lived in Liu Ling as a way to anticipate the fierce objections *Den förvandlade draken* had received. Myrdal did his best to avoid the epithet of 'parrot from Beijing'. There is no way to prove this connection, but considering the short time span—five years between the publication of Lundkvist's book and the point when Myrdal started to discuss his plans with the Chinese embassy in Stockholm in 1960—I would find it odd if the vicious debate in 1955 had not in some way played a role.

And *Rapport from kinesisk by* was influential, especially among young students and intellectuals searching for a socialist alternative to the Soviet Union. That could also put his (*Turkmenistan*) Soviet discussion in a new context: the growing interest in peasant revolutionaries, something that had the potential to resonate with a Swedish self-understanding based on the (Romantic) idea of the inherently free and democratic peasant, a resilient personage and idealization that seems to have adapted to and resonated with each generation. Jan Myrdal, however radical and revolutionary, therefore stayed safely within the bounds of the Swedish national narrative, making his case easier to grasp, even for those who did not share his political beliefs. It is there the potential to change lies.

To return to the initial question of guilt and the shift in Sweden from neutrality/welfare to North/affluence, a burning question arises: is it at all possible to be rich and righteous at the same time? The Swedish welfare state, with its past and present, could perhaps be reinterpreted, this time not as a success story. This is perhaps the reason why development aid became such an issue at the time, especially among Liberals and Social Democrats. Olof Palme discussed the relationship between ma-

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555 Ibid. 151.

terial progress and internationalism, stressing the need for further developments in Sweden, in the aforementioned article in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*. Palme confesses how the working class writers of the 1930s and 1940s inspired him, and others, to commit their lives to the eradication of social injustice in Sweden. He then points out that internationalist writers like Per Wästberg and Artur Lundkvist could inspire present-day Swedes to take political action on global issues, which in turn would lead to increased development aid. Palme adds that some might consider the aspired 1 per cent of the GNP utopian, yet he reminds them that several of those social security reforms implemented in the years after the war were once deemed utopian.<sup>556</sup>

Palme returned to the connection between Swedish affluence and the exploitation of the Third World in his famous Vietnam speech from 1965, in which he—cautiously—condemned the American war in Vietnam. Interestingly, the speech was less concerned with the war in Vietnam and more with the increasingly radicalized political situation in Sweden.<sup>557</sup> Palme did not question the path of social and material progress taken in Sweden, and instead pointed out that it was the same path that the poor farmers of Vietnam were about to embark on. He said that if one changed the geographical perspective to a temporal one, one would see that what might seem utopian to Vietnamese peasants was the same utopian idea that had once inspired the pioneers of the Swedish labour movement.<sup>558</sup> Apart from the familiar figure of history as an exportable commodity, as earlier discussed in relation to Signe Höjer and Herbert Tingsten, one can note that according to Palme progress was not a sign of the vile exploitation of poorer countries, but Sweden was a persuasive and illustrative example for the postcolonial states. Halted progress in Sweden would not be a help to anyone.

From the five years that had elapsed, one can see how Palme tried to navigate two different political and cultural landscapes. The objective of the article in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* was to prompt a more radical, internationalist outlook in Sweden, and five years later Palme seemed to be doing his best to moderate the very same.<sup>559</sup>

556 Palme, 'Politiker och författare', 231.

557 I wish to thank Stefan Nordqvist for pointing this out.

558 Parts of the speech are quoted in Östberg, *I takt med tiden*, 270–2. For a discussion on the emotional rhetoric used by Palme, see Ljunggren, *Den uppskjutna vreden*, 221.

559 For a discussion of the consequences of Palme's political rhetoric in this period, see Östberg, *I takt med tiden*, 312–15.

## Concluding remarks

The travel writers discussed in this chapter share an inverted version of a binary relationship between debasement and idealization. Per Wästberg and Anders Ehnmark were the exceptions, having turned their backs on the West in general, but Sweden in particular, and in doing so, they depict Sweden (and the West) as an example of incomplete, insufficient modernity. There is nothing heroic or distinctive about the narrative of Sweden presented here; it is just another rich, unjust European or Western nation among many. Welfare is suddenly reinterpreted as a signifier of abundant wealth and hence exploitation. This hints at the aforementioned shift from a West–East axis characterized by the Cold War to the North–South axis, in which the divide between rich and poor nations is the deciding factor.

This position influences how the writers describe themselves, with Sara Lidman and Jan Myrdal describing at length how they are perceived as ‘Europeans’. Elly Jannes does not question her own presence to this extent, but she shares their determination to understand how her own background might influence those she encounters. The stakes are higher for these travel writers, however, as they willingly take on the guilt and responsibility that earlier would have weighed on the colonial powers. Not any more.

As for representations of gender and sexuality, the veil was as significant as it had been in Artur Lundkvist’s and Eric Lundqvist’s writing. Sven Lindqvist and Jan Myrdal in particular occupy themselves with the veil as they unravel the time-knots they find in Asia. And again, the veil, along with other indications of accessibility or unapproachability, decided the direction entire peoples will move: forward to the future, or back to the past? Other characteristics of a primitivist or cultural radical standpoint are also very much present in this chapter, as the writers sought for signs of a modernizing potential, signified for example by pure pride, untouched by religion or ‘civilization’.





## 5. Summary and discussion

In the introduction of this book I formulated a set of questions to guide me through my investigation of critical travel writing. The first was which colonial tropes could be traced in the texts—not if, as I saw no relevance in constructing a study with that as a starting point, if only because too much research on the colonial discourse in Swedish source material has been done for that to seem pertinent. Another question dealt with how the tropes, when identified, should be interpreted in the context of Swedish intellectual, political, and cultural life in this particular period. I also wondered what the characteristics of these tropes must have been for them not to be understood as colonial or imperialist by readers at the time. The travel accounts were considered critical and anti-colonial, there is no doubt about that. And then there is the extent to which the social criticism of cultural radicalism affected the travel writing. Did the ideas, hopes, and convictions of cultural radicalism travel with the writers, and if so, how?

Beginning with the expressions of a colonial discourse in the travel accounts, the tropes that are presented by David Spurr and Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins constitute a rather open, overlapping repertoire or vocabulary available to a privileged (Western) observer. It is not a set list with which one can dissect the texts, although it has provided me with a map to guide my reading and analysing the texts. Also, I do not consider this map to be a way of measuring the extent to which someone was ‘colonial’ enough or not, or that certain tropes have to be present in order to decide how flawed a travel writer is.

That said, there are several tropes evident in the travel accounts that I have read. One of the most prominent is the idealization of the Other, a trope Spurr traces back to the early days of imperial expansion, in which intellectuals such as Montaigne and Rousseau used the descriptions of peoples encountered (and subsumed) as models of an alternative world, the answer to a question posed in Europe or the West. The idealizations that can be found in the travel books in question often revolve around metaphors concerning ‘purity’, of peoples and regions and nations, untouched by certain versions of civilization, or of potential to development. The idealizing descriptions are often met with their opposite—instances of debasement—which are indirectly or directly posed against each other.

Another significant trope is that of eroticization, of the idea that the Other (woman) is an infinite and accessible source of pleasure. Some of the male travel writers seem to consider it their right to observe and assess the erotic potential of the women they encounter, as if enforcing this sort of masculinism were a necessary element of the genre. Here one can point to the existence of the tropes of assessment, observation, and surveillance as well: the privilege to observe and assess, to judge, and to draw conclusions on the basis of certain characteristics.

The privilege of observation and assessment is necessary to yet another trope, classification; that is, the situation where the travel writer decides or suggests where on a temporal scale the place and/or people visited reside, creating a merger of time and space.

In the following I sum up the use of tropes by the three different groups of writers, demonstrating how they lead to insights into the life spans of certain positions, for some are employed across the entire period and others are not. I also discuss the relationship between the travel accounts and cultural radicalism, as well as between cultural radicalism and something one might be brazen enough to call Swedish culture. In the last section of this chapter, I return to the question of critiquing critiques, reflecting on the limitations of the chosen perspectives, and the hazards of trying to catch the writers unawares.

## Eroticization

Considering the significance of sexuality and gender as categories according to which norms and values (and despair as well as hope) are distributed in the unravelling of the unknown or less known, it is interesting to see how often issues of gender and sexuality in a society are openly discussed as important subjects by the travel writers. There are of course other instances where expressions of less open norms concerning gender and sexuality demand greater circumspection on the part of the scholar, but not only then. The writers obviously find it a cause worth looking into, which follows the logic of cultural radicalism and the creation of a 'new', 'liberated', and 'modern' woman. The question of sexuality outside a heteronormative frame is more complicated, in some cases demonstrating homophobia legitimized using a class perspective.

In the case of the writers who represent a more primitivist understanding of the world and themselves, there are several instances of reasoning that have strong connections to a classic colonial discourse. One that stands out is the connection made between landscapes and 'woman' as an elemental creature. Both Artur Lundkvist and Eric Lundqvist describe places they visit in terms of women's bodies, creating a

sexual bond between the exotic, female landscape and the male traveller. They also used the same colonial cliché, which is based on an idea of a harmonious fusion, when they described the consequences of war, violence, and/or colonialism as a form of rape of the same landscape. There are also moments where the writers conflate the two dichotomies of nature–culture and woman–man, where the idealization of nature brings out the idealization of women as nature, as in the case of the young girl Ota, who not only exposes herself to Eric Lundqvist but also offers herself to him when they meet in the woods, according to him. The reversal of this dichotomy leads to the debasement of women who do not expose themselves in any manner, veiled women being a case in point. The two writers harp on about the frustration they feel when women do not look back at them (openly) and refuse to reciprocate their appreciation.

The veil returns as a topic among the travel writers from the fifties (Chapter 3), but not to the same extent and not necessarily in the same manner. To Elly Jannes, the veil is an issue much closer to home than was the case for the male writers. She discusses the veil as a metaphor for global feminist struggle, and of her own and other women's reserve and fear to participate. This perspective is very different to that of Åke Sparring, who only regards the veil as 'backward' and a sign of non-civilization, and who expresses his frustration at not being able to see and evaluate the looks of the women he meets. He also contrasts the veil with the 'European fashion' worn by unveiled Persian girls or the 'tiny' Parisian shoes that he can glimpse under the veils of Afghan women. He also refers to a scene in Pakistan, a university where the young female students are no longer veiled, but where young men and women do not socialize, the point he is making being that 'families' and 'traditions' still stand in the way.

Among the travel writers in the sixties (Chapter 4), the veil becomes yet again an object of frustration, an indication of non-modernity, as in religious customs, tradition, the reign of the priesthood over the people, and the upper classes. The veil is contrasted with its opposite: accessibility marked by reciprocity, by women looking back at the travel writers, evaluating them, recognizing their presence. Jan Myrdal also constructs a strong connection between poverty, harshness, and the need for a workforce among 'primitive' tribes and unveiled women, which he then contrasts with city life, where rich men can afford to abstain from the work of their wives, and hence keep them veiled as a sign of affluence. He then expands this relationship between poor and rich in Afghanistan to the poor and the rich in the world, discussing the emancipation of Swedish women as a failure, a chimera. The veil, in this context, is not only a retrograde element in the present, its opposite, the non-veil, points forward to the future. Sven Lindqvist also creates a connection between sup-

posed primitiveness, visible, flirtatious women (with swaying hips and uncovered breasts, walking along the roads for everyone to see), and the future, claiming that these 'primitive' women, along with industrious Sikh women, represent a 'vital' source of hope for the future, in this case in India.

Another source of hope in the context of eroticization are two Indian temples with sexually explicit statues and sculptures, which Lindqvist interprets as remains of a very different and 'uncorrupted' Indian culture, a culture of (hetero)sexual abundance characterized by limitless joy and creativity. Artur Lundkvist discusses the same temples in terms of 'hopes for the future' of India. Interestingly, the temples are decidedly Hindu, but that does not seem to interfere with the writers' secular perspective: this seems to be another version of Hinduism. Returning to the issue of homophobia, Lindqvist also seems to suggest that if Nordic Hellenists had been inspired by these expressions of 'heterosexual maturity' in India instead of 'homosexual immaturity' in Greece, the upper classes (which I presume one can assume that 'Hellenists' represent, considering how grand tours and higher education were generally reserved for the upper classes) would not have been 'tainted' by male homosexuality. As Lena Lennerhed says, it would be interesting to see whether the emancipatory ambitions of the cultural radicals concerning individual freedom, sexuality, and sexual expressions were indeed strictly limited to heterosexuality. Of course, the chances are strong that the researchers' expectations of finding an all-encompassing radicalism on the part of the radicals will be dashed.

## Idealization

Two other tropes that offer clues to the relationship between the travel writing and a cultural radical matrix are idealization and debasement: the critical stance of the writers is of course expressed by describing the problems of the day and their hopes for a better tomorrow, and Other places and Other people provide a set of samples utilized as examples of a promising future (idealization) or a damning past (debasement).

For Eric Lundqvist and Artur Lundkvist, idealization is connected to notions of purity, primitiveness, but the two writers differ slightly in the employment of the trope. For Artur Lundkvist, idealization, the finding of good examples, is very much connected to his Marxist worldview, to the point where he needs to reinterpret situations in order to make them fit the theory, as in the case of Chinese women and their 'Puritan' attire. One of the founding ideas of cultural radicalism and primitivism is that both sexual and socioeconomic liberation must be achieved for the revolution to be fully realized. If China represents the highest stage of global history

and development, women cannot be perceived as anything but 'sexually liberated'. A similar situation concerns women in Cuba, where their emancipation has not reached the correct level because of Catholic tradition, but that will change, according to Lundkvist. He also uses 'primitives' as a source of sexual liberation, and by extension as representatives of a hope for a better future, as in the case of the ancient Hindu temples in India or the primitive groups living on the margins of Indian society.

Eric Lundqvist is not at all concerned with Marxist stage theory in his travel accounts. His primitivism/radicalism is much less 'rational' and much more 'romantic', to refer back to the concepts suggested by Martin Wiklund. Lundqvist's ideal state of life is represented by 'the jungle', a space where he feels true, where he is able to live according to his anti-racist ideals, where he can let his inner savage show. What the two writers share, however, is the cultural radical and likewise primitivist concept of life as an (anticlerical) indicator of salvation and hope, of a bright future. It signifies everything that is good: purity, naturalness, immediacy, and liberation.

The idealizations in Chapter 3 are somewhat more complex, as the writers are less inclined to latch onto a set theory, but there are common threads that also can be related to the romantic radicalism of Eric Lundqvist. Jannes, Höjer, Sparring, and Strandberg all seem to share a fear that the modernization process in Sweden has gone too far, and that the rationalism and functionalism of the modern welfare state have obliterated key values, and one gets the feeling that it might be too late. The values that are brought forward as positive and yet at risk include joy or the art of living, love, beauty, warmth, excitement, tenderness, care, dignity, and culture. These are threatened by too relentless a modernization process, whether Western or domestic, or by a culture based on consumption and affluence.

Technology, however, does not pose a threat in itself. Åke Sparring in particular hopes for a merger between East/South (life, warmth, love) and West/North (technology, scientific advances), where each can contribute and create a better future, the Chagga people in Tanganyika (Tanzania) being a case in point. They are presented as the 'hope' or 'light' of Africa (the opposite of the Mau Mau Rebellion, in other words) and as extremely successful coffee farmers, having learnt how to grow coffee rationally from white farmers. The cooperative aspect is emphasized, as is the rationality of the whole enterprise. Both Åke Sparring and Olle Strandberg assure the reader that the Chagga people are not behaving as *nouveau riche*, for they invest responsibly in education and media with the welfare of the people in mind.

Another expression of idealization reveals the mental proximity to the Second World War: the Norwegian resistance movement is a recurring figure that indicates resistance worthy of support, used to describe to nationalist struggle in colonies and

former colonies. These expressions of resistance are also described by Höjer and Tingsten in terms of the Swedish historical master narrative, where the labour movement (and Social Democratic Party) brought the Swedish people from darkness to light, from poverty to welfare.

If the combination of technology and human warmth promises a better future for the writers in the fifties, the writers in the sixties (Chapter 4) choose to combine technology with other qualities that are supposed to lead to a brighter future: purity, harshness, poverty, pride, and necessity. Primitiveness and barbarism are privileged as states of ‘uncorruptedness’, where upper-class and/or middle-class values, religious beliefs, Victorianism, consumerism, civilization, or culture have not muddied the waters, creating the cleanest of slates for proper, pure modernity to develop. This is the cultural radical vision of free individuals in a completely new and authentic society come true, highlighting the universal ambitions of this tradition. And like the idealization of purity, one can trace a similar idealization of youth: children and young people carry the future, untouched by the past and the present. The idealization of youth is also expressed in the idealization of the righteous warrior, of the Davids and Goliaths, whether the Vietcong, the ANC, or the Afghan mujahidin. Another indication of righteousness is masculinity, at least in the writings of Jan Myrdal.

## Debasement

The debasing trope is the most provokingly ‘colonial’ of all those I address. Idealization as a form of Othering is less conspicuous—much more sympathetic and easier to interpret as a form of resistance to a colonial mindset, Birgitta Holm’s discussion of Sara Lidman’s *Samtal i Hanoi* being a good example. I find that the two tropes do seem to work best together, however, which mirrors the oppositional character of cultural radical critique.

In Chapter 2, Artur Lundkvist is as consistent as always: his debasing descriptions bear out his theoretical and political beliefs, mainly concerning religion. Religion for him is more to blame for the situation in the colonies and former colonies than are colonialism and neocolonialism, having weakened people to the point where occupation and exploitation have been possible. He seems particularly averse to Catholicism, reserving his special ire for Catholic nuns, whom he describes in an extremely debasing manner, their inherent perversity a threat to ‘Life’. Hinduism is also depicted as a threat, albeit to India’s future, and Lundkvist does not hold back when he writes about Hindus: they are described in a racist and stereotypical fashion. In this respect, Lundkvist’s is the standard rationalist, anticlerical and anti-

authoritarian stance central to cultural radicalism. One can also follow Ingemar Hedenius by interpreting Lundkvist's aversion as a belief that religion in any form is an expression of irrationality and a sacrifice of reason. Eric Lundqvist, meanwhile, does not show a similar aversion to religion or religious tradition. He might ridicule it, or try to explain or relativize it, but Lundqvist is more concerned with the issue of primitiveness. He tends to confirm stereotypical images of the cannibalistic 'savage', only to turn them against the West, using the debasement twice, once against 'savages' and the second time against Westerners. He claims that 'we are all cavemen', prefiguring what Fothergill says about *Heart of Darkness*, but that Westerners are more technologically advanced and therefore more lethal.

In the writings by the second group—Höjer, Jannes, Sparring, Strandberg, and Tingsten—the most debasing tropes are applied to the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya, which follows the contemporary (mainly British) representation of the rebellion as cruel, atavistic, irrational, 'dark', and extremely violent. There is no discussion of Mau Mau by Strandberg or Sparring that shows a flicker of understanding for this armed anti-colonial uprising. Other instances of debasement concern the immaturity of certain states, unable to exploit their own natural resources, as in the case of Jannes's description of Iranians as children, incapable of running their oil industry without the assistance of British Petroleum. It is particularly interesting to see how Jannes follows a more 'colonial' worldview, where the Other depicted as a child is debasing, as opposed to the reverence for the young among the sixties travel writers.

Another form of debasement is directed at the European Other, and again, one can discern the temporal proximity to the Second World War. In the attempt to encourage understanding for the nationalist, anti-colonial cause in the colonies and former colonies, the writers draw straightforward comparisons between Nazi Germany and the colonial powers, the former Allies, or, as in Tingsten's case, between Nazi Germany and the South African apartheid regime. Following Johan Östling, I have already noted how extensive the 'purge' of German influence was in Swedish post-war intellectual and political life. Looking at post-war Swedish social democracy and its attitudes towards Europe in general, Bo Stråth, citing Klaus Misgeld, has pointed out that it was characterized by aversion. Europe represented the four C's: conservatism, capitalism, cartels, and Catholicism.<sup>560</sup> In the light of these travel writings I would like to add a fifth C—colonialism.

This form of debasement is present among the sixties writers as well. Especially Per Wästberg describes the apartheid policies of South Africa in terms of Nazism, a connection which also has a historical base in the support of Nazi Germany by

<sup>560</sup> Stråth, *Folkhemmet mot Europa*, 208.



South Africa. It is as if the trauma of Holocaust, which still had not become a subject of reflection and discussion in Sweden at the time, was being played out in a colonial setting. Another repeat target of debasement is the preoccupation with religion and religious people. Jan Myrdal and Sven Lindqvist are relentless in their critique of religion, both as a cultural and societal fact and as a personal choice. To them, Islam, Mongolian Buddhism, and Hinduism represented evil, forcing people into states of metaphorical sleep or irrational obedience, duping or forcing them to 'sacrifice reason on the altar of faith', in Ingemar Hedenius' words. The debasing descriptions are very strong. Sven Lindqvist above all is very harsh in his accounts of Hinduism and Buddhism, hinting at infanticide, cannibalism, and sexual perversion among the adherents of the two religions. In this respect, Myrdal and Lindqvist draw on an extremely racist discourse, a strategy they share with Artur Lundkvist, along with their political convictions and theoretical frames. This debasement is not primarily based on skin colour or ideas on race, but rather it is religion that has precedence. Their use of the trope, however, is racist, tapping into a large and familiar repertoire of Othering. And the scepticism of religion that triggers their endeavour is closely connected to the more rationalist traditions within cultural radicalism.

Debasement does not stop there, as it is also used to great effect elsewhere, often directed at the West and Europe, as a backwater, as a Victorian stage in global history soon to be forgotten or abandoned, a 'dinosaur' on its way to extinction.

## Classification, or the unravelling of time-knots

Cultural radicalism is often described as being based on a progressive, universalist worldview. With the support of rationality, scientific knowledge (whether the social or natural sciences or psychoanalysis), open debate, the vision of the uncorrupted youth, and reform or revolution, people, all people, would become emancipated and so be able to live according to their natural and sound instincts, unfettered by convention, inhibition, religious belief, or authority, creating a truly liberated, truly modern world. The prescription for successful development is well formulated, the signs of progress and the reverse, stagnation or reversal, defined accordingly.

In the case of these particular travel writers, I would even suggest that the ambition to place both Sweden/the West and everywhere else along a timeline, according to a global history with a particular direction comprising defined, fixed stages, is a driving force in the writers' willingness both to travel and to write about it. In order to formulate this ambition, the vocabulary introduced by Dipesh Chakrabarty—the unravelling of time-knots—seems to be fundamental to these travel accounts. The

critical ambition of the writers depends (of course) on constant evaluations of what they consider to be expressions of the past and the present, while painting a picture of a better future. It is also in this context, along with its cultural radical background—sometimes Marxist, but always modernist—that the other tropes can be interpreted. It is by using debasement and idealization, for example, that the writers signal the tenor of their assessments: idealizations pointing forward, debasements pointing backwards. They sort their impressions and experiences according to this tradition of thought, unravelling a linear timeline from the perspective of a privileged observer operating within a cultural radical framework. This framework creates an Othering process that reproduces the oppositional characteristics, often inverting the values of a ‘normal’ colonial discourse, resulting for example in ‘barbarism or savagery is good’.

As for the privilege of Swedish writers to create the privileged position of ‘monarch’, the elevated position from which the observation, assessment, and evaluation (the unravelling) can be performed, it becomes more complicated as the period progresses. Both Eric Lundqvist and Elly Jannes question their roles as travelling Westerners, but it clearly became more of an issue in the sixties, since all the travel writers in that group (Chapter 4) in some manner reflect on the question. Their solutions differ, of course, from the distanced, almost academically defined position as a writer (Ehnmark and Myrdal), to extreme self-criticism (Wästberg, Lidman, and Myrdal). I interpret this as an expression of Western/Northern colonial guilt and the confessional character of intellectual work on the part of Swedish intellectuals in the sixties. The ‘naïve’ or self-evident position of a Western or European travel writer is no longer available, not even to a supposedly non-colonial Swedish traveller and intellectual.

## Critique, and critiques of critique

One of the issues I raised in the introduction concerned the critical ambitions of the travel writers in relation to the colonial discourse. I wondered how readers at the time would have been able to overlook the abundance of colonial tropes and interpret the accounts as anti-colonial. The question is of course a construction along with all the other conventions of a dissertation, creating a bit of drama to push the study forwards, and answer is naturally complex. One of the most obvious answers is that the travel writers in question explicitly and harshly criticized colonialism and imperialism. There is simply no need for a reader to dig much further, unless one is a reader of suspicion in the tradition of Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx.<sup>561</sup> Also, if one

<sup>561</sup> See Felski, ‘Fear of Being Ordinary’, 321.

compares the critical travel accounts with the 'normal' travel stories of the kind *Året Runt* published, where 'primitives' devoid of context or history were presented as objects of amusement, desire, or horror, one can easily understand the significance of the more advanced analyses and descriptions offered by these particular writers.

It is also important to consider the cultural radical framework. Firstly, the tropes follow the same logic as in a critical analysis of Swedish, European, or Western conditions: thus, thinking in terms of debasements and idealizations, whatever is considered conventional, whether expressions of religion or prudery, inhibitions, and so on will be criticized as irrational or backwards (as in the case of housewives, Swedish and British alike), and the same will be true of the idealizations. And secondly, the debasements and idealizations do not follow the colour of people's skins; no, they follow the roles different individuals or peoples take or are given in the particular version of ideal modernization that the writer prefers. The problem arises when the modernist and colonial discourses overlap, which they tend to do the moment a privileged writer takes it upon him- or herself to assess and evaluate the other Others. This suggestion is the contribution of my privileged self as a theoretically informed, 'suspicious' reader with hindsight.

Another aspect to discuss in the context of cultural radicalism as an interpretative frame is the role of this tradition of thought in Sweden. In order to understand the critical potential of the travel writing studied here, it must be remembered that cultural radicalism was not a phenomenon on the margins, but a highly influential political and intellectual perspective to which socialists, social democrats, and liberals were much wedded. I have already explained the relationship between several cultural radicals and the establishment and development of the welfare state, but it bears repeating that cultural radicalism was in certain respects hegemonic throughout the post-war period. Tomas Forser even argues against the use of the term in a Swedish context, as opposed to Norway and Denmark, since one of the main characteristics of cultural radicalism is intellectual independence. For a Swedish reader of these particular critical travel accounts, I would suggest that the cultural radical perspective would not have presented too radical a framework. On the contrary, the modernist, progressive perspective would feel very familiar.

So, finally, how do I relate to the critical, postcolonial perspective I have both relied upon and somewhat undermined throughout this study? The process of reading, analysing, interpreting, and criticizing has in many ways been attended by mixed feelings, both towards the travel writers and towards the emancipating ambitions of postcolonial theory. Sometimes I have felt as if I have let both down. On the one hand, I have wanted to be fair to the writers, to communicate my admiration and appreciation of their work as extremely skilled and interesting writers. I

still enjoy reading these travel accounts, which I suppose is a rather rare situation for a researcher at this point of her work. On the other hand, there is no reason to downplay the fact that these travel accounts can be read and interpreted within a system of thought and attitudes that has buttressed European or Western imperialist expansion. In that sense, if the definition of an intellectual is someone who manages to rise entirely above prevailing circumstance, then it is not met. And, yet again, when writers and intellectuals wish to convince others or change their minds, there are limits to how avant-garde one can be. Language, in all its meanings, most definitely limits our means of communication, but it also enables. To do as the travel writers in question have done—to pick a starting point in the familiar, in this case a colonial discourse, in order to expand, reverse, and deflect the expected, and in so doing create a critical and convincing argument—is an exercise in efficient communication. They may not rise above their time and perspective, but one can admire from afar and learn from their ability to move within and perhaps beyond the boundaries.



## Summary in Swedish

Det här är en studie av kritiska reseskildringar från vad man brukar kalla Tredje världen, skrivna och publicerade mellan 1947 och 1966 av en rad svenska intellektuella. Dit hör Anders Ehnmark, Signe Höjer, Elly Jannes, Sara Lidman, Sven Lindqvist, Artur Lundkvist, Eric Lundqvist, Jan Myrdal, Åke Sparring, Olle Strandberg, Herbert Tingsten och Per Wästberg, författare och skribenter som på olika sätt och i olika grad kan karakteriseras som kulturradikaler.

Det finns flera syften med att undersöka just dessa reseskildringar. Ett sådant är att de ger förutsättningar att diskutera kulturhistoriska frågor som rör Sveriges förhållande till omvärlden i allmänhet och Tredje världen i synnerhet. Texterna publiceras under en period när Sverige söker och tar sig en ny roll i det internationella systemet i takt med att en mer aktiv, mer radikal utrikespolitik utvecklas. Det kalla kriget skapar en specifik roll för Sverige som en neutral icke-allierad nation, en tredje väg mellan kapitalism och kommunism, som ett föredöme för de nya stater som bildas i och med avkoloniseringen. I detta sammanhang bygger en del av den utrikespolitiska retoriken på föreställningen att Sverige inte har någon egentlig kolonial historia, och att Sverige just därför är lämpat som samarbetspartner för postkoloniala nationer.

Detta är också en period när den svenska ekonomin är osedvanligt stark, mycket tack vare exportindustrin och att arbetsmarknadens parter är inriktade på konsensus. Det finns alltså förutsättningar att förverkliga det välfärdssamhälle man tidigare önskat. Men hur ska samhället se ut? Hur ser en lyckad modernisering ut? Och hur ska man förhålla sig till det egna välståndet, när stora delar av världen är fattig? Reseskildrarna förhåller sig ofta kring samhällsfrågor i bred bemärkelse: Hur ser det ut där de reser, vad utmärker dessa samhällen och människor? Vad är bra, vad är dåligt? Och hur ska det bli bättre, hur riskerar det att bli sämre? Några av reseskildrarna har stora förhoppningar på de nya stater som bildas i Afrika och Asien. De förväntar sig att dessa ska kunna förverkliga de drömmar om den rena okorrumperade modernitet som de anser på olika sätt har fallerat i Sverige, eller i väst.

Ett annat syfte att ägna sig åt dessa reseskildringar är de teoretiska problem som uppstår när man med efterhandsperspektivets privilegium ska förhålla sig till andras

försök att formulera kritik, i det här fallet mot kolonialism, neo-kolonialism, rasism och föreställningar om vit överhöghet. Det är nämligen fullt möjligt att hitta olika exempel i texterna som visar att författarna omfattas av de koloniala föreställningar som de samtidigt vill kritisera. Hur ska man då tolka dessa reseskildrares status som kolonialkritiska? Hur ser dessa exempel på koloniala föreställningar ut för att *inte* tolkas som koloniala i sin samtid?

För att kunna urskilja och reflektera kring dessa koloniala föreställningar på ett systematiskt sätt, har jag valt att utgå ifrån postkolonial teori och i huvudsak som den har formulerats av Edward W. Said i hans bok *Orientalism*. Den publicerades 1978 och ses av vissa som startskottet för den postkoloniala kritiken, även om det är en beskrivning som Said själv värjde sig emot. Han påpekade att hans arbete hade föregåtts av många, som exempelvis Aimé Césaire och Frantz Fanon. Grundtesen i Saims bok är att den europeiska kolonialismen i delar av Asien ('Orienten') inte hade gått att genomföra om det inte hade funnits ett helt system av texter, bilder och andra yttringar som legitimerade expansionen, som gjorde den inte bara möjlig utan också önskvärd. Genom att utgå ifrån Michel Foucaults begrepp diskurs, genealogi och sanningsformation, kunde Said visa hur olika aktörer med väldigt olika syften tillsammans kunde skapa en föreställning om något som kunde kallas för Orienten. För att kunna visa styrkan i denna föreställning, använde Said Antonio Gramscis hegemonibegrepp. Orienten blir därigenom en motbild, den raka motsatsen till väst och Europa, en Andre som européerna och västerlänningarna kunde spegla sig i och definiera sig emot i en serie av dikotomier, där Europa representerar civilisation och Asien/Orienten barbari. På så sätt kunde man betrakta expansion och ockupation som uttryck för den vite mannens börda, som utslag av missionen att civilisera den ociviliserade, inte som den exploatering och de krig det faktiskt rörde sig om.

Även om det finns stora förtjänster med Saims kritiska teori, medför den även vissa komplikationer. En av dem är att Edward Said inte ger så mycket utrymme för kritik inom teorin, det vill säga att han tolkar även dem som gör sitt yttersta för att förändra eller underminera den orientalistiska diskursen som företrädare för den. Den tillräckligt kritiska blicken är bara förbehållen oss, eller Said. Det finns variation, författare eller andra skribenter kan skriva på ett innovativt sätt om Orienten, men för Said är det bara ytterligare en version, ett eget 'orientaliserande'. Han diskuterar bland andra äventyraren Richard Burton på detta vis, han erkänner Burtons originalitet och uttalade vilja att ge en annan bild, men konstaterar att även de som vill något annat är låsta av orientalismens begränsningar. Han lyfter alltså fram någon som brukar framställas som kritiker för att sedan använda hans eller hennes 'fall' för att visa på styrkan hos teorin: *inte ens Burton* kunde frigöra sig. Jag är inte bekväm med ett sådant arbetssätt. Diskursbegreppet förutsätter egentligen att diskursen delas av alla, det spelar inte roll vem som yttrar sig inom den, medan här blir

det centralt att peka ut vissa, 'oväntade'. Det blir inte fråga om att 'författaren är död', det verkar mer handla om att framställa författare och kritiker som otillräckliga. Så hur ta sig vidare från detta?

Först och främst har jag behövt ett postkolonialt perspektiv för att kunna peka på de koloniala element som faktiskt finns i de kolonialkritiska reseskildringar jag har valt, därför har jag dragit nytta av den empiriska forskning som skett i Sids fotspar. David Spurr liksom Catherine Lutz och Laura Collins har i två olika studier vaskat fram en rad troper, alltså språkliga figurer, som utmärker västerländska eller europeiska skildringar av de (koloniala) Andra. Tillsammans bildar dessa troper den koloniala diskursen, den repertoar som är tillgänglig för den privilegierade när denna ska skildra den Andre, som alltså inte bara behöver vara 'oriental', utan andreskapet omfattar icke-vita, icke-europeer, icke-västerlänningar i stort. Dessa troper har utgjort ett raster för min läsning och min analys, men frågan är hur närvaron av dessa troper, även i kritiska och radikala reseskildringar ska tolkas. Som misslyckanden?

Jag har valt att vända på det, och fråga mig vad man kan vänta sig av texter som ska fungera övertygande även för dem som i förstone inte håller med. Litteratur- och genusvetaren Annika Olsson påpekar att texter som inte läses (eller förstås) inte kan förändra något. Det finns alltså gränser för hur avantgarde en författare kan vara, för att nå sin samtid. Med inspiration från forskare som Annika Olsson, men även Martin Kylhammar, Joan W. Scott och Mikela Lundahl, har jag tolkat de koloniala troperna inom ramen för författarnas kritiska ambition och det som man kan förstå som tidens begränsningar. Som Scott, men även Lena Lennerhed, påpekar så formas kritik av det sammanhang som den riktar in sig på. Därpå följer paradoxen att kritiken verkar understödja själva det sammanhang den angriper, i alla fall om man utgår från ett diskursperspektiv där språk också alstrar och uttrycker makt. Igen: kritiken kan tolkas som otillräcklig, eller ännu värre som understödjande. I alla fall så här i efterhand.

För att kunna förstå de koloniala troperna som rimliga, har jag behövt tolka dem utifrån den idétradition som författarna omfattade, det vill säga kulturradikalismen. Det är ett samlingsnamn för en rad idéer som har sitt ursprung i det så kallade moderna genombrottet, när Georg Brandes höll en serie uppmärksamade föreläsningar i Köpenhamn som gjorde upp med vad han och andra radikaler med honom uppfattade som förlegat, präglad av föråldrade konventioner, brist på rationalitet och blind auktoritetstro. Brandes förespråkade att allt skulle under lupp och diskuteras, på det att ett liberalt, modernt, mer rationellt och människovänligt samhälle skulle kunna uppstå. Detta skedde under 1870- och 1880-talen och ledde till att Skandinavien för första gången utgjorde en intellektuell scen som intresserade även andra ute i Europa.



Den andra vågen av kulturradikalism inträffar under 1920- och 1930-talen, då arbetarrörelsen har vuxit sig stark och intresset för marxistisk teori når även intellektuella. Samtidigt når Freuds teorier Sverige, och både studenter och akademiker samlas kring en korsläsning av Freud och Marx som inspirerats av den franska organisationen Clarté, där man önskar en genomgripande emancipation av samhället och människorna; varken yttre strukturer eller inre hämningar ska begränsa människors liv. Clarté grundas även i Sverige, utifrån fransk modell, och man ger ut en tidskrift med samma namn.

Kulturradikalismen bygger dels på liberalismens vision om individuell frihet, dels på socialismens föreställning om socialt ansvar. Detta ledde till att liberaler och socialister kunde förenas, trots att den politiska ideologin skiljde sig åt. Det är också intressant att kulturradikalismen lyckades förena arvet från upplysningen i sin betoning av rationalitet och förnuft med ett arv från romantiken, där man understryker vikten av starka upplevelser och sann utlevelse av 'naturliga' drifter. Andra karaktärsdrag är en stark tro på det moderna framsteget, att man med hjälp av vetenskap (socialvetenskap, socialpsykologi eller psykoanalys) och ständig debatt ska kunna skapa ett bättre samhälle som är mer anpassat efter människors natur. Udden var riktad mot alla former av metafysik (som religion) och idealism, det var Livet här och nu som skulle styra. Lite förenklat kan man säga att kulturradikalismen vände på en rad tidigare etablerade dikotomier, natur—kultur, barbari—civilisation, kvinna—man, barn—vuxen, offentligt/öppet—privat/slutet, sexuell utlevelse—'anständighet', 'liv'—religion, där det som tidigare hade betraktats som positivt, nu vändes till sin motsats. Många av dem som räknade sig som kulturradikaler rekryterades in i det socialdemokratiska välfärdsbygget på olika sätt och deras idéer kom att präglade mycket av svensk politik, kultur och debatt under 1900-talet.

Kulturradikalismen ger alltså rätt tydliga anvisningar om hur en god samhällsutveckling ser ut, vad som leder framåt och vad som tvärtom hindrar utveckling. Det är också ett väl etablerat perspektiv i svenska sammanhang, inte något obskyrt randfenomen. Detta är viktigt att hålla i minnet när man tittar på reseskildrarnas samhällsanalyser. De gör närmast ständigt bedömningar av det de möter under sina resor i Asien, Afrika och Sydamerika, de sorterar och bedömer fenomen, förhållanden och människor utifrån vilken roll de spelar i en linjär och fastslagen moderniseringsprocess. Historikern Dipesh Chakrabarty har introducerat begreppet tidsknut, för att kunna beskriva hur människor inte förmår att acceptera ett komplext nu med många olika element, utan hur vi har fostrats in i ett temporalt tänkande där vissa saker tolkas som 'rester av ett förflutet' och andra inte. Detta temporala tänkande kopplar Chakrabarty till en europeisk, dominant historiesyn, där centrum och nu är placerat i Europa eller väst, och där alla andra platser förändring mäts

emot detta centrum. Reseskildrarna ägnar sig alltså ofta åt att trassla ut tidsknutar, att liksom platta ut dem till en tidslinje där vissa fenomen, samhällsformer eller människor tolkas som rester, som 'bakåt', och andra som antingen ett nu eller en indikation på framtiden, på ett sedan. För att kunna göra en sådan bedömning, måste reseskildraren anta en upphöjd, lite distanserad och privilegierad position.

Utifrån detta perspektiv blir det lite lättare att förstå några av de mest förekommande koloniala troperna i reseskildringarna: idealisering, nedvärdering, erotisering/sexualisering, och klassificering. Om man återvänder till de dikotomier som presenterades ovan, kan man mycket förenklat säga att fenomen, människor eller former som kan beskrivas som uttryck för natur, barbari, kvinnlighet, barnslig oskuld (eller klarsyn), öppenhet och sexuell utlevelse eller tillgänglighet (om än det bara rör sig om flirtiga blickar) framställs idealiserande. De indikerar antingen ett nu eller en framtid. Och de fenomen, människor eller former som uppfattas som hörande till den andra sidan, framställs som nedvärderande och är därmed indikationer på antingen ett förflutet eller en bromsad rörelse framåt. Man kan säga att författarna helt vänder på de värderingar som tidigare varit gällande, tar den konventionella uppfattningen om att exempelvis barbari är något negativt, och beskriver den som förutsättning för god utveckling.

Just nedvärderingen är svår att förhålla sig till i det kolonialkritiska sammanhanget, eftersom den ofta är så grov och påminner mest om den rasistiska ideologi som legitimerade kolonialismen. I den kulturradikala kontexten är det ofta religion eller religiösa uttryck som utlöser starkast kritik: de nedvärderande framställningarna av religiösa utövare kan vara anmärkningsvärda. Även om det inte är hudfärg eller etnisk tillhörighet som utlöser dessa, utan religion, är det svårt att bortse ifrån det. En annan form av nedvärdering som främst författarna från 1950-talet men även någon på 1960-talet ägnar sig åt, är att beskriva brittiska och franska kolonialister i termer av tyska nazister. De upplöser dikotomierna allierade—nazister, demokrati—diktatur och beskriver hur den forna goda sidan är ond i kolonierna.

Man kan också urskilja vissa konjunkturen i bedömningarna. För de reseförfattare som debuterade under 1950-talet verkar inte barn eller ungdom indikera något positivt, tvärtom diskuterar till exempel Elly Jannes iranier som omogna, närmast i termer av barn, när hon förklarar att de inte har kompetens att utvinna sin egen olja. Här fungerar jämförelsen nedvärderande och i linje med en 'normal' kolonial diskurs. Under 1960-talet, däremot, används barn- och ungdomsmetaforen i högsta grad idealiserande. Detta speglar den idealisering av ungdom i stort som sammanfaller med radikaliseringsen och den begynnande Vietnam-rörelsen.

Vad gäller tropen erotisering/sexualisering aktualiserar den vissa sexistiska drag som finns inom kulturradikalismen, och kanske mest inom primitivismen, den gren

som tog större intryck av (relativt fritt tolkad) Freud än av Marx, men som också inspirerades av tysk och finländsk expressionism och av vitalister som D. H. Lawrence. Både Artur Lundkvist och Eric Lundqvist kan räknas hit, men även Åke Sparring, Jan Myrdal och Sven Lindqvist ger ibland uttryck för en hållning som påminner om primitivism. Inom primitivismen förekommer en sorts dyrkan av kvinnan som element, som ett väsen som om man lägger samman dikotomierna jag nämnde tidigare, befinner sig närmare naturen, det barnsliga/ursprungliga, det barbariska/primitiva, det som inte har korrumperats av civilisation eller religion. I detta ligger också sexuell tillgänglighet och utlevelse, enligt samma system av dikotomier. Detta sammanfaller ganska exakt med hur kvinnor som Andra har framställts inom en kolonial diskurs. David Spurr till och med diskuterar vissa uttryck som koloniala klichéer. En sådan är att det främmande landskapet beskrivs som en kvinnas kropp, där naturen och kvinnan sammansmälter och blir tillgänglig för (den manlige) reseskildraren. Både Artur Lundkvist och Eric Lundqvist beskriver för dem nya platser på detta sätt. Samtidigt använder båda denna kliché när de ska beskriva kolonialismens exploatering eller krigets fasor, de framställer dessa i termer av våldtäkt av landet.

Ett annat exempel på en kolonial kliché är föreställningen att de Andra kvinnorna är tilldragande och sexuellt tillgängliga, och denna förväntan får konsekvenser när just den tidsknuten ska sorteras upp. Det finns en tendens att tolka kvinnors tillgänglighet, benägenhet att flirta och le eller visa upp sig, avklädda eller lätt klädda, som idealiserande, som en central indikation på en rörelse framåt mot en bättre framtid. Det innebär också att motsatsen, de kvinnor som inte flirtar, inte återgäldar blickar, inte visar upp sig, beskrivs nedvärderande som en indikation bakåt, som en rest från det förflutna eller som ett hinder för en god utveckling. Den som drabbas hårdast av detta är den beslöjade kvinnan, som både ett uttryck för prydhets och för religiös (och därmed irrationell) övertygelse och auktoritetstro. Meyda Yegenoglu påpekar att slöjan dessutom upplevs som särskilt provocerande i en observerande kultur, där möjligheten att se och studera ligger till grund för kunskapsinhämtning. Hon föreslår också att västerlänningar blir provocerade av att den beslöjade kvinnan kan titta på dem, studera dem, utan att de riktigt kan avgöra det.

Elly Jannes delar inte denna uppfattning om slöjan. Hon intresserar sig i stället för den på lite olika sätt: som en metafor för blyghet eller för generellt kvinnoförtryck eller som ett psykologiskt fenomen. Oavsett vilket, är det ingen av reseskildrarna som diskuterar slöjan som ett resultat av ställningstagande eller fri vilja.

Vad gäller klassificering, kräver denna trop både observation och bedömning. Den förutsätter därmed en privilegierad position, som jag påpekade tidigare, och reseskildringen bygger ofta just på en stark berättarposition, där man ska fungera

som ögonvittne och som förmedlare. Rollen som reseskildrare skiftar lite under periodens gång, där ifrågasättande av det egna privilegiet som vit med tillgång till världen ibland mest fungerar som förstärkning av just detsamma. Andra lyckas bättre med att skapa en framställning där det egna tvivlet utgör grund för en i högsta grad kolonialkritisk och självkritisk beskrivning av svårigheterna att ta sig förbi sina fördomar. Reseskildrarens privilegierade position blir dock alltmer komplicerad att upprätthålla allteftersom 1960-talet fortskrider, och det kalla krigets världsbild, uppdelad i väst och öst, skiftar mot en uppdelning i nord och syd, där den rika världen ställs mot den fattiga. Det blir därmed svårare att hävda att Sverige på något sätt skulle utgöra ett positivt alternativ; som alla andra länder i nord bär det skulden för fattigdomen i syd. Detta skifte kan dels kopplas till krigen i Algeriet och Vietnam, där legitimeringen av krigen utifrån ett kalla krigs-perspektiv inte längre kunde fungera när stora militärmakter slog ned vad som uppfattades som folkligt motstånd med full kraft, dels till introduktionen av teoretiker som Frantz Fanon, som beskrev kolonialismen inifrån och som ett allomfattande system, och av olika världs-systemteorier. Reseskildrarna som debuterar under 1960-talet tar i vissa fall öppet på sig skulden för kolonialismens konsekvenser, andra inte, men de flesta förhåller sig mer uttalat till sin författarroll. Privilegiet att observera och bedöma verkar inte längre vara självskrivet. Anders Ehnmark och Jan Myrdal, exempelvis, väljer en mer distanserad, akademisk position, medan Sara Lidman och Per Wästberg gör självkritiken till ett tema. Man kan också se hur nedvärderingarna i relation till Sverige och väst blir skarpare och ofta handlar om att västerlandet har stagnerat, att tiden är ute och att framtiden finns i framför allt Asien.

Så, för att återknyta till de frågor som har drivit avhandlingen, är det egentligen inte underligt att samtiden uppfattade reseskildringarna som kolonialkritiska, eftersom författarna många gånger är tydliga med sin hållning. Om man inte ägnar sig åt misstankens hermeneutik i Marx, Freuds och Nietzsches spår, skulle det kunna räcka. Jag kan också konstatera att om man jämför med 'vanliga' reseskildringar från samma tid, framstår den kritiska tonen i de radikala reseskildringarna desto mer. Det är också viktigt att tolka skildringarna inom ramen för kulturradikalism. Först och främst för att troperna, exempelvis idealisering och nedvärdering, följer liknande mönster som en kritisk analys av svenska eller europeiska förhållanden, där det som anses vara konventionellt, uttryck för hämningar och så vidare kritiseras som bakåtsträvande, och motsatsen vad gäller idealiseringar. Dessutom följer troperna inte hudfärg eller etnicitet, de hänger samman med den roll människor tilldelas i den version av moderniseringsprocess som författaren föredrar. Kulturradikalismen är också väletablerad i svenska sammanhang under denna period och upplevdes säkert som välbekant för läsaren.



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Travel accounts are considered windows to the unknown, ways to experience something new. Yet at the same time the accounts are oddly familiar, raising questions on how limited the genre is, on how much is brought along from 'home' and how much we can learn about this 'home' rather than the expected unknown.

This is a study of anti-colonial travel accounts from different parts of the world outside Europe, loosely described as the 'Third World'. They were written by radical and modernist intellectuals who left Sweden and Europe in order to report back on their experiences and impressions. These intellectuals offered descriptions of poverty, oppression, social injustice, and racism, but also of change, hope, and development. Many of the travel books they produced were soon considered significant in the radicalization process that unfolded in the post-war years and peaked at the end of the sixties.

There are, however, instances where these critical and anti-colonial travel books disclose complex ties to expressions of European privilege and power, of a colonial discourse. This becomes an area even more worthy of study given the tendency in the post-war years among Swedish politicians to emphasize Sweden's supposed 'innocence', having not partaken in the European scramble for the rest of the world.

The objective of this book is therefore to describe the accounts' relationship with a culture of colonialism, but also to recognize the anti-colonial critique and the attempts to picture a different future.

