Lions, Landscape and Legacy: ‘Exploring’ Mungo Park’s Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa

Neil Anthony Cliff

PhD 2021

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Manchester Metropolitan University

2021

ABSTRACT

Lions, Landscape and Legacy: 'Exploring' Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* focuses on the Scottish explorer's first journey into West Africa in 1795, then considers how contemporary travel writers have reacted to this seminal narrative by producing their own individual accounts of journeying down The Niger. Authors such as Kira Salak, Richard Owen, Tom Freemantle and Peter Hudson all pay homage to Park in their own narratives. By examining how their texts connect to Park's work, this research makes a timely contribution to Park scholarship as well as negotiates some of the burgeoning critical practices taking place in twenty-first century literary studies. A growing body of Park criticism exists nevertheless, a number of key elements in his narrative appear to have been neglected: noteworthy encounters with animals, commentary on landscape, as well as the literary legacy that, in recent years, has grown significantly. This study not only examines the way Park narrates animals, as well as landscape, it also brings together and expands upon some of the existing research and criticism that deals with Park's experiences of native women whilst travelling through Africa. Furthermore, in acknowledging how modern analytical approaches sit alongside more traditional types of readings, a spatially-minded examination of the other travel narratives connected to *Travels*, which imitate Park's journey, highlights some of the ways in which modern Western travellers seek to reconcile their own complex relationships with the colonial context whilst also travelling through challenging post-colonial landscapes. This thesis makes a number of contributions to the expanding field of travel writing studies by placing Park scholarship at the heart of contemporary critical debate through a range of critical concepts, in particular, zoocriticism, postcolonial green, and geocriticism.

Acknowledgements

At many points over the last few years, the idea of getting to this point has often felt like an impossible task. Without the faith, goodwill, trust and sheer belief of the people around me in both my personal and professional life, I very much doubt that I would be writing this message of heartfelt thanks. I am eternally grateful to those individuals who have supported me throughout this journey of learning and who have helped me realise this moment.

Specifically, I would like to thank my Director of Studies Doctor Rachel Dickinson for the absolute commitment and support given throughout my research project, for her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and feedback. Her guidance has been invaluable throughout many of the processes involved. Perhaps most importantly of all, thank you for having a resolute faith in my academic abilities. This gesture of trust will never be forgotten. At times, this process has taken me in many different scholarly directions, sincerest thanks for challenging my sensibilities and not allowing me to get too comfortable with any finished product. Put simply, I could not have done this without your exemplary academic support.

Most especially, I would like to thank Doctor Nicola Bishop for her advice, encouragement, and enthusiasm, which have become models for me in my teaching career. It has been such a pleasure. In certain cases, words of thanks really are not enough. The support and supervision provided has allowed me to realise a lifelong dream. Quite simply, my work is testament to her professionalism and unremitting attention to detail. Her support and positivity during the final stages of this project will always be in my heart.

I would also very much like to offer my special thanks to Doctor Sonja Lawrenson for her supervisory support. At many points, her feedback and navigation have often kept me on the right track. It has been a pleasure to be able to feel like if I needed to get in touch, you would be there. Thank you.

I would also like to sincerely thank my colleagues Kirsty Bunting, David Cooper, Trish Belfield, Lisa Oakley, and Robert Hulme, for their conversations, encouragement, insightful comments, and hard questions. All parties mentioned here have played a critical role in my personal and professional development. I am particularly grateful to noted scholars Murray Last and Ashton Nichols for their respective correspondences. I would also like to recognise and thank Dr. Gareth Morgan for his holistic conversations and much valued friendship. In relation to this, I would also like to thank Professor Nigel Wood and Professor Roger Ebbatson, for their encouragement and support in earlier years. I would additionally like to acknowledge my appreciation for fellow researchers Tim Hannigan, Amul Gyawali, Harry Pitt Scott, Nora Castle and Lieke Smits.

Finally, I must thank my family for putting up with me on this journey. In this case, thanks go to my mum and dad for their continuous support; to my children, Liam, Blaithine and Fianna, for selflessly giving up their Dad on the weekends and making sure I do not take myself too seriously. Above all, I would especially like to thank my wife Orlagh for her constant love and support, as well as for her sheer endurance. By way of a circuitous route, this work has been a long time coming. Thank you for giving me the time to realise a dream I once thought impossible to return to.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: A Summary of Park Scholarship and Relevant Literary Criticism

> The fact is that the explorer's name is almost a household word, not only along the Gambia but, as I was to lean later, all along his route, and throughout West Africa those who attend school know Mungo Park as a key figure in their history.
>
> Richard Owen, *The Saga of the Niger* (1961)[1]

When it comes to matters of space and place, especially in relation to geography and history, travel narratives of the Enlightenment era contain a great deal of valuable information. In acknowledging what Charles Withers calls 'the spatial turn in the history of science', and by bringing together a range of texts that narrate the same space travelled, albeit at different points in history, this body of research intends to contribute towards 'the idea of space and place in recent work in Enlightenment studies'.[2]

Alongside addressing the concept of spatiality, this thesis will explore some of the more familiar themes found within literary criticism, such as gender, in what is arguably one of the most famous travel narratives of the period: Scottish explorer Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799).[3] It will also offer more nuanced, original interpretations that have, until now, been overlooked. As I aim to demonstrate, critical analysis of the animal, for example, as well as commentary on green elements, such as how landscape and climate affects movement and travel, are key features of *Travels* that provide new and exciting opportunities for interpretation. This is especially the case when considering the early colonial context Park was travelling in. For Richard Holmes, the Enlightenment era is 'the age of wonder'; a time when 'the idea of the exploratory age, often lonely and perilous, is in one form or another a defining metaphor of Romantic

[1] R. Owen, *Saga of the Niger* (London: Trinity Press, 1961), p.33.
[2] C. Withers, 'Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and History', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 70, no.4 (2009), p.638.
[3] M. Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, ed. By Kate Ferguson Marsters (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), hereafter cited as *Travels* in the text.

science'.[4] Alongside the commitment to explain to a general public many of the new scientific processes that were flourishing during this time, this 'new vision', that 'swept through Britain at the end of the eighteenth century', also included the European endeavour to expand socially, politically, and economically into the African continent.[5] As Holmes notes, one of the seminal travel narratives of the period that deals with the exploration of Africa, comes from 'a tall, very largely silent, but strangely impressive young man with that promising shine of adventure in his eyes'; the individual 'was twenty-one years old, unmarried', and 'desperate to travel'.[6]

In thinking about the idea of landscapes, William Winwood Reade's 1873 'Map of African Literature' is a poignant reminder of the many ways in which interpretations of literary travel narratives can change over time.[7] Reade's 'mapping' of the African continent not only highlights the number of travel narratives produced by Europeans during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also contextualises a larger political conversation about the idea of colonialism onto his map. In one way, Reade's own form of colonialism is found in the labelling and naming of the lakes, rivers and landscapes of Africa these explorers narrated: here, place names are replaced with the names of authors. One name which stands out on the left of the map is the Scottish explorer Mungo Park.

Mungo Park was born near the banks of the River Yarrow on 10th September 1771 at Foulshiels, a small village near Selkirk. He was the seventh of thirteen children. Quiet and reserved, Park's younger years were primarily spent working in Selkirk as an apprentice to local surgeon Thomas Anderson. By way of this, after finishing his medical studies at the University of Edinburgh, Park's first job was as a surgeon's assistant on the East India ship Worcester in 1793. After journeying to Sumatra, where he detailed some of the flora and fauna, he returned and gave an academic paper describing eight previously unknown fish to the Linnaean Society.

This experience of travel and discovery was undoubtedly one of the main reasons that lead Park to apply to the African Association and put himself forwards as a candidate

[4] R. Holmes, *The Age of Wonder* (London: Harper Press, 2008), p.xvi.
[5] Ibid, p.xv.
[6] Ibid, p.212.
[7] https://library.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/winwood-reade-map.jpg

who could successfully map the Niger River. His predecessor Major Daniel Houghton had gone to Africa in 1790 to attempt to trace the fabled river as well as find the precise location of Timbuktu, but after penetrating the interior, died of starvation on the edges of the Sahara. After being impressed with Park's watercolours and anatomical descriptions of fish, alongside the plant specimens he returned from Sumatra, Sir Joseph Banks 'quickly saw in Park a possible African Traveller'.[8]

On 21st June 1795 Park travelled over 200 miles up the Gambia River before embarking east into the unknown interior of West Africa. After only a few months into his quest Park was captured by Moors, imprisoned, and periodically tortured. After escaping with only a few possessions Park eventually reached the banks of the Niger River on 21st July 1796. At this stage, Park persevered and continued to follow the river eastwards for several weeks. After realising that his situation was far worse off than he had previously considered he decided to return to the Gambia. After a transatlantic crossing homewards by way of the West Indies, Park reached Falmouth on 22nd December 1797. As determined as Park was the decision to turn back and return home arguably saved his life.

Park's second and final trip to the Gambia on 31st January 1805 was doomed from the start. With a company of over 35 soldiers, seamen and guides, Park's attempt to complete the quest he began nearly a decade earlier resulted in most of the company perishing from either dysentery or fever within a matter of weeks after arriving in Africa. After reaching the banks of the Niger River for a second time in the middle of August 1805, only 11 Europeans remained alive. By 19th November, Park committed to continue and began to progress far beyond the places his previous trip had taken him. As he moved deeper into the interior with only one British officer, three soldiers, a guide, and three slaves, things did not bode well. What is clear is that Park did not intend to stop or land anywhere until he reached the coast. It is thought that Park drowned at the Bussa Rapids near Yauri in Nigeria.

As one of the first European men to encounter Africa at the end of the eighteenth century the written record of Park's experiences of the landscapes and ecologies of the

[8] K. Lupton, *Mungo Park: The African Traveler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.18.

lower Nigerian basin signify a seminal moment in late-enlightenment travel literature. Park's *Travels* is one of the earliest European literary impressions of this part of the supposed Dark Continent: a previously unknown and wholly unfamiliar world. Park's narrative describes many of the animals he encountered and makes a concerted effort to document the various landscapes he travelled through during his journey to reach the Niger River and beyond, though little academic work has been conducted on such topics. In addition to bringing together and critically examining, for the first time, the literary collective that makes up the group of travel narratives that have subsequently paid homage to Park's trip, as well as by developing the critical conversation about his experiences with African women, this thesis intents to fill in some of the gaps in research that relates to Park and his experiences of the African interior.

As it stands, there is no literary criticism on the representation of animals in Park's narrative. This is perhaps understandable given that the practice of zoocriticism is still in its infancy. What is more surprising is how little of the existing scholarship on Park concentrates on the environment and the landscapes he travelled through. Recently, the focus has been placed on the slave company he travelled with whilst returning to the coast after nearly two years in Africa.[9] It is true that some research has taken place on Park's experience of African women, but it is certainly arguable that a more complete overview of such encounters needs to take place.[10] This is especially so in relation to how this female element influenced his progress as he made his way through Africa. Regarding the literary collective that follows in Park's footsteps over the last two centuries, what is striking is the degree to which Park's *Travels* has been such an inspiration to other writers who have also embarked on similar courses of travel along the Niger River. Travel authors such as Richard Owen, Tom Freemantle and Peter Hudson, as well as female travellers such as Kira Salak, have all produced their own accounts of journeying down the Niger by way of Park's influence. Taking a geocritical approach, the final part of this thesis explores some of the geographic as well as the human connections that exist between Park's historic account and the more recent travel experiences of the Niger River by the noted authors producing a corpus commentary that, in

[9] E. Bohls, 'Romantic Exploration and Atlantic Slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', in *Studies in Romanticism,* Vol. 55, no.3 (2016), pp.347-368.

[10] E. Mitsi, 'Let us Pity the White Man, No Mother has He': 'Kindness and Cruelty in Mungo Park's African Travels', in *People and Cultures in Contact* (Athens: University of Athens, 2015), pp.119-131.

addition to recognising the changing cultures and landscapes of the Niger, critiques the varied experiences of the same space travelled at different times by different individuals. More generally, this proposed research not only intends to develop Park scholarship in such areas but also aims to build on the growing albeit diverse body of work that already exists on Park.

Academic research into Scottish explorer Mungo Park's life and writing has recently gained significant momentum. Over the last two decades, several critical pieces have emerged that base their inquiry on a range of diverse topics as varied as language, pre-colonialism, psychoanalysis, travel theory, and Romanticism to name a few. For example, in Richardson and Hofkosh's *Romanticism, Race and Imperial Culture 1780-1834* (1996), Ashton Nichols places substantial emphasis on the examination of language in Park's narrative.[11] In particular, Nichols highlights how Park's 'prototypical pre-colonial' encounter with Africa was culturally and linguistically anchored to his own native European tongue.[12] For Nichols, Park's experience is 'deeply embedded in the rhetoric of his own culture' and as a result 'often lead[s] to cultural confusion or outright violence'.[13] This inquiry intends to explore Park's narrative with some of these ideas in mind.

Scott Juengel's mainly psychoanalytic but also postcolonial article 'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin; Or, the Year the White Man Passed' also stands out as a key piece of Park scholarship.[14] Here, the focus lies on Park's physical transformation: the gradual tanning of the 'white figure's skin' and the process of it becoming darker is referred to as his 'Moorish turn'. This visible transformation is examined in relation to Park's unlikely survival during his journey through Africa. This superficial yet wholly physical transformation was of huge importance. As Juengel argues, after Park's prolonged and agonising imprisonment by the Moors, his greatest fear was that of capture and incarceration again, so his attempts to blend in more naturally with the social environment was understandable and generally successful. As Juengel suggests, Park's 'artificial skin' hid and protected his physical as well as cultural

[11] A. Nichols, 'Mumbo Jumbo: Mungo Park and the Rhetoric of Romantic Africa', in *Romanticism, Race and Imperial Culture 1780-1834*, ed. by A. Richardson and S. Hofkosh, (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.93-113.
[12] Ibid, p.94.
[13] Ibid.
[14] S. Juengel, 'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin; Or, the Year the White Man Passed', in *The Eighteenth-Century*, Vol. 47, no.1 (2006), pp.19-39.

European origins: he was 'repeatedly mistaken for a Moor'.[15] It is safe to suggest that this superficial physical change certainly saved his life on more than one occasion

Other criticism that deals with Park's experiences as a prisoner is Emily Haddad's 'Body and Belonging(s): Property in the Captivity of Mungo Park'.[16] This work opens up new questions regarding the political dynamics associated with the matter of colonial and postcolonial incarceration, with particular emphasis on how Park's property, defined here as his masculinity and whiteness, is appropriated and re-appropriated throughout his journey. Due to the sociocultural dynamics at play during his imprisonment at the hands of the Moors, Park's incarceration is not only and understandably seen as a dehumanising experience, but also highlights how there is the 'possibility for a reconsideration of essentialist, race-based categories in a colonial context'.[17] Haddad's inquiry locates Park's narrative within postcolonial literary studies but does not expand upon the idea of how Park's presupposed colonial authority is considered outside of his incarceration.

Tim Fulford's and Debbie Lee's 'Mental Travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park and the Romantic Imagination' (2002) is also worthy of mention here.[18] Park's writing emerged during a period when the literary Romantic movement was flourishing. *Travels* locates in a timeframe when reactions to landscape and the imagination were, to a certain degree, part of the cultural climate. In addition, examining the different critical approaches to Park's writing nourishes understanding that Park's writing exists within several interconnecting spheres of academic interest: the historic, the geographic, the literary, the artistic, as well as the commemorative.

While Fulford and Lee present a useful literary approach to Park's work, Mary Louise Pratt's foundational study of travel writing alongside colonial discourse is even more relevant to this thesis. Her seminal piece *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) binds together Park's African experiences with the concept of 'the contact zone'.[19] This is a theoretical phrase coined by Pratt that has come to signify the `spatial and temporal

[15] Ibid, p.32.
[16] E. Haddad, 'Body and Belonging(s): Property in the Captivity of Mungo Park', in *Colonial and Postcolonial Incarceration*, ed. by G. Harper, (London: Continuum – Harper Collins Publishing, 2001), pp.124-144.
[17] Ibid, p.125.
[18] T. Fulford and D. Lee, 'Mental Travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park and the Romantic Imagination', in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, Vol. 24, no.2 (2002), pp.117-137.
[19] M. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect'.[20] Pratt's analysis of Park's actions and reactions towards the various cultures he comes across in Africa establishes another vital component of Park scholarship. Here, Park's desire for a mutuality between personal and political cross-cultural experience establishes a 'mystique of reciprocity' in his sociocultural interactions.[21] For Pratt, Park is neither a colonising force nor an early-imperial trader. Rather, he is the epitome of what Pratt describes as an 'experiential unhero'.[22] He is a pre-colonial traveller keen to experience the flora and fauna of Africa as well as to survey and map the unexplored regions that bank the Niger River. In doing so, Park's 'reciprocal vision' comes to symbolise his experiences of the exotic other as well as document his quest for safety and survival in this unforgiving environment. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Pratt omits many of Park's unsavoury experiences and dealings with the Moorish tribes, especially King Ali. His subsequent torture and incarceration do not align with Pratt's critical perspective on romanticised cultural reciprocity and is evidently absent from her inquiry.

Other writing that comments on Park's journey can be found in the various academic theses and dissertations that deal with this subject. One notable example that traces Park's journey as a process of religious progress rather than an exercise in scientific mapping and which also highlights the range and variety of academic approaches taken with this particular literary text, is Carl Thompson's PhD thesis 'Traveling to a Martyrdom'.[23] This piece recognises how travelling individuals such as Park as well as other explorers of the more southern districts of Africa during this time, most notably James Bruce and John Barrow, become for Thompson saint-like figures in their respective journeys across the foreign African landscape. In doing so, Thompson locates these exploration narratives of the late-enlightenment period not only within the genre of travel writing but also within the Romantic literary imagination. More recently, Thompson's work on this subject can be found in *The Suffering Traveller and The Romantic Imagination* (2007), with the focus being centred around the heroic seafaring traveller coupled with, however unlikely, a successful return. This role 'resonated powerfully in the Romantic imagination: that of a hapless voyager profoundly marked, transformed even,

[20] Ibid, p.7.
[21] Ibid, p.78.
[22] Ibid, p.75.
[23] C. Thompson, *'Travelling to a Martyrdom': The Voyages and Travels Genre and the Romantic Imagination* (Ph.D. Oxford University, 2001).

by a terrifying ordeal at sea'.[24] Evidently, Park's position within contemporary literary studies is becoming notably more significant.

Other analyses of Park's work lean towards the geographic, with critic Charles Withers placing particular attention on the memorialisation of Park's life as well as *Travels*. Critique focuses on the monuments and architecture that celebrate Park's life in Scotland as well as in Africa. Withers' positioning of both 'memory and geography' in his article 'Memory and the History of Geographical Knowledge: the Commemoration of Mungo Park, African Explorer' (2004), recognises how Park's historiographic legacy reinforces the mythology surrounding his exploits: his association with the Niger region has lasted well over two centuries and, amongst others things, resulted in a memorial statue being erected in 1859 in his hometown of Selkirk.[25] It also illustrates how an interdisciplinary approach to texts widens the scope and spectrum of academic knowledge on Park. Considering this, it is also worth acknowledging how Park's biographic collective has grown and developed over the last two centuries.

Biographies on Park and his adventures can be arranged into three main categories. The first deals with the commemorative literature produced on Park during the nineteenth century. This body of early biographies on Park, such as John Wishaw's memoir *Account of the Life of Mungo Park* (1815), comments on the sensationalism that surrounded Park during the time *Travels* was published. At the time of his death in 1806, Park's notorious African narrative of 1799 had penetrated the social consciousness of the era. However, it was not until 1835 with the publication of *The Life of Mungo Park* by the elusively named author HB that a truly commemorative body of work on Park began to take form. By the end of the century, it was the Scottish Joseph Thomson's *Mungo Park and the Niger* (1890) that emerged as the key biographical voice on Park. Thomson's authorial tone was assertive, in part, because he had real life experience of Africa. This was not the only connection between the two men: both were also alumni of Edinburgh University and both individuals died in their late thirties.

By the 1930s, the commemorative tone changes significantly with much more dramatic pieces on Park emerging by writers such as Lewis Grassic-Gibbon (*Niger*, 1934) and

[24] C. Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), p.60.
[25] C. Withers, 'Memory and History of Geographical Knowledge: the Commemoration of Mungo Park, African Explorer', in *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004), pp.316-339.

Stephen Gwynn (*Mungo Park*, 1934). The written style of both biographies marks a departure from the slightly more pragmatic delivery of previous generations, and perhaps denotes a literary style of the era rather than a change in perspective on Park's historical endeavours. More importantly, by the latter part of the twentieth century, key writers such as Kenneth Lupton begin to solidify and accentuate critical attention on Park and his narrative, most notably through what could be recognised as a type of biographic analysis. Lupton's text *Mungo Park: The African Traveler* (1977) stands out as a key biography.[26] Lupton's text is one of the few pieces of work that traces Park's African footsteps geographically as well as biographically within the same narrative, it also spends a substantial amount of time and focus on Park's second trip to Africa.

This work is certainly not intended as a complete overview of all writing on Park's life and adventures; nevertheless, the literature and criticism on Park included here recognises a range of academic perspectives. Examples such as the ones presented here have clearly opened Park scholarship up towards thinking about how this narrative connects to some of the new ideas and practices circulating within the realm of literary critical inquiry today.

The scope for further and more nuanced literary inquiry into Park's narrative is entirely feasible given the work already accomplished and recognised here. More specifically, in light of recent growing academic debate in these respective areas, research into Park's experience of animals, the landscapes he moved through, his numerous interactions with African women, as well as the body of travel writing that makes up the homage journeys that have followed in Park's footsteps over the last two centuries, are all elements relating to his narrative that call out for more detailed interpretation. These gaps in criticism are the core areas of focus for this thesis. They are not only all significant contributions to existing Park scholarship but also, in a variety of ways, an attempt to develop the practice of a range of burgeoning critical approaches.

Recent movements in Romantic studies towards the postcolonial, green readings, and travel writing more generally have problematised some of the traditional Romantic debates over the beautiful/sublime, human/animal, and nature/culture distinctions. By considering how some of these distinctions are addressed through a set of contemporary critical

[26] K. Lupton, *Mungo Park: The African Traveler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

approaches, namely zoocriticism, postcolonial green, and geocriticism, my research addresses what Timothy Campbell terms Romanticism's 'Dark Ecology'.[27]

Chapter I, 'Categorising the Colonial: Animals and the Enlightened Explorer', adds to the existing body of Park scholarship by arguing that animal representation in Park's *Travels* engages in philosophical and political projects that bring together aspects of postcolonial studies with environmental approaches, as well as animal studies. Such interactions between the human and the non-human animals of *Travels* are set against Park's sociocultural positioning in Africa. As a European traveller, his narrative moves closer towards addressing how this contemporary critical approach places a 'renewed pressure on the nature/culture and human/animal binaries that facilitate imperial privilege and colonial dispossession' in both postcolonial and literary arenas.[28] It is arguably the case that there is a small but growing body of animal criticism within the colonial context in literary studies, however, there has been scant scholarly research of this theme of animals in relation to Park's *Travels*.[29]

Tim Youngs' comprehensive appreciation of animals in literary texts at the fin de siècle provides a seminal work in relation to addressing this theme in literature of the latter nineteenth century.[30] Whereas Youngs' critical preoccupations arguably lie in the themes of change and becoming or even at times, mutation, other researchers whose critical focus lies on animals during this era look towards the idea of difference. For example, Anna Feurenstein's critique of animals during the Victorian era nurtures debate around the symbol of animals as differentiated subjects.[31] More recently, Feuerstein has offered alternate political models for human relationships within the space of empire especially. Through her analysis of Oliver Schreiner's portrayal of the ostrich, meerkats, and birds, Feuerstein invites readers to rethink negative conceptions of animality and, by extension, liberal imperial

[27] T. Campbell, 'Romantic Elements: An Introduction', in *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 31, no.3 (2020), pp.243-252.
[28] A. Vadde, 'Cross-Pollination: Ecocriticism, Zoocriticism, Postcolonialism', in *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 52, no.3 (2011), pp.565.
[29] G. Huggan and H. Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010).
[30] T. Youngs, *Beastly Journeys: Travel and Transformation at the Fin de Siècle* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).
[31] A. Feuerstein, 'Victorian Animal Subjects: Power, Alterity, and Animal Subjectivity in Victorian literature and Culture' (Ph.D. Michigan State University, 2019).

discourses that operate within a speciesist logic.[32] In light of this type of approach and in attempting to address similar textual elements but within an earlier colonial setting, a zoocritical reading of Park's narrative provides a timely contribution to this area of literary studies. In expanding upon questions raised by Kelly Struthers Montford and Chloe Taylor on how the colonial context and the representation of animals in literature intersect, this reading of Park's narrative aims to go some way towards providing an answer and highlights the importance of looking into this underexamined trope within Enlightenment travel writing.[33]

As zoocriticism has gained momentum it has started to explore the different types of animal representation found in literary texts. Allmark-Kent's examination of 'The Wild Animal's Story' brings about a timely reminder that, in representing animals, the strategies of 'knowing' an animal stem from their modes of representation. For Allmark-Kent, these modes are: the 'fantasy' of knowing the animal, the 'failure' to know it, or 'acceptance' of not-knowing the animal.[34] In light of such research, a zoocritical analysis of Park's work not only develops this relatively new critical approach being taken towards texts which involve the 'reading' of animals in literature within an early colonial context but also provides a new critical approach to Park's narrative that has hitherto been unexplored.[35] What is clear, is that although some work has already been accomplished in regards to reading animals in literature during the Romantic era, there has been scant focus on this particular theme in relation to the European explorer of this period.[36] However, within literary studies, the concept of the animal is becoming extremely fashionable. As Lawrence Buell states:

> Animal studies are self-evidently a hot topic these days for critical theory – hotter than global warming. Not only life scientists and cultural anthropologists, but also neuroscientists, ethicists, epistemologists, legal theorists, and literary scholars have been speaking out at an unprecedented rate on the subject of human obligations

[32] A. Feuerstein, 'Animals in Victorian Empire', in *The Political Lives of Animals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp.198-226.
[33] K. Struthers Montford and C. Taylor, eds, *Colonialism and Animality: Anti-Colonial Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies*, (London: Routledge, 2020).
[34] C. Allmark-Kent, 'The Wild Animal's Story: nonhuman protagonists in twentieth-century Canadian literature through the lens of practical zoocriticism', (Ph.D. University of Exeter, 2015).
[35] K. Soper, 'The Beast in Literature: Some Initial Thoughts', in *Comparative Critical Studies*, Vol. 2, no.3 (2008), pp.303-309.
[36] C. Kenton-Jones, 'Jane Austen and Animals; Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species', in *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 26 (2015), pp.122-127.

> toward the nonhuman world, the porousness or solidarity of human-nonhuman border, interspecies communication, and so forth.[37]

Alongside ecocriticism as a literary practice, animal studies in literature, or zoocriticism, has recently emerged perhaps most prominently within postcolonial ecocritical studies and is quickly becoming a key zone of interest within this area of contemporary academic debate. Simply put, zoocriticism 'refers to the practice of animal studies in literary studies which focuses on animal representation, animal subjectivity, and animal rights'.[38] In relation to its close connection to postcolonial ecocriticism, zoocriticism stands out as a branch of study that has recently opened up new academic pathways regarding the interpretation of animal representation specifically within colonial and postcolonial contexts. When it comes to the genre of travel writing that involves colonial and postcolonial contexts, zoocriticism is arguably a highly under-researched topic of critical debate.

Regarding the idea of animal studies in literature, key critics such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin acknowledge that, outside of postcolonial ecocritical debate, zoocriticism has also grown and 'developed independently through the disciplines of philosophy, zoology and religion' and can perhaps be considered a separate entity to this new strand of emerging academic debate.[39] In spite of this position, within the realm of postcolonial ecocriticism, analytical focus on the representation of animals is still very much 'regarded as a sub-branch of ecocriticism […] and is still in its infancy'.[40] When set against a wider body of literary criticism that is specifically considering animals, Huggan and Tiffin have come to recognise that there 'are intersections' across the divide between ecocriticism and postcolonialism.[41] In addition to showing to what extent animal representation in Park's narrative partakes in some of the philosophical and political projects that brings postcolonial studies and animal studies together, this piece will point out how a zoocriticism of Park's narrative is one such 'intersection'.

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[37] L. Buell, 'Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends', in *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 19, no.2 (2011), p.105.
[38] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.18.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

On closer inspection of *Travels*, this animal element highlights some of the tensions that existed between the ecologies Park encountered in Africa and the process of early colonialism. At the same time, it is perhaps understandable that this aspect of *Travels* is an unexamined theme. As Aarthi Vadde states: 'Zoocriticism is an alien term to most literary scholars […] its intersection with postcolonial critique is comparatively thinner than the more established ecocriticism'.[42] As a fledgling practice, zoocriticism inhabits a literary space that validates the idea that these 'two methodologies – ecocriticism and zoocriticism – are valuable and new ways of reading postcolonial literature and extending postcolonial critique'.[43] By engaging in a zoocriticism of Park's narrative, scholarship on Park's work will not only expand into new territories of literary criticism but also address the lack of research regarding this theme in early colonial travel writing of the enlightenment period.

In offering a zoocritical reading of Park's experiences, the literary representation of animals in his *Travels* raises issues of cultural perspectives through the idea of the gaze and more specifically, the reception and interpretation of the received image through non-native European eyes. The received images, taken in the form of the animals Park observed and experienced during his journey, resonate with Bertrand Westphal's comments that the perceived image of the cultural other, however manifest, is contained in the idea that 'the image is thus the expression, literary or not, of a significant difference between two orders of cultural realities'.[44] The idea of Park seeing or gazing at animals begins to consider the act of observation with some of the symbolic, as well as political, dynamics at play during Park's movements through Africa. As Catherine Parry points out, it is

> the condition of 'the animal' as 'the human gaze' [that] increasingly circumscribes and re-packages the physical reality of animals for human visual consumption. An [anthro]zoological approach not only addresses transformations of animals from wild, elusive, resistant creatures to constrained and contained images in human culture.[45]

As an outsider to local cultural knowledge, Park's experiences of some of the animals he encountered often meant his cultural positioning was sometimes extremely different to that

[42] Vadde, 'Cross-Pollination: Ecocriticism, Zoocriticism, Postcolonialism', p.567.
[43] Ibid.
[44] B. Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.111.
[45] C. Parry review of 'An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture: Animality in British Romanticism', by Randy Malamud, *Green Letters Studies in Ecocriticism*, Vol. 17, no.2 (2013), p.190.

of the native populations. For Park, this form of cultural displacement culminated in a collection of extremely diverse interpretations. In general, these interpretations dealt with what animals he observed, experienced, understood, or how they were employed or utilised in any practical or symbolic way by the local populations. As an early colonial traveller, Park's journey to map the Niger River saw him engage in the act of seeing animals within their various native environments. Such acts position Park in a realm that recognises the importance of the growing understanding and knowledge acquisition that was taking place between human/nonhuman animal relationships during this period of European global expansionism through travel and exploration.

> As the very act of seeing became crucial in forming the modern person — who you were as a human being was determined by where you were and what you saw, as well as how you interpreted it — animals too were placed in this visual moral compass. The act of seeing was key in forming our understanding of the modern animal.[46]

When it comes to animal representation in Park's narrative, the focus lies not only in his gaze towards the animals he observed but also deals with his interactions with them. In considering Park's European cultural position as traveller, what is particularly noteworthy in *Travels* is how he narrates his nonhuman animal experiences. Be it for food, warmth, entertainment, travel, or even companionship, the theme of animal representation warrants further critical exploration. In this light, a close reading of Park's narrative in this manner will explore how animals are represented in Park's travelling experience. In attempting to get a little closer towards what a successful zoocritical reading Park's narrative would look like, it is important to note that Park's interpretations and descriptions of animals are often more than simple description. Such a reading could, in one sense, resist ideas such as those of Guatam Basu Thakur, who considers how 'the animal in postcolonial literature' acts 'as surplus'.[47] This may very well be the case as a zoocritical approach *may* result in Thakur's considerations surrounding this subject being validated. On the other hand, it may also provide a variety of new insights into the ways in which Park perceived and interacted with the animals he encountered whilst travelling through Africa.

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[46] K. Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (London: Berg Publishing, 2007), p.26.
[47] G. Thakur, 'A Strangeness Beyond Reckoning: The Animal as Surplus in Postcolonial Literature', in *Postcolonial Animalities*, ed. by S. Sinha and A. R. Baishya, (London: Routledge, 2020), pp.29-47.

Chapter II, 'Interpreting Landscapes: Discovery, Foliage, Flows and Floods' provides a green reading of Park's narrative descriptions of some of the African landscapes he travelled through. Since its publication in 1799, arguments surrounding Park's travelogue involving themes of discovery, landscape and historical truth have not only persisted but also at times emerged as key components of contemporary political postcolonial discourse.[48] More recently, though certainly continuing the debate, Nigerian critic Yemi Osinbajo has reignited conversations concerning Park's 'discovery' of the Niger and has prompted us to look for further questions relating to the European exploration of Africa during the Enlightenment period. Considering such points, as well as the fact that recent scholarly preoccupations have centred more specifically on the idea that 'ecocriticism and postcolonialism must be understood as parallel projects', where 'a growing body of scholarship is doing the difficult work of creating dialogue between ecocritical and postcolonial theory', a 'postcolonial green' reading of Park's narrative makes sense.[49]

Regarding ecocriticism, the first surge in literary preoccupations with the environment defined as an ecocritical approach emerged most prominently towards the latter decades of the twentieth-century. Cheryl Glotfelty's revival of William Rueckert's term in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism' both inaugurated and established the concept of 'the study of nature writing' within a specific model of literary criticism.[50] The growing interest and subsequent questioning of "what is ecocriticism?" founded a body of perspectives that brought together an approach that began to both publicise and develop the term, both in scholarship and pedagogy.

Lawrence Buell notes four key tenets of an 'ecologically minded' piece of work.[51] The first element considers the representation of the world through literature, where 'the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest human history is implicated in natural history'.[52] This point complements

[48] Pratt, *Imperial Eye*s, p.69.
[49] B. Roos and A. Hunt, eds, *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives* (Virginia, USA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), p.5.
[50] W. Rueckert, 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism', in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. by C. Glotfelty and H. Fromm, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 105-123.
[51] L. Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995).
[52] Ibid, p.7.

the notion that ecocriticism shifts away from factors which 'privilege language and the difficulty of referentiality to approaches that re-emphasise the real work of words in a world of consequence, joy and despair'.[53] Park's narrative is one such example where the environment affects the protagonist's experiences. Park's 'joys and despair' closely relate to the ecologies he encounters and at many times, endures.

In many ways, it is the environment itself which facilitates as well as dictates Park's movements and progression as well as establishes the text as an ecologically orientated piece of literature. Buell's second recommendation, that 'the human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest' of a text, is also relevant to *Travels.*[54] Here, an ecocritical approach shifts the reader's gaze from the human towards the non-human elements of the text and, in doing so, decentralises the assumption that the representation of the human lies at the heart of any similar type of reading. Here, the recognition that the environment represents something equal to any human element is undoubtedly where the roots of ecocriticism lie. In relation to *Travels*, it is this notion of mutuality between Park and his environment that begins to form the foundation of an ecocritically-minded reading of Park's work.

Another tenet that appears to connect to a reading of Park's work in this vein ties into the idea that the environment is ever changing and in a constant state of flux. It is the idea that, within every ecocritical reading, there is 'some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given [and which] is at least implicit in the text'.[55] For Park, as the individual subject traversing an ever changing and at times unknown landscape, as well as experiencing the different flora, fauna and climates along the way, the environmental 'processes' at work are clear to see. In this manner, a straightforward ecocritical reading of Park's work could take place. However, this may significantly limit the capacity of such an examination when considered in relation to his political positioning as European traveller moving through the African landscape.

[53] C. Cokinos, 'What is Ecocriticism?', in 'Defining Ecocritical Theory and Practice: Sixteen Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting', Salt Lake City, Utah (06/11/1994).
[54] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination,* p.8.
[55] Ibid.

The idea that Park's narrative involves discoveries of people and places already inhabited is as complex as it is problematic. James Bruce's quest to find the source of the Nile also brings forth similar questions regarding this idea. As Bohls states, Bruce set off 'to discover the Ethiopian source of the Nile, which (although Bruce refused to admit this) was not really unknown'.[56] When looking at European travel narratives of Africa from this period and in examining how landscape is described and to what extent 'discovered', this characteristic – of discovering a known place — plays a key role in demonstrating the mindset of the narrator. In addition, this trait perhaps becomes even more relevant to consider when addressing instances of colonialism within this literary genre. As Richard Kerridge states:

> Travel writing, similarly, has a complex historical relationship with colonialism. Travel writers have frequently been critical of colonial regimes, but many of the familiar conventions of the genre – the rituals of quest and departure, the anecdotal meditation of foreignness to readers at home, the freedom of movement enjoyed by the traveller-protagonist – are interwoven with colonial relations. Both environment[alism] and travel writing can be read, in many cases, as continuations, in a post-colonial world, of types of sensibility formed in colonial conditions.[57]

In one respect, this passage illustrates how Park's narrative fits into the genre of travel writing perfectly: the narrative traits of the text, the intended audience, as well as the setting of the colonial context, all locate his work in a critical realm where these 'types of sensibility' are considered core elements within colonial discourse. In considering literary representations of environment, tensions in the narrative dynamics of *Travels* stand out. Park's cultural positioning as the colonially minded European explorer bravely discovering new and unexplored worlds, embodied in his position as the ego-centric human narrator, juxtaposes the opposing eco-centric position of the non-subjective environmental discourse as it is presented in the text.

In addressing this relationship more closely and by examining the idea of the culture/nature debate in Park's narrative, an unexplored avenue of Park scholarship opens up. It is not quite ecocriticism and not exactly a pure landscape reading of an enlightenment

[56] E. Bohls and I. Duncan, eds, *Travel Writing 1700-1830* (London: Oxford World Classics, 2005), p.220.
[57] R. Kerridge, 'Ecologies of Desire: Travel Writing and Nature Writing as Travelogue', in *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, ed. by S. Clark, (London: Zed Publishing, 1999), p.164.

travel narrative but something that lies in-between; it is a product stemming from what Graham Huggan marks as a result of 'some of the implications […] of bringing postcolonial criticism and ecocriticism together, both for the reassessment of Romantic ecological legacies and for the "greening" of postcolonial thought'.[58] This chapter calls to attention Park's relationship with his experiences of green spaces as they are presented, as well as considers this aspect against a 'postcolonial green' critical context. In this instance, the idea behind this type of reading centres around the notion that to pursue a purely ecocritical approach would mean losing a crucial element of Park's narrative: the politically charged cultural environment of the early colonial context. As readings such as this have become more widely acknowledged within literary studies, an examination of the green spaces alongside the cultural context Park found himself in is an ideal approach to take. This is especially the case when considering to what extent Park's account of Africa provides access to the history of the landscape and flora of the Niger region during this period.

One root that connects ideas such as these to the past lies in Maria Hooker's, albeit brief, comments regarding Park's progress and the impact of green landscapes on his journey. Dating back well over a century, Hooker's comments that 'people have erroneously supposed that a moss may have 'saved Mungo Park's life', links far more closely to considerations of a spiritual rejuvenation rather than a satiety of physical hunger.[59] The green elements of Park's African experience have always been present in his narrative and given Hooker's historic comments, it is surprising more criticism on this theme has not emerged.

Critical work on Park relating to the landscapes he moved through is sparse. Concerning *Travels*, Pratt's comment that 'there is no landscape description at all' problematises the question of subjectivity and ecocriticism even further.[60] Her assertion that there is no landscape description 'at all' is not the case. I argue that Park's descriptions stem from his narrative voice which, in turn, ties in with what Paul Smethurst identifies as 'thin description': a concept that stems from his own analysis of James Cook's narratives of landscape in the South Seas, where this style of delivery concentrates:

[58] G. Huggan, 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism and the Limits of Green Romanticism', in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 45, no.1 (2015), pp.3-14.
[59] M. Hooker, 'Mungo Park and the Moss', in *Notes and Queries*, no. 4-viii (177) (1871), p.440.
[60] Pratt, *Imperial Eye*s, p.76.

> on the style and form, rather than the content, the effect is hyper-realism: presence shifts from the disembodied subject to the reified object. Observations are recorded in non-metaphoric, denotional language, with a controlled narrowing of perspective and shortening of perception […] In [Park's] thin description, the insistence on using an artless form of language can produce unintended effects. His intensely visual and unmediated scrutiny of external reality gives the object, landscape or human figure an elevated sense of *presence*, increasing their symbolic weight.[61]

Whilst certain portions of Park's work focus on his experiences and dealings with the native human cultures of Africa, other parts concentrate on aspects of the unfamiliar countryside. For much of his narrative, Park's attention is drawn to the surrounding landscape: his recorded literary accounts of both the farmed landscapes as well as the wild scenery around him are numerous. On closer inspection of Park's writing, descriptions of the untouched natural wildernesses of Africa present one of the key leitmotifs of Park's seminal text.

From a critical standpoint, this thesis demonstrates how Park scholarship transcends a range of literary genres and critical discourses. A postcolonial green reading of *Travels* is interesting; Park's narrative is a key piece of European travel writing from the Enlightenment period and provides a richly nuanced commentary on a range of diverse and, at times, changing landscapes within West Africa at the end of the eighteenth-century. As Park states:

> Early in the morning, we departed from Lackerago, and a little to the eastward came to the brow of a hill, from whence we had an extensive view of the country. Towards the southeast were perceived some very distant hills, which our guide told us were the mountains of Fooladoo. We travelled with great difficulty down a stony and abrupt precipice, and continued our way in the bed of a dry river-course; where the trees, meeting over head, made the place dark and cool. In a little time we reached the bottom of this romantic glen, and about ten o'clock emerged from between two rocky hills, and found ourselves on the rocky and sandy plains of Kaarta.[62]

In highlighting Park's efforts to incorporate such passages into his narrative, my chapter examining landscapes addresses how some of the central moments of the text lie in the

[61] P. Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World 1768-1840* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.54.
[62] Park, *Travels*, p.125.

instances and observations of natural beauty that occur within the experience of day-to-day travel through what Park notes as unrelenting and challenging wilderness. In keeping with contemporary debates within the realm of postcolonial ecocriticism and related studies, this interpretation of Park's work both 'recognises the importance of a historicist approach that charts the importance of environmental politics in the colonial period', as well as examines 'the interconnections between postcoloniality, environmentalism and economic development'.[63] Additionally, this chapter also addresses one of the fundamental questions surrounding postcolonial ecocritical discourse: how do critics reconcile the ego-centric and the eco-centric positions into a form of analysis which retains the integrity of each? By attempting a 'green reading' of Park's narrative of landscape, a more detailed understanding emerges regarding the interaction between literary representations of landscape and the contextual dynamics of the colonial encounter.

The political dynamics at play in Park's journey across Africa are key, especially when considering how important Park's commentary on landscape is. In a move that pushes the boundaries of ecocriticism even further, contemporary scholarship in literary studies has begun to acknowledge how this practice connects with other political concepts, most notably, in the form of the colonial context. In this manner:

> the project of postcolonial ecocriticism may hence consist in part of a re-reading of some of the canonical texts common to both fields, and to expose these strands of argument – ecocritical concerns in postcolonial literature, and postcolonial aspects of environmental writing – which have previously been submerged.[64]

With this type of critical approach in mind, contemporary debate connects to not only texts that involve environmental and ecological issues within the colonial context that are relatively recent in a *post*-colonial framework, but also champions the idea of 're-reading' narratives that have a certain historical value. In this instance, interpreting Park's, arguably canonical, narrative suits this type of inquiry.

In recent years, the growing popularity of postcolonial ecocriticism has made this practice not only an essential aspect of twenty-first century literary studies but also a highly

[63] M. Sen, 'Spatial Justice: The ecological imperative and postcolonial development', in *The Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 45, no.4 (2009), pp.365-377.
[64] H. Zapf, ed., *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology* (Germany: De Gruyter Publishing, 2016), p.196.

complementary, relevant critical position that reflects the core interests of this chapter: to examine the representation of landscape within an early colonial context. What is clear is how, upon addressing the ecologic and environmental aspects of Park's narrative, certain overriding themes emerge. One, in particular, concerning Park's connectedness to the land he travelled through points towards what Hubert Zapf considers to encapsulate 'the rootedness of the [post]colonial subject in his or her geography' alongside the 'metaphors of the land', 'where the material and the ecocritical dimension of these metaphors […] have often gone unnoticed'.[65] In addressing this gap in critical attention, this chapter additionally examines some of the 'unnoticed' ecological aspects of *Travel*s, as well as attempts to participate in what Richard Watts describes as 'the work of synthesising postcolonialism and ecocriticism by pointing to the texts and approaches that suggest a productive resolution to the tension between these two critical practices'.[66]

By examining Park's narration of the African wilderness, this critique intends to reconcile the human/ego-centric narrative point-of-view, or rather, the human-centred position of the postcolonial project with the non-human position of the environmental. This type of critical participation follows on from efforts by scholars such as Richard Watts who endeavour to account 'not just for the human effects of the post/colonial condition but also for the effects on the non-human world'.[67] This 'greening' of postcolonialism leans towards an examination of Park's narrative whereby the inclusion or emphasising of ecocritical concerns provides a more balanced interpretation of the nature/culture debate under the umbrella of the colonial context as it is presented in this inquiry. Perhaps even more importantly, a green reading may also facilitate a space in which several layers of meaning or interpretation can coexist.

In developing the idea of what an ecocritical interpretation may bring to an inquiry such as this, what is clear is how 'ecocritical readings may add to postcolonial critiques yet another layer of meaning: if from within the human centred framework of postcolonial studies, the land remained necessarily mute, ecocriticism restores the land to a form of both

[65] Ibid.
[66] R. Watts, 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism', in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 44, no.3 (2008), pp.251-261.
[67] Ibid. p.251.

agency and eloquence'.[68] This approach is not without its tensions, the nature/culture debate often lies at the heart of much literary analysis. Nevertheless, in attempting to bring 'the two fields [that] are notoriously difficult to define' together, Huggan and Tiffin have come to renegotiate the complex fields of postcolonialism and ecocriticism into a contemporary approach that has come to be known as postcolonial ecocriticism: the critical examination of texts dealing with the complex interlay of themes regarding postcolonial colonial contexts, environments, and animals.[69] This mode of inquiry, or burgeoning alliance is perhaps far more complementary than it initially seems.

The historic preoccupation with the environmental aspects of exploration literature as well as the 'long history of ecological concern in post-colonial criticism' has paved the way for critical approaches to meditate on the idea of landscape within the political realm of the colonial/postcolonial model, as it is interpreted within any individual text.[70] Evidently, the scope and scale of critical inquiry into landscape narratives within the colonial context is as varied as it is rich. As Huggan and Tiffin state, one of the most foundational principles of postcolonial ecocriticism is to challenge the colonial context and 'to contest Western ideologies of development'.[71] Here, I interpret this position as being the highly varied and numerous ecologic and environmental factors that had a tangible impact on Park's movements and progress through Africa, as well as upon his physical and mental well-being.

In a move that acknowledges the representation of landscape and environments within early colonial encounters as well as modern post-colonial ones, noted critics such as Rob Marzec have focussed on broadening knowledge regarding the roots of postcolonial ecocriticism, and have begun to explore literary representations of landscape within historic narratives such as *Travels*. Marzec's focus lies on this importance of considering scholarly activity 'at length when taking up questions about the relation between land, the novel, and fields such as postcolonial and environmental studies'.[72] This notion, of a kind of disciplinarity of the land, instils the idea that landscape is something more than just a contextual framing device: it is an active element of any text examined in this manner.[73] This is perhaps no more

[68] Zapf, *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, p.196.
[69] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.3.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid, p.19.
[72] R. Marzec, *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study of Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), p.30.
[73] Ibid, p.100.

the case than within travel narratives in general, where a protagonist's movements, coupled with ecological factors such as climate, brings about transformations and changes in the narrated landscape. Again, Park's narrative stands out here as a text that includes such elements.

In relation to *Travels*, I would argue that however invariably problematic this coming together of disciplines may be, the postcolonial ecocritical approach is fundamentally necessary. As Pablo Mukherjee states:

> Surely, any field purporting to theorise the global conditions of colonialism and imperialism (let us call it postcolonial studies) cannot but consider the complex interplay of environmental categories such as water, land, energy, habitat, migration with political or cultural categories such as state, society, conflict, literature, theatre, visual arts. Equally, any field purporting to attach interpretative importance to environment (let us call it eco/environmental studies) must be able to trace the social, historical and material co-ordinates of categories such as forests, rivers, bio-regions and species.[74]

In this guise, a postcolonial ecocritical reading of Park's writing makes sense. Here, Mukherjee's comments on the triple elements of the colonial, the literary, and the natural landscapes correspond to the overriding thematic issues within postcolonial ecocriticism and reinforce some of the key elements that emerge within Park's writing. Here, *Travels* aligns towards this area of literary criticism in general and connects to similar themes in other seminal pieces of critical insight that tie-in with the theme of landscape. Elizabeth DeLoughrey's and George Handley's *Postcolonial Ecologies* (2011) considers Mahasweta Devi's fiction, and, in doing so, examines the notion of a protagonist's 'plight to be reflected in nature'.[75] Park's narrative stands out as a piece of writing that is not only situated within a colonial context but also identifies as a narrative which deals with an individual who is travelling through a range of exotic landscapes, and who is also commenting on the climate as well as his own emotional mindset.

[74] P. Mukherjee, 'Surfing the Second Waves: Amitav Ghosh's *Tide Country*', in *New Formations* 59 (2006), p.144.
[75] E. DeLoughrey and G. Handley, eds, *Postcolonial Ecologies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.152.

The connections that emerge between Park's comments regarding his own emotional disposition, in relation to coping with the extreme heat or the torrential downpours during the rainy season, goes some way towards illustrating how Park's own form of ecological crisis is reflected in his written commentary. These factors all contribute towards an urgency, or need for an interpretation of Park's experiences of the African landscape as he travelled through it in search on the Niger; to what degree he can be understood as the discoverer of this particular place remains to be seen.

Chapter III, 'Sights, Sounds and Silence: Narrating African Women in Mungo Park's *Travels*' adds to the growing body of scholarship on Park that deals with the theme of African women and their representation. In commenting on Park's experiences with female Africans, journalist Eve Auchincloss notes that his interactions with them were often challenging; a position that is clearly brought to life in her statement that African 'women gave him a hard time'.[76] Given the fact that Park was one of the first white European men to attempt to venture into the African interior, his relationships with many of the women he encountered are understandably complex.

As represented, Park's numerous interactions with native women encompassed a wide range of fascinating social exchanges. Be it simply for basic survival, such as begging for food, or by undressing to display the novelty of his white skin, Park's experience of the female African gaze arguably commands further and more developed critical attention. Some critics have certainly recognised a number of instances where Park interacted with African women in *Travels*, however, many of these readings do not explicitly focus on the idea of gender and, to that degree, stand alone in wider critical considerations on Park's socio-historical politicised endeavours.[77] By expanding upon as well as bringing together this fragmented body of criticism, this chapter develops a broader, more composite appreciation of gendered space in Park's narrative specifically through the exploration of Park's representation of female Africans. A further aim is to highlight how Park's representation of women often includes a process involving an inspection or observation of the European traveller by the

[76] E. Auchincloss, 'Mungo Park and the River of No Return', in *The Washington Post* (11/10/1977).
[77] See E. Mitsi, *'Let us Pity the White Man, no mother has he'* (2015); S. Juengel, *'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin; Or, the Year the White Man Passed'* (2006). See also A. Nichols, *'Mumbo Jumbo: Mungo Park and the Rhetoric of Romantic Africa'*, in *Romanticism, Race and Imperial Culture 1780-1834* , ed. by A. Richardson and S. Hofkosh, (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.93-113.

women themselves, subverting the male gaze which has dominated much of western literature.

In recent years, critical approaches to texts that meditate on the identification of female spaces in literature have taken many new directions. Regarding notions of spatiality in literary studies, the process related to the identification, presentation, and examination of female space within texts, or bodies of texts is relatively new. Robert Tally's comments highlight how this type of approach 'aims to make visible the hitherto undisclosed gendering of spaces, while also establishing a visionary critique of the power/knowledge relations of male-dominated social formations'.[78] Critics such as Doreen Massey have also focussed on this particular form of representation, especially the way gender is formalised, constructed and represented specifically within literary spaces that involve considerations of movement or travel:

> Space and Place, spaces and places, and our sense of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through. Moreover, they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over times. And this gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the ways which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live.[79]

Critical considerations of gender within African literary space have also gained momentum. In general, the focus lies on African authors, the idea of travel, and conversations involving space, place and gender, especially architecture.[80] Furthermore, criticism recognising and interpreting the representation of gendered space within Enlightenment travel literature is also relatively sparse. In as much as critics such as Anne McClintock have gone some way towards establishing this critical trend in the colonial context, the examination of texts such as *Travels* have yet to be considered in this manner.[81] In exploring the representation of native women in Park's narrative, a more nuanced understanding of this aspect of spatiality aims to

[78] R. Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.132.
[79] D. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994), pp.185-186.
[80] L. Prussin, *African Nomadic Architecture: Space, Place and Gender* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1995).
[81] A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (London: Routledge, 1995).

build upon the 'new understanding of social space, on the grounds that such research reveals the profound and intricate relations of space and the construction of a gendered reality'.[82]

Acknowledging and interpreting the role and representation of women in *Travels* undoubtedly contributes towards the recognition of a predominantly female-oriented space. Park's narrative regularly includes female reactions to the white European explorer travelling through the Niger region. Moreover, Park's inclusion of such reactions (particularly of the native women towards himself) alongside projections of his own experience of other cultures and communities, highlights an attempt to contextualise a female-oriented experience into his work. This effort does not simply enrich his narrative, it also goes some way towards revealing a type of 'gendered reality' as mentioned earlier.

In numerous instances, the Africans who assisted and helped his passage deeper into the interior, and who also facilitated his journey back to the coast after he had decided to return home, were 'mostly women'.[83] Be it Moorish queens or old slave women, Park's experience of African women, as well as their own experience of him, demonstrates their pivotal role in facilitating Park's survival throughout his oftentimes perilous journey. Evidenced clearly throughout, is how Park's dealings with women encompasses those from both ends of the social scale. The aim is to acknowledge and examine a range of literary examples that develop Tally's idea of 'a gendered reality' specifically in relation to *Travels*.

Chapter IV, 'Travel Narratives of the River Niger: Considering Some Geocritical Approaches', contributes to Park scholarship by examining and interpreting a selection of travel writing that has been conducted in direct response to Park's seminal work. What is particularly interesting about Park's narrative is its impact in terms of the literary legacy it has left behind. Since publication, Park's foundational journey has spawned similar attempts by both men and women that present as narrative homages to this initial trip. This literary collective, understood here as a body of travel literature that spans over two centuries since Park's first steps in Africa, brings forth ideas concerning not just the authors involved in their respective journeys but also the concept of a spatial examination of this designated travelled

[82] Tally Jr., *Spatiality*, p.132.
[83] Mitsi, 'Let us Pity the White Man, No Mother has He', p.120.

space. In this light, Robert Tally's comments on the practice of geocriticism 'presents an intriguing method for examining the interrelations of space, place and literature'.[84]

In this instance, the thread that brings these travel narratives together into an identifiable literary collective, which also places focus on the idea of travelled space, is Park's published journey along the Niger River. What is evident is that Park's initial attempt inspired others to conduct their own travels as well as document their own experiences of the Niger region. In bringing a range of these travel narratives together, and by exploring how Park's work acts as an anchor to the other texts it has arguably spawned, the manifestation of a literary corpus that contains several different accounts and experiences across a range of contrasting political timeframes emerges.

A similar critical approach can be found in Dustin Crowley's analysis of Africa, more broadly, as a continent. Crowley's critical focus lies exclusively on indigenous African writers and, in doing so, brings together a collection of authors that, by way of interpreting a representation of Africa through examining the authors' imagined geographies of resistance and reality, charts one kind of pathway towards a geocriticism of Africa.[85] Authors such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Leopold Senghor, and Chris Abani, are brought together to construct a textualized representation of Africa that not only attempts to deal with the political dynamics of the colonial context but also engages in bringing forth a collective representation of literary space through a number of selected texts. In relation to this point, no research so far has recognised 'the vision of the traveller', as Westphal puts it.[86] In complementing Crowley and in bringing forth the spirit of a geocritical approach, the final chapter of this thesis aims to explore the nuanced interconnections between historic and modern travel experiences, producing a corpus commentary that, in addition to recognising the changing cultures and landscapes of the Niger, critiques the varied experiences of the same space travelled at different times by different individuals.

The selected narratives included in this part of my inquiry, which also act as parameters, are: Richard Owen's *Saga of the Niger* (1961), Peter Hudson's *Two Rivers: Travels*

[84] Tally Jr., *Spatiality*, p.140.
[85] D. Crowley, *Africa's Narrative Geographies: Charting the Intersections of Geocriticism and Postcolonial Studies* (New York: Palgrave, 2015).
[86] B. Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.128.

in West Africa on the Trail of Mungo Park (1991*)*, Tom Freemantle's *The Road to Timbuktu: Down the Niger on the Trail of Mungo Park* (2005), and Kira Salak's *The Cruelest Journey: Six Hundred Miles to Timbuktu* (2005).[87] What is noteworthy, is that the corpus of authors included here all link to what Westphal recognises as an 'exogenous point of view'. Park, Owen, Hudson, Freemantle, and Salak 'all reflect the vision of the traveller; [and] exude exoticism'.[88] In light of this, there are no indigenous voices in this travelled literary space. That is not to say that such an endeavour is not without merit; similar approaches such as Crowley's offer alternative readings that reinforce just how highly diverse and multitudinous the practice of geocriticism is.[89]

Chapter IV also intends to offer three different types of geocritically-minded interpretations of the selected texts mentioned. Marked under the subheadings 'Beginnings', 'Touched by the Fever', and 'Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo' respectively, these interpretations not only highlight the impact of Park's seminal work on a twentieth and twenty-first century readership of travel writers but also contributes towards the growing practice of geocriticism. These readings also intend to point out the sheer diversity possible when conducting this type of inquiry, as well as demonstrate some of the ways in which geo-centred readings bring about new meanings and interpretations of, in this instance, a collection of travel narratives involving the Niger region of West Africa.

One reading, titled 'Beginnings', offers a spatially-focussed interpretation of the region, more specifically, it examines the point where the travellers began their respective journeys upon arriving in Africa. These beginnings act as starting-off points that, in general, all take place in the same region. In a fledgling way, it is an attempt to complement and build upon Pratt's concept of what she recognises as one of Park's arrival scenes 'a convention of almost every variety of travel writing [that serve as] particularly potent sites for framing relations of contact and setting in terms of its representation'.[90] In addition, I also offer a polysensory reading of the ways in which the travelling individuals Park, Owen, Hudson, Freemantle and

[87] R. Owen, *Saga of the Niger* (London: Trinity Press, 1961); P. Hudson, *Two Rivers: Travels in West Africa on the Trail of Mungo Park* (London: Chapmans Publishing, 1991); T. Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu: Down the Niger on the Trail of Mungo Park* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2005), and K. Salak, *The Cruelest Journey: Six Hundred Miles to Timbuktu* (Washington, United States: National Geographic Press, 2005).
[88] Westphal, *Geocriticism,* p.128.
[89] Crowley**,** *Africa's Narrative Geographies.*
[90] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.80.

Salak are, in some way or other, physically affected by being touched by the fever as they make their respective journeys through Africa. A key tenet of geocriticism, polysensoriality envisages a critical approach that examines a collective, textualized space through the auditory, visual, olfactory, gustatory and tactile dimensions of a designated place.[91] In one respect, if there was enough room for such an inquiry, a polysensory reading could incorporate experiences of all five senses: the hearing, the sight, the smell, the taste, and even the touch, of travelled experience within the region mentioned. My focus within this reading offers a type of physiological reading of the ways in which the travelling body reacts to exotic environments. Recently, there has been a growing trend in some literary quarters to remain exclusive to one particular sense. But space is not textually constructed by vision alone; each of the senses plays a vital role in the perception of space throughout Park's journey.

One brief example, which I shall develop within the chapter, is Sten Moslund's study of colonial and postcolonial writing from a non-visual sensory angle; specifically, the analysis of silence in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.[92] This reading not only confirms the integrity of a polysensorial approach but also introduces a colonially charged environment into an examinable ensemble of textualised space. Moslund's sensory reading places focus on the auditory elements of the text, or lack thereof, and is arguably ground-breaking through its originality. It is in the spirit of this type of sensory approach that I wish to examine how each of the travellers included here is, in some way, touched by the fever as they travel through Africa in Park's footsteps.

As Westphal notes, 'the view and its activation by the gaze are not the only centres of perception'.[93] Recent studies relating to polysensoriality have highlighted how this approach of examining specific sensory landscapes is realised and interpreted in a number of different ways. In general terms, historic overviews of polysensoriality, most notably by critics such as David Howes, go some way towards bolstering a critical standpoint that stands firmly within classical scholastic discourse: the 'classification of the body's senses being the case in point'.[94]

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[91] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.137.
[92] S. Moslund, *Literature's Sensuous Geographies: Postcolonial Matters of Place* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.97.
[93] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.132.
[94] D. Howes, 'The Senses', in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. by F. Mascia-Lees, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p.2.

For others, this notion of legitimisation, in that it is a credible analytical method, is already a given and within academic fields such as psychoanalysis, polysensoriality consists of a conceptual practice solely designed as a way of 'accessing meaning' within any given context.[95] Westphal even recognises how the flexibility of this particular approach can incorporate one or many of the senses. Nevertheless, in order to acknowledge a truly *poly*sensory reading, all of the senses should be recognised: 'either we may focus discussion on a particular sense or we can apprehend this relationship in toto, in a polysensory way'.[96]

As Westphal notes, if for whatever reason it is not possible to recognise the full spectrum of senses, the interpretation of a range of sensory landscapes, or sensuous geographies is also a viable option in which to consider these non-visual elements of spatial study. By examining a range of sensory landscapes that exist beyond the visual, Park's polysensorial experiences become clearer to define. In addition to Park's *Travels*, the idea is to attempt a polysensory reading of the selected travel narratives and comment on the physical effects of what is most commonly referred to as 'the fever': Park's 'seasoning', along with the impact this type of illness had on the progress of his modern-day counterparts, are aspects of this reading which I elaborate on.

In completing this triad of readings, my final interpretation 'Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo' examines the ways in which this African ritual has changed since Park's experience of it over two centuries ago. In what is one of the most vivid scenes of his narrative, the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony undoubtedly contributed towards Park's experience of Africa. My examination intends to offer a geocritically-minded approach to this regional practice by way of examining how other modern-day travel writers look for and attempt to experience this ritual in homage to Park. What stands-out, is how this ceremony has changed over time. In bringing together these different narrated experiences of the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony and noting how it has changed from a sacred native ritual to a contemporary tourist attraction, this reading offers new interpretations of how the impact of colonialism has affected this type of indigenous native practice.

In addressing some of the overarching ideas that surround this inquiry, the core function of the thesis is to address and question the traditional ways in which texts are

[95] B. Golse, 'From the Senses to Meaning: The Place of Sensoriality. Ex-periencing, Perceiving, Constructing', in *Revue Francaise de Psychanalyse*, Vol. 80, no.4 (2016), pp.998-1011.
[96] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.133.

critically examined. More specifically, it attempts to point out and examine the validity of reading texts from a position other than a purely egocentric narrative position. In addressing the landscapes, environments, and ecologies that make-up Park's travelling experience in Africa, the notional position of the eco-centric offers one type of alternative approach. Another, clearly, is that of the geo-centric; geocriticism is quickly gaining momentum as a valid and extremely varied alternative that facilitates new interpretations of texts by way of examining the spatial, collective representation of any designated material selected. This thesis contributes to Park scholarship and pushes the boundaries of a range of contemporary critical practices by offering approaches that lie slightly away from the egocentric gaze and, at points, examines the positions of eco-centric as well as geo-centric. Recent criticism that binds some of these ideas together is certainly developing, though it is by no means complete.[97]

In examining the lions, landscapes and literary legacies of Scottish explorer Mungo Park's *Travels*, this work acts as a timely reminder that Park's narrative stands out as a key piece of literature: its significance is demonstrated through the fact that it continues to be an inspiration to other contemporary travel writers well into the twenty-first century.

[97] *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism*, ed. by R. Tally Jr. and C. Batista, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Chapter I: 'Categorising the Colonial: Animals and the Enlightened Explorer'

'Animals are good to think with'

Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (1970) [98]

'Anyone reflecting on the presence of animals in literary texts must quickly come to appreciate the diversity and complexity of the ways in which they are registered or represented'

Kate Soper, 'The Beast in Literature: Some Initial Thoughts' (2008) [99]

'The lions are here very numerous: the gates are shut a little after sunset, and nobody allowed to go out. The thoughts of seeing the Niger in the morning, and the troublesome buzzing of musketoes, prevented me from shutting my eyes during the night; and I had saddled my horse, and was in readiness before daylight; but, on account of the wild beasts, we were obliged to wait until the people were stirring, and the gates opened'

Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts if Africa* (1799) [100]

From one perspective, the many ways in which lions stalk Park's narrative is fascinating. Throughout much of his journey they are never that far away from Park's mind. Either as a local story, a threat, or as a symbol of something other, the idea that this particular beast makes-up a great deal of *Travels* arguably warrants further critical attention. Upon closer inspection, a variety of animals influence in some way, as well as make-up, large parts of Park's travelling experience. This chapter adds to Park scholarship by examining some of the

[98] C. Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp.204-208.
[99] K. Soper, 'The Beast in Literature: Some Initial Thoughts', in *Comparative Critical Studies*, Vol. 2, no.3 (2008), pp.303-309.
[100] Park, *Travels,* p.193.

ways in which nonhuman animals are represented in *Travels*. It will also interpret a range of documented experiences Park had with animals as he moved through Africa.

Thinking about some of the ways in which animals are categorised in Park's narrative also provides a deeper understanding of their significance in relation to his early-colonial experience. In recent times, scholarship on Park's journey has been highly particular; the result of this is that innovative interpretations, fresh perspectives, and possibly new understandings of Park's trip are still being made.[101] In light of such specific approaches, an examination into Park's narration of nonhuman animals during his trip will also provide original insight into this aspect of his African experience in relation to the colonial context. More specifically, it also interprets the ways his narrative differentiates the various animal experiences he had whilst in Africa and, by way of this, exposes the various ways in which non-human animals are seen, as well as treated, by different cultures.

In relation to the representation of nonhuman animals during the Enlightenment period, Mathew Senior's comprehensive presentation of animals as historical cultural material not only highlights their importance in relation to the advancement of human knowledge gathering, but also sets a scene where the theme of animals is worthy of closer critical attention.[102] In a similar vein, and perhaps even more important to some of the ideas circulating in this chapter, is Katherine Kete's *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (2011), which explores the cultural role played by animals in the long nineteenth-century during a time of rapid imperial expansion and significant industrial change.[103] In addition, Tim Youngs' seminal *Beastly Journeys: Travel and Transformation at the Fin de Siècle* (2013) further bolsters the argument that approaching texts in this manner is a wholly worthwhile critical endeavour that pushes boundaries in relation to the theme of the animal within the subject area of English critical studies more generally.[104] In recognising the myriad ways in which animals inhabit texts and, in some instances, bring about transformation and change, Youngs' work establishes a sphere in which interpretations of animal representation provide new perspectives of understanding in nineteenth-century literary texts. More specific

[101] E. Bohls, 'Romantic Exploration and Atlantic Slavery: Mungo Park's Coffle', in *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 55, no.3 (2016), pp.347-367.
[102] M. Senior, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment* (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 2007).
[103] K. Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 2011).
[104] T. Youngs, *Beastly Journeys: Travel and Transformation at the Fin de Siècle* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

interpretations, for example the work of critic Jean Yves Le Disez, in his chapter 'Animals as Figures of Otherness in Travel Narratives of Brittany 1840-1895' (2017), also expose growing critical interests in animal representation within non-fiction travel writing.[105]

As critic Kate Soper asserts, one must 'quickly come to appreciate the diversity and complexity of the ways in which [animals] are registered or represented'.[106] Throughout his African journey, Park recorded a variety of animal encounters. Though some of these experiences were highly exotic, others were far more mundane, everyday encounters with familiar creatures. His narrative's often explicit focus on both the domesticated as well as wild animals of Africa is an element worthy of more nuanced thought.

In considering the representation of animals in the colonial context, texts such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010), highlight how the relationship between animals and the colonial context can be, at times, highly problematic.[107] More specifically, this is through the friction that often exists between the boundaries of the animal as well as the coloniser/colonised, and the positioning of the animal in-between such political relationships. Clearly, there are various ways of interpreting and representing animals within colonial literature and, by way of this, a growing body of criticism is engaging with this matter. For instance, Pat Louw's 2018 analysis of settler dogs and their role in colonial society, brings about new interpretations of the ways in which dogs are regarded and relied on: as an ally, as a protector, and as a companion.[108] In one sense, this chapter not only aims to examine some of the aforementioned tensions brought about by animal representation within the colonial context (especially the ways in which animals impact cross-cultural interactions between races), but also, as Christa Jones puts it, the ways that literary works provide the most detailed descriptions of specific and direct human/animal encounters, most of which are unsettling, sometimes threatening or hostile'.[109]

[105] J. Y. Le Disez, 'Animals as Figures of Otherness in Travel Narratives of Brittany 1840-1895', in *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, ed. by G. Hooper and T. Youngs, (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.71-85.
[106] Soper, 'The Beast in Literature', p.303.
[107] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*.
[108] P. Louw, 'Wildness and Colonialism in 'the Story of Two Dogs' by Doris Lessing', in *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde*, Vol. 55, no.3 (2018), pp.174-185.
[109] C. Jones, 'Ecocriticism *avant la letter*: human-animal encounters in colonial travelogues by Gautier, Fromentin, Lorrain, Loti and Maupassant', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 21, no.3 (2017), pp.278-292.

In bringing Park's narrative deeper into this area of thinking, this type of zoo-critical approach seeks an answer to Fayaz Chagani's question of whether animals within the colonial context 'can speak'.[110] By way of a response and amongst other modes of animal representation, this chapter explores Park's narrative by interpreting the three definable types of animal representation put forwards by Soper: the 'naturalistic', the 'allegorical' and the 'compassionate'.[111]

The Naturalistic

In an attempt to categorise some of the animal descriptions in Park's narrative, the most straightforward form of description lies in the concept of the naturalistic. As Soper states: 'In speaking of a 'naturalistic' register, I refer to that mode of writing in which animals are described in a fairly straightforward way and figure as part of the narrative situation and environmental context'.[112] At first glance, this is the most basic form of animal representation: simple description. Considering Park's narrative with this idea in mind, certain instances that connect to this type of naturalistic register stand out. During an early stage of Park's journey, this type of description allows a lot of information about the local wildlife to be passed on to the reader in a short and simple fashion. For example, as Park waits for the high tides, strong currents and local flooding to subside, his interest in observing the local wildlife becomes clear to see:

> The Gambia abounds with fish, some species of which are excellent food; but none of them that I recollect are known in Europe. At the entrance from the sea, sharks are found in great abundance; and, higher up, alligators, and the hippopotamus (or river-horse) are very numerous. The latter might with more propriety be called the river-elephant, being of enormous and unwieldly bulk, and his teeth furnish good ivory. This animal is amphibious, with short and thick legs, and cloven hoofs; it feeds on grass, and such shrubs as the banks of the river afford, boughs of trees, &c. seldom venturing far from the water, in which it seeks refuge on hearing the approach of man. I have seen many, and always found them of a timid and inoffensive disposition.[113]

[110] F. Chagani, 'Can the Postcolonial Animal Speak?', in *Society and Animals*, Vol. 24, no.6 (2016), pp.619-637.
[111] Soper, 'The Beast in Literature', p.303.
[112] Soper, 'The Beast in Literature', p.303.
[113] Park, *Travels*, p.70.

The detailed nature of Park's description here allows the reader to explore the region alongside him and, to a certain extent, get a sense of what the animals within these foreign landscapes looked like, how they sounded, and if they were of any useful function for commercial or personal use; one of the central issues concerning the presence of animals in literary texts is the question of representation. Considering Park's travelling experience taking place within an early colonial context, at times he struggles to find the appropriate language to describe some of the animals he had never seen before. When Park describes the hippopotamus, it becomes clear that this inhabitant of the African riverbank is not easily characterised. Nevertheless, in attempting to do so, he brings forth familiar concepts of other animals known to himself and his readers, such as the horse, by describing its 'hoofs' and, to a lesser degree, the elephant in the form of its size and bulk. In doing so, he helps European readers to envisage some of the animals of Africa. Furthermore, the more political aspects of the scene are also evident, as well as hint at a future enterprise synonymous with the British Empire: the ivory trade.

Many of Park's early descriptions of animals go some way toward confirming a literary approach of this nature, which, as Huggan suggests 'begins by colourfully describing the ecology of the colonial African world in terms accessible to a lay international readership'. [114] In this sense, Park's narrative brings forth a vision of Africa that relays aspects of the exotic as well as the familiar. It is Park's interest in recording what Peter Brent identifies as the 'zoological knowledge about Africa in the late-eighteenth century', that is clearly evident throughout much of *Travels*.[115] Even at early points in his journey, his concerns about the climate, as well as his progress eastwards against the fast approaching rainy season and subsequent flooding of the Gambia River, give way to his enthusiasm for simple ecologic description: the local animals took priority over the 'impenetrable thickets of mangrove' and 'flat and swampy' landscape.[116] What stands out are his inclusion of animals in his narrative and the emphasis he placed on human – animal relations.

[114] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.246.
[115] P. Brent, *Black Nile: Mungo Park and the search for the Niger* (London and New York: Gordon and Cremonesi Publishing, 1977), p.46.
[116] Park, *Travels*, p.70.

In another instance, Park's observations on locusts go beyond the idea of a 'naturalistic' register that deals with simple description:

> On the road we observed immense quantities of locusts: the trees were quite black with them. These insects devour every vegetable that comes in their way, and in a short time completely strip a tree of its leaves. The noise of their excrement falling upon the leaves and withered grass, very much resembles a shower of rain. When a tree is shaken or struck, it is astonishing to see what a cloud of them will fly off. In their flight they yield to the current of the wind, which at this season of the year is always from the N.E. Should the wind shift, it is difficult to conceive where they could collect food, as the whole of their course was marked with desolation.[117]

Here, Park's focus lies on the connection between animals and their habitat. In this instance, his attention is drawn to the novel sights and sounds on display by a swarm of locusts; novelty lies in his astonishment at the scene before him. What is clear in this scenario, his depiction of a 'cloud' of locusts and description at their 'excrement falling [like] rain', as well as the 'desolation' it causes Park, paints an extremely vivid picture. More specifically, efforts such as these demonstrate how Park brings together both the concept and image of the exotic animal, whatever that may be, alongside ideas relating to ecology as well as weather. In one sense, the falling excrement that resembles a 'shower of rain', greens *Travels* to an even greater degree.

In what could be described as a familiar echo, Jones' point that 'travel writers need to write about memorable human–animal encounters in detail, in some cases obsessively, as for instance Théophile Gautier's accounts of locust attacks', embeds Park's experience within a broader thematic framework along similar lines.[118] In one sense, this bizarre connection may appear as simple coincidence. However, to an early nineteenth-century European readership, experiences such as these would have been far removed from anything experienced in everyday life; clearly even more so when considering relatively unfamiliar, wild creatures such as locusts. For Park, this 'astonishing' observation was just one of many moments during his

[117] Park, *Travels*, p.143.
[118] Jones, 'Ecocriticism *avant la letter*: human-animal encounters in colonial travelogues by Gautier, Fromentin, Lorrain, Loti and Maupassant', pp.278-292.

trip that depicted unaccustomed and unusual animals: an aspect that he was evidently enthusiastic to record.

As Soper's own study of dogs in Joyce's *Ulysses* acknowledges, even straightforward 'descriptive techniques are complex and idiosyncratic'.[119] Even in what could be termed straightforward description, notions of desire, familiarity, as well as differentiation and otherness, expose how even the most basic form of animal representation is often a complicated affair. In *Travels* animals are mentioned regularly. They are regularly at the forefront of Park's mind and arguably make up a great deal of his narrative in one way or another. On one occasion, whilst travelling at night with some native assistants, a silent, nocturnal animal kingdom emerged out of the forest shadows:

> […] as soon as the people of the village were gone to sleep (the moon shining bright) we set out. The stillness of the air, the howling of the wild beasts, and the deep solitude of the forest, made the scene solemn and impressive. Not a word was uttered by any of us, but a whisper; all were attentive, and every one anxious to shew his sagacity, by pointing out to me the wolves and hyaenas as they glided, like shadows, from one thicket to another.[120]

Even short passages such as this illustrate how animals often lie at the centre of Park's travelling experience. Their presence regularly creates moments of subtle tension and excitement. In examining this scene in more detail, it becomes clear that within these moments the human elements take a secondary position to that of the animals described. The 'wolves and hyenas' that 'glided like shadows' in the African bushes are the centrepiece, the cool, 'solemn' night brings forth an atmosphere of what could be described here as a kind of sublime unfamiliarity: a sensation of scenic grandeur combined with a sense of unknown horror that lies somewhere unseen – or barely glimpsed – in the dark African undergrowth. What is clear is that by concentrating on describing how the presence of animals affects his route and travelling experience, his narrative is positioned at the centre of critical debate in relation to animals in the travel writing of the era.

[119] Soper, 'The Beast in Literature', p.305.
[120] Park, *Travels*, p.104.

Considering Soper's comments relating to some of the complexities involved in simplistic animal description, this scene offers a number of issues to consider. Interestingly, Park resists any attempt to note the shape, size, or colour of any of the 'wild animals' moving around in the nearby thickets; there is scant detail regarding the appearance of animals. Nevertheless, alongside the fluidity of their smooth movements, the simple presence of the 'wolves and hyenas' brings forth sensations of excitement and intrigue. Other idiosyncratic, political elements of this early colonial experience also begin to emerge. Members of his company attempt to impress their local knowledge on him to enhance his experience; Park even notes their 'attentive' 'sagacity'. In bringing together animal description alongside the human elements interwoven into the scene, a more politicised representation emerges. At times, as in this example, Park's literary representations of animals inextricably connect with his experiences of other native people and cultures. It is within these moments that the concept of an 'allegorical' type of animal description emerges.

The Allegorical Animal

Park's narrative tells a story of early colonialism directly through his experiences and descriptions of animals. In relation to allegory, several scenes correspond with Simone Cohen's recognition that, in some instances, animals in literature act as 'disguised symbols' of a wider political cause or movement.[121] As a traditional literary device, the archaic use of allegory usually aligns with an intentional effort to convey certain abstract ideas or principles through symbolic modes of representation. As much as allegory uses symbols, it is different from symbolism; allegory usually tells a story whereas symbolism does not. More recently, modern allegorical interpretations of texts have come to problematise traditional assumptions, by reading allegories in texts where the author may not have recognised or intended. As Angus Fletcher puts it, allegorical writing such as this is the process of 'saying one thing in order to mean something beyond that one thing'. [122]

Soper has opened up new academic pathways of debate that directly engage with the concept of allegory within this growing field of animal studies. By examining this particular type of descriptive register, where there is a degree of symbolic weight or meaning assigned

[121] S. Cohen, 'Titian's London Allegory and the three animals of his selva oscura', in *Journal of Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 14, no.1 (2008), pp.46.
[122] A. Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p.4.

intentionally or otherwise to the literary representation of animals in texts, Soper highlights how, in certain circumstances, animals carry 'some more symbolic/allegorical charge taken within the context of the narrative as a whole. Animals that at first appearance look as if they are simply 'making up the scene' may, after all, not be as peripheral or incidental as they first appear'.[123] Park's narrative describes moments where wildlife networks present 'as active agents who make a difference to the ways in which heterogeneous social networks take and hold their shape'.[124] With Park playing out his role as a colonial entity whilst searching for more information on the Niger, his conversations about animals with the native cultures he encountered illustrates how the role and representation of animals take on a more referential state. In this sense, many of the animals in Park's narrative act as symbols of a wider political story: that of early colonialism in Africa by individual European travellers.

One early example of animal representation that corresponds to an allegorical mode of animal description occurs when Park attempts to differentiate between the wild and domesticated animals of the lower Niger. This scene details some of the key differences in the native and non-native gaze simultaneously cast onto an indigenous animal population. The difference is encapsulated in the form of Park's gaze: seeing, describing and responding to what he observes and records from a European perspective. It is also an act which differentiates him from the native knowledge of specific animals. Here, the boundaries of spatial difference between cultures and the wildlife within are a source of division between Park and his travelling entourage:

> Their domestic animals are nearly the same as in Europe. Swine are found in the woods, but their flesh is not esteemed […]. Poultry of all kinds (the turkey excepted) is every where to be had. The Guinea fowl and red partridge, abound in the fields; and the woods furnish a small species of antelope, of which the venison is highly and deservedly prized. Of the other wild animals in the Mandingo countries, the most common are the hyaena, the panther, and the elephant. Considering the use that is made of the latter in the East Indies, it may be thought extraordinary, that the natives of Africa have not, in any part of this immense continent, acquired the skill of taming this powerful and docile creature, and applying his strength and faculties to the service

[123] Soper, 'The Beast in Literature', p.306.
[124] S. Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: Natures Cultures Spaces* (London: Sage Publishing, 2002) p.36.

> of man. When I told some of the natives that this was actually done in the countries of the East, my auditors laughed me to scorn, and exclaimed, *Tobaubo fonnio!* (a white man's lie.) The Negroes frequently find means to destroy the elephant by fire arms; they hunt it principally for the sake of the teeth, which they transfer in barter to those who sell them again to the Europeans. The flesh they eat, and consider it as a great delicacy. The usual animal of burthen in all the Negro territories, is the ass.[125]

This scene conveys an array of animal description. Be it the elephant, ass, or antelope, the human–animal relationships that existed in West Africa during this period illustrate how Park's own European cultural knowledge differs from that of the native human populations. European markets and desires were not for elephant flesh, for example, but rather, for the growing ivory trade.[126] For food, the consumption of Guinea fowl or antelope meat is noted in Park's opening comments. However, in relation to elephants, for example, cultural differences in understanding denote a schism between Park's own observations and the indigenous population. Whereas the natives recognise the elephant primarily as food to eat or as a resource for commercial purposes, in the form of ivory, Park's own position sees the animal as something more. In this context, the idea that the elephant could act as a tool for domestication is dismissed with native 'scorn'. Park's comments are simply incredulous to his indigenous company and ultimately beyond comprehension. It is within these moments that cultural difference is at its most explicit.

Homi Bhabha's thoughts concerning the crossing over of cultural boundaries alongside the emergence of cultural difference in texts ties in here. For it is 'in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated'.[127] In one sense, these 'domains of difference' symbolise the difference in understanding of certain animals as they present and symbolically sit in-between cultures. As the scene plays out, the ways in which elephants are seen and understood vary a great deal between the early-colonial experiencer, in the form of Park, and the native population. Park is accused of lying; his fantastical assertions that such sizeable animals can be tamed,

[125] Park, *Travels*, p.74.
[126] See Huggan and Tiffin, 'Elephants and Ivory' in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.141.
[127] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.2.

managed, and put to work, are 'laughed' off with 'scorn'. In this instance, Park's liminality emerges through his knowledge and understanding of elephants beyond the cross-cultural context he finds himself in. With Park arguably existing in a threshold space such as this, the personal and political complexities regarding his relationship with the wildlife of Africa, as well as the people alongside him in these moments of contact, not only start to surface but also begin to define his transient experiences throughout Western Sudan during this period.

As Senior states, 'there were many new attempts to classify animals, explain their origins, behaviours and appearance, and seek out new and unusual examples' during Park's time in Africa.[128] Scenes within his narrative go some way towards affirming this idea: as much as he often resists any 'thick', or extremely detailed description of animals, he often includes actions, behaviours, or something else about them as part of his travelling experience.

Certain scenes denote how a number of his encounters with animals actually change his experience through the process of acculturation. As Robert Young states, acculturation is 'the process whereby groups are modified through intercultural exchange and socialisation with other groups […] the coloniser and colonised, self and other'.[129] For Park, this process extended beyond his human interactions; at times, his acculturation to Africa emerged through some of the wild animals he encountered. Understandably, what was once a frightening cry or wail in the wild, unfamiliar darkness changes into something considerably different when he is more acclimatised to his foreign surroundings. In an example that demonstrates this type of change, Park's immediate reaction to the wildlife he encountered when initially arriving in Africa undergoes a significant development further on in his narrative. At first, Park's uneasiness is clear:

> […] and when the night is spent by the terrified traveller in listening to the croaking of frogs, (of which the numbers are beyond imagination,) the shrill cry of the jackall, and the deep howling of the hyaena; a dismal concert, interrupted only by the roar of such tremendous thunder as no persons can form a conception of but those who have heard it.[130]

[128] M. Senior, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Berg Publishing, 2007), p.121.
[129] R. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.5.
[130] Park, *Travels*, p.72.

Park's explicit focus on the animal noises he could hear is telling. He is the 'terrified traveller', new to a foreign land and new to the wildlife living within it. In detailing the alarming noises he hears, Park's description concentrates on the 'croaking' of frogs, the 'shrill' cries of the jackal, and 'deep howling' of hyenas close by. At this stage, the 'dismal concert', played out around him, embodied in the uncanny cries of the unseen, unsettles as much as it disturbs. Here, the exotic soundscapes of the crying, wailing animals give an additional layer of unfamiliarity that, at many points, stand at the forefront of his explorations into the unknown interior. However, after spending some time in Africa, Park's reaction to such sounds and noises changes considerably.

After having been imprisoned, harassed and tortured by the Moorish tribes of King Ali, and then upon being released, finding himself lost, alone and dying of thirst, Park's reaction to such disconcerting sounds changes. With his horse also succumbing to the intolerable heat, a more acculturated Park again comes across a colony of frogs. On this occasion, Park is no longer the 'terrified traveller'; in this instance, his reaction is markedly different:

> About a mile from this place, I heard a loud and confused noise somewhere to the right of my course, and in a short time was happy to find it was the croaking of frogs, which was heavenly music to my ears. I followed the sound, and at daybreak arrived at some shallow muddy pools, so full of frogs, that it was difficult to discern the water. The noise they made frightened my horse, and I was obliged to keep them quiet, by beating the water with a branch until he had drank.[131]

Park's change here is significant. What was once only a few months earlier 'a dismal concert', is now 'heavenly music' to his ears: a dramatic shift. In this instance, Park's reaction to the noise of the frogs in relation to his horse is also noteworthy; after experiencing the extreme temperatures of the Sahara and with little food or water, his priority is the welfare of his animal companion rather than himself.

In relation to the idea of a traveller's acclimatisation and subsequent acceptance of what was once an unfamiliar and foreign land, historical ecologist Carole Crumley notes that such experiences are evolving manifestations of 'ongoing dialectical relations between

[131] Park, *Travels*, p.185.

human acts and acts of nature'.[132] In addition, in what is a similar approach to parts of this chapter and the next, Robert Markley's comments on how Alexander Hamilton came to terms with a new climate and culture in his *A New Account of the East Indies* (1727), explicitly documents how Hamilton's experiences directly informed his approach to not only surviving the 'interanimating processes of acculturation to the peoples, languages, and cultures he encounters', but also the 'acclimatisation to the monsoon-driven seasons, winds, and tides of a vast region that remains alien to the experience of his readers'.[133] In more general terms, it is a process that highlights:

> The complex interactions between the dynamic processes of acculturation and acclimatization that […] describes [and] suggests some of the ways in which an eco-cultural approach offers a powerful analytic to explain a wider range of phenomena than conventional 'intellectual' or 'literary' history, and brings to higher standards of interdisciplinary accountability to bear on 'travel' literature.[134]

In this guise, an ecocentric reading of *Travels* fits particularly well. Be it the croaking of frogs or Park's experience of the shifting sands in the Sahara, in reference to Markley, the 'eco-cultural' experience appears to be a 'powerful analytic' when it comes to examining Park's seminal narrative in this manner. To build on the ideas a little more, Mary Kingsley's experiential knowledge of mosquitoes and, perhaps more importantly, how to deal with their bites whilst travelling through the dense jungles of Africa, also connects to the idea of new learning. In what was an ongoing problem, Kingsley's approach of covering her feet at all times in order to avoid mosquito bites saw her acclimatise to the animals of Africa, however small they were, and also comment on some of the ways their effects can influence travel. As Kingsley notes, 'through an atmosphere that has 45 per cent. of solid matter in the shape of mosquitoes':

> I take off my boots and put on my slippers; for it never does in getting bitten by mosquitoes on the feet, when you are on the march; because the rub of your boot on

[132] C. Crumley, 'Historical Ecology: A Multidimensional Ecological Orientation', in *Historical Ecology: Cultural Knowledge and Changing Landscapes*, ed. by C. Crumley, (New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1994), p.9.
[133] R. Markley, 'Monsoon Cultures: Climate and Acculturation in Alexander Hamilton's 'A New Account of the East Indies'', in *New Literary History*, Vol. 38, no.3 (2007), p.528.
[134] Ibid, p.530.

> the bite always produces a sore, and a sore when it comes in the Gorilla country, comes to stay.[135]

It is, perhaps, by way of this kind of commentary and her 'idiosyncratic, witty style', that Kingsley's narrative of West Africa is generally regarded as 'an exceptional piece of exploration writing'.[136]

Park's experiential learning of some of the places, people and landmarks Africa and, in this instance, animals, meant that his journey regularly located him in a realm where opportunities for new cross-cultural learning often occurred. This element of new learning ties in with Bhabha's considerations regarding the 'accumulation of additional cultural knowledge': the process of learning outside of one's own native culture.[137] For Park, this process often took place simply by being geographically located in a certain place. In wandering on the fringes of the Sahara, the shrieks and sounds of the frogs guide Park to a water source and, arguably, save his life. His metamorphosis from the 'terrified traveller' to the cautious but confident explorer demonstrates his ability to not only adapt but also learn new ways in which to come to terms with his extreme environments and the animals living within them. Evidently, at times, the development of Park's own learning experience and familiarisation of such things as animals was his and his alone.

Concerning animals and the process of categorisation, one particular division stands out more than most. After initially recognising the divide between human-animals and non-human animals, another division occurs. This is through the conceptual splitting of the animal kingdom, with one group encompassing the domesticated and the other recognised as the wild. In postcolonial theory, this type of human-centred differentiation exposes one of the key issues when it comes to animal representation: how to deal successfully with the vast array of sub-categories that exist underneath the overriding term of animal. The fluidity of these borders between humans and categorised sets of animal life is an ongoing source of discussion, as expressed by Huggan and Tiffin a decade ago:

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[135] M. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), p.93.
[136] B. Korte, 'Practices and Purposes', in *The Handbook of British Travel Writing*, ed. by B. Schaff, (Berlin: de Gruyter Publishing, 2020), p.101.
[137] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.126.

> This boundary is shifting and contingent […], but most of us are given to act as if it were obdurate, continually re-drawing the line between human and simian primates or, in an opposite move, including domestic animals with ourselves as farm animals […] there are further orders of classification within the primary category 'animal'.[138]

In relation to Park's narrative, this boundary is oftentimes explicit. There is a definite difference between representations of animals that have been adopted or cared for to benefit humans as food or for commercial gains, or even as spiritual token or gift, and what could be understood as the collective body of wild animals that have little intimate contact with human culture. In most instances, these animals pose a threat to human life, cannot usually be tamed or domesticated, and are usually physically separated from human experience. At points, they are the ghosts of Park's text: the hyenas, wolves and lions that glide 'like shadows from one thicket to another.'[139] Often unreachable, untouchable, and regularly a threat, this faction of the animal kingdom understandably lies some way beyond Park's many domesticated animal interactions he includes in his narrative. Nevertheless, by way of examining several of Park's encounters with the domesticated animals of West Africa, several key moments present where cultural difference is bridged through conversations about this particular category of non-human animal.

On commenting on the Foulah population's care and approach towards their domesticated animals, Park notes:

> They display great skill in the management of their cattle, making them extremely gentle by kindness and familiarity. On the approach of night, they are collected from the woods, and secured in folds, called korrees, which are constructed in the neighbourhood of the different villages. In the middle of each korree is erected a small hut, wherein one or two of the herdsmen keep watch during the night, to prevent the cattle from being stolen, and to keep up the fires which are kindled round the koree to frighten away the wild beasts animals. […] The cattle are milked in the mornings and the evenings.[140]

[138] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.154.
[139] Park, *Travel*s, p.104.
[140] Park, *Travels,* p.107.

Impressed, Park notes how considerate their animal practices are; their attentive manner towards their cattle not only allows him to characterise the type of animal husbandry the Foulahs employ, but also reinforces the idea of a schism between the domesticated animals and wild animals as they are presented. Here, the cattle are 'collected', 'secured', and thus protected from the 'wild animals'. As Park continues his commentary, the results of the farmed cattle being brought into the native culture and segregated away from the wild animals are clear to see:

> The cattle are milked in the mornings and the evenings: the milk is excellent; but the quantity obtained from any one cow is by no means so great as in Europe. The Foulahs use the milk chiefly as an article of diet, and that, not until it is quite sour. The cream which it affords is very thick, and is converted into butter by stirring it violently in a large calabash. This butter, when melted over a gentle fire, and freed from impurities, is preserved in small earthen pots, and forms a part in most of their dishes.[141]

This type of description not only demonstrates his interest in animals but also goes some way towards illustrating what his priorities are when including them in his narrative. What is also significant here is the cultural difference he encounters. Park comments on what he sees as local native knowledge regarding animal husbandry, in the form of cheesemaking or lack thereof. This reflects on the cultural characteristics of the people he encounters as much as it demonstrates the different approaches taken towards farmed animals such as cattle:

> […] it is somewhat remarkable that the Foulahs, and indeed all the inhabitants of this part of Africa, are totally unacquainted with the art of making cheese. A firm attachment to the customs of their ancestors, makes them view with an eye of prejudice every thing that looks like innovation. The heat of the climate, and the great scarcity of salt, are held forth as unanswerable objections; and the whole process appears to them too long and troublesome, to be attended with any solid advantage.[142]

Park's cultural positioning here lies between native cultural practices and the animal livestock he describes. In knowing that cheese can be produced quite straightforwardly, but being

[141] Park, *Travels*, p.107.
[142] Ibid.

surprised when the natives know nothing of this particular practice, Park's liminal position stands out. As shown, he suggests that native knowledge originates from a mindset that intends to adhere to historic or traditional practices maintained by the local tribes. In this sense, outsider knowledge, which has previously been described as a '*Tobaubo fonnio*' (a white man's lie!) or, in this instance, the practice of cheesemaking, is viewed with 'an eye of prejudice [towards] everything that looks like innovation'.[143] At this stage of early European colonialism, the exchange of cross-cultural knowledge was as complex as it was dynamic.[144]

Park's commentary here also illustrates how impressed he was at this type of animal-management. In particular, the ways in which the Foulah natives interacted with their most prized resource: farmed cattle. Furthermore, the measures the natives took in protecting their resource are also significant. This is best illustrated through the ways in which they created a physical and, to a lesser extent, conceptual barrier between the farmed animals and the surrounding wild animals, such as securing the animals 'in folds'. This ties in with the previously discussed idea of animal sub-categorisation between wild and domestic; namely, the proximity of animals towards humans and, more specifically, human consumption. In addition, the threat of attack by wild animals is seen as a threat equal to that of dangerous bandits attempting to steal the Foulahs' precious livestock. The protection of their most valued resource is clearly evident; it is a vital element of daily life and their survival depended on this living stock. What is more, the other products synthesised or gleaned from this livestock also signify just how important cattle are to the Foulah. Amongst other things, the cattle give a regular supply of milk, as well as provide material components for other products, such as moisturising skin oil, which are all for human consumption.

In developing the idea of allegory in relation to the representation of animals in Park's narrative, scenes that involve domesticated animals tells the story of the daily habits of the native tribes, as well as highlight Park's threshold position as witness to such events as they unfold before him. Here, animals are marked as a resource for human consumption, and there is little description or detail given to the way animals such as cattle look or act. In instances such as these, the story of the domestic animal lies solely within the domain of the human world. It is the idea that 'our animals are represented as domestic or wild, good or bad, savage

[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

or tame, brave or cowardly': the world in which these animals exist is wholly human-centred.[145] Nevertheless, this entirely human-orientated practice, of differentiation, between such aforementioned categories, reinforces the fluidity and changeability of animal representation by humans. If the human gaze differs like it sometimes does between Park and some of the native populations, the symbolic and cultural understanding of the perceived animal, whatever that may be, often contains differences in the way in which the animal is seen.

In another scene that demonstrates how domesticated animals often lie at the forefront of his narrative, Park's commentary on the practices and process by which domesticated animals, such as the ass, are controlled in order to increase their mobility, stands out:

> […] the Negroes took a curious method to make him tractable. They cut a forked stick, and put the forked part into the ass's mouth, like the bit of a bridle, tied the two smaller parts together above his head, leaving the lower part of the stick of sufficient length to strike against the ground, if the ass should attempt to put his head down. After this, the ass walked along quietly, and gravely enough, taking care, after some practice, to hold his head sufficiently high to prevent the stones or roots of trees from striking against the end of the stick, which experience had taught him would give a severe shock to his teeth. This contrivance produced a ludicrous appearance, but my fellow-travellers told me it was constantly adopted by the Slatees, and always proved effectual.[146]

In what appears to be a novel technique to Park, this approach or 'curious method', 'always proved effectual', and suggests that this mechanism of animal control was equally effective as contemporary European methods. In contrast to such innovation, Park observes that 'the application of animal labour to the purposes of agriculture, is no where adopted; the plough, therefore, is wholly unknown'.[147] This once again places Park in a conceptual zone of liminality whereby his own cultural knowledge differs from that of the locals. In both contexts, the animal is simply a tool, with Park pragmatically taking a more discernible interest in the operation and effects of the process, rather than the animal itself.

[145] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.155.
[146] Park, *Travels*, p.99.
[147] Park, *Travels*, p.74.

Park's observations on what types of animals constitute the diet of the Mandingo natives tell a much broader story, particularly in light of ecocriticism within the field of postcolonialism. As Alison Carruth discusses in her examination of animal domestication in the novels of J.M. Coetzee, the importance of identifying these traits within any textual representation of eating or consuming animals makes it clear that 'the human treatment of animals reflects on a larger discourse [… and is] a vital component of postcolonial ecocriticism: that of human consumption of the other-than-human-world'.[148]

As Park continues his journey, he is exposed to numerous moments when animals are a source of food. In relation to the exotic nature of some of the animal foodstuff Park consumes, one instance is particularly noteworthy:

> The present inhabitants, though they possess both cattle and corn in abundance, are not over nice in articles of diet; rats, moles, squirrels, snakes, locusts, &c. are eaten without scruple by the highest and lowest. My people were one evening invited to a feast given by some of the townsmen, where, after making a hearty meal of what they thought fish and kouskous, one of them found a piece of hard skin in the dish, and brought it along with him, to shew me what sort of fish they had been eating. On examining the skin, I found they had been feasting on a large snake.[149]

Often, rather than committing to any kind of detailed animal description, it is the practice of catching and consuming that is the primary focus. This process cannot but bring animals and human cultures together. In a nod towards his style of simple description, Park's recording of such consumption is arguably of its time and, perhaps more accurately, of its author, in that it is neither 'flavoured with a patronising amusement or tainted with disgust': a trend that is perhaps more explicit in the descriptions of Africans eating in the travel narratives of the following century.[150] Park's list of creatures considered edible, 'rats, moles, squirrels, snakes, locusts', highlights some of the exotic, novel, and at times alien, practices of the African cultures he describes. As food, the animal becomes part of, or gets closer towards, the human, cultural element of his narrative. This is also the case when Park describes local native fishing

[148] DeLoughrey and Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies*, p.33.
[149] Park, *Travels*, p.116.
[150] T. Youngs, *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues, 1850-1900 (Studies in Imperialism)*, (Manchester: Manchester University, 1994), p.54. See, in particular, Youngs' chapter 'Victorian Writing; African eating: digesting Africa', pp.54-75.

practices whilst travelling through an area known as Soobrudooka, some six months into his trip:

> The natives were employed in fishing in various ways. The large fish were taken in long baskets made of split cane […] The small fish were taken in great numbers in hand-nets, which the natives weave of cotton, and use with great dexterity. The fish last mentioned are about the size of sprats, and are prepared for sale in different ways; the most common is by pounding them entire as they come from the steam, in a wooden mortar, and exposing them to dry in the sun, in large lumps, like sugar loaves.[151]

This description not only describes the ways in which animals are connected with the local human populations, but also tells the story of how abundant some of them are in a particular region – here, as when describing the hippopotamus, he takes care to offer points of reference his reader would recognise: 'large lumps, like sugar-loaves', making the exotic recognisable. Clearly, Park gives numerous examples of how animals are used for food throughout his *Travels*. As an early colonialist, Park is interested in the practices that are familiar and potentially open to exploitation in terms of the natural resources available. However, there are many other aspects of his narrative involving animals that point towards a variety of other ways in which they are represented, such as the numerous ways domestic animals are employed in transportation.

The representation of domestic animals in Park's narrative is so closely tied up with their functional uses within the human world that their respective appearance and behaviour are, at times, overlooked. Familiar animals such as asses, cattle or horses are presented quite simply as basic human tools for either commercial exchange, transit or transportation. What is interesting is that even within scenes where animals are used as some kind of human tool or function, the narration of the conscious or cognitive behaviours of these animals sometimes becomes the primary focus. At one stage, Park and his entourage attempt to cross the banks of the River Senegal; it is perhaps within this moment more than others that the character or personality of certain animals are at their most easily identifiable:

[151] Park, *Travels*, p.100.

> I did not, however, think it possible to get the cattle down the bank, […] the Negroes seized the horses, and launched them one at a time, down a sort of trench or gully, that was almost perpendicular, […] After the terrified cattle had been plunged in this manner to the water's edge, […] a general attack commenced upon the other horses, who finding themselves pelted and kicked on all sides, unanimously plunged into the river, and followed their companion. […] It was a matter of great difficulty to manage the asses: their natural stubbornness of disposition made them endure a great deal of pelting and shoving before they would venture into the water; and when they had reached the middle of the stream, four of them turned back, in spite of every exertion to get them forwards.[152]

The most telling aspect of this scene lies in Park's description of the asses and their inherent stubbornness. As much as the resistant horses were forced down the steep banks and ultimately made to cross the river, moving the asses across the same breadth of water proved to be 'a matter of great difficulty'.

In light of this type of characteristic, criticism on the idea of animals as machines and in this instance, as transportation, raises new questions regarding the ethical treatment of animals both inside and outside the colonial context, especially ones used for human transportation or movement of some kind. In referring to the idea of consciously 'thinking animals' and, by doing so, rejecting Descartes' claims of animals 'not thinking' (but rather understood as 'mere automata', or conscious 'machines'), Elizabeth Costello's comments tie in with how domesticated animals in Park's narrative present 'as being [for] human benefit at animal expense'.[153] The scene that Park describes places animals within a human context whereby animal resistance is met with 'a great deal of pelting and shoving'.

Other instances in which animals signify something more than being a component that makes up the background of a scene lie in the moments where they exist as human-centred symbols of cultural worth or meaning. As a form of dress, or marked out as a type of gift, the symbolic underpinning of certain animals represents a key element of Park's narrative. Two

[152] Park, *Travels*, p.114.
[153] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.177.

noticeable scenes that support this idea take place several weeks prior to Park reaching the Niger.

In the first instance, Park's audience with the King of Kasson, Demba Sego Jalla, sees him receive 'a large white bullock' the sight of which 'quite delighted my attendants'.[154] Here, the animal gift is of particular significance in that it marks a favourable travelling experience whilst moving through Kasson's kingdom. It also signifies a recognition of status, 'not so much on account of its bulk, as from its being white in colour, which is considered a particular mark of favour'.[155] In referring to Park's meeting with King Daisy Koorabari of Kaarta, the animal represents a mark of cultural distinction. It is a sign of significant royal eminence that 'was not to be distinguished from his subjects by any superiority in point of dress' other than 'a leopard's skin [that] constituted the only mark of royal dignity'.[156] On occasions, the literary representation of the animal, such as the white bullock or leopard's skin, emerges as a key symbol of cultural worth. As a gesture of well-meaning and wealth, or as an indication of status, at times the symbolism of the animal is used within the different indigenous cultures Park meets for a variety of reasons.

When it comes to highlighting allegory in Park's narrative, where animal description tells a story of life in the Niger region, describes animal behaviour, and also demonstrates how animal species come together naturally, another passage stands out. Park's descriptions of the assault on the kingdom of Kassa by wolves and hyenas provide a fascinating example of how animals are differentiated and categorised:

> I observed a number of large holes in the crevices and fissures of the rocks, where the wolves and hyaenas take refuge during the day. Some of these animals paid us a visit on the evening of the 27th; their approach was discovered by the dogs of the village; and on this occasion it is remarkable, that the dogs did not bark, but howl in the most dismal manner. The inhabitants of the village no sooner heard them than, knowing the cause, they armed themselves; and providing bunches of dry grass, went in a body to the enclosure in the middle of the village where the cattle were kept. Here they lighted the bunches of grass, and, waving them to and fro, ran whooping and hallooing

[154] Park, *Travels*, p.123.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Park, *Travels*, p.128.

> towards the hills. This manoeuvre had the desired effect of frightening the wolves away from the village; but on examination, we found that they had killed five of the cattle, and torn and wounded many others.[157]

Here, the difference between the dark holes and cracks of the rocky landscape where the wild hyenas and wolves hide and the relative safety of the cattle enclosure in the centre of the village, provides a striking contrast to the ways in which these particular animal sub-categories are seen by the local human populations, as well as by Park himself. The domesticated cattle are presented as a precious resource and also serve an allegorical function by symbolising something to be protected at all costs. This is demonstrated through the lengths the locals go to in order to save the cattle from attack: the 'bunches of grass' once set alight, combined with the 'whooping and hollering', act as rudimentary deterrents from further attacks by the wild animals. As Park notes, this endeavour only went so far in protecting the cattle: some were killed outright during the attack whilst 'many others' were 'torn and wounded'. In considering the impact this incursion had, it is understandable why the natives took such drastic measures to protect their livestock. As much as the cattle and other domestic animals exist on a plane where they are protected by and connected with humans and human contact, the banditry of the wolves and hyenas, lying outside of human control, present another type of sub-category in which wild animals reside in a realm where human interaction is limited or distanced.

Much of Park's travelling experience in West Africa is defined through his fear of being attacked, or even eaten, by such animals. At one point, whilst lost and alone deep within the unpopulated African landscape, the disquiet caused by the local wildlife regularly causes Park immense concern. His anxiety at being attacked by wolves, hyenas, or even lions, is reflected in the many short passages that mention this ongoing fear. It is a motif throughout much of the latter part of his narrative. In one example that encapsulates this kind of tension, it is interesting to note how Park's priorities lie with another animal – his horse – rather than himself:

> Having given my horse the remainder of the corn, I made my bed as formerly: but the musketoes and flies from the pool prevented sleep for some time, and I was twice

[157] Park, *Travels*, p.124.

> disturbed in the night by wild beasts, which came very near, and whose howlings kept the horse in continual terror.[158]

Park's attempt to survive the night proved successful. However, this type of threat proved to be something that was forever an issue. In expanding this idea beyond his *Travels*, Park's doomed second trip to the Niger in 1805 cements the idea of just how dangerous the wild animals of Africa are in such circumstances. From the very start, complications dogged the second journey back to the Niger even with a compliment of over thirty soldiers accompanying him. In commenting on a fellow soldier's demise in his unpublished journal, Park writes:

> [Corporal M'Inelli] was removed yesterday to the shade of a tree at a small distance from the tents; and not being brought near in the evening, he was very nearly torn to pieces by the wolves. They were smelling at his feet when he awakened, and then set up such a howl that M'Inelli, sick as he was, started up and came to the tents before the sentry could reach the place where he slept.[159]

Notably, during his first journey to Africa, the deeper he travelled into the interior the more extreme his experience became. The turning point, identified here in moments he is captured and incarcerated by the Moors, signifies a dramatic shift of events. It is at this point that Park's journey turns from a travelling commentary on his experiences of West Africa to a survival narrative. Upon his release, Park never realistically reaches a point where he is well or has any real means of successfully realising his charge of reaching the termination of the Niger. His imprisonment leaves him with no money, no food, and little hope of survival. It is around this this time that Park's experience takes him to the fringes of what was named The Great Sahara Desert. Tellingly, even here, in the most extreme of circumstances, Park's narrative concentrates on the animals he encountered.

In examining some of the wild and domesticated animals that Park engaged with during his time on the edges of the Sahara Desert, it is clear that he made attempts to describe some of the behaviours and actions he observed. As Park's narrative shows, the desert region he wandered through was an extremely inhospitable place for humans; at times, the hot sun,

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[158] Park, *Travels*, p.186.

[159] M. Park, *The Journal of a Mission to the Interior of Africa, in the year 1805*, ed. by J. Wishaw, (London: Createspace, Griffopress, 2015), p.163.

dry heat and burning sand made movement all but impossible. Nevertheless, as Park points out, the landscape and climate were capable of sustaining the animal life which inhabited or moved through the region. The lack of water sources and vegetation resulted in a barren landscape that was dangerous as it was devoid of any facility that could, at face value, support animal life. Yet, some animals did survive within this harsh and demanding environment:

> The few wild animals which inhabit these melancholy regions, are the antelope and the ostrich; their swiftness of foot enabling them to reach the distant watering-places. On the skirts of the Desert, where water is more plentiful, are found lions, panthers, elephants and wild boars.[160]

Once again, Park's narrative concentrates on the animals he gazes upon. In the areas where there is little to no water to support any kind of life, the few animals that inhabit this 'melancholy' region only do so by way of their physical attributes. In particular, the Ostrich's 'swiftness of foot', which allows it to 'reach the distant watering-places'. In moving closer towards the edges of the desert, however, 'where water is more plentiful', a variety of larger animals can survive. As Park continues to comment on the animals of the region, he takes time to describe animal behaviour, namely, the ways in which camels skilfully pick and consume the sparse vegetation. Here, Park's keen eye for detail allows him to document some of the animal's more subtle gestures:

> Of domestic animals, the only one that can endure the fatigue of crossing the Desert, is the camel. By the particular confirmation of the stomach, he is enabled to carry a supply of water sufficient for ten or twelve days; his broad and yielding foot, is well adapted for sandy country; and by a similar motion of his upper lip, he picks the smallest leaves from the thorny shrubs of the Desert as he passes along. The camel is, therefore, the only beast of burden, employed by the trading caravans, which traverse the Desert in different directions, from Barbary to Nigritia.[161]

At its simplest, Park's narrative tells the story of his day to day experiences of Africa. Yet, even during this particularly difficult period of travel, where his focus was simply on survival, he retained an interest in documenting animals. To what degree this type of act served as a form

[160] Park, *Travels*, p.171.
[161] Ibid.

of distraction from his own plight, or if this process gave him a hope or focus, is unclear. Nevertheless, if understood as a form of self-displacement, Park's descriptions of animals, at times, creates the idea that if they can survive in such hostile conditions, then he can too. This is no more the case than when he comments on camels whilst journeying on the southern tips of the Sahara Desert.

During this critical stage of his journey, Park's exposure to the southernmost areas of The Sahara Desert meant that for much of his travelling experience he was sunblind, starving and extremely dehydrated; nevertheless, in this lengthy passage, the appearance and role of camels is deemed particularly important. In what is a particularly detailed description, Park's noting of how the camel 'can endure fatigue', and 'can carry a supply of water for ten or twelve days', once again illustrates his pragmatic mindset when it comes to documenting some of the animals of Africa. What is more, he continues to describe the camel's physical attributes which make it suitable for desert survival. In Park noting how the camel's foot is 'well adapted for sandy country', as well as its 'upper lip' having the ability to 'pick the smallest leaves from the thorny shrubs', his descriptions place animals at the heart of his narrative. As he continues his commentary, his thoughts return towards the practical, in the sense that, as much as the camel is recognised as a body for transportation and desert survival, it is also used by some humans as food. As Park states, 'I shall only add that his flesh, though to my own taste dry and unsavoury, is preferred by the Moors to any other, and that the milk of the female is in universal esteem, and is indeed sweet, pleasant and nutritive'.[162] For Park, animal function is more important than animal form or appearance.

Evidently, animal description constitutes a great deal of Park's publication; moreover, it tells a number of stories about human as well as nonhuman animal life in the different regions he travelled through. In relation to Soper's concept of an allegorical mode of animal description, Park's commentary contains far more instances which are attuned to this idea than Soper's other noted type of categorisation. Often, Park includes animals in such a way that moves a step beyond the naturalistic register of simple description. When it comes to Park's encounters with animals, the allegorical mode often takes precedence over the more basic form.

[162] Ibid.

Park's focus on wildlife embeds animal representation at the forefront of his narrative in a number of ways. It certainly goes simply beyond the notion of animals being included in his narrative as background to whatever scene he describes. Simply put, animals are key figures in *Travels* who often exist at the forefront of his journey; they alter his route, affect the speed of his progress, and whatever shape or size they are, make a substantial impact on Park's mental well-being. In relation to the scale and size of some of the animals he comments on, it is not always the largest animals that stand out as the biggest threat. The risk of attack or injury by animals came not just from large beasts, but also minuscule ones. Upon reaching the Niger, Park notes how it was not the crocodiles that posed a threat, but rather the mosquitoes that flourished close to the river:

> […] the amazing swarms of musketoes, which rise from the swamps and creeks, in such numbers as to harass even the most torpid of the natives; and as my clothes were now almost worn to rags, I was but ill prepared to resist their attack. I usually passed the night, without shutting my eyes, walking backwards and forwards, fanning myself with my hat; their stings raised numerous blisters on my legs and arms; which, together with the want of the rest, made me very feverish and uneasy.[163]

Be it in the form of wild lions of the dense jungle or the 'amazing swarms' of mosquitoes, Park's success lay in both the physical and mental attributes he possessed in overcoming such dangers. In this instance, Park's robust physicality meant that, although the 'stings raised numerous blisters on [his] arms and legs', which 'made him very feverish and uneasy,' he was physically capable of surviving the ordeal and journey onwards. The threat from wildlife, regardless of size, meant anxieties about succumbing to such threats were constant.

Animals played a key role in the British colonisation of Africa: as transportation, food, and eventually and obviously for commercial gain, in the form of ivory. Other European explorers of this era, such as James Hingston Tuckey, did not share the same physical constitution as Park and died directly from dangers such as this. Europeans were simply not physiologically equipped to cope with the dangers that stemmed from such animals as

[163] Park, *Travels*, p.205.

mosquitoes and, by way of this, malaria: a deadly combination and highly effective barrier to the early European expansionism of West Africa as well as the continent more generally.[164]

In this guise, the complex relationships between colonialism, postcolonialism, and ecocritical examinations of texts, here specifically in the form of a zoocritical analysis of Park's travel narrative, combine to develop scholarship in this area beyond current debate regarding *post*-colonial animals. Readings of historic representations of animals, such as in Park's journey, forge new pathways into scholarship that deals with 'postcolonial histories'; namely, the ways in which literature like Park's develops understanding of the representation of the animal within a colonial context grappling with issues, or 'postcolonial questions', regarding concepts such as 'justice, representation, and conservation'.[165]

One instance that illustrates how animals were employed for a range of diverse and, at times, malevolent practices, emerges when Park is held prisoner for several months between March and May of 1796. In commenting on some of the behaviours and general characteristics of the Moors, Park's narrative describes a complex and highly-varied relationship with nonhuman animals. In one sense, it is as extreme as it is practically minded. As Park comments, 'The Moors, indeed, subsist chiefly on the flesh of their cattle, and are always in the extreme of either gluttony or abstinence'.[166] In another instance, Park describes a scene where some young boys are being schooled on their religious faith. Here, the way in which animal waste is utilised paints a picture of West Africa that, for European readers of Park's narrative, is exotic: the 'pupils assemble every evening before his [the priest's] tent; where, by the light of a large fire, made of brush-wood and cows' dung, they are taught a few sentences from the Koran, and are initiated into the principles of their creed'.[167] Clearly, these types of observations are, in general, culturally descriptive rather than animal centred. Yet this focus changes when it comes to Park's narration of his capture, imprisonment and subsequent torture at the hands of the Moorish King, Ali.

[164] A. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.13-72.
[165] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.177.
[166] Park, *Travels*, p.165.
[167] Park, *Travels*, p.166.

During this period of horrendous anxiety, and whilst imprisoned, Park is subjected to a series of encounters with a wild hog. In this instance, the Moors use the animal as a type of crude religious test:

> […] Ali was about to present me with something to eat; and looking round, I observed some boys bringing a wild hog, which they tied to one of the tent-strings, and Ali made signs to me to kill and dress it for supper. Though I was very hungry, I did not think it prudent to eat any part of an animal so much detested by the Moors, and therefore told them I never ate such food. They then untied the hog, in hopes that it would run immediately at me; for they believe that a great enmity subsists between hogs and Christians.[168]

Park's miserable experience at the hands of the Moors did not end there. After being led to a prison hut, where he remained for a great deal of his incarceration, the animal was tormented and whipped into a wild frenzy and then introduced back into the hut:

> This animal had certainly been placed there by Ali's order, out of derision to a Christian; and I found it a very disagreeable inmate, as it drew together a number of boys who amused themselves by beating it with sticks, until they had so irritated the hog that it ran and bit at every person within its reach. […] With the returning day commenced the same round of insult and irritation: the boys assembled to beat the hog, […] It is impossible for me to describe the behaviour of a people who study mischief as a science, and exult in the miseries and misfortunes of their fellow creatures.[169]

Whilst incarcerated, Park's experience of animals is explicit by way of its connection to the specific culture in which he is imprisoned. As he notes, the Moors believed that 'a great enmity subsists between hogs and Christians'; the animal 'had certainly been placed there by Ali's order, out of derision to a Christian'. In this case, Ali was the King and ruler of the Moorish tribes in the region of Benowm, Ludamar. This was a prolonged period of great distress for Park, whose captivity spanned a range of months. During this time, his daily experiences of torture comprised a number of techniques, all of which were engineered to make him suffer

[168] Park, *Travels*, p.147.
[169] Park, *Travels*, pp.148-149.

as much as possible. By way of starvation or torment by the whipped hog, this period of imprisonment stands out as one of Park's unhappiest times in Africa. In one sense, this type of description connects to his earlier comments on the camel, in that Park is not just noticing and describing the animal, but identifying with it in some way. Here, they are both tortured prisoners, tormented for the pleasure of others.

As Emily Haddad comments, the Moors did not 'permanently deprive Park of the use of his body by murdering him [rather] they violated Park's right to his body as property not by actually taking it from him, but by preventing him from fully exercising his right to it'.[170] In this context, the pig, or 'hog' as described, is used to not only limit his physical movements whilst trapped in the hut but also rob him of any stable mental state. This form of torture comprised of a 'non-stop performance from noon until eight o'clock. Whilst the spectators enjoyed themselves they taunted Park, and the small boys continued rousing the hog'. [171] This highlights how the experience was not only ongoing and physical in its delivery but also exasperatingly psychologically torturous. Furthermore, this process of torment and terror situated Park in a position where, as a Christian, he was seen as lower than the slaves who were under a similar type of ownership by the Moors. In this instance, Park is, again, equated with the pig rather than his fellow humans. As Haddad points out, 'at a particularly trying stage of his incarceration, Park found himself yearning for 'solitude and reflection' and envy[ing] the situation of a slave, who, amidst all his calamities, could still possess the enjoyment of his own thoughts; a happiness to which [Park] had been for some time a stranger'.[172] As Brent notes, this continued torment by the same 'furious hog', with 'an evil temper', took its toll on Park's mental disposition to such a degree that his 'very patience' began to wane.[173]

This scene is particularly significant when addressing how Park's narrative ties in with current postcolonial ecocritical debate, particularly what Huggan and Tiffin refer to as, 'the ways in which the treatment of animals that have special status in one human society is used to vilify, incriminate or marginalise other human groups'.[174] Here, the animal acts as a symbol

[170] Haddad, 'Property in the Captivity of Mungo Park', p.132.
[171] Lupton, *Mungo Park – The African Traveler*, p.67.
[172] Haddad, 'Property in the Captivity of Mungo Park', p.132.
[173] Brent, *Black Nile: Mungo Park and the search for the Niger*, p.66.
[174] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.154.

of religious (in)difference. In this scene, the animal is used as a provocative tool where cultural and religious diversity can be toyed with via the behaviour of the Moors. This was what Ali was doing to Park's physical and mental disposition: 'the animal had certainly been placed there by Ali's order […] 'I was a *stranger*, I was *unprotected*, and I was a *Christian*; each of these circumstances is sufficient to drive every spark of humanity from the heart of a Moor'.[175] Park's torment by the hog, albeit at the hands of the Moors, highlights the type of dynamics involved when it comes to animal representation in the colonial context. In considering Park's narrative within contemporary critical frameworks such as postcolonial ecocriticism, interpretations which address this broad and clearly complex theme open up new avenues of scholarly insight. In this sense, the hog is not only a tool of torture, it is a symbol of a much wider conversation about how animals in the early colonial context are represented and reviewed within a contemporary postcolonial critical domain.

In examining the representation of animals in Park's narrative, lions are extremely significant. In contrast to some of the other threats and dangers posed, lions stand out as one of the most prominent dangers to life throughout his journey. Be it the threat of a surprise attack whilst wandering alone through the jungle, or by way of an imagined or conceptual assault solely within the mind, the threat of lion attack was a perpetual and very real concern. Not only are they regularly mentioned throughout his journey and by doing so, in a sense, stalk his narrative, they also arrive to the text with a certain degree of cultural baggage by way of the mythic as well as symbolic image this creature creates. In interpreting literary representations of the lion in Park's work, it is clear that this particular animal had a significant impact on Park's travels through West Africa.

Lions

Understandably, criticism of this animal in Park's narrative is multi-faceted. His experience of lions is complex. At times, it is a highly personal, individual affair whilst in other circumstances lion encounters bring cultures together. Passages that mention the fear of lion attack provide a defining strand of tension and excitement. However, what may be an element of excitement to a reader at home in Europe, would be incomparable with the overarching anxiety and fear

[175] Park, *Travels*, pp.148-149.

experienced by Park when walking alone and exposed to such dangers in the wild jungle landscapes.

When set against his treatment at the hands of the Moors, many of the benevolent tribes Park met display a distinct compassion and kindness towards the lone individual. Recognising the dangers faced by the solitary traveller in the wilderness, the friendly locals often go out of their way to support and assist Park's mission. Concerning the threat of lions, some of the locals are only too aware of how at risk the lone traveller is:

> About noon, my horse was so much fatigued that I could not keep up with my companions; I therefore dismounted, and desired them to ride on, telling them, that I would follow as soon as my horse had rested a little. But I found them unwilling to leave me: the lions, they said, were very numerous in those parts, and though they might not so readily attack a body of people, they would soon find out an individual: it was therefore agreed, that one of the company should stay with me, to assist in driving my horse, while others passed on to Galloo, to procure lodgings, and collect grass for the horses before night.[176]

On another occasion, the dangers associated with the sheer number of lions inhabiting the local vicinity of populations has a dramatic effect on the behaviour of Park, as well as the natives:

> The lions here are very numerous: the gates are shut a little after sunset, and nobody allowed to go out. The thoughts of seeing the Niger in the morning, and the troublesome buzzing of the musketoes, prevented me from shutting my eyes during the night; and I had saddled my horse, and was in readiness before daylight; but, on account of the wild beasts, we were obliged to wait until the people were stirring and the gates opened.[177]

In one sense, the human action and response towards this kind of threat is a reaction towards the dangers imposed by the surrounding non-human animal ecologies. Be it the mosquitoes

[176] Park, *Travels*, p.190.
[177] Park, *Travels*, p.193.

or the proximity of the man-eating lions, animal elements in his narrative play a key role in affecting his movements and the pace at which he travelled.

In thinking about the concept of the lion and its associations with some of the local native tribes, especially in relation to the theme of folklore, one moment is particularly noticeable: the story 'catching a live lion'. Here, the connections between Park's travelling experience, animal representation, and native storytelling traditions come together:

> Many years ago (said the relator), the people of Doomasansa (a town on the Gambia), were much annoyed by a lion, that came every night, and took away some of their cattle. By continuing his depredations, the people were at length so much enraged, that a party of them resolved to go and hunt the monster. They accordingly proceeded in search of the common enemy, which they found concealed in a thicket; and immediately firing at him, were lucky enough to wound him in such a manner, that, in springing from the thicket towards the people, he fell down among the grass, and was unable to rise. The animal, however, manifested such appearance of vigour, that nobody cared to approach him singly; and that a consultation was held, concerning the properest means of taking him alive; […] In this manner they approached the enemy: but the beast had by this time recovered his strength; and such was the fierceness of his countenance, that the hunters, instead of proceeding any further, thought it prudent to provide for their own safety, by covering themselves with the roof. Unfortunately, the lion was too nimble for them; for, making a spring while the roof was setting down, both the beast and his pursuers were caught in the same cage, and the lion devoured them at his leisure, to the great astonishment and mortification of the people of Doomasansa.[178]

This passage highlights just how intertwined some of the native populations were with the dangerous, local wildlife. In this case, lions are located at the centre of local native oral traditions directly through the act of storytelling. This passage also illustrates in a number of ways how lions are represented in Park's narrative. As much as there is little to no physical description of the lion, this story puts particular focus on its behaviour, as well as detailing the various attempts to catch it by some of the local natives. In this context, lions are seen as

[178] Park, *Travels*, p.88.

a dangerous threat to life (that 'showed such appearance of vigour that nobody cared to approach him singly'), as well as a commodity (the locals could 'sell him to the Europeans'); and as an agile animal ('the lion was too nimble for them'). In one sense, this example frames lions as animal figures that are enclosed within the boundaries of local cultural folklore. Such native allegories are merely one aspect. In relaying this story to Park, as a foreign traveller outside of this local knowledge, this tale – reminiscent of urban legends of our time – crosses over into Park's European travelling experience and, thus then later after publication, onto an early nineteenth-century European readership. It is a story within a story that, in one sense, is parable-like, and in this manner, transcends cultures. In examining some of the other parts of Park's narrative which include the representation of lions, the story of 'catching a live lion' is only one aspect of a much broader, multifaceted, growing body of literary examples that incorporate this particular creature.

Evidently, lions play a pronounced role in Park's movements and progress through West Africa. This is especially the case the deeper he penetrates into the remote, perilous interior. On closer inspection, the different types of experience Park has with lions, such as gazing at them on horseback from afar or when fleeing in a panic after coming face to face with a pride, are presented as noteworthy encounters that connect to some of the fundamental ideas within postcolonial ecocriticism. More specifically, the ways in which animals are seen and subsequently categorised by humans and to what degree they are, in this sense, 'primarily symbolic' in their literary representation is important here.[179] It connects back to Soper's comments regarding allegory, that animals in literature act, at times, as disguised symbols of a wider political cause or movement; lions tell a number of stories.

As his narrative develops, Park's ongoing anxiety towards the persistent danger presented by the local wild animals continues as he travels deeper into the unforgiving African landscape. In another noteworthy scene, Park's encounter with a giraffe and a lion illustrates how such animals are differentiated through categorisation; namely, animals that pose a threat to humans and animals that harbour no discernible menace. At first, Park's description of a giraffe reinforces the idea that he was desirous to record such wildlife in his narrative; in

[179] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.133.

this instance, his attempts at recording such animals go beyond simply characterising its behaviour.

The description of the giraffe's 'mouse colour', 'short black horns', and 'very long' 'neck and fore-legs' stands out. It illustrates how Park conveys the appearance of a creature he had relatively little contact with. Moreover, this instance also illustrates that not all the wild animals Park encountered were directly life-threatening to humans. Park's narrative illustrates how the giraffe 'trotted', 'in a very sluggish manner', and exits the scene 'moving its head from side to side to see if we were pursuing it'. As much as it is classified as a wild animal, it poses little threat. Nevertheless, the process of animal categorisation is explicit. Animals here are recognised, in some way, to be wild, untamed, and to that extent, undomesticated. Human differentiation emerges through the concept of threat, more specifically, the separating of animals into those which are an immediate, highly-dangerous threat to life, and the wild animals of Africa simply inhabiting the local landscapes with no likelihood of affecting Park.

There is, understandably, a noticeable difference in tone when Park chances upon a lion some moments shortly after his encounter with the giraffe. As Park states:

> Shortly after this, as we were crossing a large open plain, where there were a few scattered bushes, my guide, who was a little way before me, wheeled his horse round in a moment, calling out, something in the Foulah language, which I did not understand. I inquired in Mandingo what he meant; *Wara billi*, a very large lion, said he; and made signs for me to ride away. But my horse was much too fatigued: so we rode slowly past the bush, from which the animal had given us the alarm. Not seeing any thing myself, however, I thought my guide had been mistaken, when the Foulah suddenly put his hand to his mouth, exclaiming, *Soubah an allahi*, (God preserve us!) and to my great surprise, I then perceived a large red lion, at a short distance from the bush, with his head couched between his fore-paws. I expected he would instantly spring upon me, and instinctively pulled my feet from my stirrups, to throw myself on the ground, that my horse might become the victim, rather than myself. But it is probable the lion was not hungry; for he quietly suffered us to pass, though we were

> fairly in his reach. My eyes were so riveted upon this sovereign of the beasts that I found it impossible to remove them, until we were at a considerable distance.[180]

In what is one of the highlights of animal representation in his narrative, Park's account of this encounter with this lion, in particular, is remarkable. It is, in one sense, the very moment that Park comes face to face with the African other, as manifest in the form of the non-human animal. With the large, red lion's 'head couched between his fore-paws', coupled with Park's anticipation of what may immediately follow, it is clear that the European traveller was just as susceptible to attack as the local guide was.

What makes this scene particularly striking is the style in which Park narrates the situation. His comments signify something more than a simple, chance meeting with a particularly large forest animal whilst travelling through the jungle. From one point of view, the encounter contains a number of themes that relate to the processes involved in early colonial travel: exploration into a remote zone of potential contact of some description; bravely confronting the unknown dangers of meeting a human, or, in this case, non-human animal other; the interpretation of a hierarchy of power; the unknown and unfamiliar exotic. These are all crystallised into a meeting with an animal that was as wild and dangerous as anything Park would ever experience during his journey. His surprise and awe, encapsulated in the moment where Park 'found it impossible' to remove his eyes from the lion's, is clear to behold.

Complementing this idea and drawing from Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)* (2002), where he describes an encounter of looking between himself and his cat, Wendy Woodward's *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Narratives* (2008), connects the concept of the animal gaze to a space in which 'the human acknowledges subjective kinship with animals'.[181] In a similar vein, Park's brief encounter with the lion echoes a similar type of connection; in this instance the hierarchy between the two is established through Park's language. The lion, identified by Park as the most 'sovereign of animals', brings forth the concept of monarchy. In every sense, the 'large red lion at a short distance from the bush, with his head couched between his fore-paws', is the king of the

[180] Park, *Travels*, p.204.
[181] W. Woodward, *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Narratives* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008), p.3.

jungle. Its power and strength is matched by its striking colour, fearless attitude and overarching authority of the scene as depicted. Park's blustering entrance to the sovereign's kingdom, on his horse that was 'much too fatigued' could have been the end of his journey, but as he suggests, it was most 'probable the lion was not hungry'. Aligning with the growing criticism on the subject of how animals are represented in literature, Park's encounter with the large red lion is one such example that 'provides the most detailed descriptions of specific and direct human/animal encounters, most of which are unsettling, sometimes threatening or hostile'.[182]

In offering another point that emphasises this moment above others, the colour of the animal is also effective in differentiating it from other instances in the text where lions are included. Park's meeting with 'Wara billi (a very large lion)' stands out as a key moment of tension. With his eyes 'so riveted upon this sovereign of the animals that I found it impossible to remove them until we were at a considerable distance', the idea that Park is caught deep within the contact zone, trance-like and impotent to the perilous situation unfolding before him, places any sense of power or authority firmly within the realm of the animal. In this sense, the story unfolding here connects to a much larger narrative unfolding beyond Park's narrative: that Park's efforts to explore the interior of Africa, like many of his counterparts during this era, were, at points, in some way affected by the indigenous animals and creatures that inhabit these remote, wild regions.[183]

In offering another example of this animal within a travel narrative of Africa, albeit around sixty years after Park's journey, Doctor David Livingstone's account of a lion attack offers some insight into what Park may have experienced had the beast actually savaged him. As Livingstone comments:

> Starting, and looking half round, I saw the lion just in the act of springing upon me. I was upon a little height; he caught my shoulder as he sprang, and we both came to the ground below together. Growling horribly close to my ear, he shook me as a terrier dog does a rat. […] Besides crunching the bone into splinters, he left eleven teeth wounds on the upper parts of my arm. A wound from this animal's tooth resembles a

[182] Jones, 'Ecocriticism *avant la letter*: human-animal encounters in colonial travelogues by Gautier, Fromentin, Lorrain, Loti and Maupassant', pp.278-292.
[183] See P. Heymans, *Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species* (London: Routledge, 2012).

> gun-shot wound; it is generally followed by a great deal of sloughing and discharge, and pains are felt in the part periodically ever afterwards.[184]

In contrast, Fred Selous's encounter with a family of five wandering lions illustrates how, nearly a century after Park and around a generation after Livingstone, the colonial mindset of the European game hunter in Africa had well and truly set in. For Selous, the chance to encounter such a beast appears to be less of a dangerous near miss, but rather more of a missed sporting opportunity:

> This family partly consisted of a large male and a young male, and three full-grown females. The big one seems to have been a magnificent animal […] He looked as if his shoulders were loaded with bundles of grass, and behind he was so small he looked hungry. […] I was well mounted and had a good rifle with me, and had I only sighted them in so open part of the country I think I should have added at least the skin of the big male to my collection of hunting trophies.[185]

By way of such accounts, Park's encounter with the large red lion appears to be a lucky one. He escaped unharmed and lived to tell the tale. With no rifle, and with no real company or caravan to support him, Park's commentary on this moment provides a momentary snapshot of a much broader narrative of lions as they are viewed and represented by Europeans within the colonial context. For Livingstone, the moment of lion contact was a matter of life and death; for Selous, it was a missed opportunity; for Park, however, it was a lucky escape!

<u>Categorising the Compassionate</u>

Soper's third type of literary representation of animal, the idea of the compassionate form of representation, brings to mind Park's close, almost familial, relationship with his horse. This idea stems from Soper's comment that 'the compassionate' register of the animal in literature acts as a 'way of meditating upon or bringing us to think about our treatment of animals'.[186] Park's descriptions of horses are numerous. However, Soper's definition appears particularly

[184] D. Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishing, 1982), pp.12-13.
[185] F. Selous, *Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa* (London: Century Publishing, 1984), pp.121-122.
[186] Soper, 'The Beast in Literature', p.307.

suitable in considering Park's horse, who, for the most part, remained with Park throughout his journey.

When it comes to the representation of horses in general, one fleeting example that illustrates Park's particular style of commentary on this subject occurs when he approaches the township of Jarra. Here, Park's gaze focuses on a pack of wild horses running free in the African wilderness:

> About four miles to the north of Simbing, we came to a small stream of water, where we observed a number of wild horses: they were all of one colour, and galloped away from us at an easy rate, frequently stopping and looking back. The Negroes hunt them for food, and their flesh is much esteemed.[187]

Once again, Park's simplistic descriptions of the world he observes often concentrate on animals. In this scene, Park comments on how the wild horses of Simbing are sometimes used as a food source. However, in addressing moments in his narrative which involve his own horse, a closer connection can be seen. His horse is the only figure that accompanies him for most of his perilous journey. The strength of this relationship is even noted by William Wordsworth. In what ended up being an unused passage in book XIII of 'The Prelude', Wordsworth's reference to Park's troublesome journey is as explicit as his acknowledgement of Park's relationship with his horse:

Doth that Land Traveller living yet appear
To the mind's eye when, from the Moors escap'd
Alone and in the heart of Africa
And having sunk to earth worn out with pain
And weariness at length took pain away
The sense of life, he found when he awaked
His horse in quiet standing at his side
His arm within the bridle & the Sun
Setting upon the desart.[188]

[187] Park, *Travels*, p.135.
[188] W. Wordsworth, in T. Fulford, D. Lee and P. Kitson, eds, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.100.

Wordsworth's acknowledgment of Park's horse 'in quiet standing by his side' is a striking image; the picture of the weary traveller alone in the 'heart of Africa' is not only reminiscent of Carl Thompson's work detailing the plight of the suffering traveller, but also leans perhaps more closely to what Tim Youngs identifies as a process where 'images and motifs from earlier voyages and travels were incorporated by Romantic poets'.[189]

As Youngs points out, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's composition of 'Kubla Khan' took place whilst reading Samuel Purchas's anthology of travels. Here, Park's journey, as well as his horse, is absorbed and reintroduced into Wordsworth's poetry: a Romantic consciousness that, 'in the case of the Romantic poets', 'shows how travel accounts may be utilised in other forms of literature and influence their representations — and thus, in turn, readers' images — of other places'.[190] To develop this idea — of how travel accounts influence other forms of literature — Cian Duffy's comments regarding the 'genre of the polar sublime that developed in the writings of Cook and others in the mid-eighteenth century [and how it] had quickly become embedded in the popular imagination', complements his analysis of Romantic works such as Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) as well as the artic frame narrative of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).[191] Furthermore, Duffy's inclusion of the fateful Franklin expedition also highlights one of the central geopolitical aims of the era: the political exploration and intended exploitation of such landscapes. Like Park's, these adventures were attempts to 'claim these spaces for the European imagination', however, similarly to Park's demise during his return to Africa in 1805, they rather more poignantly point towards a kind of 'narrative heroic failure'.[192] As I intend to point out in my next chapter, Park's *Travels* not only documents an experience of Africa, it also connects to other Romantic writers of the period in a variety of ways; here, Wordsworth's poetry is just one example.

What is clear is that Park's horse never abandoned him. However, soon after reaching the banks of the river Niger, his horse is simply too exhausted to continue, and it was with great sadness that Park finds himself having to leave it alone in the wilderness. In one, albeit practical sense, its usefulness had come to an abrupt and sombre end; its function had

[189] See C. Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007) and T. Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.40.
[190] Ibid.
[191] C. Duffy, *The Landscapes of the Sublime, 1700-1830* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.21.
[192] Ibid.

essentially ceased to be. Nevertheless, Park's compassion towards his animal companion is clear:

> But though I was littler able to walk, my horse was still less able to carry me, and about six miles to the east of Modiboo, in crossing some rough clayey ground, he fell, and the united strength of the guide and myself could not place him again upon his legs. I sat down for some time beside this worn-out associate of my adventures; but finding him still unable to rise, I took off the saddle and bridle, and placed a quantity of grass before him. I surveyed the poor animal, as he lay panting on the ground, with sympathetic emotion; for I could not suppress the sad apprehension that I should myself in a short time lie down and perish in the same manner of fatigue and hunger. With this foreboding I left my poor horse, and with great reluctance followed my guide on foot along the bank of the river until about noon.[193]

Here, Park's compassion can be recognised in a number of ways: not only through some of the language he uses — the term 'worn-out associate' gives the impression he is talking about an old friend or acquaintance, for example — but also through his efforts to revive him by placing 'a quantity of grass before him'. His concerns for the animal even led him to dismount so that it could be revitalised, though this had little effect.

But this is not the end. After a number of days travel, having decided to return to the coast, Park coincidentally reunites with the horse he reluctantly abandoned. This moment is significant, in that it catalyses Park's hope of successfully returning home. In the moment Park left his horse, he gave up all hope of obtaining another and, in a bold statement of intent, 'taking off the stirrups and the girths, […] threw the saddle onto the river'.[194] This action prompts his guide to react: 'The Negro no sooner saw me throw the saddle into the water, than he came running from among the bushes where he had concealed himself, jumped into the river, and by the help of his spear, brought out the saddle, and ran away with it'.[195] Confused at the guide's actions, Park carried on for some miles until he reached the town of Modiboo. Distraught and frustrated at his ongoing misfortune, it is at this point that his

[193] Park, *Travels*, p.205.
[194] Park, *Travels*, p.212.
[195] Ibid.

situation changed somewhat for the better. In being reunited with his longstanding travel companion, the chances of making it back to the coast were greatly improved:

> While I was conversing with the Dooty, and remonstrating against the guide for having left me in such a situation, I heard a horse neigh in one of the huts; and the Dooty inquired, with a smile, if I knew who was speaking to me? He explained himself, by telling me that the horse was still alive, and somewhat recovered from his fatigue; but he insisted that I should take him along with me; adding, that he had once kept a Moor's horse for four months, and when the horse had recovered and got into good condition, the Moor returned and claimed it, and refused to give him any reward for his trouble.[196]

Even the way in which the Dooty refers to Park's horse, inquiring if 'he knew who was speaking to me', positions Park's relationship with the animal in the category of the compassionate. The sense of anthropomorphic familiarity given to the horse stands out even further when compared to the Dooty's comments regarding another horse once owned by a Moor. It is Park's horse, Park's companion, Park's 'associate'; to others, it is simply another domesticated animal. It is through such subtleties in language, as well as by way of human action towards certain animals, that the category of the compassionate animal emerges.

Park's commitment to commenting on and including animals in his narrative stands out. They were not included to simply add character or detail to the background, but were oftentimes the primary focus of his narrative. In many instances, animal description is privileged over commentary of the landscape or behaviour of local native populations. The case stands that animals were a fundamental part of his travelling experience in Africa. Whether as food, transport, token-gift, or even as allegory by which the story of the early colonial encounter plays out, the European traveller's experience of animals in Africa was as varied as it was, at times, incredibly exotic.

At times, the different ways Park describes some of the non-human animals highlights his political position as an early colonial European. The inclusion here of some of the different types of animal categorisation used by Park, coupled with contemporary criticism on the subject, sheds light on the types of animal descriptions set out in his narrative. In thinking

[196] Ibid.

about animals within the realm of postcolonial ecocriticism, or by way of what could be termed a zoocritical approach, this type of inquiry illustrates how animal representations of this kind tie in with instances of cultural displacement; highlighted through instances of cultural hybridity and liminality as well as acculturation and assimilation.

This work is not meant to be an exhaustive survey of every single instance where animals are commented on or are present in his narrative. This zoocritical reading of Park highlights some of the factors that emerge when critically examining and interpreting the representation of animals in texts. It is still a growing practice. This chapter interprets the theme of the animal within the political realm of the colonial context and, by way of this, offers an innovative perspective on Park's travelling experiences in Africa. In relation to Park scholarship, this chapter sheds new light on how animals play a key role throughout his narrative; they affect his route, offer numerous opportunities for new cross-cultural knowledge to be shared, act as transportation and, amongst other things, give Park an opportunity to describe and comment on some of the animals he had never seen or encountered before. More generally, scholarship on the literary analysis of animals in texts is growing and, in this vein, a zoocritical reading of *Travels* not only provides an important contribution to the growing body of Park scholarship but also engages in a critical approach that has yet to define many of the ways in which animals in texts can be examined and interpreted. By embracing some of the ideas found in the writing that constitutes the literary criticism of animals, namely Soper's thoughts on animal categorisation, contemporary critical approaches, like zoocriticism, offer new critical pathways in which to examine and interpret narratives such as Park's. This contemporary and original reading of Park's narrative provides one component of this much broader exploration into some overlooked aspects of Park's *Travels*. By way of this, and exploring a little further, the representation of landscape is another aspect of *Travels* that warrants more in-depth critical attention.

Chapter II: Interpreting Landscapes: Discovery, Foliage, Floods and Flows

'I tell you, it is total rubbish to say Mungo Park discovered River Niger. We all know that people were fishing in the River before Mungo Park's grandfather was born'

Vice President of Nigeria Professor Yemi Osinbajo, Lagos, 1st May 2018 [197]

'for though the whole plant was not larger than the top of one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots, leaves and capsula, without admiration'

Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799) [198]

'Scholars must account for the fact that what it means to be 'postcolonial' or 'green' varies radically in different geographies'

B. Roos and A. Hunt, *Postcolonial Green* (2010) [199]

At the core of Park's narrative is his direct relationship with the landscape he travelled through, so an ecocritical reading is particularly complementary. Ecocritical studies of Romantic texts have grown significantly over the last few decades and, in an attempt to continue what Laurence Coupe identifies as 'the potential of ecocritical interpretation', this reading of Park's narrative examines some of the environmental elements that influence his journey in some way.[200]

As well as addressing recent controversies surrounding his discovery of the Niger, this chapter contributes to Park scholarship by offering a green reading of his *Travels* by way of interpreting some of the landscapes, climates and flora he experienced whilst making his way through West Africa during his first trip. To a lesser degree, this chapter will also explore what 'some of the implications might be of bringing postcolonial criticism and ecocriticism together, both for the reassessment of Romantic ecological legacies and for the 'greening' of

[197] See Edujandon.com, 'Mungo Park did not Discover the Niger – Osinbajo' (2018) https://edujandon.com/2018/05/mungo-park-did-not-discover-river-niger-osinbajo.html/
[198] Park, *Travels*, p.227.
[199] Roos and Hunt, *Postcolonial Green*, p.7.
[200] L. Coupe, *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.209.

postcolonial thought'.[201] By way of a reaction towards this type of contemporary debate, this chapter offers one type of interpretation that builds upon ecocritical practice within the colonial context. Park's narrative contains many 'green' elements that, until now, have been critically overlooked. More specifically, how the climate affects his body and mind, how the landscape changes with the seasons, and how these aspects influence his progress across West Africa. Some of the landscapes presented are characteristically sublime; Park's experience is, at times, transcendental. To a lesser degree, this chapter will also examine how *Travels* is stylistically shrouded by convention; it adheres to archetypal forms of description commonly associated with the travel writing genre of the period. Park's other work, for example his under researched poetry, offers crucial insight into some of the more nuanced Romantic aspects his writing contains. In addressing how the foliage, flows and floods affected Park's travelling experiences, this diverse chapter makes a valuable contribution to Park scholarship by way of highlighting the numerous ways in which the African landscape influenced Park's physical as well as mental well-being throughout his journey.

One of the central complexities in moving between ecocriticism and postcolonial ecocriticism lies in understanding how the cultural politics of the colonial context interact with the natural environments and ecologies these encounters take place in. As Glotfelty states, 'Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment'.[202] In this light, a purely ecocritical reading of Park's narrative makes sense. However, in contemplating the historical impact and studying the political resonance his journey has made, Park's early-colonial experiences in Africa promote a distinctive type of environmental analysis: one that leans towards the growing discipline of postcolonial ecocriticism. As much as Park's narrative includes descriptions of landscapes and green vegetation, the roots of his journey lie within a political cultural domain of the colonial context; Park's role as a European explorer or geographic discoverer of the period means that his political positioning lies at the heart of his narrative as much as anything else.

As Pratt states, the political roots of the mission trace back to the African Association's ideals: of being 'predominantly commercial', 'economic expansionists'.[203] To disregard such

[201] G. Huggan, 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism and the Limits of Green Romanticism', in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 45, no.1 (2015), p.3.
[202] Glotfelty and Fromm, *The Ecocriticism* Reader, p.xix.
[203] Pratt, *Imperial Eye*s, p.70.

factors would be to disregard the entire reason Park set out to find the source of the Niger. By exploring some of the tensions between literary representations of landscape and the colonial context in Park's *Travels*, this chapter aims to play a key role in opening up new channels of communication concerning different environmental experiences across space, time, and culture and, through doing so, diversify the ways we think about and live in the environment.

'Discovering' the Niger

Since its publication in 1799, arguments surrounding Mungo Park's travelogue, involving themes of discovery, landscape and historical truth, have not only persisted but also, for critics such as Pratt, emerged as key components of contemporary political postcolonial discourse.[204] Furthermore, Park biographer Kenneth Lupton has also brought Park's second journey into focus. No travel narrative was officially published in relation to this particular journey and Park's demise, along with the many problems he encountered on his return to Africa, has been brought into focus not only by way of Park's journal, which managed to get safely returned, but also through Lupton's close analysis of this fateful second trip.[205] In continuing the debate, Nigerian critic Yemi Osinbajo has recently raised questions regarding the European exploration of Africa during the Enlightenment period, and specifically considers Park's supposed 'discovery' of the Niger. The idea that Park discovered the Niger is, in one sense, preposterous. Evidently, there were other humans already inhabiting the region prior to his arrival. However, in relation to what Joanne Sharp recognises as the ways in which 'travel and exploration were caught up in the processes of imperialism and colonial expansion that characterised nineteenth-century imagined geographies', explorers were at the forefront in the establishment of colonies; recording, measuring and collecting information about new lands and peoples.[206]

For a European readership, this form of knowledge-building positions Park as not only the explorer-cum-discoverer of the region he describes, but also characterises his narrative in the style of what Mary Louise Pratt calls the 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' rhetoric.[207] In this sense,

[204] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.69.
[205] Lupton, *Mungo Park –The African Traveler*.
[206] J. Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism* (London: Sage, 2009), p.38.
[207] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.205.

Park's narrative positions him 'standing at a high point', 'an explorer above the landscape and people being described'; it not only has the effect of 'already implying a position of power', but also 'places the explorer outside of what is being described, and establishes his viewpoint as authoritative'.[208] From this European position and perspective, Park's discoveries place him in a much broader political context of early colonial expansionism; his journey and findings contribute towards the knowledge building of Africa that flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. What is more, this idea of perspective ties in with Michel de Certeau's comments that:

> His elevation transforms him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and Gnostic drive; the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.[209]

From this vantage point, the traveller's account of such experiences could be seen as the most accurate and complete. What is problematic, however, is the concept of a fiction of knowledge which brings forth the idea that Park's discoveries are just that: fictional discoveries of inhabited places. From an African perspective, such as Osinbajo's, the idea that Park discovered the region that his ancestors already inhabited is understandably concerning.

When it comes to travel writing the concept of discovery is clearly complex. In one sense, it is an act that requires a certain amount of amnesia by the travelling explorer who, upon discovering his goal, needs to shed the local help and knowledge that in many instances guided them to their intended destination. As Mathew Edney points out

> Discovery thus requires an historical act of forgetting or of wilfully setting aside the knowledge and guidance that had been offered by locals, whether native inhabitants, less privileged scientists, or archivists. To be clear, these new concepts of 'exploration' and 'discovery' provide inadequate models for understanding actual events. They

[208] Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism*, p.39.
[209] M. de Certeau in S. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.6.

> require the retrospective assessment of the moral and cultural significance of past events, together with the active identification and isolation of 'great men'.[210]

In a similar vein, Adriana Craciun's question of 'What is an Explorer?' also points towards the idea of how the concept — of discovery — is a fundamental element of how explorers are recognised and remembered; it is a central component of the 'criteria' as well as one of the key 'mechanisms', 'in which an Explorer is visible'.[211] Moreover, Craciun's analysis of ship surgeon Bernard O'Reilly's comprehensive account of *Greenland, the Adjacent Seas, and the Northwest Passage* (1818) pays particular attention to his 'Luminous Phenomenon' discovery. As Craciun points out, O'Reilly's discovery was, in fact, already discovered 'by survivors of the French geodetic expedition to South America led by La Condamine in the 1730's'.[212] As Craciun goes on to suggest, when it comes to the idea of discovery, other factors also play their part. For example, shared discoveries often fail to name 'neighbours' of a group experience; her comments on how O'Reilly's account of the phenomenon he records is the same as Antonio de Ulloa's comments of a similar experience over eighty years later, also points out that 'Ulloa's Rings', as they became known, which 'continue to interest atmospheric scientists today', were viewed by a party that 'were six or seven together'.[213] Evidently, the desire to attempt to 'describe it first' connects to one of Craciun's central ideas: the *appropriation* of discovery. In a comment that connects to Park's *Travels*, Craciun's comments on O'Reilly's 'Luminous Phenomenon' in *Greenland* produced 'a unique 'author effect' in an attempt to situate the author […] within an exclusive and increasingly regulated discursive tradition: that of the naturalist and 'explorer' in Britain's expanding second empire'.[214] In this guise, Park's authorship — of his discovery of the Niger — is clear to see.

Similar travellers to Park, such as James Bruce, have also been challenged on their supposed discoveries. As Nigel Leask points out, 'Bruce's account of his sublime 'discovery' of the Nile source upon which his largest claim to posterity was grounded' is arguably tenuous due to the fact that the work is 'presented through a distorting lens', 'out of proportion to

[210] M. Edney, ''Creating 'Discovery': The Myth of Columbus, 1777 — 1828', in *Terrae Incognitae, The Journal of the Society for the History of Discoveries*, Vol. 52, no.2 (2020), p.198.
[211] A. Craciun, 'What is an Explorer?', in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 45, no.1 (2011), p.30.
[212] Ibid, p.35.
[213] Ibid, p.36.
[214] Ibid, p.35.

any acceptable notion of scale', and 'embellished' in its 'original observations'.[215] Suggestions of inaccuracy are also further complicated by geographic misunderstandings:

> The 'fountains of Geesh' which Bruce reached on 4 November 1770, were, in fact, one of the sources of the tributary Blue Nile, rather than the White Nile, 'discovered' nearly a century later by John Hanning Speke at Lake Victoria, over 500 miles to the south. The Little Abbai river at Gish, 70 miles south of Lake Tana, had already been visited and described by Pedro Paez in 1618.[216]

Moreover, Bruce's account has also been questioned in other ways. For example, Egyptologist Henry Salt's comments on Bruce's failure to mention some of his travelling company whilst exploring Africa explicitly points to my earlier comments regarding amnesia. As Salt points out:

> Besides, if it could possibly be supposed, that from 'inattention,' or any other cause, Mr. Bruce could have forgotten altogether, on his return, the fact that Signor Balugani's having attended him during his whole excursion to the Nile, (a circumstance which appears to me absolutely incredible in itself) yet can it be believed for a moment, that he should not have been reminded of the fact by the frequent sight of the Italian manuscript journal, &c. written by Balugani, which is full of his own personal observations, and from which we know that Mr. Bruce, in writing his work, continually made extracts?[217]

Evidently, when it comes to examining some of the ways in which an explorer becomes known for a particular discovery, the idea of appropriation is a central component; amnesia is also clearly a factor — especially when acknowledging the idea of the 'author effect'. In relation to the discovery of the Niger and the idea of authorship, as much as Mungo Park is the author of discovery, it is clearly for Europe and Europeans only.

In this manner, Park did not discover the Niger, Africans were clearly living in the region many years before his arrival. Conversely, in taking a European perspective, as Sharp

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[215] N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel-Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.77.
[216] Ibid.
[217] H. Salt, *A Voyage to Abyssinia, and Travels into the Interior of that Country, Executed Under the Orders of the British Government, in the Years 1809 and 1810* (London: F.C. and Rivington Publishing, 1815), pp.340-341.

puts it, 'travellers' and explorers' accounts played an important role in communicating information about new lands and peoples to Europe's populations, and thereby 'constructed the world through narratives of heroism and bold deeds'. [218] For the European population at large during his era, Park's journey of discovery was as real as it could possibly get. The impact of such a double-history is pronounced: the history of early colonial European expansionism is problematized by the fact that such 'discoveries' are now open for ridicule and critique within a post-colonial worldscape. Recent tensions raised by individuals such as Osinbajo illustrate how Park's narrative is just as relevant today as it was nearly two centuries ago. As McClintock notes, ''Discovery' is always late. The inaugural scene is never in fact inaugural or originary: something has always gone before'.[219]

Over time, Park's first journey and unlikely survival has made a substantial impact. For writers such as Joseph Conrad, Park's narrative represents an experience that leans far closer towards fantastical factual experience than famous fiction; his journey is part of a larger endeavour of filling in the blank spaces of places more commonly known as terra incognita:

> Not the least interesting part in the study of geographical discovery lies in the insight it gives one into the characters of that special kind of men who devoted the best part of their lives to the exploration of land and sea […] Of some of them I had soon formed for myself an image indissolubly connected with certain parts of the world. For instance, Western Sudan, of which I could draw the rivers and principal features from memory even now, means for me an episode in Mungo Park's life.[220]

In this manner, Park acts as a symbol of geographic knowledge gathering, his journey is an 'episode' of the much larger project: the European narrative of the discovery of Africa. By way of resisting as well as problematizing such endeavours, Pratt's comments regarding such feats position travellers like Park in a category where 'discovery has no existence on its own'; it only 'gets made for real after the traveller (or other survivor) returns home and brings it into being

[218] Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism*, p.39.
[219] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p.28.
[220] J. Conrad, 'Geography and Some Explorers' in *Last Essays*, ed. by R. Curle, (London: J.M. Dent Publishing and Sons, 1926), p.11.

through texts: a name on a map, a report to the Royal Geographical Society, the Foreign Office, the London Mission Society, a diary, a lecture, a travel book'.[221]

Park's notoriety stems from the experiences he describes in his narrative. What starts as an exploration into the interior soon becomes a fight for survival not only from the Moorish tribes who rob, incarcerate and torture him but also from the unforgiving landscapes and extreme climate that appears to control his progress through Africa. These scenes, in particular, offer clues as to why his narrative has been so successful and made such an impact over the last two centuries.

At first glance, Park's arrival at the banks of the Niger could be seen as perhaps the most important scene in his narrative. After having already spent over a year in Africa, during which time he survived numerous life-threatening situations, on the 21st July 1796 Park reached the fabled Niger River and achieved his quest. Upon closer inspection, however, several other instances also act as key moments in which Park's descriptions of the natural world provide valuable snapshots of an early colonial context in Africa. When he attempts to describe some of the flora he comes across whilst travelling through the Gambia, or when he is relaying his experiences of the sands of the south Sahara Desert, landscape not only provides a sense of the country he describes from a naturalistic point of view but also locates his role as European explorer within a context that sees him 'discover' places that are already inhabited. This is no more the case than as set out in the frontispiece of the 1860 edition of *Travels* depicting Park's sighting of the Niger on the outskirts of the town of Segou whilst surrounded by locals.[222] In recalling Osinbajo's recent comments about Park's 'discovery' of the Niger, depictions like this, which place Park at the forefront of exploration, correspond to the audience it was meant for at that time: Europe.

After surviving an intense period of several days, in which he endured extreme temperatures, dust storms and the rolling terrain of the desert region, coupled with some desperate days of searching for food, Park found respite with a group of fugitive Kaartans heading east. Like Park, this company was also avoiding capture from the Moorish tribes that populated the local area and suggested that he accompany them, especially because of the

[221] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.204
[222] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.73.

dangerous wildlife that roamed freely throughout the area and were of a significant threat to travellers who were not familiar with the terrain. After a few further days travel with this small company of eight, Park reached Sego, a small town located on the banks of the River Niger:

> […] as I was anxiously looking around for the river, one of them called out, *geo affili* (see the water); and looking forwards, I saw with infinite pleasure the great object of my mission; the long sought for, majestic Niger, glittering in the morning sun, as broad as the Thames at Westminster, and flowing slowly *to the eastward*.[223]

In what is, arguably, the most critical point of his journey, Park's thin description of the Niger is lacking in any great amount of detail. Having taken over a year to get to the Niger's banks, Park's quest should have been to begin mapping the geography of the river and to move east in search of its origins. It is within this very instance that Park's mission, as set out by the African Association, truly begins. However, having only just survived capture, imprisonment, starvation, and suffering in the months leading up to this moment, his priorities at this stage had altered considerably. Simple survival quickly became the leitmotif for many days.

The threat of capture and undoubted torture by the Moors had overtaken any scientific endeavour Park was willing to entertain and, having been robbed of most of his equipment, he would have found it virtually impossible to map the landscape even if he had wanted to. Park's travelling tale of discovery had developed into a story of survival: the root of the mission now secondary to that of simply making it back home alive. Park's success is conspicuous simply by way of his survival and the fact that he actually managed to return home, a feat that others did not manage to realise. As Withers states:

> In 1789, John Ledyard, an American, had been sent to Africa, but he got no further than Cairo, where he died. In 1788, Simon Lucas, a Court official, penetrated part way across the Sahara from Tripoli. Major Daniel Houghton, who had served in West Africa between 1779 and 1783, was sent by the [African] Association in 1790 to investigate the Niger region. […] Houghton was last formally heard from in September 1791.[224]

[223] Park, *Travels*, p.194.
[224] C. Withers, 'Mapping the Niger 1798-1832: Trust, Testimony and 'Ocular Demonstration' in the Late Enlightenment', in *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 56, no.2 (2004), p.174.

Nevertheless, Park's discovery falls too easily into a category that McClintock describes as a process which:

> usually involves a journey to a far-flung region, asking the local inhabitants if they know of a nearby river, lake or waterfall, paying them to take one there, then 'discovering' the site, usually by the passive act of seeing it. During these extravagant acts of discovery, imperial men reinvented a moment of pure (male) origin and mark it visibly with one of Europe's fetishes: a flag, a name on a map, a stone, or later perhaps, a monument.[225]

Alongside this now famous scene of Park reaching the banks of the Niger lies another moment involving landscape. With Park close to death at this point, it is perhaps surprising to see how engaged the Scot was with a piece of small moss lying close by. For Pratt, it is 'the scene that generations of readers found by far the most memorable', one that, 'depicts his deepest moment of crisis'.[226] Finding himself lost and alone in a landscape that is surrounded by wild animals and, in relation to the Moors, dangerous men, Park turns towards the natural world:

> At this moment, painful as my reflections were, the extraordinary beauty of a small moss, in fruitification, irresistibly caught my eye. I mention this to shew from what trifling circumstances the mind will sometimes derive consolation; for though the whole plant was not larger than the top of one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots, leaves and capsula, without admiration.[227]

In one sense, Park's discovery here is one of hope; the 'extraordinary beauty' of the small moss revitalises his spirits and rejuvenates his optimism. Furthermore, his efforts to detail what constitutes the foliage he beholds goes some way towards positioning Park as a botanist.

The Botanical Traveller

In considering the idea of natural history in the contact zone, Smethurst's comments on how the traveller-scientist records and reacts to the natural environment connects to many of Park's remarks on the natural world. As Smethurst states: the 'observation and identification

[225] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p.30.
[226] Pratt, *Imperial* Eyes, p.77.
[227] Park, *Travels*, p.227.

of natural phenomena in unfamiliar territory was not straightforward […] scientific protocols demanded detachment and a disinterested eye'.[228] At this stage of his journey, Park's state-of-mind reflects how 'the observer/narrator's objectivity was often compromised as he was forced into the role of actor in tense dramas within alien environments'.[229] Here, Park's desperate situation and epiphanic moment in the wilds of Africa betray much of his earlier prose. As Pratt points out, it is the scene 'that absorbs the discourse of science into the narcissism of the sentimental'.[230] As Park goes on:

> Can that Being (thought I), who planted, watered, and brought to perfection, in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and sufferings of creatures formed after his own image? — surely not! Reflections like these, would not allow me to despair. I started up, and disregarding both hunger and fatigue, travelled forwards, assured that relief was at hand.[231]

Maria Hooker's comment on this scene nearly a century after *Travels* was first published (that a moss may have 'saved Mungo Park's life'), points towards the idea of how some of the green landscapes Park experienced may have had a spiritual impact. Somewhat religious in tone, this moment of realisation – of a spiritual connection to the landscape – potentially challenges Erin James's position that, 'while postcolonialists have worked to excavate or reimagine the lost marginalised past, ecocritics have leaned towards the pursuit of a timeless, solitary moment of commune with nature'.[232] Park's epiphany-like moment brings the two ideas much closer together. With aspirations of colonial expansionism inhabiting much of the text, Park's travel narrative encapsulates an instance in which the perils of his colonial endeavours are brought together with a profoundly significant, as well as spiritually poignant, timeless moment between himself and the green natural wilderness. As Park states: 'I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots, leaves and capsula, without admiration'; here, landscape is something considerably more than simply a background setting or layout.

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[228] Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World 1768*-1840, p.43.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.77.
[231] Park, *Travels*, p.227.
[232] E. James, 'Teaching the Postcolonial/Ecocritical Dialogue', in *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.61.

For Denys Van Renan, this moment signifies the nexus of Park's environmental experience: it is an attempt to 'create intimate affiliations' and 'reanimate' his surroundings through the genre of the picaresque simply because it, 'by definition, not only defies the socioeconomic elite but also cherishes the places erased or subsumed by development'.[233] In relation to her commentary on Park's surveying processes, and in a similar vein to Maria Hooker's comments regarding Park and the moss, this instance clearly holds a degree of symbolic weight for Van Renen. Evidently, these green moments of ecological interest point towards something far more profound than the environment making up the background of a scene; they are cornerstones of Park's ecological experience of Africa.

Park's encounter with the moss relates to ecocriticism and the concept of deep ecology, where religious and spiritual connections are linked to the well-being of the planet. Whereas shallow ecological approaches within the discipline focus on the preservation of natural resources for the sake of humans, deep ecology:

> demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature. It identifies the dualistic separation of humans from nature promoted by western philosophy and culture as the moment of environmental crisis, and demands a return to a monistic, primal identification of humans and the ecosphere.[234]

In light of such comments, to what degree Park's moment with the moss places him within this aforementioned 'primal' state remains to be seen. What is unarguable is his connection with the natural world: the landscape affects Park's emotional and spiritual disposition. Here, Park's observations and attitudes place him in a realm that sees his approach to his environmental as deeply ecological, in that, as much as he is in an extreme state of physical and emotional desperation, his attention towards such 'ecologic entities', along with his detailed appreciation of its components, aligns with how:

> Deep ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Thus, this attitude is intended to

[233] D. Van Renen, 'The Scottish Picaresque, Surveying, and Socio-environmental Nexuses in *Mungo Park's Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*', in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 32, no.1 (2019), p.146.
[234] G. Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2011), p.24.

> extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as rivers, landscapes, and even species and social systems considered in their own right.[235]

Park's moment with the moss is pivotal; it is the scene that steers him back to civilisation and survival. Recalling Hooker's comments about how a moss may have saved Park's life, such comments about finding hope in nature correspond with Pratt's point that Park experienced a 'naturalist's epiphany'.[236]

Park's narrative sits alongside other similar travel accounts of individuals who recorded what Dewey Hall terms 'Naturalists' Interpretations' of their travelling experiences.[237] This type of description details the ways in which natural scientists record their observations of the natural world. Hall's study of the origins and legacies of *Romantic Ecocriticism* places the importance of landscape at the heart of the Enlightenment period, not only because of its inclusion in the writing of the era but also through the way in which environmental processes are described.

As Roy Bridges points out, the practice of recording botanical and zoological specimens during this period of discovery was not necessarily something new or original. In fact, the general trend was to go about such business with an air of superiority. Evidently, 'Europeans claimed to understand the earth and its physical processes, knew how to plot positions, and could classify plants and animals'; such intellectual conquests, coupled with what could be described as an air of 'arrogance and insensitivity', portrays the group of individuals who set out across the world to collect and record their collected specimens as arguably prejudice in their approaches.[238] In the case of Park, however, alongside others such as Captain Cook and William Burchell, the scientific approach nurtured the 'attempt to observe dispassionately'. In Burchell's case, 'he thought his observations were objective as he recorded everything as he saw it', and wanted to record a country 'still in a state of nature'; this is a stance so similar to Park's approach that it is difficult to discern any difference between the two mindsets.[239] In relation to this, Trevor Wilson's recent study 'The Botany of

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[235] G. Sessions, (1995) *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Shambala Press, 1995), p.270.
[236] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.77.
[237] D. Hall, *Romantic Ecocriticism: Origins and* Legacies (London: Lexington Books, 2016), p.43.
[238] R. Bridges, 'Exploration and Travel Outside Europe (1720 — 1914)' in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by P. Hulme and T. Youngs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.57.
[239] Ibid.

Mungo Park's Travels in Africa' also has an air of, what could be termed, dispassionate observation.[240] Wilson's detailed study of the many plants Park recorded during both journeys to Africa is a comprehensive overview of the botanical elements of Park's experience and, perhaps simply because of the subject matter, is taxonomic in approach. There is, arguably, little analysis or critical interpretation that ties the reading to any contemporary critical context, for example postcolonial ecocriticism, but rather it explicitly addresses the 'botanical references that are scattered throughout the narrative'.[241] As much as Wilson's reading is, to employ my own words here, 'green' in its approach, my own reading of *Travels* intends to complement rather than compete with this type of reading. In a similar vein, Joel Schwartz's *Robert Brown and Mungo Park* (2021) brings together the idea of history and exploration by commenting on Park's journey to Africa as well as his time spent in Scotland prior to his return trip to Africa; my goal is to provide far more than a simple commentary, more specifically, the intention is to highlight and question how Park's work connects to contemporary critical practices within literary studies, such as postcolonial green ecocriticism.[242]

As much as Park's work is often straightforward and, at points, thin in its descriptions, it follows similar narrative traits to those employed by other travel writers of the period: it regularly attempts to engage in a style that typifies a scientific approach to describing and recording any flora examined.[243] Park's reactions and responses to the botanical portray an individual who is wholly engaged in the practices of the travelling naturalist:

> The lotus is very common in all the kingdoms which I visited; but is found in the greatest plenty on the sandy soil of Kaarta, Ludamar, and the northern parts of Bambarra, where it is one of the most common shrubs of the country. I have observed the same species at Gambia, […] The leaves of the desert shrub are, however, much smaller; and more resembling, in that particular, those represented in the engraving given by Desfontaines in the Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences […]. As this shrub is found in Tunis, and also in the Negro kingdoms, and as it furnishes the natives of the latter with a food resembling bread, and also with a sweet liquor, which is much

[240] T. Wilson, 'The Botany of Mungo Park's Travels in Africa, 1795 — 1806', in *Asian Journal of Geographical Research*, Vol. 2, no.1 (2019), pp.1-19.
[241] Ibid, p.6.
[242] J. Schwartz, *Robert Brown and Mungo Park: Travels and Explorations in Natural History for the Royal Society* (Berlin: Springer Publishing, 2021)
[243] Park, *Travels*, p.46.

> relished by them, there can be little doubt of its being the lotus mentioned by Pliny, as the food of the Lybian Lotophagi.[244]

Park's narrative style in this passage is typical of what Smethurst notes as a symptom of late eighteenth-century traveller-scientist attitudes. In detailing the lotus, Park's commentary focuses on the practical, functional aspects of the flower, rather than dealing in any comprehensive physical depiction of the way the flora appears. Here as elsewhere in his writing, Park's style aligns with the idea that the recordings of voyages and travels should be as Smethurst states 'plain, perspicuous, and unaffected', or, as Thomas Sprat recommends, 'use a close, naked, natural way of speaking'.[245] Like many of the animals he mentions, Park's landscape descriptions often present his narrative as a straightforward, factual travel account. *Travels* typifies this kind of style; detailed, extensive description gives way to more functional connections.

Park's recording of such natural flora was not uncommon, and, at many points, he goes out of his way to mention and describe a newly discovered element of botanical significance. In this instance, Park's interest in the Lotus flower stands out; it is not dissimilar to Charles Darwin's attempts at orchid classification nearly a century later.[246] This similarity in approach, embodied in a move that Thieme calls 'a reflection of the challenge they present to any Linnaean taxonomy of species as well as an index of the variety they represent more generally', signifies how the characteristics of Park's actions, in accurately recording such 'botanical tropes', demands as much as they demonstrate an identifiably active engagement with the landscape in a narrative that is also part colonial discourse.[247] Furthermore, Park's efforts to not only describe some of the flora but also produce several detailed sketches, here of the Rhamnus Lotus, reinforce his interests in the natural green landscapes he moved through.[248]

As much as Park's journey involved interactions between himself and the African natives, at many points his preoccupation with the landscape is the real focus of his narrative.

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[244] Park, *Travels*, p.131.
[245] Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World 1768-1840*, p.49.
[246] See C. Darwin, *On the Various Contrivances by which British and Foreign Orchids are Fertilised by Insects* (London: John Murray Publishing, 1862)
[247] J. Thieme, *Postcolonial Literary Geographies* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p.46.
[248] Park, *Travels*, p.132.

His reactions to the landscapes he ventured into and ecologies that existed within lie at the heart of his experience. During one of Park's early descriptions, it is the terrain which captures his attention more than anything else:

> The country itself being an immense level, and very generally covered with woods, presents a tiresome and gloomy uniformity to the eye; but although nature has denied to the inhabitants the beauties of romantic landscapes, she has bestowed on them, with a liberal hand, the more important blessings of fertility and abundance. A little attention to cultivation procures a sufficiency of corn; the fields afford a rich pasturage for cattle; and the natives are plentifully supplied with excellent fish, both from the Gambia river and the Walli creek.[249]

One of Park's earliest descriptions of the Gambia, this gives the impression that the area contains very few redeeming or notable characteristics. With few distinguishing features, the terrain is monochromatic in appearance and topography. Park's commentary indicates what lies before him: the potential of the land in relation to farming with the 'abundance' of 'rich pasturage'.

What is also noticeable, is how the terrain in this particular passage is gendered in its representation. Park's personification of the environment, which acknowledges that 'she', the landscape, is an entity or power, has the ability to 'bestow' or 'deny' the 'beauties of romantic landscapes' wherever 'she' pleases. In many ways, this process of feminisation indicates Park's positioning, or the way he saw himself, within this part of the world. At its most basic level, Park, with the African wilderness in front of him, seen and presented here as a female landscape, constructs a literary context that goes some way towards presenting Park as 'the heroic explorer', who 'opened up blank spaces on the map for colonialism and imperialism by defeating barbarism and overcoming the challenges of the natural world'.[250]

Park's commentary helps to illustrate the differences between landscapes which are farmed and those which he identifies as 'wildernesses' of West Africa. In his narrative, these boundaries between untouched and unknown wilderness and cultured or farmed landscape are easily identifiable. This was oftentimes because of the danger of wild animals attacking

[249] Park, *Travels*, p.72.
[250] Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism*, p.40.

cattle or people during the night. At many points, Park can be seen at a threshold, waiting to be admitted, or not, to whatever village or town he was trying to enter that particular day. As Park mentions, the farmed landscape, or 'rich pasturage', is clearly different from the 'immensely level' land, 'covered in woods'. As a European prospector, Park's commentary on the lives and landscapes, environments, as well as climates, gives a unique perspective.

Park's journey is an act of early colonialism, his commentary is an act of colonial expansionism into unknown realms. As historian Richard Holmes writes, Park's journey 'took two years to accomplish. Speculative maps had been drawn of this region, based on the stories of slave traders, but it was virtually unknown territory to any European. It was not even clear where the fabled Niger rose, or in which direction it flowed.'[251] That Park spent some of this time engaged in measuring and recording the landscape he encountered is not surprising, however, and upon closer analysis, Park's relationship with many of the ecologic and environmental processes that took place during his journey reflect a much deeper connection than might appear at first thought.

Park's narration of plants, as well as scenery, brings to mind Lawrence Buell's primary tenet of an ecologically-minded piece of work: 'the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest human history is implicated in natural history'.[252] After leaving his European chaperones, who had accompanied him for several miles along the Gambia, the gravity of the endeavour leads Park to consider what sort of situations lie ahead of him. Alongside possible meetings with unknown cultures lies the vast, 'boundless' unfamiliar lands of West Africa:

> About one o'clock in the afternoon of the 3^{d} of December, I took my leave of Dr. Laidley and Messrs. Ainsley, and rode slowly into the woods. I had now before me a boundless forest, and a country, the inhabitants of which were strangers to civilised life […] Thoughts like these would necessarily cast a gloom over the mind.[253]

As much as he is dour in his demeanour, this is a moment that highlights Park's momentous efforts in exploring new and, for the European explorer, uncharted domains of Africa. Here, the presence of landscape, or as Buell puts it 'the nonhuman environment', acts as a framing

[251] Holmes, *The Age of Wonder*, p.216.
[252] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, p.7.
[253] Park, *Travels*, pp.88-89.

device for Park's experience. However, it is much more than this: in this instance, it is part of a European history that encompasses Park's attempt to map an undiscovered part of the world. In this manner, landscape in Park's narrative is not simply a framing device or inactive backdrop in which Park's journey plays out; here, charting the landscape of Africa *is* the story.

Some of the flora Park records confirms Buell's position: that an ecologically-minded work illustrates how the interconnections between nature and culture go far beyond that of environment simply providing a setting. Another example takes place when Park comes across a tree signifying water is nearby. Here, the intersections between the natural landscape and human survival are clear to see:

> We continued our journey without stopping any more until noon, when we came to a large tree, called by the natives *Neema Taba*. It had a very singular appearance, being decorated with innumerable rags or scraps of cloth, which persons travelling across the Wilderness had, at different times, tied to branches; probably, at first, to inform the traveller that water was to be found near it […] A pool was found, but the water was thick and muddy […] I was persuaded to change my resolution of resting here all night, and proceeded to another watering-place, which I was assured we might reach early in the evening.[254]

Buell's notion of an environmental text, where landscape is more than just a setting for human activities and ideas to play-out in but rather acknowledged as a dynamic process that impacts culture as well as vice versa, is of particular significance here. As Park mentions, the tree is shrouded in 'scraps of cloth' that suggests a water source is nearby: his movements and plans react to this information and, upon finding the water is dirty, he moves on to find another watering place. The importance of the tree, and the fact that it is named by the local natives, suggests that this particular part of the terrain is something more than just a symbol for locating fresh water. For Park, amongst others, the tree represents a signpost for 'persons travelling across the wilderness' 'at different times' and, in doing so, reflects an interaction taking place between nature and culture in an explicit way; it is what Buell recognises as the

[254] Park, *Travels*, p.95.

process by which 'human history is implicated in natural history' and, to that extent, the nonhuman environment'.[255]

In this instance, the landscape is appropriated by the native culture and is, quite literally, dressed and named in order to symbolise and signify information pertaining to the local environment: water is close. As Park goes on to discover, these watering holes were a matter of life or death for all living beings in the wild. As an outsider, Park's knowledge of such places would prove to be invaluable, as well as life-saving, during the trip ahead of him. It is in this sense that, within the realm of postcolonial ecocritical discourse, such native practices detail the 'symbolic transactions between tribes, classes and nations, and interest groups that situate themselves differently in these basic conditions, and that define and determine each other unevenly [in relation towards] the ecological processes [that] are an integral part of such networks of power and communication'.[256] Here, Park's symbolic transactions lie in the accumulation of knowledge gained from his new learning experiences by way of the environments he travelled through. Moreover, this scene also illustrates how the natives used the tree for their own gain. In considering these connections and in reflecting on Park's narrative within a framework that encompasses both the postcolonial and the ecocritical, Roos and Hunt's concept of a 'postcolonial green' reading offers a useful critical model which explores 'how the "natural" functioning of ecosystems without human interference should be envisioned and how indigenous peoples have historically interacted with their environments and altered such functioning'.[257]

Park's recording of the ways in which the natives appropriated the tree named Meema Taba connects to Roos and Hunt's ideas of a 'postcolonial green' approach. This definition stands at a point where 'postcolonial and environmental critics have turned their attention to important convergences between their projects', more specifically, through analysis of 'the ways in which historical struggles over colonial and neo-colonial power structures […] have involved and continue to revolve around fundamental environmental questions'.[258] Park's movements through numerous and changing environments see him narrate many different types of landscapes, some of these were managed by way of the local natives farming the

[255] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, p.7.
[256] Roos and Hunt, *Postcolonial Green*, p.255.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid, p.251.

land whilst other instances see him comment on his wanderings into extremely remote regions of unknown expanse and unrecorded territory.

Park's eco-logically minded commentary combines with his political position to form an early colonial landscape discourse of West Africa. Undoubtedly, Park's work lends itself to a postcolonial ecocritical reading. To what degree this constitutes a postcolonial green narrative, however, remains to be seen. Park's commentary on the tree goes some way towards supporting the argument that his *Travels* does correspond to some of the ideas circulating within this arena of environmental criticism.

Another noteworthy scene involves his travels through the south Saharan desert. Here, Park is quite literally dying of thirst. What is clear, however, is how this new understanding — of knowing where to locate natural springs of water — is a key factor in his survival. At this juncture, the landscape is sparse and unforgiving, with little greenery or foliage worth noting. The barrenness of the immediate area as well as the 'scarcity of water' casts a gloomy tone:

> The distant country presented to the eye a dreary expanse of sand, with a few stunted trees and prickly bushes, in the shade of which the hungry cattle licked up the withered grass, while the camels and goats picked off the scanty foliage. The scarcity of water was greater here than at Benowm. Day and night the wells were crowded with cattle, lowing and fighting with each other […] [they] endeavoured to quench their thirst by devouring the black mud from the gutters near the wells; which they did with great avidity, though it was commonly fatal to them.[259]

Park's description of the desert as a 'dreary expanse', populated with 'stunted' trees, 'prickly' bushes and 'withered' grass, frames the landscape as a lifeless, dangerous place to be. With little foliage to consume, the wildlife that survives does so by fighting for a share of water. Whilst at the same spring, Park is just another animal. Too severely dehydrated to care, his desperation gets the better of him and, at great risk to himself, he joins the cattle at the watering hole and drinks alongside the animals who are also desperate to 'quench their thirst'. His survival instincts as well as that of the indigenous animals around him coalesce: 'Though this trough was none of the largest, and three cows were already drinking in it, I

[259] Park, *Travels*, p.162.

resolved to come in for my share; and kneeling down thrust my head between two of the cows and drank with great pleasure until the water was nearly exhausted and the cows began to contend with each other for the last mouthful'.[260]

Park's survival is entirely reliant on the resources he could find in his immediate environment and, in this sense, the landscape is much more than just a setting (as per Buell's assertion); here, it additionally acts as an overriding factor when it comes to movement and travel. This is no more the case than when he is alone in the more remote desert regions of Africa, where the landscape Park moves through is a key factor in influencing which direction he takes in attempting to get out of such an inhospitable region.

The idea that a piece of writing can be environmentally orientated also upholds Buell's second recommendation, that 'the human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest' of a text.[261] In particular, Park's narrative sheds light on the behaviour of cattle or frogs, as well as the locations of watering holes, trees, foliage or specific shrubs. Here, an ecocritical approach shifts the reader's gaze from the human towards the non-human elements of the text and, in doing so, decentralises the assumption that the representation of the human lies at the heart of any particular reading. Park's descriptions of the land he traverses as well as the flora is explicit: 'About a mile from Ganado we crossed a considerable branch of the Gambia, called Neriko. The banks were steep and covered with *mimosas*'.[262] As brief as the description is, scenes like this demonstrate as well as reinforce how landscape lies at the heart of Park's narrative.

At this point in his journey, Park does not look to incorporate how he feels, mention other people, or comment on any other notable events; he just documents the terrain he moves through and some of the flora that catches his eye. As Park continues, his interest in describing the local cultures fades into the background. By concentrating on the environments no European eyes had observed before, Park's commentary demonstrates where his narrative priorities lie:

> We departed from Buggil, and travelled along a dry, stony height, covered with *mimosas*, till mid-day; when the land sloped towards the east, and we descended into

[260] Park, *Travels*, p.163.
[261] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, p.7.
[262] Park, *Travels*, p.98.

> a deep valley, in which I observed abundance of whin-stone, and white quartz. Pursuing our course to the eastward, along this valley, in the bed of an exhausted river-course, we came to a large village.[263]

Park places the environment at the forefront of his experience. In addressing aspects of the natural world, Park's journey saw him attempt to cross regions that were geographically inhospitable and, at points, proved a real challenge to get through. An example which illustrates how the terrain did eventually begin to change, as well as conveying a sense of some of the more practical difficulties Park encountered when attempting to penetrate deeper in to the African wilderness, takes place in December 1795:

> We departed from Samee, and arrived in the afternoon at Kayee, a large village, part of which is situated on the north, and part on the south side of the river [Senegal]. A little above this place is a considerable cataract, where the river flows over a ledge of whin-stone rock, with great force: below this, the river is remarkably dark and deep […] I did not, however, think it possible to get the cattle down the bank, which is here more than forty feet above the water.[264]

Here, the focus lies not on the village Park passes through but on the surrounding terrain. In an interpretation of Buell's second tenet of an ecologically orientated text, Park's 'human interest', recognised here in his narration of the local cultures he encounters on his journey, becomes secondary to that of his desire to narrate the environment he traverses. Arguably, Park's narrative is more environmentally centred than culturally orientated. His eco-centric gaze builds towards placing the African landscape at the front and centre of his commentary; *Travels* is just as focussed on environmental factors as it is on human cultures.

The Enlightenment era is considered a crucial time when relationships between the global traveller and natural world were developing at an ever-increasing rate. As a result, this expanding study brought about new attitudes to the ways in which the world was observed, studied and recorded. As Smethurst states, 'it was in the latter half of the eighteenth century that attitudes to the natural world were dramatically altered by the related practices of natural history and global exploration'.[265] More specifically, new attitudes developed that

[263] Park, *Travels*, p.99.
[264] Park, *Travels*, pp.113-114.
[265] Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World 1768*-1840, p.1.

incorporated the scrutiny of the world on the 'microscopic and macroscopic' level; Park's narrative resists some of the historical 'attitudes to nature since the mid-eighteenth century', that brought about a, 'studied disinterest, disenchantment and detachment that would later have a global impact on the environment'.[266] In many ways, *Travels* is quite the opposite. At many points, Park's narrative demonstrates a studied interest in the environment; he is often caught up in the ways landscapes change, either by flooding or sand shifting, and is arguably enchanted by the flora he observes.

It is this environmental element which draws Park's narrative closer towards Buell's third tenet of an ecologically-minded text: that 'human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation.'[267] This notion of 'accountability' brings forth questions regarding the origins and motivations of a text. In this instance, Park's motivation and charge was to map the Niger under the direction of Joseph Banks's African Association, as well as to gain as much information about the people and places he encountered along the way. In addressing such motivations, Park's narrative is not solely concerned with the untouched blank spaces of land he encounters.

Park not only describes 'blank', uninhabited landscapes, but also some of the farmed landscapes he comes across. By doing so, he not only paints a vivid picture of what he surveys but also alludes to the potential of such rich, fertile landscape. To what degree such commentary frames Park as colonially-minded, however, remains to be seen. As Park states:

> I thought it very singular, at this season of the year, to find the banks of the Falemé every where covered with large and beautiful fields of corn; but on examination I found it was not the same species of grain as is commonly cultivated on the Gambia; it is called by the natives *Manio*; and grows in the dry season, is very prolific, and is reaped in the month of January. It is the same which, from the depending position of the ear, is called by botanical writers *holcus cernuus*.[268]

Park's interest in the management of the land, as well as the farmed produce, highlights how his focus on the African landscape is not entirely centred upon his experience of the wilderness. In relation to this point, the concept of wilderness represents the natural

[266] Ibid, p.2.
[267] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, p.8.
[268] Park, *Travels*, pp.100-101.

environments of Africa that have been untouched by culture or, in Garrard's words, 'uncontaminated by civilisation'.[269]

One of the main characteristics of Ecocriticism is to categorise outdoor environments into a series of adjoining and overlapping areas that move gradually from nature to culture in specific areas: the wilderness, the scenic sublime, the countryside and, the domestic picturesque, all go toward illustrating how Park's movements saw him encounter acculturated, managed land as well as remote, untouched regions.[270] What is clear throughout is Park's focus; as much as he is from one point of view an early colonial prospector, in regularly returning to narrating the different types of landscape he encounters, he continually positions himself as a travelling botanist.

It is not without a degree of irony, then, that Park's writing style in his narration of the '*holcus cernuus'* plant mentions how such greenery is named in this way 'by botanical writers'. In positioning such writers as other, or, as something he is not, Park fails to see what he has already clearly become and, ultimately, is. This element of Park's narrative reflects what DeLoughrey refers to as 'the eighteenth-century European mania for plant collecting, particularly new world flora, [which] enabled the production of Carolus Linnaeus's binomial plant taxonomies and developed into a hierarchy of species backed by an emergent Enlightenment science'.[271] It perhaps comes as no surprise to note that, as much as he is regarded now as an explorer or traveller or even travel-writer, Park spent most of his time as an undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh studying medicine and botany. After completing his natural history course, he spent a summer collecting specimens of flora whilst engaged in botanical fieldwork with his brother in law, James Dickson. This scientific education and experience shape his activities and narrative as a traveller.

As Pratt notes, 'Linnaeus' system alone launched a European knowledge building enterprise of unprecedented scale and appeal', and, by doing so, brought 'into being a new European 'planetary consciousness''.[272] In positioning Park as an early colonial traveller-botanist, *Travels* becomes something much more than a collection of fleeting encounters

[269] Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p.66
[270] For an extremely basic definition of these four areas, see P. Barry, *Beginning Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p.240.
[271] DeLoughrey and Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies*, p.10.
[272] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.25. See also p.9.

where background environments set scenes in which cultural events play out. In this manner, Park's attitudes and actions align with other travellers of the era. As Smethurst states:

> Traveller-scientists, by turning the ship's log into a personal narrative, represent the experience of succeeding moments of discovery as they unfold, and present to the reader shifting windows onto previously unseen realities […] In which case, the function of the travel narrative goes beyond touristic encounters with the natural world.[273]

Park's descriptions of the African landscape are often present as the centrepiece to whatever human situation is playing out. Oftentimes, this type of description places the environment as something other than, or more than, a simple backdrop or contextual system.

Park's reactions to the landscapes of Africa also had a huge impact on his physical and spiritual development. In one instance, upon entering the Kingdom of Kajaaga, the beauty of the region has an immediate effect:

> The air and climate are, I believe, more pure and salubrious than at any of the settlements towards the Coast; the face of the country is every where interspersed with a pleasing variety of hills and vallies; and the windings of the Senegal river, which descends from the rocky hills of the interior, make the scenery on its banks very picturesque and beautiful.[274]

Park's journey through Africa became so entwined with the natural environment, that to narrate his journey was to narrate the very landscape he traversed. Here, the scene depicts Park entering a region that is 'salubrious', 'pleasant', 'picturesque and beautiful'; the 'variety of hills' denotes a change in the terrain. Even when the land was mundane or uniform, which was especially the case during the early stages of his journey where his experience was that of an unchanging plateau of woodlands with some scattered shrubs and bush, Park regularly describes the landscape he found himself in.

After six months of travel, Park had made it through the Gambia and in the middle of December 1795, he reached the River Senegal. With his belongings intact and the regularity

[273] Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World 1768-1840*, p.51.
[274] Park, *Travels*, p.108.

of food generally well secured, Park was free to move deeper into the unknown, unexplored areas. Park's journey would only get more challenging from this point onwards. As he penetrated deeper into the interior, he encountered a much more diverse range of environments. Some days after leaving Kajaaga and before entering the town of Samee, Park is again struck by the beauty of the surrounding countryside:

> A little before sunset we arrived at the town of Samee, on the banks of the Senegal, which is here a beautiful, but shallow river, moving slowly over a bed of sand and gravel. The banks are high, and covered with verdure; the country is open and cultivated; and the rocky hills of Felow and Bambouk, add much to the beauty of the landscape.[275]

For much of his narrative Park's descriptions are stylistically and superficially thin. However, this makes the parts of his narrative where he describes the landscape with some detail that much more meaningful. In a similar fashion, an 'intensely visual and unmediated scrutiny of reality gives the object, landscape or human figure an elevated sense of presence, increasing their symbolic weight'.[276] For an individual like Park, who clearly fits into this type of narrative style, the faint flourishes of emotion that emerge in his commentary when describing a place or region give subtle clues to his mindset as he moves through the unknown landscapes.

In some instances, Park's descriptions of the landscape he surveys relay a great deal of information about the region to the reader. Be it what he can see on the horizon, what type of terrain he is attempting to walk through, or a plant or moss that catches his eye, at points, Park's narrative focuses solely on his environmental experience. In taking one such example, shortly after leaving the village of Lackarago, even though the terrain was proving to be a challenge, Park's narrative paints a clear picture of what lies ahead:

> [We] came to the brow of a hill, from whence we had an extensive view of the country. Towards the south-east were perceived some very distant hills […] We travelled with great difficulty down a stony and abrupt precipice, and continued our way in the bed of a dry river course; where the trees, meeting over head, made the place dark and cool. In a little time we reached the bottom of this romantic glen, and about ten

[275] Park, *Travels*, p.113.
[276] Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World 1768-1840*, p.54.

> o'clock emerged from between two rocky hills, and found ourselves on the level and sandy plains of Kaarta.[277]

At first glance, this scene resembles many others: it is a simple description of the landscape he is travelling through on any given day. However, what stands out in this specific scene, is how Park connects this unfamiliar terrain to his homeland. His linguistic descriptions of this part of Africa being a 'romantic glen' look back to home pastures and fields once trodden by a much younger Park, more specifically, his home village of Foulshiels and the nearby Yarrow Water in Selkirk, Scotland. In connecting phrases such as this back to his homeland, Park's comments illustrate how his upbringing and Scottish heritage are never far from his mind, even in the relatively remote wilds of Africa. In exploring this point a little further, Park's interests in the landscapes of Africa link to his more formative years in a number of ways.

Romancing home

As a young adolescent, Park would often seek out remote, isolated pastures near his home. As Gibbon notes, Park would often wander 'out of the cluttered action of the farmyard […] to the surrounding hills, where he would walk alone and read poetry'.[278] Alone and isolated in the surrounding rural locales of his childhood home, Park's disposition towards solitary escapism started well before his trip to Africa. Furthermore, during this period, there is also a definable sense of Park being:

> already somewhat withdrawn, stepping alone over those low, solitary hills. He read and heard with great avidity the tales, poems and ballads of the Border, and mixed with these a handful of novels.[279]

Here, a portrait of Park as the young yet confident loner who is lost in romantic tales of local legends and songs sits alongside his journeys into the Scottish landscape. For Gibbon, it was Park's foundational experiences in books and wanderings in the 'solitudes of the hills and windings of the Yarrow' that defined Park throughout much of his formative years.[280] If the Niger was to be a defining element of his professional life, then the Yarrow was the place Park sought whilst growing up in Scotland. In many ways, the Yarrow is Park's home. After

[277] Park, *Travels*, pp.125-126.
[278] L.G. Gibbon, *Niger: The Life of Mungo Park* (Edinburgh: The Porpoise Press, 1934), p.15.
[279] Brent, *Black Nile*, p.77.
[280] Gibbon, *Niger*, p.16.

returning from Africa and whilst writing up his account, Park sought the river: 'going out only in the evenings for walks down by the Yarrow'.[281] As Lupton points out, it was also here at the banks of the Yarrow that, 'years later', Sir Walter Scott found Park 'judging the depth of a stream by throwing in pebbles and seeing how long it took for bubbles to surface, [a technique] he had learnt in Africa'.[282]

In noting other Romantic connections to the region, the Yarrow also features in a number of poetic exchanges between William Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott. In many ways, their friendship flourished through the poetry they produced that engaged with this particular landscape. Wordsworth's *Yarrow Revisited* (1831), for example, is perhaps one of the most appropriate examples to mention in relation to how the region Park grew up in is, in literary terms, Romantically connected. In lines taken from the poem rather than the volume title, Wordsworth's enthusiasm for the water is clear to see: 'Flow on forever, Yarrow stream', illustrate how this place was, for a period, a centre for literary inspiration and Romantic friendships.[283] As Stephen Gill notes, another poem about the water, 'Yarrow Unvisited', memorialises the day when an exchange between Scott, Wordsworth, and Dorothy took place that contemplated a real as well as an imagined visitation to the river:

> Her desire to 'turn aside, | And see the Braes of Yarrow' is countered not only by his refusal to do so, but by his insistence that not to see the Yarrow will leave them 'a vision of their own'. Actually to go there would destroy the vision: For when we're there, although 'tis fair, | 'Twill be another Yarrow!' […] Wordsworth would have expected Scott to appreciate the subtle ways in which 'Yarrow Unvisited' interweaves elements of 'real-life' and poetry.[284]

Scott struck Dorothy as a man of intense 'local attachments', whose 'whole heart and soul seem to be devoted to the Scottish Streams Yarrow and Tweed, Tiviot and the rest of them which we hear in the Border Ballads'.[285] In this guise, like Scott, Park fits particularly well

[281] Lupton, *Mungo Park: The African Traveler*, p.101.
[282] Ibid, p.83.
[283] W. Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1880), p.507.
[284] S. Gill, *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.161.
[285] Ibid, p.161.

here: he is not only a key literary figure of the period, but also an individual with intimate knowledge and close personal attachments to the local landscape.

Can Park be seen as a Romantic traveller? As much as Park's writing is, at many points, characteristic of what Carl Thompson details as symptomatic of an Enlightenment traveller, in that their observations are often 'detached from the scenes they survey', Park, in other moments, reacts to the scenes around him that 'arouse strong feelings and sensations of sublimity or spiritual intensity'.[286] Park's commentary on the landscape in *Travels* could also be understood to be Romantically related. As Holmes states, the publication of Park's journey 'revealed Park as the essential Romantic explorer. His heart was a terra incognita quite as mysterious as the interior of Africa, about which he wrote with quiet humour and unflinching observation'.[287] Clearly, upon closer inspection, Park's connection with Romantic literature is much broader and more complex than it may initially appear. David Scott's comments regarding the change or 'the mutation of English Romanticism in the direction of a greater ideological and historical self-consciousness' calls for a kind of renewal whereby Romanticism and colonialism are brought together far more closely.[288] For example, the influence of Park's narrative on writers of fiction is, at first, opaque, but as Peter Kitson notes in relation to *Frankenstein*: 'Mary Shelley had just about that time read the accounts of Mungo Park's African exploration', and she 'drew on attitudes towards Africans and slaves in her depiction of the monster'.[289] With Shelley's *Frankenstein* first being published in 1818, one could suggest that Park's influence on literary culture was immediate.

Critic Ashton Nichols' suggestion that Park's publication is a type of 'rhetoric of Romantic' also places Park's work in a broader, literary Romantic context.[290] As Huggan states, such efforts 'not only demonstrate the far-reaching work of Empire, but also point to the pressing need to re-examine the limiting European parameters within which that work has frequently been compressed'.[291] In considering a more global point of view, Mary Louise Pratt's point that, 'one might be tempted to argue that Romanticism originated [not in

[286] C. Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.117.
[287] Holmes, *The Age of Wonder*, p.221.
[288] D. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), p.59.
[289] P. Kitson, *Romantic Literature, Race and Colonial Encounter* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.84.
[290] See Nichols, 'Mumbo Jumbo: Mungo Park and the Rhetoric of Romantic Africa', pp.93-113.
[291] Huggan, 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism and the Limits of Green Romanticism', p.3.

Europe, but] in the contact zones of America, North Africa and the South Seas', places Park's narrative in a global literary context that is, in one sense, paradoxical to his own writing style: a style that is particularly straightforward, and, in his own terms, 'plain and unvarnished'.[292]

In contrast to this style of thin description, albeit one that adheres to the stylistic traits of the genre of the period, Park's other writing prior to Africa is worth noting here. As much as he is far more well known for his African expedition and subsequent publication, Park's literary output before his first journey resides in his 'virtually unknown personal letters and poems'.[293] In contrast to Renwick's accusations of Park's travel writing being a bland descriptive slog where, 'in his simplicity', he 'writes down what happens to him', Park's other work, which emerges during his time as a final year medical student, is worth noting.[294] The small, arguably forgotten body of poetry that shows Park 'to have been highly conscious of the literary culture of lowland Scotland and eager to contribute to it' during his time at Edinburgh University, is worth mentioning here.[295] Here is one example of his poetry that not only illustrates Park's position as an, arguably, unrecognised poet of the era, but also points towards his heightened interest in nature:

> 'The Stormy Night'
>
> I
>
> The storm begins to lower — the Ball of the day
> Sinks in the darkened wave — The troubled sky
> Rolls big with tempest, and no friendly ray
> Shines on the path — the leaves and thistles fly.
>
> II
>
> Loud roars the mountain stream — the aged oak
> Groans to the Blast — the Hunter on the hill
> reels with Benighted steps — the hollow rock
> sounds from afar — Black runs the mossy rill
>
> III
>
> The trembling sailor hears — the ocean roars
> Around the rocking Bark — the rattling wind

[292] Pratt, *Imperial* Eyes, p.138
[293] K. Williamson and M. Duffill, 'Mungo Park, Man of Letters', in *Scottish Literary Review*, Vol. 3, no.2 (2011), p.55.
[294] W. Renwick, *English Literature 1789-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p.50.
[295] Williamson and Duffill, 'Mungo Park, Man of Letters', p.55.

Howls in the rigging and the broken oars
Float in the surge — confusion fills the mind.[296]

Park's poems, few as they are, cast him in a different literary light. Park's *The Stormy Night* is a typical Romantic poem in several ways, and it establishes Park as a poet who explicitly addresses feelings of awe in nature. The phrases 'rolls big with the tempest', 'loud roars the mountain stream', and 'wind howls' place human experience of the natural world at the heart of the text. There are also clear links to Park's Scottish roots, in that, 'the leaves and thistles fly'. The poem also celebrates the emotions of the individual by way of 'the trembling sailor'. To a certain degree, this work also connects with the idea of extreme mental states, by way of the fact that 'confusion fills the mind'. Here, Park's 'Scottish Romanticism' is apparent just as clearly as his 'plain' type of writing style in *Travels*. As Williamson and Duffill suggest:

> it significantly alters our perception of him as a writer: not only long acclaimed as the author of a classic of travel literature, but now recognisable as one of those overlooked eighteenth-century members of the Scottish republic […] for whom poems as well as songs served as a flourishing mode of social exchange.[297]

In considering Huggan's considerations of what the 'limits' of green Romanticism may be, Park's poetry is an interesting dilemma. Arguably, Park's thin style of description in *Travels* goes against the literary potential he shows in his poetry, as does the way his poetry connects to other literary movements of the period outside of the travel writing genre. In one sense, the limit of Park's own green Romanticism, in reference to Huggan, lies in the written style he adopts in *Travels*. In contrast, Park's potential as a poet of the Romantic era is clearly established in poems such as *The Stormy Night*.

The Scottish Romantic movement was gaining an increasing momentum in its popularity and practices, especially in relation to its 'lyric culture' of poetry and song. In considering an example of Park's literary output prior to his *Travels*, his work is in a realm where such Scottish Romanticism celebrates its origins as well as its modes of delivery regardless of its 'humble, rural background'. Connections to landscape, as well as his own literary connections to Scotland by way of his writing prior to *Travels*, in one sense, indicate

[296] *The Bee*, or *Literary Weekly Intelligencer*, Vol. 16, p.263.
[297] Williamson and Duffill, 'Mungo Park, Man of Letters', p.71.

the deep-rooted sense of place Park has, not only throughout much of his early years in Scotland but also during the times in Africa when he was at his lowest.[298]

In considering the idea of green Romanticism, the idea of the ecologic sublime may also relate to Park's African experience. For example, Edmund Burke's comments on 'whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger', certainly recall Park's ongoing difficulties as he moved through Africa.[299] However, as much as Park's travelling experience was routinely challenging, his narrated experience rarely falls into the category of the sublime. Furthermore, in taking Immanuel Kant's position that the sublime 'reveals a capacity for judging ourselves as independent of [nature]', and holds a 'superiority over nature on which is grounded a self-preservation', Park's experience with the moss, for example, arguably resists this concept; instead of being independent of the experience, Park is now inextricably connected to it.[300] In many ways, Park's narrative leans more towards the beautiful rather than the sublime. Nevertheless, in taking two of the most memorable moments in *Travels* — namely, Park's encounter with the large red lion and his discovery of the small fructifying moss — Peter Heymans' comments on the ecological sublime in his analysis of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* fit particularly well:

> The ecological sublime in general is the emphasis Burke puts on the animal's potential to induce a mind-expanding sensation in its human observer. The Burkean system, it appears, does not hinge on the animal's species or physique but on its degree of domestication and social relationship to mankind.[301]

Here, as much as the comment is about the albatross, Park's 'mind-expanding' encounter with the moss not only points towards feelings of transcendence, but also, similarly to the Wedding Guest in Coleridge's *Rime*, highlights a kind of hypnotisation. Whereas the moss irresistibly caught Park's eye, his encounter with the large red lion is perhaps even more noteworthy, in that his eyes 'were so riveted upon this sovereign of the beasts, that [he] found it impossible

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[298] Ibid.
[299] E. Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful: With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste, and Several Other Additions* (Basil: Tournesien, 1792), p.47.
[300] I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, ed. by E. Mathews and P. Guyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.145.
[301] P. Heymans, 'Reading the Animal: An Ecocritical Approach to the Discourse of the Sublime in 'The Ancient Mariner'', in *Coleridge Bulletin*, Vol. 30 (2007), p.19.

to remove them'.[302] Without question, in both instances, Park's gaze is held. In what Heymans notes as the 'residual effects' of the sublime, 'including, admiration, reverence, and respect', Park's comments on the extraordinary beauty of the moss are — in relation to the idea of aesthetics — counterbalanced with a form of mesmeric 'admiration'.[303] Furthermore, Park's use of language here, in his representation of the lion as the most 'sovereign of the beasts', also supports Heymans' point that within this ecologically sublime moment, where Park's 'reverence and respect' is clear to see, the undomesticated lion is part of a wider group where:

> Only the wild animal, free from humanity's stranglehold, is capable of evoking the terror and contrariety necessary from producing a collision between antipodes […] [Park's encounter and reaction] reveals the animal's autonomous existence and temporarily displaces man from his central position in the cosmos.[304]

Park's displacement is not only evident, but explicit. He stares, captivated by the respective scenes playing out in front of him, arguably powerless to take any immediate form of action. In this sense, the ecological sublime in *Travels* is not 'strikingly Darwinian', as it is in Heymans' analysis of Coleridge, but very much 'the face of nature', and 'green' in appearance.[305]

In many ways, Park's connection to Romanticism is complex. His journey is responsible for a number of poems that, in one way or another, position Park as a highly influential, fascinating figure of the period; his impact, on what could be called the Romantic literary consciousness, cannot be overestimated. For example, Mary Howitt's 'Ode to Botany' not only refers to Park's journey, but also highlights his vulnerability in a hostile land:

'[…] the dauntless man,
Who pierced the deserts of African,
And left a dark fate, darkly told,
For His native land to hold;
A woeful mystery, half unweaved —

[302] Park, *Travels*, p.204.
[303] Heymans, 'Reading the Animal: An Ecocritical Approach to the Discourse of the Sublime in "The Ancient Mariner"', p.18.
[304] Ibid, p.19.
[305] Ibid, p.26.

Vouched, feared, yet fondly disbelieved: —
As unto him, when sore distress
O'ertook him in the wilderness;
When courage failed, and dark Dispair
Scoweld on him in the withering air,
And home-thoughts in his heart sprung up —
The bitterest drops in his bitter cup;
As then — a little flower could reach
His spirit's core, and profoundly preach
Of Him whose eye-lids never fall: —
Of Love, which watcheth over all.
Ode to Botany.[306]

For Tim Fulford and Debbie Lee, Howitt's fixation with Park's isolation in the African landscape is simply a way for female poets of the era to 'offer ways of dramatizing — and assuaging — the vulnerability and tenderness nineteenth-century culture defined as feminine'.[307] More importantly, Park's impact on the literary movement is clear to see. Poetry such as Howitt's also allowed other female poets to react in a similar manner. As Fulford and Lee point out, 'Felicia Hemans used Howitt's reference to Park as the epigraph of her *The Flower of the Desert*'; here, however, 'the flower itself becomes the subject. It is an emblem of a loneliness that is only vestigially related to Park.'[308] In contrast, many male poets of the period who were exposed to Park's stories of adventure and intrigue had their imaginations well and truly captured. In one noteworthy instance, Park not only 'gave them new metaphors to speak of', but also provided 'an exotic geographic terminology to speak of the mind and of the imagination itself':

> In 1818, when yet another edition [of Travels] hit the shelves in London, some of Park's readers gathered in Hampstead for a sonnet contest. Keats, Shelley, and Hunt gave themselves fifteen minutes to compose sonnets on the geography of the Nile. They

[306] M. Howitt and W. Howitt, *The Desolation of Eyam: The Emigrant: a Tale of the American Woods and Other Poems* (London: Wightman and Cramp Publishing, 1828), p.262.
[307] Fulford and Lee, 'Mental Travellers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park and the Romantic Imagination', p.131.
[308] Ibid.

> each made use of the popular knowledge of Africa produced by the narratives which Banks had offered to the public: narratives by explorers such as Bruce, Frederick Hornemann, and Mungo Park himself.[309]

Evidently, Park's journey clearly influenced a number of key figures within the Romantic literary movement of the era. His impact not only appears to be significant, but also as inspirational and motivating as the small fructifying moss he came across whilst wandering desperate and alone in the wilds of Africa. In this manner, and in returning to the idea of where Park is located — between the spheres of the Romantic or Enlightened traveller — within instances such as the moss, Park is far more aligned to what Thompson sees as characteristic of a 'Romantic traveller' in that he reacts to and reflects on the scenes around him. At other points, the enigmatic Park also falls into the category of the 'Enlightenment traveller' as well: more often than not Park prioritised 'fact-finding and empirical inquiry' over feelings of sublimity or spiritual intensity.[310]

Flows

In interpreting a piece of travel writing that details Park's experiences of the meteorological, this chapter demonstrates how environmental factors, such as climate, had a significant effect on his progress through Africa. Understandably, the extreme heat, hot winds, and even torrential downpours of the rainy season all played a pivotal role in his movements. What is apparent is how these ecological elements affected Park in a number of ways. Be it through sunburn, starvation, tidal flows, or even simply because of impassable flooded areas of land, each of these factors contributed towards his environmental experiences of Africa. In relation to the more physically and emotionally extreme instances of his journey, one factor above all others stands out: the scarcity of water. As the Proceedings of the Africa Association in 1791 illustrate:

> That the Geography of Africa has made a slower progress towards improvement than that of every other part of the world, during the last, and the present century, is to be attributed more to natural causes, than to any absolute want of attention on the part of geographers. But Africa stands alone in a geographical view! Penetrated by no

[309] Ibid.
[310] Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p.117.

> inland seas, […] its regions separated from each other by the least practicable of all boundaries, arid deserts of such formidable extent, as to threaten those who traverse them with the most horrible of all deaths, that arising from thirst![311]

Understandably, for Park, this type of experience began to occur more frequently when he reached the edges of the Sahara Desert. Here, food and water became much more difficult to come by. The danger of capture by one of the Moorish tribes who roamed throughout the region was also a persistent threat.

With all of these risks and challenges becoming more serious with each passing day the further eastwards he went, Park's wariness of just how extreme his environment was, in conjunction with his regular efforts to note the type of landscape he was moving through, make his narrative a tale as much about survival as it is about travel. Heat also emerges as an element which determines his movements for much of this stage of his journey. As Park comments:

> We departed from Deena towards Benowm, […] on account of the scarcity of water; here we filled our soofroo, and continued our journey over a hot sandy country, covered with small stunted shrubs, until about one o'clock, when the heat of the sun obliged us to stop. But our water being expended, we could not prudently remain longer than a few minutes.[312]

Upon reaching this part of the interior, Park's reactions to 'the heat of the sun', as well as the terrain, signify how factors such as lack of water or extreme temperatures presented much more than simple inconveniences. Oftentimes, Park's travelling experiences see him relate how the environment is ever changing and in a constant state of flux. It is the idea that, within every ecocritical reading, there is 'some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given [and which] is at least implicit in the text'.[313]

For Park, as the individual subject traversing an ever changing and at times wholly unknown, wilderness, the environmental 'processes' at work are clear to see. This is no more

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[311] 'The Construction of the Map of Africa', Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa (1791), pp.314-15.
https://library.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/explorers.html
[312] Park, *Travels*, p.146.
[313] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, p.8.

the case than when the desert landscape governs his progress by way of the regional sand-winds stopping him from being able to see what lies ahead:

> In the afternoon the horizon, to the eastward, was thick and hazy, and the Moors prognosticated a sand wind; which accordingly commenced on the morning following, and lasted, with slight intermissions, for two days. The force of the wind was not in itself very great: it was what a seaman would have denominated a *stiff breeze*; but the quantity of sand and dust carried before it, was such as to darken the whole atmosphere. It swept along from east to west, in a thick and constant stream, and the air was at times was so dark and full of sand, that it was difficult to discern the neighbouring tents.[314]

Some days later, Park again finds himself subjected to the blinding winds of the Saharan desert. However, in this instance, it was the regularity, ferocity and scale of the winds that made an impression:

> About four o'clock in the afternoon, a whirlwind passed through the camp, with such violence that it overturned three tents, and blew down one side of my hut. These whirlwinds come from the Great Desert, and, at this season of the year, are so common, that I have seen five or six of them at one time. They carry up quantities of sand to an amazing height, which resemble, at a distance, so many moving pillars of smoke.[315]

The momentum of Park's journey is, at points, entirely reliant on seasonal changes affecting his transit through the wilderness. With such 'processes' taking place, and as the wind and storms intensified, his journey to find the Niger became a much more challenging endeavour. This is particularly the case during Park's period of travel throughout the first six months of 1796, where the heat of the sun as well as the scorching winds dominated much of his progress, or lack thereof. With the extreme temperatures heating the sandy ground to such a degree that movement became impossible, Park's journey began to falter:

> The scorching heat of the sun, upon a dry and sandy country, makes the air insufferably hot. Ali having robbed me of my thermometer, I had no means of forming

[314] Park, *Travels*, p.153.
[315] Park, *Travels*, pp.155-156.

> a comparative judgement; but in the middle of the day, when the beams of the vertical sun are seconded by the scorching wind from the Desert, the ground is frequently heated to such a degree, as not to be borne by the naked foot, […] I have often felt the wind so hot, that I could not hold my hand in the current of air which came through the crevices of my hut, without feeling sensible pain.[316]

Park's work allows us to consider how ecocritical practice shifts away from factors which 'privilege language and the difficulty of referentiality to approaches that re-emphasise the real work of words in a world of consequence, joy and despair'.[317] In this sense, Park's 'joys and despair' closely relate to the environments and ecologies he encountered whilst on the fringes of the Sahara Desert. Park's experiences in this particular region correspond to what Cian Duffy identifies as a 'landscape of the sublime'; in this instance, attention is paid towards Park's experience of the Sahara region and 'the role played by the desert landscape', more specifically, to examine and interpret connections between 'the sublime of the desert landscape and the scope of human cultural achievements'.[318]

Throughout much of this stage, Park's emotional and physical responses to the effect of the heat upon the landscape, as well as himself, reflect a character who is struggling to cope. With his spirit jaded and the barren expanse surrounding him, Park's narrative offers little optimism regarding his prospects of a successful trip. Seen though European eyes, the landscape of West Africa is coloured by Park's negative outlook; the wild expanse of desert and scattered shrubs tainted by his pessimistic point of view:

> The heat was now almost insufferable; all nature seemed sinking under it. The distant country presented to the eye a dreary expanse of sand, with a few stunted trees and prickly bushes, in the shade of which the cattle licked up the withered grass, while the camels and goats picked off the scanty foliage. The scarcity of water was greater here than at Benowm.[319]

[316] Park, *Travels*, p.156.
[317] Cokinos, *What is Ecocriticism?* In 'Defining Ecocritical Theory and Practice: Sixteen Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting', (Salt Lake City: Utah, 1994).
[318] Duffy, *The Landscapes of the Sublime, 1700-1830*, p.136.
[319] Park, *Travels*, p.162.

Park's sense of detachment leads him to consider places that were homelier and more familiar. With the 'insufferable' heat and vast 'expanse of sand' clouding his thoughts, it is perhaps not surprising that, in his more emotionally fragile moments, Park's longing for home and the fresh running waters of the River Yarrow, where he spent most of his early life, overtook his immediate interactions with the barren locality spread before him:

> No sooner had I shut my eyes, than fancy would convey me to the streams and rivers of my native land: there, as I wandered along the verdant brink, I surveyed the clear stream with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; — but alas! disappointment awakened me; and I found myself a lonely captive, perishing of thirst amidst the wilds of Africa![320]

During his first trip, the region of Ludamar was the most northerly point Park reached. With its boundary running for many miles along the southern tips of, what was known as, the Great Sahara Desert, the barren terrain was clearly a dangerous and difficult place to survive in. The impact of such desolation upon Park's general well-being is clear to see. With water sources being an unknown quantity and with animal life dying around him, his reaction conveys his concern at what his situation is at that moment, as well as what lies ahead:

> In some parts of this extensive waste, the ground is covered with low stunted shrubs, which serve as landmarks for caravans, and furnish the camels with a scanty forage. In other parts, the disconsolate wanderer, wherever he turns, sees nothing around him but a vast interminable expanse of sand and sky; a gloomy and barren void, where the eye finds no particular object to rest upon, and the mind is filled with painful apprehensions of perishing with thirst.[321]

At this juncture, Park's experiences of the extreme weather came to dominate his mindset. The reality of dying alone, either through thirst or hunger, in an unfamiliar and barren wilderness looked extremely likely. His prospects of survival, let alone reaching the Niger and mapping its course, were diminishing by the hour. At this critical stage, the environmental processes occurring around him: the winds, the extreme temperature, even the desolate barren landscape surrounding him, stand out as something more than just a setting in which

[320] Park, *Travels*, p.163.
[321] Park, *Travels*, p.170.

Park played out his role as explorer. Here, the insufferably hot weather brought on by the strong winds not only prevented travel but also, with the sand blowing so severely, went so far as to blind him. In what is another example of the ecological sublime, Park's comments on the uniformity and barrenness of the landscape connect to Duffy's analysis of John Barrow's *Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* (1801). Here, Duffy concentrates not on 'the physical', but rather 'the psychological privations' of Barrow's journey:

> Just as in Burke's claim that 'succession' and 'uniformity' in an object can produce a sublime effect because they 'impress the imagination with an idea of their progress beyond their actual limits', then, so, for Barrow, the sublimity of the Great Karoo arises not from the physical hardships of the environment, but rather from the psychological impact of the 'altogether barren', 'sterile and naked' landscape.[322]

At another point the sand and wind even began to change the local geography of the landscape. As a disoriented Park comments, 'the quantity of sand which passed to the westwards in the course of a day, must have been prodigiously great. At times it was impossible to look up'.[323] These extreme conditions understandably have an effect on Park's physical as well as mental well-being. In desperation, Park:

> climbed a high tree, from the topmost branches of which I cast a melancholy look over the barren Wilderness, but without discovering the most distant trace of a human dwelling. The same dismal uniformity of shrubs and sand every where presented itself, and the horizon was as level and uninterrupted as that of the sea.[324]

With his hopes waning, Park takes to any means possible in order to stave off his unrelenting thirst: his only focus being to escape the desert and find some kind of sustenance within this wholly unforgiving place. As Park laments:

> I pushed on as fast as possible, in hopes of reaching some watering-place in the course of the night. My thirst was by this time insufferable; my mouth was parched and

[322] Duffy, *The Landscapes of the Sublime*, *1700-1830*, p.147.
[323] Park, *Travels*, p.174.
[324] Park, *Travels*, p.183.

> inflamed: a sudden dimness would frequently come over my eyes, with other symptoms of fainting.[325]

In interpreting some of the environmental aspects of Park's narrative, the many ways in which Park deals with the challenges presented to him bring to mind one of the central principles of postcolonial ecocriticism: 'to contest Western ideologies of development.'[326]

In a symbolic sense, the landscape does indeed resist Park's attempts to develop European knowledge of the region. One example that highlights how Park's movements through Africa are entirely reliant on the landscape and climate he moves through, is when he eventually succumbs to dehydration whilst on the southern edges of the Sahara Desert:

> I was now too faint to attempt walking, and my horse much too fatigued to carry me […] I was suddenly affected with sickness and giddiness; and falling upon the sand, felt as if the hour of death was fast approaching. 'Here then, thought I, after a short and ineffectual struggle, terminate all my hopes of being useful in my day and generation: here must the short span of life come to an end.[327]

Lost and alone in an unknown wilderness, Park's hope faltered. Wandering, often disorientated and close to dying of thirst, his story apparently comes to a prolonged and savage end. However, this was obviously not the end for Park, or his story.

<u>Floods</u>

Subsequently, as 'Nature resumed its functions', the setting sun and receding temperatures revived Park to a point where, upon seeing an oncoming rainstorm, he 'summons up all resolution' and 'spreads out all his clean clothes', in order to soak up the approaching rain and quench his unrelenting thirst.[328] As the storm arrives, however, Park realised that it was not rain that was fast approaching, but a regional sandstorm. Here, once again, the weather and local conditions rule Park's experience; his movements are 'suffocated' by the sand winds of the lower Sahara. At this point, his hopes of survival continued to be severely tested:

[325] Ibid.
[326] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p.19.
[327] Park, *Travels*, p.183.
[328] Ibid.

> I perceived some lightning from the north-east; a most delightful sight; for it promised rain. The darkness and lightning increased very rapidly; and in less than an hour I heard the wind roaring among the bushes. I had already opened my mouth to receive the refreshing drops which I expected; but I was instantly covered with a cloud of sand, driven with such force by the wind as to give a very disagreeable sensation to my face and arms; and I was obliged to mount my horse, and stop under a bush, to prevent being suffocated.[329]

Arguably, the central goal at this point of his trip was to get out of the region. In being lost, alone, and with no hope of rescue, his sense of imprisonment in this remote and challenging region far outweighed the torturous experiences he had previously endured whilst incarcerated by the Moorish tribes of King Ali some weeks earlier. It is during this period of extreme hardship that Park's writing becomes more of a survival narrative than travel account. When faced with certain death in one of the remotest parts of Africa, his cosmopolitan beginnings quickly became a forgotten memory.

Park's journey was under threat from several factors, the most immediate being the extreme terrain he had to traverse. In considering the dangers associated with such an unforgiving landscape, coupled with the animals that roamed freely in the region, especially lions, and in considering the proximity of the Moorish tribes that populated the area, Park's chances of successfully mapping the Niger, or even making it back to Scotland alive, were extremely slim. When one could imagine how it could not get any worse for Park, that night, even more problems ensued as his mobility suffered even further. There 'being no moon out it was extremely dark, so I was obliged to lead my horse, and direct my way by the compass [and was] under the necessity of groping along, to the no small danger to my hands and eyes'.[330]

Park's exposure to the extreme elements had a dramatic effect, not only in relation to his expectations of surviving the journey he set out to complete but also in the way his physical appearance altered during this time. As a result, Park was repeatedly mistaken for a Moor: 'I was awakened about two o'clock by three Foulahs, who, taking me for a Moor,

[329] Park, *Travels*, p.184.
[330] Ibid.

pointed to the sun, and told me it was time to pray'.[331] Furthermore, in another instance, Park 'passed several large villages, where I was constantly taken for a Moor'.[332] In changing the colour of his skin, the effect of the sun's rays, in one sense, similar to Hooker's comments about moss, may have actually saved Park's life. In such remote regions, Park's darker skin acted as a type of camouflage, his European whiteness hidden after nearly two years in Africa.

As Juengel notes, 'On roughly ten occasions in the second half of his narrative Park is addressed as if the signs of his European identity were elided'.[333] Here, the impact of such solar ecologies is explicit and, in one way, resists the notion that 'the solar is rarely considered when discussing the concepts of the globe'.[334] In this instance, global politics involving the exploration and discovery of Africa by European, and in Pratt's term, 'imperial eyes', actually goes some way towards confirming how the sun and its effects had a direct impact on such grandiose endeavours such as global expansionism. As the sun changed the colour of Park's skin to a much darker shade, his chances of survival improved significantly. It is perhaps no surprise then that, after escaping imprisonment from King Ali, in one of the first towns he enters after escaping, his ethnic identity is put to trial. Whilst trying to rest after his ordeal by King Ali, Park is awakened by 'the curiosity of the people,' who were 'assembled in great number to learn who I was, and whence I came. Some were of the opinion that I was an Arab: others insisted that I was some Moorish Sultan'.[335]

It is during this stage that Park completed one of the key aims of the journey: to locate the Niger and begin mapping its course. Perhaps more than most others, this moment in Park's narrative signifies what has now arguably grown to become a common phrase, or keyword, within the travel writing genre: the 'arrival scene'.[336] For Park, this key arrival scene is entirely based around locating and recording a specific geographic landmark: the River Niger. In a snapshot that is meant to signify a momentous moment in European history making, this instance not only marks out the date Park 'discovered' the river he was charged

[331] Park, *Travels*, p.186.
[332] Park, *Travels*, p.193.
[333] For a more in-depth analysis of Park's skin see Scott Juengel's 'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin', pp.19-39.
[334] DeLoughrey and Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies*, p.235.
[335] Park, *Travel*s, p.188.
[336] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.77.

to locate and map, but also connects to other ideas concerning imperial acts of exploration and, in particular, discovery. As McClintock notes:

> The imperial act of discovery can be compared with the male act of baptism. In both rituals, western men publicly disavow the creative agency of others and arrogate to themselves the power of origins. The male ritual of baptism – with its bowls of holy water, its washing, its male midwives – is a surrogate birthing ritual […] the lands are already peopled, as the child is already born.[337]

In this manner, McClintock's ideas regarding imperial acts 'of discovery' fit well with Park's moment by the banks. In many ways, Park's own symbolic baptism here lies in the moment he hastens to the water, drinks, and then raises his hands to 'the Great Ruler of all things'.

To some, this moment represents the actual moment Park's mission truly begins. However, having taken over a year to get to the Niger's banks, it is only a matter of days after this that Park realised that his journey had reached a critical point:

> Worn down by sickness, exhausted with hunger and fatigue; half-naked, and without any article of value, by which I might procure provisions, clothes, or lodging; I began to reflect seriously on my situation. I was now convinced, by painful experience, that the obstacles to my further progress were insurmountable.[338]

Park's decision to alter his course is, perhaps, best reflected in the changing of the seasons around this particular time. After barely surviving the extreme heat of previous weeks in the desert regions, the rainy season brought many new challenges to the journey. As Park comments, with each passing day that July, the wet weather took its toll on the landscape to such a degree that, although visually pleasing to look at, the sudden downpours meant that 'the roads were wet and slippery; but the country was very beautiful, abounding with rivulets. Which were increased by the rain into rapid streams'.[339]

Park's progress, along with his health, began to suffer, the damp air invited a 'smart paroxysm of fever, during the night'.[340] As his progress faltered, Park's predicament grew

[337] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p.29.
[338] Park, *Travels*, p.206.
[339] Park, *Travels*, p.190.
[340] Park, *Travels*, p.206.

steadily worse. As Park biographer HB states: 'His situation was now extremely critical: difficulties were multiplying at every step; and he, at length, began to reluctantly admit the conviction that it would be idle to attempt carrying his original plan to execution'.[341] Upon greater reflection, and in considering his position at this point, Park's decision to return to the Gambia ultimately proved to be a sound one. The coming months of prolonged rainfall would provide an increasingly inhospitable landscape to traverse and, coupled with the increased dangers of succumbing to the fever during this season, progress into and through the unknown wilderness ahead proved to be too much. In commenting on the landscape ahead, HB notes that, for Park:

> the prospect before him of having to traverse on foot a distance of more than twelve hundred miles, through unknown deserts and amid barbarous tribes; at a season of the year, too, when travelling is rendered almost impracticable by the state of the roads, and when the climate of Africa, always trying to a European constitution, is formidable to the very natives themselves.[342]

Not surprisingly, the dangers involved in returning westwards were equally as relevant when considering whether to continue eastwards further along the Niger. What is clear is that the 'prospect either way was gloomy. In returning to the Gambia, a journey on foot of many hundred miles, presented itself to my contemplation, through regions and countries unknown. Nevertheless, this seemed to be the only alternative; for I saw inevitable destruction in attempting to proceed eastward'.[343] When considered against the risks involved in carrying on, and with knowledge that the next town Park would come to would be Jenne, where the majority of its inhabitants were Moors, Park's decision ultimately proved a wise one. After his encounter with King Ali, his fear of capture played a significant role in his decision to return to the coast, however dangerous that would also prove to be. What was also a contributing factor in his decision to return westwards, however, was the flooded landscape before him.

The intensity of the rain increased the dangers involving travel across the region considerably and, with many areas of land covered with vegetation now too wet to pass

[341] HB, *The Life of Mungo Park (1835)* (United States: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), p.110.
[342] Ibid, p.113.
[343] Park, *Travels*, p.207.

through, the places that Park deemed as possible routes forward were quickly becoming impossible to traverse. Once again, the effects of the extreme climate and unstable terrain determine Park's progress through Africa: what was once the issue of dealing with insufferable dust storms and intense heat with sand too hot to walk on, some weeks earlier, had now become the new challenge of attempting to get through watery floodplains amid constant and torrential downpours. Park's description of such adversity here paints a bleak picture of any potential progress: 'The tropical rains were already set in, with all their violence; the rice grounds and swamps, were everywhere overflowed; and, in a few days more, travelling of every kind, unless by water, would be completely obstructed'.[344] Resultantly, such a 'painful experience', whereby 'violent', 'tropical rains', as well as 'obstacles, and 'swamps', act as barriers to progress signifies how, once again, the landscape proved too challenging to negotiate.

After discussing the feasibility of returning on the south side of the Niger with the local Dooty (the title given to the chief man of a town or village) at the small village of Silla, Park soon determined that this particular route would be far too challenging to traverse successfully. Park's course is completely ruled by the way the landscape changes in front of him:

> I acquainted the Dooty with my intention of returning to Sego, proposing to travel along the southern side of the river; but he informed me, that, from the number of creeks and swamps on that side, it was impossible to travel by any other route than along the northern bank; and even that route, he said, would soon be impassable, on account of the overflowing of the river.[345]

The density of the vegetation, as well as the severity of the floods, meant that the terrain was simply far too dangerous to get through. As Park continued, the flooding worsened and the challenge of travelling any measurable distance became greater with each passing day. With only his ailing horse for company, surviving the experience remained Park's key goal, especially when considering how the effects of the rains altered the landscape he was trying to get through.

[344] Park, *Travels*, p.206.
[345] Park, *Travels*, p.211.

As Park comments, throughout this period, 'the country was so deluged, that I was frequently in danger of losing the road, and had to wade across the savannahs for miles together, knee deep in water'.[346] Such problems meant that some days were spent wading through regions that, in drier months would have taken only a few hours to walk across. A typical example of such a day around this time, in which Park only covered a handful of miles, illustrates the point: underfoot 'the water had swelled to such a height, that in many places the road was scarcely passable; and though I waded breast deep across the swamps, I could only reach a small village called Nemaboo'.[347]

In addition, the unrelenting rainfall was beginning to have an effect on Park's mental disposition. This was no more the case than when Park found himself not only disheartened by the constant deluge, but also disorientated by the ever-changing geography of the region due to extreme flooding. Here, as much as he is in a state of physical vulnerability from fever, robbery, or even attack from wild animals, anxieties about the direction he was taking stand at the forefront of his mind. Understandably, Park's fragility here marks this moment out from others as a critical point in his journey. As he notes: 'The difficulties I had experienced the day before, made me anxious to engage a fellow-traveller; particularly as I was assured, that, in the course of a few days, the country would be so completely overflowed, as to render the road completely impassable.'[348] At this point, even heading west would prove difficult. As much as there was an ongoing risk of being captured by Moors again, the real threat to Park's life concerned the more immediate challenges of moving through the inhospitable terrain under such circumstances.

In taking one instance from this point in his journey, where Park attempts to cross the flooded Niger, several dangers present themselves from both above as well as below the waterline:

> I travelled through the long grass and bushes, with great difficulty, until two o'clock in the afternoon: when I came to a comparatively small, but very rapid river […] the banks were so covered with reeds and bushes, that it would have been impossible to land on the other side, except at the pathway; which, on account of the rapidity of the

[346] Park, *Travels*, p.213.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.

> stream, it seemed very difficult to reach […] I examined the grass and bushes, for some way up the bank, and determined upon entering the river considerably above the pathway, in order to reach the other side before the stream had swept me too far down.[349]

With the Niger flooded and the high grass and bushes blocking much of the way west, the obstacles preventing Park from reaching the coast were plentiful. With several hundred miles still to go before surfacing unexpectedly at Pisania on the coast of West Africa, 'alone, destitute, and rather the worse for wear', Park's chances of survival at this stage deep in the unknown interior looked extremely unlikely.[350]

Postcolonial ecocritics such as Amanda Hammar note how processes involving landscape description and trauma often involve ideas of how the world speaks. More specifically, Hammar points towards an 'exploration of the ways in which words — mostly written words — but also language more broadly; and fiction and poetry […] engages[s] with the world [in order to better understand] how the world (human and nonhuman) in turn 'speaks' and thus asserts and (re)creates itself'.[351] In one manner, this idea is perhaps best represented in Park's comments on landscape shortly after he is released from imprisonment by King Ali. Instead of a barren wilderness, in which the only goal of any living animal or otherwise is survival, the desert in this scene is seen as something else. In rejoicing at his situation, Park notes that 'I felt like one recovered from sickness; I breathed freer; I found unusual lightness in my limbs; even the Desert looked pleasant'.[352]

In considering Hammar's point, that the world essentially 'speaks' through recreation, the same landscape shifts from being what was once an inhospitable, barren wasteland to a vista offering opportunity, freedom and survival. As he wanders deeper into the African interior, Park's fear and anxieties can be understood to originate from two clear issues: the unknown landscape that lies ahead in whichever direction he decides to take, and his cultural

[349] Park, *Travels*, p.219.
[350] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.69.
[351] A. Hammar, 'Sleepwalking Lands: Literature and Landscapes of Transformation in Encounters with Mia Couto', in *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa*, ed. by B. Caminero-Santangelo and G. Myers, (Ohio-Ohio University Press, 2011), pp.121-140.
[352] Park, *Travels*, p.182.

positioning of being a white European roaming through a wilderness that mainly consists of transient Moorish tribes.

Factors such as these produce an urgency in his narrative that reflect the shifting mindset of a man in peril, as well as connect it towards the landscape he is travelling through. In considering Hammar's terms, the wilderness 'transforms' into an environment that is full of danger and risk at any turn. The most easily identifiable change in landscape comes when the unrelenting rainfall made travel extremely dangerous. In this instance, the landscape is submerged and impassable.

After finding assistance and securing a crossing of the river with the help of some local boys, Park continued his slow progress through the unrelenting swampland and flooded plains of the region. Unfortunately for Park, it is at this point in his narrative that things take a turn for the worse:

> Park by now looked so ragged that he only had a cloth to cover himself with. He waded across miles of flooded savannah, knee-deep in water, shaky from fever' […] for three days he lived entirely on raw grain […] when suddenly he was surrounded by armed men. […] They finally left him with a shirt, a pair of trousers, and his hat.[353]

Broken by the unrelenting climate, hunger, as well as the threat of beasts or banditry, Park's demeanour at this stage reached its lowest ebb. He is, quite literally, lost, alone and helpless in an unknown exotic wilderness with little chance of successfully surviving any further hardship. This instance could be understood as the zenith of Park's own personal crisis in relation to his own personal experiences in the African wilderness: his eco-crisis being interpreted here as his own ongoing experiences with the extreme climate and the terrain he attempted to travel through. As De Gramont laments: 'his nerve failed him. He sat down in the wilderness, naked and alone. There seemed nothing left for him to do but lie down and die'.[354] However, it is at this precise moment that Park's outlook is revitalised, quite simply, by the landscape in front of him and the 'extraordinary beauty of a small moss'.[355]

[353] S. De Gramont, *The Strong Brown God* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1975), p.79.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Park, *Travels*, p.227.

Park's commentary on the various landscapes he experienced whilst travelling Africa during his first trip corresponds to many concepts and ideas circulating within environmental literary criticism today. In particular, a 'postcolonial green' reading of Park's narrative appears to suit particularly well. The colonial context, twinned with Park's narration of some of the green landscapes and flora of Africa, at times goes some way towards connecting traditional binary concepts, such as the nature/culture debate, more closely together.

Evidently, a green reading of Park's narrative not only addresses this overlooked aspect of his work, but also identifies some of the ways this aspect of his narrative can be framed within contemporary criticism as an environmentally oriented work. Arguably, in some circles, Park's discovery of the Niger remains in question. Nevertheless, in documenting the different, changing landscapes as well as commenting on the impact climate made on his progress through Africa, in addition to highlighting how Park's narrative style corresponds to similar travel documents of the era, this particular interpretation of *Travels* expands upon the body of criticism that addresses similar ideas.[356] At times, Park surveys the vast and remote desert regions of Africa, whilst in other moments, he casts his gaze on the very smallest of flora such as the aforementioned moss. By doing so, Park's work stands as a vital piece of Romantic era environmental literature that, until now, has not been recognised in this manner.

[356] Z. Kinsley, 'Landscapes "Dynamically in Motion": Revisiting Issues of Structure and Agency in Thomson's The Seasons' in *Papers on Language and Literature*, USI, Edwardsville, Vol. 41, no.1 (2005), pp.3-25.

Chapter III: 'Sights, Sounds and Silence: Narrating African Women in Mungo Park's Travels'

'WOMAN'

Place the white man on Afric's coast,
Whose swarthy sons in blood delight,
Who of their scorn to Europe boast,
And paint their very demons white:
There, while the sterner sex disdains
To soothe the woes they cannot feel,
Woman will strive to heal his pains,
And weep for those she cannot heal:
Hers is warm pity's sacred glow;
From all her stores she bears a part,
And bids the spring of hope re-flow,
That languish'd in the fainting heart

George Crabbe (1829) [357]

In commenting on Park's experiences of native women, George Crabbe's poem 'Woman' (1829) goes some way towards highlighting the many favourable ways in which Park was treated by them throughout much of his first journey. Here, Park's predecessor John Ledyard also has a part to play. As Park highlights in *Travels,* Ledyard's own experiences of the women of Africa lead him to conclude that they are 'decent and friendly' and 'so kind in manner'.[358] In tending to Park, Crabbe notes that African women 'soothe' his 'woes' and 'strive to heal his pains'; they are a significant presence throughout his *Travels*. From one perspective, they not only contribute towards his survival whilst doggedly moving through the remote and

[357] G. Crabbe, 'Woman', in *The Poetical Works of George Crabbe* (Paris: Galignani and Co. publishing, 1829), p.48.
[358] Park, *Travels*, p.240.

dangerous African landscapes but also prove to be vital players in Park realising a successful return home. Park associate James Dickson, who, on Christmas morning 1797, was up early maintaining the gardens at the British Museum, would certainly not have been so startled to see Park chancing upon him — by way of Park's unlikely return — were it not for the benevolent actions shown to the explorer by the women of West Africa.[359] In many ways, Park's survival was a direct result of female kindness.

This chapter intends to bring together as well as build upon the existing Park scholarship that, to a degree, involves Park's interactions with and experiences of native women in his *Travels*; in particular, it will respond to the works of Bohls and Mitsi respectively.[360] More specifically, this interpretation aims to highlight and comment on the many different ways that Park observes and represents native women in his narrative.

In general, Park's observations of African women resist the notion of titillation. He records his experiences in a manner similar to that of other noted travellers such as Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mrs Belzoni, who, by way of avoiding the sensationalism of 'near — naked spectacles', 'disavow the 'allurement of excess'' for 'the authority of restraint'.[361] Parts of this chapter will highlight how Park resists this kind of aforementioned spectacle by interpreting what Chloe Chard notes as 'a gesture of authoritative appropriation': a 'recognition of cultural difference […] [that] affirms power to claim from the foreign the primary quality expected and demanded of it'.[362] In this sense, Park's commentary on women stands out; he is not only the subject narrator of events as they unfold before him but also, at points, explicitly the body — object to be examined. As I aim to show, Park's actions within these intimate social interactions with African women illustrate his intent to reclaim a sense of authority. By attempting to do so, Park:

[359] For a more complete overview of Park's return to London, see Lupton's chapter 'Long numbered with the dead' in K. Lupton, *Mungo Park: The African Traveler*, p.95. Also see Joel Schwartz's chapter 'Mungo Park's Last Journey', in J. Schwartz, *Robert Brown and Mungo Park: Travels and Explorations in Natural History for the Royal Society* (Berlin: Springer Publishing, 2021), pp.103-119.
[360] See Bohls, 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', p.362; Mitsi, 'Let us Pity the White Man, no mother has he': 'Kindness and Cruelty in Mungo Park's African Travels', p.126.
[361] A. Gilroy, ed, *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel* 1775-1844 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.8.
[362] C. Chard, 'Women who Transmute into Tourist Attractions: Spectator and Spectacle on the Grand Tour', in *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel* 1775-1844, ed. by A. Gilroy, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.118.

> 'can be seen as supplying another way of exploring, vicariously, the gratification and danger of becoming an object as well as a subject of vision, while maintaining an authoritative detachment. […] [Park identifies as one of the] spectators who also manage to assume the role of the spectacle, but are able to halt or disavow the process of identification once it becomes too alarming'.[363]

As much as Park observes and records the appearance and behaviour of many of the native women he interacted with, they also, clearly, observed and commented on him; in particular, his physical looks. Parts of this chapter will also examine and interpret how some of the female natives eulogised their experiences of Park through song, other parts will additionally comment on some of the other music and poetry produced that emerges from such interactions. In addition, and specifically in contrast to the presence of female voices in *Travels*, another aspect of this inquiry intends to examine to what degree, if any, the concept of a silence is present. In regard to the idea of there being a silence in Park's narrative, attention will be focussed on sections of his movements westwards whilst accompanying a coffle back towards the coast, in particular, the scenes that detail the demise of the slave girl, Nealee.

In addressing the numerous ways women are represented in *Travels*, it is clear that a female presence inhabits many of his documented travelling experiences. In either commenting on their behaviour or noting appearances, Park's inclusion of such elements reinforces one of the primary aims of his journey: 'observing the manners and customs of the natives'.[364] In one early example, Park provides a scene that not only comments on the idea of a gendered reality within native African culture, but also provides specific details on the role and representation of women during regional indigenous rituals. After several weeks of travel through the Gambia, the emergence of an explicitly female oriented space appears by way of his description of the Mandingo tribal custom of the *Mumbo Jumbo* ritual; it is conveyed with distinct clarity. After finding a mask hanging in some trees at the edge of a village, Park is informed that the practice is used:

[363] Ibid, p.119.
[364] Park, *Travels*, p.71.

> in keeping their women in subjection; for as the Kafirs are not restricted in the number of their wives, every one marries as many as he can conveniently maintain; and as it frequently happens that the ladies disagree among themselves, family quarrels sometimes rise to such a height, that the authority of the husband can no longer preserve peace in the household.[365]

What is clear in Park's commentary on this highly gendered practice is how divisions between men and women are used to subjugate and control the female population through fear and separation. As Park goes on:

> this exhibition is not much relished by the women; for as the person in disguise is entirely unknown to them, every married female suspects that the visit may possibly be intended for herself; but they dare not refuse to appear when they are summoned; and the ceremony commences with songs and dances, which continue till midnight, about which time Mumbo fixes on the offender. This unfortunate victim being thereupon immediately seized, is stripped naked, tied to a post, and severely scourged with Mumbo's rod, amidst the shouts and the derision of the whole assembly; and it is remarkable, that the rest of the women are the loudest in their exclamations on this occasion against their unhappy sister. Daylight puts an end to this indecent and unmanly revel.[366]

For the female members of the Mandingo tribe, engagement in this gender-specific ceremony is obligatory: the women 'dare not refuse to appear when they are summoned'. In this instance, the women are rounded up and one is then singled-out and separated from the rest of female-only group. It is of particular significance then, that the female victim is subsequently also classed and identified as an 'offender' who was 'immediately seized'. This terminology of language portrays the event not as a familial or tribal matter but rather as a social procedure more akin to a court setting. In this sense, the chosen female is framed as an outlaw who is twice displaced. She is not only removed from the collective native

[365] Park, *Travels*, p.92.
[366] Park, *Travels*, p.93.

community of both males and females but also, during the final moments of the scene, then further severed and segregated from the group of assembled women.

As much as the evening 'commences with songs and dances', it ends with the chosen woman being 'seized, stripped, tied to a post'. What is, arguably, the most unsettling aspect of the episode is how the rest of the women raise their voices collectively. It is the other women who are the 'loudest in their exclamations against their unhappy sister'. Furthermore, in an unsubtle movement of gendered spatial divergence, the rest of the tribeswomen dispel and ostracise one of their own: a single female. Isolated and marginalised, the unfortunate victim is then 'severely scourged' by the 'rod of public authority'. Park's commentary of such scenes goes some way towards establishing a female-oriented space that brings together a diverse range of instances in which African women arguably lie at the heart of his narrative.

At this early stage of his journey, Park often appears very much as the outsider looking-in. Keen to provide details of his experience as accurately as possible, he goes to great lengths to describe the women he encounters, both in their looks as well as in behaviour. In another instance, and again during the initial Gambian leg of his journey, Park comments on the Mandingo women: 'the women are good-natured, sprightly and agreeable'.[367] In another instance that highlights his intentions of describing what he sees as accurately as possible, he notes the style of dress as well as the types of jewellery the Mandingo women wear. This act shed new light on some of the regional cultural practices of the female population:

> Thus, in the countries of the Gambia, the females wear a sort of bandage, which they call *Jalla*. It is a narrow stripe of cotton cloth, wrapped many times round, immediately over the forehead. In Bondon the head is encircled with strings of white beads, and a small plate of gold is worn in the middle of the forehead. In Kason, the ladies decorate their heads in a very tasteful and elegant manner, with white sea-shells. In Kaarta and Ludamar, the women raise their hair to a great height by the addition of a pad (as the ladies did formerly in Great Britain) which they decorate with a species of coral,

[367] Park, *Travels*, p.80.

> brought from the Red sea by pilgrims returning from Mecca, and sold at a great price.[368]

In one way, this scene illustrates how Park's simple, straightforward description allows his words to speak for themselves. Here, there is no inference of what the beads or dress signify within the native culture, just that such items were to be worn in a highly specific way dependent on the geographic region he found himself in.

Park's journey would often take him into a range of different communities where he would encounter women who would adopt a variety or range of different dress styles, jewellery, or make-up. In this respect, the type of description Park employs here resonates with Bohls' comments regarding the ways in which Park's narrative 'sections' on African culture are constructed; the 'natives could be classified like plant and animal species, as a group or generalized stereotype'.[369] Against this idea lies Fulford's and Peter Kitson's position: that Park's narrative contains many explicit, 'closer encounters recorded in his narrative proper' which 'tend to undermine such stereotypes'.[370] Addressed as either a collective, or examined as a series of individual encounters, what is clear is how representation of native females in Park's *Travels* is diverse as it is plentiful.

During an early stage of Park's journey, one meeting where he experienced this aforementioned type of closer, more intimate, encounter, gives an insight into how he was perceived by some of the local women. The ways both parties involved react to this particular meeting provide two divergent, yet wholly fascinating, points of view:

> We found many of the natives, dressed in a thin French gauze, which they called *Byqui*; this being a light and airy dress, and well calculated to display the shape of their persons, is much esteemed by the ladies. The manners of these females, however, did not correspond with their dress; for they were rude and troublesome in the highest degree; they surrounded me in numbers, begging for amber, beads, &c.; and were so vehement in their solicitations, that I found it impossible to resist them. They tore my cloak, cut the buttons from my boy's clothes, and were proceeding to other outrages,

[368] Ibid.
[369] Bohls, 'Romantic Exploration and Atlantic Slavery: Mungo Park's Coffle', p.353.
[370] T. Fulford and P. Kitson, eds, *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the Era of Imperial Expansion 1770-1835*, 8 vols., (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001), p.xxv.

> when I mounted my horse and rode off, followed for half a mile by a body of these harpies.[371]

As much as the passage describes the ways local women dress, the core element of the scene lies in how they react upon seeing the Scottish traveller and his entourage. Strong willed and physically overwhelming, the women 'surround' and physically molest both Park and his 'boy'. Evidently, the attack places the Scot in a vulnerable position: outnumbered and harassed by the 'rude and troublesome women', Park clearly struggled 'to resist them'. Pestered and picked-at, Park's victimisation by this predatory group of female 'harpies' brings forth imagery that is explicitly female focussed; apart from Park and his boy there are no other men in the scene. In this instance, he is outnumbered, vulnerable, and fortunate to escape the encounter with minimal injury.

Park attempted to limit any presupposed threat during his journey by travelling individually and acting alone, with no other Europeans. Nevertheless, whilst there were many agonising days walking unaccompanied on the brink of starvation, in other instances, he travelled with native assistants such as his aforementioned attendant 'boy'. Furthermore, after halting his movements eastwards, several hundred miles into the African interior, his return to the coast was far from being lonely; he accompanied a slave caravan, or coffle, back to the Gambian coastline, a journey of nearly five hundred miles. Even so, on many occasions, the native reaction to initially observing a wandering white man's skin was to flee in horror. As Park notes:

> two Negro horsemen, armed with muskets, came galloping from among the bushes: on seeing them I made a full stop; the horsemen did the same, and all three of us seemed equally surprised and confounded at this interview. As I approached them their fears increased, and one of them, after casting upon me a look of horror, rode off at full speed; the other, in a panic of fear, put his hand over his eyes.[372]

In considering Park's gaze towards the native communities and, to a certain degree, the gaze of the local natives back towards Park, the act of observation becomes particularly relevant. The fact that the deeper he progressed into the African interior, the more likely it was that

[371] Park, *Travels*, p.100.
[372] Park, *Travels*, p.127.

the natives he met along the way would never have encountered a white-skinned human in their entire lives, meant that his survival in these situations became increasingly more precarious. It is not without note that during the early weeks of his trip, during his journey through the Gambia, this type of native reaction — at seeing Park — was far less. In this respect, the native tribes residing nearer the coast, such as the Mandingos, would have been more accustomed to seeing a white European than some of the other native communities who resided deeper within the interior.

With factors such as this in mind, it is perhaps surprising just how well received Park was. One reason, which perhaps goes some way towards explaining how Park managed to survive these particularly dangerous initial moments of cross-cultural contact, that undoubtedly contributed to his survival, was the way in which he conducted himself when arriving at new villages. Park's passive technique when approaching new villages or towns, where he would simply sit down under a tree on the periphery and wait to be discovered, may appear a little odd. Quite simply, he would 'satisfy their curiosity by sitting still'.[373] This act, coupled with his white skin, singled Park out as somewhat of a novelty. In taking one such instance, his behaviour as well as his appearance arouses the interest of some of the native women. In particular, they are interested in the colour, shape and size of his distinctly large nose:

> They rallied me with a good deal of gaiety on different subjects; particularly on the whiteness of my skin, and the prominencey of my nose. They insisted that both were artificial. The first, they said, was produced when I was an infant, by dipping me in milk; and they insisted that my nose had been pinched every day, till it had acquired its present unsightly and unnatural conformation. On my part, without disputing my own deformity, I paid them many compliments of African beauty. I praised the glossy jet of their skins, and the lovely depression of their noses; but they said that flattery, or (as they emphatically termed it) *honey-mouth*, was not esteemed in Bondou. In return, however, for my company or my compliments (to which, by the way, they

[373] Park, *Travels*, p.144.

seemed not so insensible as they affected to be), they presented me with a jar of honey and some fish.[374]

In one respect, the idea that it is native women who confront and question Park on the whiteness of his skin brings forth provocative questions regarding gender and ethnicity in the colonial context. In particular, conversations dealing with ethnicity or race that are explicitly *not* located within the realm of the black or colonised race or individual stand out. In this case, Park's white skin is the primary subject of his interrogation by others.

As bell hooks notes, 'one change in direction that would be real cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness'.[375] In this instance involving Park, the questioning and inspection of his features connects to this sort of idea put forward by hooks. In the women concentrating 'particularly on the whiteness of my [Park's] skin', or, more broadly, his physical cultural differences, Park is the white subject being interrogated. For McClintock, and very much in a similar vein to the Mandingo women Park meets, 'whiteness, here, is not the invisible norm but the problem to be investigated'.[376] The incredulity that Park's skin is real rather than 'artificial' during this face-to-face encounter brings forth new questions regarding Park's own racial situatedness within the early colonial context.

As Juengel highlights during his comments on this subject, the theme of 'whiteness' within Park's narrative goes far beyond the immediacy of the physical encounters Park experienced. In many instances, Park's skin colour is emblematic of a broader political posture that portends the oncoming wave of colonialism throughout the African continent. Here, 'whiteness' is particularly 'useful for scrutinising Mungo Park's singularly white skin in the Travels', if for no other reason than, 'Park is repeatedly confronted with the suspicion that white men in Africa are operatives for broader commercial ventures'.[377] In expanding upon this idea of native 'suspicion', what is clear is that this type of wariness manifests at many points throughout Park's journey. This is understandable as, for some natives, Park's reasons for travelling appear tenuous. This factor appears to be especially the case when meeting

[374] Park, *Travels*, p.103.
[375] b. hooks, 'Travelling Theories: Travelling Theorists', in *Inscriptions*, Vol. 5 (1989), p.162.
[376] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p.8.
[377] Juengel, 'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin', p.24.

native royalty. For example, when Park meets King Mansong, his motives come across as weak and frivolous. As Park states: 'I had come from a great distance, and through many dangers, to behold the Joliba river, he (King Mansong) naturally inquired, if there were no rivers in my own country, and whether one river was not like another'.[378]

Regarding the repeated inquiries by the African women concerning his skin, Park's reaction is also telling, in that his response is to flatter and compliment them on their own striking features and physical beauty. Evidently, his technique is successful, and his praise is rewarded. More notably, this meeting contrasts his earlier encounter where the local women ripped and tore at his clothes. During this, far friendlier, instance of cross-cultural contact, his experience results in the presentation of gifts in the form of honey and fish in striking juxtaposition to his earlier encounter where his clothes were picked at or cut loose. Even during the early stages of his journey, Park's experiences with native women are complex as they are intrusive; he becomes something much more than an object to be gazed upon, in far more personal terms, he is something to be mentally probed, prodded and physically disrobed.

Just like some of the men he describes in his narrative, Park's preoccupations with recording the physical features of the African women he encountered is another recognisable element of his narrative. At times, during his friendlier experiences with the natives, Park finds opportunity to describe not only the physical features of the native women but also to comment on their cultural practices and behaviours. In one such instance where he describes a tribal dance, Park's comments focus on the physicality of the women he gazes at:

> I found a great crowd surrounding a party who were dancing by the light of some large fires, to the music of four drums, which were beat with great exactness and uniformity. The dances, however, consisted more in wanton gestures, than in muscular exertion or graceful attitudes. The ladies vied with each other in displaying the most voluptuous movements imaginable.[379]

Here, Park's acknowledgement of the division between the 'graceful attitudes', 'muscular exertion' and 'voluptuous movements' of the dancing women brings forth another factor

[378] Park, *Travels*, p.199.
[379] Park, *Travels*, p.110.

regarding his modes of description, especially regarding the ways in which he sees the native men and women. Taking an earlier scene, where Park narrates a wrestling match between a group of Mandingo men, his recording of the event acknowledges the 'muscular exertion' of the competition:

> Stripped of their clothing, except for a pair of drawers, and having their skin anointed with oil, or *shea* butter, the combatants approached each other on all fours, parrying with, and occasionally extending a hand for some time, till at length one of them sprang forward, and caught his rival by the knee. Great dexterity and skill were now displayed; but contest was decided by superior strength.[380]

In this light, there is the suggestion that Park's gaze upon the native populations and practices, although straightforward in its narrative style, suggests a slight division between how he viewed native men and women. If women were, to any degree, objectified through their physical appearances, then Park also categorises himself within this mode too. As previously mentioned, Park's own bodily objectification emerges in the instance where the local women question his own physicality, 'particularly on the whiteness of my skin and the prominencey of my nose'.[381] In this sense, and in detailing such interactions that focus on the whiteness of his skin, Park is just as much the object of the native gaze as much as he is the subject narrator of his journey.

In another instance, Park not only records his experiences and observations of women during native rituals from the periphery, at times he also integrates to such a degree that, arguably, he ends up playing a role in them. This idea is most explicit when Park describes a Moorish wedding:

> I was soon tired, and returned to my hut, where I was sitting almost asleep, when an old woman entered, with a wooden bowl in her hand, and signified she had brought me a present from the bride. Before I could recover from the surprise which this message created, the woman discharged the contents of the bowl full in my face. Finding that it was the same sort of holy water, with which, among the Hottentots, a priest is said to sprinkle a new married couple, I began to suspect that the old lady was

[380] Park, *Travels*, p.94.
[381] Park, *Travels*, p.103.

> actuated by mischief, or malice; but she gave me seriously to understand, that it was a nuptial benediction from the bride's own person; and which, on such occasions, is always received by the young unmarried Moors as a mark of distinguished favour. This being the case, I wiped my face, and sent my acknowledgements to the lady.[382]

In what could easily be seen as an act of aggression, this lengthy passage highlights how Park is, at first, unsure of how to react to such behaviour. The scene takes place during his period of imprisonment by the Moorish King Ali. Having been subjected to relentless starvation and, at regular intervals, harassment and torture, he is extremely wary of the ways most Moors act towards him. With his guard up, the act is open to numerous interpretations. However, in learning that this behaviour signified a function of the ritual that was not only a traditional component of it, but also an honourable act, Park's engagement with the scene goes beyond straightforward description.

At first, Park's commentary here focuses on how the native women act and sound. He also notes the difference between the sombre scene taking place in front of him and 'that mirth and hilarity which take place at a Negro wedding'. When he is anointed by the 'holy water', Park becomes part of the ritual and, in doing so, transcends the boundary between observer and participant. In becoming part player in this marital scene, intentionally or otherwise, Park embeds his experience deep within a female domain of the native culture. In contrast, his scant descriptions of male practices only go towards solidifying the argument that Park's preoccupations with native cultures, and arguably their interest in him, is routinely realised through African women.

In an act of intimacy that is easily misinterpreted, Park's symbolic baptism here could be, in one sense, recognised as the moment in which he is seen, acknowledged, and thus integrated more intimately within the Moorish community. However, this is not the case. This fleeting episode of apparent kindness is momentary; it is a moment of frivolity during a period in which Park endured months of captivity at the hands of the Moors, where 'each returning day brought fresh distresses'.[383]

[382] Park, *Travels*, p.156.
[383] Park, *Travels*, p.158.

What is clear is how the mutuality of these types of cross-cultural meetings or exchanges connects to Pratt's commentary on the idea of a 'reciprocal vision' between Park and the many natives he encountered:

> In exchange for seeing Africa and Africans, Park repeatedly portrays himself as subjected to the scrutiny of the Africans. In a parodic reversal Park's portmanteau becomes a cabinet of curiosities for his African 'travelees', while his body is surveyed simultaneously as landscape and a zoological specimen.[384]

In considering Pratt's point, Park's body is arguably objectified. He is seen, observed, and inspected by the natives as a type of animal specimen. His white, European, male body represents a stark contrast to the darker-skinned women he interacts with. At many points, this process of, in Pratt's terms, 'transracial erotics', is what directly brings African women into Park's narrative.[385] Park's gaze also often lies on the actions of African men. However, the numerous instances where Park describes African women in some way denotes a key element: the routine event of native women being fascinated by what they see when they observe Park. In this manner, Park's commentary regularly places the Scot as the sole object of the female gaze in his narrative.

Curiosity and Compassion

Park's travelling experiences note a number of instances where encounters with African women were fundamental to his survival, simply because they wanted to see what he looked like. This process of female scrutiny is another ongoing theme in his narrative. In expanding upon this type of idea, the cultural range of females desiring to see Park also clearly marks out how this particular fascination transcended many class and cultural divisions within the native populations. Women often wanted to see Park, regardless of their own cultural heritage or social background. This desiring process often meant that the novelty of Park's skin was oftentimes far more interesting than his reasons for being in Africa. At points , these types of encounters took place within the context of the court, at others, such interactions occurred at the lower end of the social ladder. In one such instance, Park's exchange with a female slave is, arguably, one the most fascinating moments of Park's entire journey:

[384] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.82
[385] Ibid.

> I was sitting upon the Bentang, chewing straws, an old female slave, passing by with a basket upon her head, asked me *if I had got my dinner*. As I thought she only laughed at me, I gave her no answer; but my boy, who was sitting close by, answered for me; and told her, that the King's people had robbed me of all my money. On hearing this, the good old woman, with a look of unaffected benevolence, immediately took the basket from her head, and shewing me that it contained ground-nuts, asked me if I could eat them; being answered in the affirmative, she presented me with a few handfuls, and walked away, before I had time to thank her for this seasonable supply. This trifling circumstance gave me peculiar satisfaction. I reflected with pleasure on the conduct of this poor untutored slave, who, without examining into my character or circumstances, listened implicitly to the dictates of her own heart. Experience had taught her that hunger was painful, and her own distresses made her commiserate those of others.[386]

I quote this passage at length to detail Park's overall experience of this particular encounter. In taking Park's perspective, as a travelling European individual with few resources to rely on, the slave's actions are a clear instance of human 'benevolence' or kindness. Yet, by acknowledging the broader political and historical contexts of the situation at large, with Park as early colonial explorer, this scene transcends a simple act of humanity into something far greater. Here 'the old female slave' becomes something more than just a 'good old woman'; for a few brief moments, the slave exists outside of her sociocultural situation and, in this sense, arguably outside of slavery. In this moment she becomes more than a slave, she becomes Park's benefactor. This 'trifling circumstance' clearly resonates with the Scot and, in an uncanny acknowledgment of this momentary self-emancipation, Park is left 'with a peculiar sensation' and, in an instance where 'few words are exchanged', a great deal is stated through the most straightforward of gestures.

A few days after meeting the slave woman, Park again narrates an episode that highlights some of the more humane aspects of his travelling experience. After ensuring a blacksmith's safe return to his village, Park's focus turns towards the native's reception upon

[386] Park, *Travels*, p.112.

entering his home residence. Once again, the moment revolves around the presence and reaction of an elderly native female:

> Amidst these transports, the blacksmith's aged mother was led forth, leaning upon a staff. Every one made way for her; and she stretched out her hand to bid her son welcome. Being totally blind, she stroked his hands, arms, and face, with great care, and seemed highly delighted that her latter days were blessed by his return, and that her ears once more heard the music of his voice.[387]

In a similar fashion to Park's earlier encounter with the elderly female slave, this moment also bears elements of transcendence. Transcendence here, within these given examples, is perhaps best defined as a solemn, if not, momentary realisation of profound interconnectedness between fellow human beings outside of race, political leanings or sociocultural standing. For a brief moment, brought on by Park's own benevolent actions in his aiding the blacksmith home and through his physical presentation to her, in a symbolic sense, the blind woman sees her son once again.

Park's narrative often goes far beyond simple, straightforward description. As he states shortly after the encounter, 'from this interview I was fully convinced that, whatever the difference there is between Negro and European in the conformation of the nose and the colour of the skin, there is none in the genuine sympathies and characteristic feelings of our common state'.[388] These scenes illustrate how Park's narrative is a profound, seminal piece of Enlightenment travel writing which arguably borders on the spiritual as well as the sentimental. At its core, Park's narrative *is* fundamentally a sentimental travel account.

At one point, Park describes some general characteristics of the native women. He also mentions one of his travelling predecessors: the American explorer John Ledyard. In doing so, Park brings together his own experiences of African women with that of other travellers who have also experienced their kindness:

> I do not recollect a single instance of hardheartedness towards me in the women. In all my wanderings and wretchedness, I found them uniformly kind and compassionate: and I can truly say, as my predecessor Mr. Ledyard has eloquently said

[387] Park, *Travels*, p.120.
[388] Ibid.

> before me; 'To a woman, I never addressed myself in the language of decency and friendship, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. If I was hungry, or thirsty, wet, or sick, they did not hesitate, like the men, to perform a generous action. In so free and kind a manner did they contribute to my relief; that if I was dry, I drank the sweetest draught, and if hungry, I eat [sic] the coarsest morsel with a double relish.[389]

Ledyard, who was employed by Joseph Banks's African Association to explore the Niger region prior to Park, succumbed to fever in Cairo before even making it to West Africa. Prior to this, Ledyard was Corporal of Marines on Cook's third voyage and, to colleagues such as James Burney (another officer on Cook's third voyage), Ledyard identified as a conspicuously sentimental explorer. As Burney mentions, Ledyard's 'ideas were though too sentimental, and his language too florid. No one, however, doubted that his feelings were in accord with his expressions'.[390] Within some critical circles, Ledyard's attitudes explicitly connect to Park's own narrative style, in that the spirit in which they conducted their explorations routinely exhibit traits of sentimentalism. As Carl Thompson points out:

> [Ledyard's] sentimentalism, it seems, is respected, but nevertheless sets [him] apart from his fellow explorers; with Park, however, the relationship between sentimentalism and the mainstream of exploration is significantly adjusted. Park inherits from Ledyard his sentimental attitudes and, in his writing, his sentimental techniques yet in Park's hands these elements are successfully grafted to the more characteristic agenda of exploration and the exploration narrative.[391]

The concept of sentimentalism is, arguably, a key theme within Park's work, as well as in other seminal works of travel writing that evoked similar feelings during this period. From a contextual standpoint, Park's narrative aligns with texts such as Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) and Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768).[392] In contrast, other critics note Park's indifference and, at times, dispassionate narration. As historian Philip Curtin states, Park 'simply told what he had seen, without arrogance, without special pleading

[389] Park, *Travels*, p.240.
[390] D. Davie, 'John Ledyard: The American Traveler and His Sentimental Journeys', in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (1970), pp.57–70.
[391] Thompson, *'*Travelling to a Martyrdom*'*, p.171.
[392] Two of the most notable works of the sentimental movement: H. Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, ed. by B. Vickers, (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2009); L. Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey and Other Writings*, ed. by T. Parnell, (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008).

and without interpretation'.[393] In one sense, Park's narrative shifts between these two positions throughout his account.

In noting the numerous moments of social intimacy with African women, Park's work is located in a literary space that goes far beyond simplistic, "cold" descriptions of people and place. They are documented instances of, at times, cross-cultural humanity that are located deep within the contact zone during a period when significant colonial expansions brought on by the British Empire in Africa were still, in one sense, a number of decades away. Park's narrative certainly provides an image of the explorer as someone who suffers. Nevertheless, when addressing such traits, this suffering is regularly assuaged by the continual presence of benevolent native women.

In expanding the idea that Park presented as a human curiosity, the desire to see Park apparently transcended class structures. Evidently, it was not only slave women who desired to see him. To native Africans, the unfamiliarity of a travelling white European was a wonder to be marvelled at. Quite simply, the opportunity was, at times, simply too good to miss. In offering one example, where Park's journey was interrupted because of a female native's desire to see him, Park, after many months of travelling and hardship and finally on the verge of coming face to face with the Niger River, is surprised by banditry, taken prisoner by a party of Moors, and quickly taken to King Ali's camp at Benowm:

> They came, they said, by Ali's orders, to convey me to his camp at Benowm […] Their visit, they added, was occasioned by the curiosity of Ali's wife, *Fatima*, who had heard so much about Christians, that she was very anxious to see one: as soon as her curiosity should be satisfied, they had no doubt, they said, that Ali would give me a handsome present, and send a person to conduct me to Bambarra.[394]

Upon inquiring of his captors the reasons as to why his kidnapping took place, Park's religion was identified as the key factor. He was certainly under no illusions that the presupposition that he was a Christian was the only reason. In moving farther eastwards and thus deeper into the unexplored African interior, the risk of encountering and then succumbing to the

[393] P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa* (Vol. II), (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1973), p.207.
[394] Park, *Travels*, p.145.

many Moorish tribes who populated the region became an all too significant threat to Park's life, as well as a clear danger towards any intentions of mapping the Niger River.

For the Moorish rulers of the region, Park's presence in the interior caused a certain amount of concern, especially for the Moorish King Ali and Queen Fatima. Park's narrative details how Ali not only kept him prisoner for several months, but also had him tortured and starved. Essentially, King Ali owned Park throughout his captivity during this time. It is during this period of imprisonment that Park details an encounter with a group of native women that is, arguably, one of the most fascinating cross-cultural episodes of his entire journey:

> The curiosity of the Moorish ladies had been very troublesome to me ever since my arrival at Benowm […] a party of them came into my hut, and gave me plainly to understand that the object of their visit was to ascertain, by actual inspection, whether the rite of circumcision extended to the Nazarenes, (Christians,) as well as to the followers of Mahomet. […] I observed to them, that it was not customary in my country to give ocular demonstration in such cases, before so many beautiful women; but that if all of them would retire, except the young lady to whom I pointed, (selecting the youngest and handsomest), I would satisfy her curiosity. The ladies enjoyed the jest, and went away laughing heartily; and the young damsel herself to whom I had given the preference, (though she did not avail herself of the privilege of inspection), seemed no way displeased at the compliment; for she soon afterwards sent me some meal and milk for my supper.[395]

This passage illustrates a number of ways in which Park's origins, as well as his appearance, acts as a spark of curiosity to the surrounding female group. It also brings forth a lighter-toned, comedic element to his narrative. In a piece of work that is so dense in detailing the daily trials and tribulations that regularly included robbery, imprisonment, starvation and loss, scenes such as these illustrate instances where there were, at times, moments of good humour and light-hearted fun; and is especially the case between Park and African women. Episodes such as this reinforce Pratt's assertion that these moments 'owe a great deal to the conventions of the orientalist writing that flourished in Europe in the eighteenth century […] much of the comedy lies in the parodic reversals of Eurocentred power relations and cultural

[395] Park, *Travels*, p.154.

norms, especially about seeing and being seen'.[396] The objectification of Park is clear to behold, he is 'inspected', and rewarded for his efforts through the delivery of 'some meal and milk for his supper', which kept starvation at bay. More often than not, these aforementioned inspections take place within a space that is predominantly female-oriented. Either it is older women who want to feed him, or younger females who desire to observe his physical features.

In commenting on the sexualised nature of this scene, Nigel Leask highlights how Park's accommodating attitude demonstrates his 'reserved, bourgeois sexuality', through the singling out of 'one partner from the collectivity in a synecdoche of European conjugality' and, in doing so, 'domesticates [their] 'curiosity' […] without losing face'.[397] Nevertheless, Park's face is not what the Moorish women wish to see. In elaborating upon this idea, of inspection, Efterpi Mitsi highlights how Park 'emerges as the object of the effeminising and prurient female gaze'.[398] Once again, Park appears as a living curiosity, or as a specimen that warrants closer examination; he is a body of difference that regularly has to justify that he is a human, albeit a white skinned one.

In one manner, these moments of cross-cultural contact invert many of the stereotypical, socio-historic attitudes found within the context of early colonialism. As Mitsi states 'this episode emphasises that he [Park] is constantly objectified and rendered weaker than the people among whom he travelled; gender and racial norms are momentarily overturned as the African women assume in this scene the dominant position in the visual relationship'.[399] Such actions symbolise a type of colonisation that is manifest through African female desire to see Park and inspect his body.

Either for curiosity or for knowledge, this act stands as an ironic portent of things to come when considering the future of Africa and the role of the British Empire during the following century. In many ways, the symbolism of Park's own body being colonised through the native female gaze complicates as much as clarifies the socio-political dynamics taking place within these highly intimate moments of cross-cultural interaction. Nevertheless, the

[396] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.82.
[397] Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840*, p.88.
[398] Mitsi, 'Let us Pity the White Man, no mother has he', p.126.
[399] Ibid.

presence of these moments in Park's narrative creates a space that, apart from Park, is oftentimes explicitly female in its representation. As much as Park inhabits this domain, he aligns far more closely towards the idea of his being the object of this type of scene, rather than travelling subject-narrator.

At points, the desire to see Park results in a reaction that borders on revulsion. In one instance, whilst being inspected by another group of women, whiteness brings about a physical reaction in the natives that manifests as a form of culture shock: 'They were very inquisitive, and examined my hair and skin with great attention, but affected to consider me as a sort of inferior being to themselves, and would knit their brows, and seemed to shudder when they looked at the whiteness of my skin'.[400] This type of reaction brings forth notions of the uncanny, in that, through the evident astonishment and incredulity of the women who see Park, his skin is deemed unreal or 'artificial'. As Juengel notes:

> the 'milky whiteness' of Park's skin not only 'possesses its own alchemical power to materialise as an object of intercultural accommodation' [but also] reinforces a strategic oscillation between the figurative and the literal, between identities and objects, suggesting how the "shock" of difference is mitigated in local episodes that are, nonetheless, structured around broader epistemic and economic systems of value.[401]

At points, Park's currency is oftentimes his skin, and although in certain instances some natives fled at the first sight of him, in others, his appearance was the sole reason for his survival.

Evidently, Park regularly appeared to play up to the novelty factor that his appearance had and, more often than not, is a key factor in realising a number of successful interactions. In expanding upon Juengel's comments, it is this type of cultural shifting or, as Juengel puts it, a 'strategic oscillation' that locates Park in an in-between state of identification and objectification. This notion of plurality here places Park as both a private traveller and representative of a much broader body politic at the same time. This is no more the case than when Park meets the Moorish Queen Fatima. As Park states:

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[400] Park, *Travels*, p.155.
[401] Juengel, 'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin; Or, the Year the White Man Passed', p.30.

> I immediately waited upon Ali, in order to pay my respects to Queen Fatima, who had come with him from Saheel. […] She was a woman of the Arab cast, with long black hair, and remarkably corpulent. She appeared at first rather shocked at the thought of having a Christian so near her: but when I had […] answered a great many questions, which her curiosity suggested, respecting the country of the Christians, she seemed more at ease, and presented me with a bowl of milk; which I considered as a very favourable omen.[402]

Considering the idea of symbolism in this scene, Park represents much more than a single person. He is recognised as a representative of a specific culture and race. Here, Fatima's gaze sees more than a single individual in the man presented before her, he is a symbol of something other, even as a potential threat.

At this stage, Park's life is very much in Fatima's hands. With the King away, she is the one in control of his fate. Park resides in a position where an African woman has complete authority over his very survival. What is noteworthy, however, is how Fatima's reaction to Park changes from an initial revulsion at 'having a Christian so near her', to a development that illustrates her desire for further knowledge about Park's origins and background. In adopting Juengel's lexicon again, this shift denotes Fatima's political mindset, in that she engages in the 'broader epistemic' 'system[s] of value' of finding out more broadly why Park is travelling through Africa, a result that sees her attitude to the Scot change. Not only does she become 'more at ease' with Park's presence but she also rewards him for his efforts.

Whilst held captive by King Ali's transient Moorish tribe, the juxtaposition of attitudes between the king and queen is at first perhaps difficult to differentiate, they both act with a reserved indifference to him. Nevertheless, Queen Fatima's benevolence is arguably the primary factor in Park's survival. It is not without note that Park's chance of freedom came about whilst the King was away:

> This was an opportunity of too great consequence to me, to be neglected. I immediately applied to Fatima (who, I found, had the chief direction in all affairs of

[402] Park, *Travels*, p.162.

> state) and begged her […] Fatima looked kindly on me, and, I believe, was at length moved with a compassion towards me.[403]

In this light, even Moorish queens appear to have succumbed to the mystique that Park appears to have exuded whilst travelling through this remote region of Africa. Park's mystique adheres to the idea of 'the curiosity of the travellee turning the traveller into a spectacular object', which 'is a well-known trope of early travel writing'.[404] Park's insistence on his own objectification also draws attention to some other strategies he used to distinguish himself as an unthreatening presence. In what is arguably the most well-known piece of criticism on Park's narrative, Pratt's considerations of this point primarily lie in what could be understood as the mutuality of Park's cross-cultural interactions, or what she describes as 'the mystique of reciprocity', which is ultimately brought about through Park's technique of routinely sitting at the edges of a new town or village and waiting to be discovered by some of the locals.[405]

Park's representation of African women in his narrative is complex. In her introduction to Park's *Travels*, Kate Ferguson Marsters points out that Park may have been intentionally cautious when writing about African women. Even though 'there is no evidence that [Joseph] Banks actually interfered in any way with Park's writing', Banks' detailing of his own adventures with Tahitian women some thirty years earlier, whilst travelling with Captain James Cook to observe the Transit of Venus, had become a subject of much literary ridicule:

> Banks, whose liaisons on the island paradise were a rather eye-catching part of the narrative, had been widely satirized for such incidents as losing his trousers, gazing too closely at the naked tattooed buttocks of Tahitian women, and altogether participating with ungentlemanly eagerness in far too many island activities.[406]

To a certain degree, this may be down to Dr John Hawkesworth's 'errors of judgement' in recording these 'religious and moral matters'; he was the man assigned to write the official narratives of both Banks and Cook and to that extent bears some responsibility in highlighting this particular matter.[407] In light of this, *Travels* is not a travel narrative ripe for satirisation,

[403] Park, *Travels*, p.164.
[404] Mitsi, 'Let us Pity the White Man, no mother has he', p.126.
[405] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp.78-81.
[406] Park, *Travels*, pp.12-13.
[407] Ibid.

but rather as 'a public document, under official commission'.[408] As much as there are echoes of Banks' journals within some of Park's interactions with African women, most noticeably embodied in scenes which involve undressing or losing of clothes or the gazing at the skin, Park's work avoids the type of sensationalism brought on through what could be termed as a type of titillation of the exotic. More generally, it also avoided moral outrage, satire and a lack of credibility by providing an account that is straightforward in its simple delivery of, oftentimes, incredible events and unmanageable circumstances.

In another noteworthy exchange with women, after fleeing imprisonment by the Moors, Park attempts to pass a very uncomfortable night under a tree. Dejected and extremely hungry, his predicaments are often remedied through the kindness of strangers. In this scene, a group of native women feed and shelter the Scot and, by doing so, provide a level of comfort and security that had been absent in his life for quite some time:

> They lightened their labour by songs, one of which was composed extempore; for I was myself the subject of it. It was sung by one of the young women, the rest joining in a sort of chorus. The air was sweet and plaintive, and the words, literally translated, were these. — 'The winds roared, and the rains fell. — The poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree. — He has no mother to bring him milk; no wife to grind his corn. *Chorus*. Let us pity the white man; no mother has he, &c. &c.' Trifling as this recital may appear to the reader, to a person in my situation, the circumstance was affecting in the highest degree. I was oppressed by such unexpected kindness; and sleep fled from my eyes.[409]

This passage acts as a cultural balance between Park's humanistic experience of Africa and the political aims of the trip. For as much as Park's narrative focuses on the search and eventual discovery of the Niger River, scenes where Park's cross-cultural interactions and narrated observations take precedent over geographic interests regarding the African landscape could, in one sense, be collectively described as the cultural impetus of the text.

The gaze of one woman is explicit: Park is perceived, 'observed', and, a little later during the evening, 'the female part of her family' stand by 'gazing' at him. Here, Park is much

[408] Ibid.
[409] Park, *Travels*, pp.195-197.

more than a 'weary and dejected' 'stranger in distress', he is a long-lost son, vulnerable, in need of mothering. Evidently, once again, he is clearly a source of fascination. Furthermore, the women do not only feed Park, they also sing to him as well. As the group of women eulogise in their chorus, 'Let us pity the white man; no mother has he/ Let us pity the white man; no mother has he', Park's torture and imprisonment by the Moors becomes a distant memory.[410] As Mitsi states, it is within this moment that, 'the kindness of the African women erases the cruelty the traveller encountered in his journey, overflowing him with emotion'.[411]

In taking a more politicised position, Felicity Nussbaum's comments on this interaction highlight how, in 'usurping the words, translating them, and rendering them legible to the European reader, Mungo Park mediates the subjectivity of the colonised through the coloniser' and, by doing so, fails to reinforce the depth of humanity within the situation.[412] In contrast, Mitsi's reaction to this type of reading points out that this, arguably cold, interpretation of events 'does not account for the affective relations represented in the episode; this is the first time the African practice of turning an event into a song is translated into English'.[413] In addition, it is not without note that the eventual reinterpretation and re-composition of the song to music by Georgiana Cavendish, the Duchess of Devonshire, to serve 'the cause of abolition', adds an additional female presence to Park's narrative:

'A NEGRO SONG'
The Loud wind roar'd, the rain fell fast;
The White Man yielded to the blast;
He sat him down, beneath our tree;
For weary, sad, and faint was he;
And ah, no wife, or mother's care;
For him, the milk or corn prepare
CHORUS:
The White Man, shall our pity share;
Alas, no wife or mother's care,

[410] Ibid.
[411] Mitsi, 'Let us Pity the White Man, no mother has he', p.126.
[412] F. Nussbaum, 'Savage' mothers: Narratives of Maternity in the mid-eighteenth century', in *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 20 (1992), pp.123-151.
[413] Mitsi, 'Let us Pity the White Man, no mother has he', p.126.

For him, the milk or corn prepare.

Georgiana Cavendish (1810).[414]

In noting some of the similarities between African women and the women of his homeland, Park biographer Lewis-Grassic Gibbon goes so far as to highlight how some of the characteristics of the native women, who almost certainly saved Park's life, are reminiscent of the type found in Park's own home village: 'this was a peasant woman of the same nature as her of Fowlshiels, strong and self-reliant'.[415] What is clear is that the humanity of this moment is not lost on the Scot; 'the only recompense' he could make was through giving his benefactor the four remaining brass buttons of his waistcoat.[416]

In what is clearly a highly domesticated, exclusively female space, Park's rehabilitation and eventual revival in the dimly lit hut 'with a mat on the floor', comes about through a combination of physical and spiritual nourishment. The combination of the 'supper' of fish presented to him and the collective voices of the women singing about him, engaging in routine, everyday processes such as 'spinning cotton', underlines the fundamental importance of African women in relation to Park's survival. He is safe and secure in the knowledge that, for that evening, he can rest easy.[417]

Park's commentary on this scene positions women at the heart of his travelling experience: they are associated with food, lodging and a benevolent attitude. As Haddad points out, Park's female saviours were often 'cast in the role of mother or nurse, he is 'put to bed' and sung a lullaby.[418] This notion of mothering, as well as the idea of a female saviour, is realised best through Park's own words: 'Accordingly, the maternal affection (neither suppressed by the restraints, nor diverted by the solicitudes of civilized life) is every where conspicuous among them; and creates a correspondent return of tenderness in the child.[419] In essence, Park symbolises the long-lost wandering son, an idea that is reinforced when, in an echo of this earlier exchange, a starving Park is, once again, saved by a similar figure: 'an

[414] See Park, *Travels*, p.196.
[415] Gibbon, *Niger: The Life of Mungo Park*, p.177.
[416] Park, *Travels*, p.197.
[417] Park, *Travels*, p.196.
[418] Haddad, 'Property in the Captivity of Mungo Park', p.144.
[419] Park, *Travels*, p.241.

old motherly-looking woman sat spinning cotton', brings him, 'a dish of kouskous that had been left the preceding night'.[420] In contrast, and regardless of social hierarchy, Park's comments on the men he encountered illustrate a clear difference in narrative tone between his experiences of them and native women:

> Among the men, as the reader must have seen, my reception, though generally kind, was sometimes otherwise. It varied according to the various tempers of those to whom I made application. The hardness of avarice in some, and the blindness of bigotry in others, had closed up the avenues of compassion.[421]

What is clear is how native men see Park differently than the women. Many are wary of the implication a white man's arrival brings: he is an unknown and wholly unfamiliar force.

Nealee

Another notable scene is Park's experience of the young slave woman, Nealee. After deciding to return to the Gambia, a journey of some five-hundred miles westwards, Park ended up joining a group of seventy-three travellers in a caravan, or coffle. From this party, thirty-four were enslaved Africans. Park had brokered a deal where he would pay the leader of the group, an African slave trader named Karfa Taura, 'the value of one prime slave', upon his return to the Gambia.[422] Without Karfa Taura's help and benevolence, it would have been extremely unlikely that Park would have survived, or even successfully made his way back to the coast. Nevertheless, for some of the party heading west, it was not a return home but rather a new beginning. As Bohls states:

> When he [Park] arrived at the slave trader's village, he was wandering, hungry, sick, and alone, after seeing which direction the Niger River flowed (to the east). Karfa fed, clothed, and sheltered the bedraggled Park and let him join his travelling party to begin the journey home. But the explorer's homeward journey was his fellow traveller's journey away from their homes into New World Slavery.[423]

[420] Park, *Travels*, p.185.
[421] Park, *Travels*, p.240.
[422] Park, *Travels*, p.234.
[423] Bohls, 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', pp.347-368.

Within this travelling party, Nealee, a 'sulky' slave girl, 'had refused victuals in the morning, 'refused to drink', and had begun 'to lag behind', and complained 'dreadfully of pains in her legs'.[424] After travelling for a number of days, a faction of the group discovered a hive of bees in a hollowed-out tree and attempted to obtain the honey. This foolhardy move resulted in disaster for the entire group which, as Park notes, brought about an attack of 'the largest swarm I ever beheld [which] flew out and [began] attacking the people of the coffle'.[425] As Park discovers, Nealee, who had 'not come up', had been 'found lying by the rivulet', 'very much exhausted', and 'had been stung in the most dreadful manner'.[426] As Park continues:

> When the Slatees had picked out the stings as far as they could, she was washed with water, and then rubbed with bruised leaves; but the wretched woman obstinately refused to proceed any farther; declaring, that she would rather die than walk another step. […] Every attempt to carry her forward being thus found ineffectual, the general cry of the coffle was, *kang-tegi*, *kang-tegi*, 'Cut her throat, cut her throat;' an operation I did not wish to see performed, and therefore marched onwards with the foremost of the coffle. I had not walked above a mile, when one of Karfa's domestic slaves came up to me, with poor Nealee's garment upon the end of his bow, and exclaimed *Neale affeeleeta* (Nealee is lost). […] The sad fate of this wretched woman, notwithstanding the outcry beforementioned, made a strong impression on the minds of the whole coffle.[427]

This incident clearly made a lasting impression on the coffle, especially the schoolmaster 'who fasted the whole of the ensuing day in consequence of it'.[428] In what is a story within a story, this vignette illustrates how Park's personal experience offers aspects of a much broader political commentary; more specifically, Park's relationship with the burgeoning slave trade during his time in Africa, his representation of native women and, at times, his unsentimental descriptions of them in his narrative.

Prior to this scene involving Nealee, Park's narrative includes a few scenes that involve personal interactions with female slaves. Taking one instance, in an event that took place

[424] Park, *Travels*, p.284.
[425] Ibid.
[426] Park, Travels, p.285.
[427] Park, *Travels*, pp.285-286.
[428] Ibid.

some months earlier, Park 'even had the mortification' to be snubbed by one'.[429] In general, these types of instances were usually brief affairs with little detailed commentary, nevertheless, Park came to rely on the food that was provided, more often than not, in this way.

Park's description of Nealee's demise, however, captures something much more profound than a young woman's physical and mental decline over a number of days. Park's description here crystallises what Bohls considers 'the most sustained embodiment of the psychic damage of the First Passage'.[430] The 'First Passage', in this sense, is what historian Walter Johnson recognises as 'the internal African slave trade', that encapsulates the movements, interactions and experiences of enslaved Africans prior to beginning 'the notorious Middle Passage': the Atlantic leg of forcible transportation between Africa and America.[431] Incidentally, this passage ended up being the route by way of which Park returned home. Park's narrative often lies somewhere in-between complicity and ambivalence, in that, although not a slave owner or trader, Park regularly relied on its infrastructure and personnel to achieve his goal of reaching the Niger, as well as returning home.

In recent years, critics such as Simon Gikandi have suggested the idea of a specific type of writing that involves the slave trade, identified as a 'third text'. In connecting Park's narrative to this concept, it bears all the hallmarks of a type of work 'written by people who were neither masters nor slaves, observers whose relationship with the institutions of slavery was tenuous, and whose intentions were driven by goals that were sometimes at odds with the systemising functions of the archive of enslavement'.[432] Park's narrative corresponds with this idea, in that he interacts with the process of slavery at a number of points during his journey but does not explicitly condone the practice.[433]

In contrast to his earlier description of the group of women sat spinning cotton, singing, eulogising his many travails, Park is unsentimental towards Nealee's plight; he is

[429] Park, *Travels*, p.193.
[430] Bohls, 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', p.347.
[431] W. Johnson, 'Time and Revolution in African America: Temporality and the History of Atlantic Slavery', in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660-1840*, ed. by K. Wilson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.200.
[432] S. Gikandi, 'Rethinking the Archive of Enslavement', in *Early American Literature*, Vol. 50, no.1 (2015), p.93.
[433] See Bohls' analysis and commentary on Park's coffle and, to a lesser degree, Nealee, in 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', p.361.

arguably cold in his depiction of the young slave girl. His portrayal of Nealee being whipped, where 'threats were used in vain, the whip was at length applied; and after bearing patiently a few strokes, she started up and walked with tolerable expedition for four or five hours longer' describes what Park sees but provides little detail on how he reacted to the situation.[434]

Stylistically, Park's muted realism here suggests that he is unfeeling or disconnected from events. However, as Bohls points out, this particular type of narration 'seems especially well suited to represent day-to-day business of the slave trade — the violent, management of recalcitrant, damaged human bodies'.[435] Unsentimental, though not unsympathetic, Park's description of Nealee focuses on her actions rather than describing her physical features. As much as Park dedicates some of his narrative towards describing the severity of the bee stings, in that Nealee was 'stung in the most dreadful manner', his main focus concentrates on her attitude: Nealee is 'sulky', 'obstinately refused to proceed', 'unable to rise' and, 'would rather die than walk another step'.[436]

In many ways, after the bee episode, Nealee is effectively more dead than alive. She is 'like a corpse' and, whilst being carried on the back of an ass, 'made no exertion to prevent herself from falling'. The cries from the rest of the coffle appear to confirm the heartlessness of the situation. In an act that suggests that they are perhaps already numb to the mechanics of the social climate of the period, the calls of 'Kang-tegi, kang-tegi, "Cut her throat, cut her throat"', lead Park to ride towards the front of the caravan so he can miss the dreadful events unfolding behind him. As much as Park describes Nealee's behaviour, he resists detailing any language that was spoken or cried out. As Bohls states, 'Park does not relay Nealee's words', but rather, 'does describe, in harrowing detail, the progressive damage to her body on the forced march towards the coast'.[437] In this sense, Nealee has no words or voice to speak of, it is only her actions that make up her presence in the text.

Nealee's presence in Park's narrative comes by way of his interactions with the African slave system, something that Park, upon returning to the coast with the coffle, participated

[434] Park, *Travels*, p.285.
[435] Bohls, 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', p.362.
[436] Park, *Travels*, p.285.
[437] Bohls, 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', p.362.

in. This notion of participation lies explicitly in Park's interactions with the coffle, whose primary reason for movement west was to move slaves to the Atlantic coast. As Haddad points out, Park's participation in 'slavery-based economic system[s]' does not mean he advocates the slave trade: 'he did not purchase any slaves on this trip nor did he explicitly condone slavery'.[438] As much as Park interacts with the slave system from time to time during his trip, he lies outside of the master-slave dynamic. Concerning Nealee, Park is an outsider looking on; Karfa Taura is the master and Nealee is the slave. In this guise, Park's narrative corresponds to Gikandi's thoughts regarding the characteristics of what a "third" text consists of, in that Park participates from a space that is both within and outside of the slave system. In this instance, all Park can do is watch the scene unfold; the only action he can take is to march 'onwards with the foremost of the coffle'.[439]

This episode is also symbolised in other ways, more specifically through the piece of fabric brought to the front of the coffle by one of Karfa's domestic slaves to where Park situated himself. As Park notes, the slave 'came up to me with poor Nealee's garment upon the end of his bow, [and] exclaimed Nealee affeeleeta (Nealee is lost)'. What is, at first glance, a simple piece of cloth becomes something much more symbolic. In as much as 'the empty garment on the end of the bow poignantly figures a symbolic undressing — another part of the long process of enslavement that would culminate in naked bodies crammed into the hold of a ship'.[440] As understated as the fabric may appear, its signification of a naked slave girl left for dead by the side of the road 'made a strong impression on the minds of the whole coffle'.[441]

Another noteworthy element of this scene is how there is little connection or any real social intimacy between Park and his narrated subject. Nealee does not have the capacity to feed Park, allow him to stay safely in her hut, or offer guidance on his route. She does not, unlike others, sing or tend to the Scottish traveller in any discernible way. Nealee's gaze never falls on Park, she never inspects him; she does not ask him questions, or even speak to him, even though she is only a short distance away. In this sense, as much as Nealee is situated at the centre of events, as a female slave girl, she is also located on the social periphery of the

[438] Haddad, 'Property in the Captivity of Mungo Park', p.131.
[439] Park, *Travels*, p.286.
[440] Bohls, 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', p.362.
[441] Park, *Travels*, p.286.

group. To a degree, this concept of separation is reflected in Park's mode of narration: as much as Park details the many events taking place whilst travelling with the coffle, he is also emotionally and descriptively distant when portraying Nealee.

In what is a clear contrast to some of the many other, and at times far more intimate, scenes that involve native women, Park's inclusion of the female slave's name, Nealee, stands out. This incongruity between personalising the slave girl in this way, but in the same instance disassociating himself from a closer detailing of the young woman's features, lies at odds with many of the other encounters Park had with African women. To offer one example, Park's comments on the physical appearance of native women, his descriptions of Moorish ladies, illustrate the level of detail he is capable of:

> Voluptuousness is, therefore, considered as their chief accomplishment, and slavish submission as their indispensable duty […] The gracefulness of figure and motion, and a countenance enlivened by expression, are by no means essential points in their standard: with them, corpulence and beauty appear to be terms nearly synonymous.[442]

It is this detailed description that is wholly absent in Park's narration of Nealee. From one point-of-view, Park's restraint here could be interpreted as necessary: stirring up controversy, or the intentional promotion of the burgeoning European slave trade was not Park's intention.

As Pratt mentions, the African Association's intentions were predominantly commercial: 'the members were economic expansionists interested in legitimate commerce, that is not colonisation or settlement, and above all not the slave trade'.[443] Subtle, political tensions exist throughout the scene, which garners 'impact from its understatement […] using concrete sensory details to convey the events leading to the empty garment on the end of the bow'.[444] Furthermore, it also highlights Park's often politically precarious social positioning when it comes to his, evidently complex, relationship with the process of slavery. Paradoxically, in appearing apolitical in his behaviour towards the practice of slavery and by

[442] Park, *Travels*, p.167.
[443] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.75.
[444] Bohls, 'Romantic exploration and Atlantic slavery: Mungo Park's coffle', p.362.

way of his apparent ambivalent or unsentimental descriptions of Nealee, Park places himself into a public, political arena that directly involves this specific practice.

At times, Park inhabits both the roles of passive observer and ambivalent narrator. As a member of the travelling coffle, he is also a participant. Once again, it is a scene that reflects Park's ongoing and changeable sociocultural situation in Africa: he regularly interacts with cultures. In doing so, Park becomes part of the social fabric. He exists in a state where he is oftentimes in-between or on the periphery of social interaction. Similar to his experience of the singing women, the episode detailing Nealee's death casts Park simultaneously in the roles of both actor and audience. What is clear is that during such moments, Park's sociocultural positioning is, to a certain degree, ambivalent.

From one perspective, it is what postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha recognises as characteristic of cultural hybridity, recognised here as an inhabitant of cross-cultural space within the colonial context that exists in a state that is 'at the edge of experience'.[445] Furthermore, in relation to the slave trade, Park's contact here, or 'participation', 'was structured to an important extent by his perception of the situation of slaves'.[446] As he travels with the coffle and watches events unfold, Park's 'perception' here arguably lies 'at the edge of experience'; it is, potentially, one of the primary reasons Park's narration of Nealee is both personal, through his detailing of the actions of the rogue female slave, and impersonal, identified here in the lack of personal detail of the woman he describes, at the same time. Nealee's presence lies at the heart of this episode. Her actions and attitude towards her situation she found herself in certainly make her stand out from the crowd. In noticing and narrating these sad events, Park contributes a voice towards a growing chorus of literary representations that involve African slave women and the idea of resistance during this period.[447] As much as she is arguably muted in vocality, Nealee's actions resonate and sing true by way of her clear insubordination and resistance towards the situation she found herself in.

[445] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.70.
[446] Haddad, 'Property in the Captivity of Mungo Park', p.131.
[447] A. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the silence and the Shame* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2006), pp.95-115. See, in particular, chapter 4: African Resistance: 'The slave who whipt her mistress and ganed her fredom', pp.95-115.

As well as detailing his observations and experiences of African women, either as individuals or in other instances as a collective, it is the female perception of Park that plays a key factor in the representation of women in *Travels*. Park was clearly subjected to a range of procedures exclusively by African women: he was inspected, judged, touched, undressed, fed, clothed, scalded, refused, ignored, and even sung to. What is clear is that all these experiences contribute towards a more complete representation of native women in Park's narrative. Park's journey consisted of a variety of complex encounters with native women and, in exploring and interpreting these elements of *Travels*, it is certainly the case that the women of Africa helped Park survive.

As much as his narrative provides a range of fascinating accounts that detail his many interactions with native women, without their assistance, it is hard to see how his safe return to Scotland could have been successfully realised. In bringing together a much broader range of examples that illustrate the various ways Park observes and interacts with females throughout his journey, as well as documenting the many ways they see and act towards him, and across a range of social positions, this chapter builds upon some of the existing criticism that acknowledges the role and representation of native women in his narrative. In exploring such female elements in more nuanced detail, it is arguably the case that this type of approach not only opens new critical pathways in relation to Park's narrative but also, in doing so, makes room for similar endeavours to take place within other travel narratives of this period.

In considering the idea of a sensory experience of Africa, Park's relationship with women is a key element. In this manner, his gaze not only accommodates the appearances of African women, as shown in his commentary on their attire as well as physical looks, but also their behaviour. At one point, whilst passing through a village, Park is nearly physically wrestled from his horse by overly inquisitive women; in another instance, whilst imprisoned by the Moors, he is asked if his genitals could be visually inspected by his female captors. What is clear, however, is that Park's sensory experience goes far beyond his encounters with African women.

After initially acclimatising to Africa by way of the *seasoning*, a process that saw Park's body get used to the shift in day and night temperatures, humidity, and general environmental change over a period of weeks, Park was ready to travel. Even this seasoning factor can be understood to be a marked success as not everyone managed to survive this

process. As I will note in the following chapter, many other travellers to Africa during this period were not so lucky as Park and died shortly after arrival. What is clear is that this robustness marks him out as a hardy individual: not only did he have the physical constitution to make his way into the interior, but he also had the endurance to undertake extreme physical hardships.

In considering some of Park's physical experiences in Africa, it is clear he had to walk hundreds of miles. At points, this was done wading knee deep through flooded plains, at others, it meant wandering lost and alone across scorching hot desert sands. In other moments, whilst lost in the forest, Park would also have needed the physical capacity to climb trees in order to ascertain his bearings, more often than not with little success. Whether Park was walking, wading, climbing trees, or even riding his horse, the physicality of such experiences after a prolonged period in the African interior began to affect his movements. It is, perhaps, no great surprise then that just at the point where he decided he could not go any further eastwards, Park looked at his most vulnerable.

In building on the idea of a physical experience, the notion that Park could not travel because the desert sands were too hot is another interesting factor worth mentioning. Whilst captured by the Moors, Park was imprisoned and unable to travel. What is also the case, however, is that the climate also made movement extremely limited, especially during the day: it was simply too hot to travel and the sand far too hot to walk on. These physical hardships Park endured are perhaps best exemplified in this short passage taken immediately after his newly found freedom from the Moors:

> A little after noon, when the burning heat of the sun was reflected with double violence from the hot sand, and the distant ridges of the hills, seen through the ascending vapour, seemed to wave and fluctuate like the unsettled sea, I became faint with thirst, and climbed a tree in hopes of seeing distant smoke, or some other appearance of a human habitation; but in vain: nothing appeared all around but thick underwood, and hillocks of white sand.[448]

The physicality of Park's experience is clear to behold, it is not only too hot to walk but the lack of water also prevents any kind of purposeful travel. In the sense, Park's search for water

[448] Park, *Travels*, pp.182-183.

is not the intended form of travel; Park's explorative travel can resume only when this 'sensory' need is fulfilled. The physicality of his experience is also noteworthy in other ways. For example, the violent sand winds that prevented Park from travelling any meaningful distance whilst on the edges of the Sahara Desert did not simply blind him, but also affected others. This process also put Park in great deal of danger:

> The quantity of sand which passed to the Westward in the course of this day, must have been prodigiously great. At times it was impossible to look up; and the cattle were so tormented by the particles lodging in their ears and eyes, that they ran about like mad creatures, and I was in continual danger of being trampled to death by them.[449]

In considering factors such as sand blindness, thirst, as well as the hot desert sun making the ground too hot to walk on, Park's sensory experience is clearly complex. Furthermore, Park frequently and throughout his journey only avoids starvation due to the benevolent actions of female others. As much as this aspect is a reasonably well acknowledged element of his journey, as is his sunburnt frame by way of Juengel's analysis of his 'artificial skin', Park's starved body is also a factor. The evident changes in his physical appearance, from the sun and the lack of food and water, not only fools some of the locals into thinking he is a lone Moor, but also demonstrates just how deeply Park is physically affected by Africa. His meals, when they came, were generally bowls of couscous and, on occasion, some dressed meat that had been sacrificed in his honour, though this was more often the case prior to reaching the Niger during the Gambia part of his journey. The further east Park went, the more difficult and trying his experience became. Nevertheless, such hardships were often tempered by moments of human kindness. In thinking of the sensory, it is not without note that alongside the sustenance of a meal, as well as having safe lodging during what is arguably one of Park's most desperate moments in *Travels*, the sounds of singing from the group of women who took pity on him provide a great deal of comfort.

[449] Ibid, p.174.

Chapter IV: 'Travel Narratives of the River Niger: Considering Some Geocritical Approaches'

> 'All tourists embody a quest for authenticity, and this quest is a modern version of the universal human concern with the sacred. The tourist is a kind of contemporary pilgrim, seeking authenticity in other 'times' and other 'places'
>
> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* 3.0 (2011) [450]

> 'By taking a geocritical perspective, we opt for a plural point of view, which is located at the crossroads of distinct representation'
>
> Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2007) [451]

> 'Questions of space and place have always been central to postcolonial literary criticism'
>
> Robert Tally Jr., *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism* (2016) [452]

In thinking about some of the ways in which explorers such as Park have influenced others, the idea that modern-day travellers have felt the urge to conduct their own travels into Africa is interesting. Noted as travellers rather than explorers, this group of, in Urry's terms, 'pilgrims', along with their touristic tendencies to try and accurately follow in Park's foundational footsteps and re-live some of Park's encounters, stands out as one of the key legacies of Park's seminal narrative.

This chapter contributes to Park scholarship by examining and interpreting a selection of travel writing that has been conducted in direct response to Park's *Travels*. In this manner, it offers a range of interpretations involving travelled space in the Niger region, more specifically, the travelled spaces that intersect within the selected texts chosen for this inquiry. By way of this, it is a contribution to scholarship in the field of spatiality by specifically examining travelled space in the colonial context.[453] In addition, it also offers another example of what has come to be known as a 'geocritical exploration' involving the analysis of space

[450] J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: Sage Publishing, 2011), p.10.
[451] Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, p.114.
[452] Tally Jr. and Batista, *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism*, p.118.
[453] Tally Jr., *Spatiality*.

and place in literary texts.[454] Furthermore, in considering a number of approaches that make-up or are components of any geocritical practice, this chapter will involve a number of critical elements that may, at times, appear entirely separate. However, in attempting to make this inquiry as broad as possible, this collective set of readings included here intends to highlight the sheer variety of critical perspectives that can take place under the umbrella term of geocriticism. Recently, geocritical practice has been recognised as being at a kind of crossroads, with so 'many multitudinous critical approaches to consider not only literary critics, but also other spatially oriented critics, theorists, and scholars at the cutting edge of the spatial turn, as well as geographers, urbanists, and philosophers'.[455] Geocriticism is quickly becoming one of the most interdisciplinary critical practices of the modern era.

Geocriticism and Multifocalisation

In relation to travel writing in general, a geocritical approach fits particularly well. It corresponds to an aspect of the practice, defined by Westphal as 'the space of travel, a viatic space'.[456] Park's narrative certainly aligns with the nomadic perspective of the travel writer and, in bringing together a collection of other texts that narrate experiences of the same space travelled at different times by different individuals for the first time, a new type of spatial reading of the Niger region of Africa can be attempted. This effort, identified here as a geo-critique of Park's route, explores some of the existing interconnections between historic and modern travel experiences producing a corpus commentary that, in addition to recognising the changing cultures and landscapes of the Niger, notes the importance of Park's narrative within a twenty-first century travel writing genre that acknowledges the growing importance of spatial studies.

In *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2007), Bertrand Westphal attempts to 'establish the background and characteristics of this critical method, while also leaving geocriticism open to further critical elaboration and exploration'.[457] This chapter intends to elaborate and explore this practice in a variety of ways. By taking Westphal's assertion that

[454] R. Tally Jr., ed, *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[455] R. Tally Jr., ed, *Spatial Literary Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Space, Geography, and the Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2020), p.317.
[456] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.112.
[457] Tally, *Spatiality*, p.140.

there are several key tenets of any geocriticism, it is thus relevant to identify how some of these are characterised within this inquiry into the narratives that detail the routes taken along the Niger River.

One tenet that is, perhaps, the most straightforward to recognise is the idea of multifocalisation. Simply put, this is the study of literary space from a number of different perspectives. As Westphal states, multifocalisation: 'involves the confrontation of several optics that correct, nourish and mutually enrich each other. Writing of space may always be singular, but the geocritical representation emerges from a spectrum of individual representations'.[458] In light of this, the multifocal approach here comprises of a few authors who have all narrated this particular space. Alongside Park's, narratives by authors such as Richard Owen, Tom Freemantle and Peter Hudson, as well as female travellers such as Kira Salak, all involve this selected space. In considering Westphal's comments, the process of multifocalisation highlights how the selected narratives are all highly personal, individual accounts of journeying down the Niger, but also go towards collectively representing a space that to some degree nourishes and enriches a broader literary representation of this region. When space or place is at the centre of critical debate, like it is here, the process of multifocalisation:

> is more meaningful in a geocritical, geocentred context. Derived from only a single source, the knowledge of a given space will be restricted, as the view of a single person, and thus less valuable. If confined to the study of a single text or single author, geocriticism becomes lopsided […] it is clear that multifocalisation requires a reticular arrangement of a certain number and a wide variety of viewpoints.[459]

In considering a range of narratives that are exclusively travel related in authorship, this inquiry adheres to Westphal's tenet of multifocalisation in a highly specific way. Namely, the way in which multifocalisation is expressed in three basic variations: the endogenous, the allogenous and the exogenous. Here, my approach lies exclusively in relation to the traveller's perspective, recognised here in the *exo*genous point-of-view. As Westphal notes 'The *endogenous* point of view' is normally resistant to any exotic view, it limits itself to familiar space'; in opposition to this perspective, the *exogenous* point of view, however, reflects the

[458] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.113.
[459] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, pp. 126-127.

vision of the traveller; it exudes exoticism' and in this way positions travel writing and the travelling voice at the centre of analysis.[460] In addition to these perspectives lies the concept of 'the *allogenous* point of view'; it is the voice that 'lies somewhere between the other two', in the sense that it has become familiar with the narrated space but still remains foreign 'in the eyes of the indigenous population'.[461]

In taking this approach, a great deal of other texts and resources are already, understandably, lost by way of this. Nevertheless, in regard to the scale of this inquiry, in relation to Park's *Travels*, it seems fitting to acknowledge how other travellers have journeyed to the Niger. In doing so, they too have walked in Park's footsteps and have also experienced this region in their own way through their own travel experiences. In light of this, my focus is on the exogenous voices that connect to this particular region of Africa. The selected narratives included in this part of my inquiry, which also act as parameters, encompass: Richard Owen's *Saga of the Niger* (1961), Peter Hudson's *Two Rivers: Travels in West Africa on the Trail of Mungo Park* (1991), Tom Freemantle's *The Road to Timbuktu: Down the Niger on the Trail of Mungo Park* (2005), and Kira Salak's *The Cruelest Journey: Six Hundred Miles to Timbuktu* (2005).[462]

As I intend to highlight in the second section of this chapter, the idea that cultural symbols, rituals, practices, interpretations, and experiences, evolve and change over time becomes clearer when employing the idea of a layered, or stratigraphic, textual analysis. What is clear, is that certain literary spaces intersect with other texts from the past. This is no more the case than here: where the impact of Park's published narrative has resulted in other travellers attempting a similar feat, albeit at different periods in time.

Finding a balance between addressing a highly personal, individualised viewpoint of any travelled space and then critiquing any pluralised representation is crucial. What is also clear is that, from a political standpoint, each of the aforementioned journeys included here took place after 'The Gambia gained independence from its British colonizers': each selected

[460] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.128.
[461] Ibid.
[462] R. Owen, *Saga of the Niger* (London: Trinity Press, 1961); P. Hudson, *Two Rivers: Travels in West Africa on the Trail of Mungo Park* (London: Chapmans Publishing, 1991); T. Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu: Down the Niger on the Trail of Mungo Park* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2005); K. Salak, *The Cruelest Journey: Six Hundred Miles to Timbuktu* (Washington, United States: National Geographic Press, 2005).

travel experience occurs, arguably, within a post-colonial West African landscape.[463] In fact, apart from Park's, all the other travel narratives examined here take place after the end of what could be termed British Colonialism.

In highlighting what Luca Raimondi suggests as an 'integrated methodology', this inquiry expands upon the 'dynamic interaction among postcolonial, ecocritical and geocritical perspectives', by addressing how 'postcolonial considerations are brought to and consider the ways in which power relations penetrate the different systems of representation'.[464] In recognising such affiliations, as well as 'the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about', this inquiry scrutinizes such issues in relation to the exogenous travelling voice as well as maintains integrity towards 'the referential relationship between the texts' and 'the location of the texts with regard to the social and political dimensions in which they are produced and consumed'.[465]

In offering an example of this kind of idea within one of the selected narratives, Peter Hudson's comments on native reactions to his geographic knowledge of Africa goes some way towards highlighting some of the cross-cultural dynamics at play:

> My map had no meaning for these people. They looked at it, holding it perhaps upside down. They saw no connection between it and their land. Their land was a living thing and their knowledge of it came from the stories, past and present, that had occurred in it. It was where they took their goats to graze, that place where their ancestors had once lived. It had themes and plots and they could not comprehend that these could be put down on a piece of paper. My maps were very detailed and so my knowledge of their lands amazed them and made them laugh with incredulity. How could I, a stranger, know the names and directions of things they had learnt from their fathers and grandfathers.[466]

Hudson's knowledge of Park's route, the detailed maps he uses to travel, coupled with the fact he is a white European moving through a post-colonial landscape, means that his

[463] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, p.8.
[464] Tally Jr. and Batista, *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism*, p.118.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, pp.98-99.

personal experiences are never fully removed from the political implications of such a journey.

As much as the focus of this inquiry is to address some of the geographic locations where the selected narratives intersect, another element highlights how the political overtones of many of the modern journeys examined here are never far away. In giving another example, albeit less subtle, Tom Freemantle's brief encounter with a stranger on a bus in Mali goes some way towards illustrating how the modern day white European traveller is seen by some Africans. In this instance, Freemantle is othered by another bus passenger: ''Oh, so the great white man comes to look at our country.' He spat out the words, playing up to the other passengers. 'He travels down the Niger River. And now he is ill! Maybe he will die here too, like his great explorer''.[467] At first glance, such sociocultural friction may be a symptom of *any* potential postcolonial geocriticism. In this instance, the cause may simply be because the origins of the travelling voice come from an outsider's perspective or, in geocritical language, the aforementioned exogenous point of view: the traveller's representation of place. What is certainly the case, is how, as Tally and Batista suggest 'the stratigraphic logic of geocriticism is particularly useful for an examination of postcolonial environments'.[468]

It is also perhaps necessary to address what Eric Prieto highlights as a symptom of any potential geocriticism: that there exists 'a danger that is intrinsic' to such practice, in that it could be accused of being a 'segregationist, textualist theoretical model'.[469] In response to this kind of thinking, it is worth pointing out that, in bringing together a set collection of texts that adhere to the selected travelled space, each demonstrates a connection to Park's journey and the region he travelled through.

In commenting on the act of selecting text, Westphal states how 'collecting a sufficiently documentary base is sometimes hard' and, in selecting this specific geographic space as well as collecting the relevant literary sources, it is also clear that exogenous travel narratives of the Niger River are not abundant.[470] In contrast, Tally's comments regarding a

[467] Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu*, p.98.
[468] Tally Jr. and Batista, *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism*, p.118.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.117.

geocriticism of more popular literary places, such as Paris or Dublin, only go towards highlighting the Niger's literary remoteness to other regions. As Tally states:

> One of the problems that a strictly geocentric approach presents involves the question of the corpus as Westphal has readily acknowledged, how does one determine exactly which texts could, in the aggregate, reasonably constitute a meaningful body of material with which to analyse the literary representations of a given geographic society? If Dublin, as represented in the works of James Joyce is far too limited since it relies on the perspective of a single author or maybe just a few of his writings, then how many authors? How many texts representing Dublin would constitute a credible starting point for a geocriticism of the Irish capital […] who determines whether enough material has been taken into account, how would one know […] even in a relatively remote place?.[471]

Tally's comments here go some way towards acknowledging some of the issues involved in identifying and then critically examining a designated geographically literate space. This inquiry into Park's journey advances geocriticism by examining a few identifiable, transecting literary spaces in the Niger region of West Africa; it is by no means a complete interpretation. Put simply, it is an inquiry into a literary collection of travelled space in an area of Africa that, in Tally's terms, could be described as 'relatively remote'.

In considering a multi-textual interpretation of the region Park travelled through and, in doing so, attempting to interpret a geo-centric rather than ego-focused point-of-view, it is somewhat ironic to first consider the authors selected for this spatially-minded inquiry. In keeping with this aspect of geocriticism, my approach is to interpret the narratives that directly relate to Park's journey.

The collectively similar, as well as highly individual, encounters each author has whilst travelling through the Niger region all go towards building what Westphal describes as 'a plural point of view, which is located at the crossroads of distinct representation'.[472] This position is clear: each of the narratives selected has its own respective cultural and contextual

[471] Tally, Keynote address, (03/11/2018).
[472] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.114.

historicity; they represent 'the numerical threshold of representativeness […] determined and justified on a case-by-case basis, according — among other things — to the extension of the intertextual chain that the real-world referent has brought into being'.[473] It is clear that Park's foundational journey had a significant impact on a number of future generations of travel writers.

Richard Owen's *Saga of the Niger* (1961) exemplifies a core characteristic of this geocritical inquiry: to examine geographical space from a pluralised literary perspective. Owen's comments stand out, his entire reason for journeying into the interior of West Africa is singularly down to Park's narrative:

> Re-reading, after many years, the Journals of Mungo Park, I realized that the most fascinating part of his travels was his overland journey from the coast to the Niger. […] To know and understand Park better and to try and resurrect in myself something of the feelings and reactions experienced by him and his associates, I had resolved to follow his route all the way – and here I was, making for the spot on the coast where he first landed and from where I could follow his tracks to the Niger and down the river past the rapids where he was drowned.[474]

In an attempt to get closer to knowing Park's character, but more importantly here, to try and diligently re-trace as much as Park's journey as possible, Owen's narrative homage is remarkably useful when examining the same travelled space. As the critic W.B Morgan states: 'Owen's account is concerned with the route followed by Mungo Park from the Gambia via the Upper Niger Valley to the Bussa Rapids, and thence by the Landers' route to the delta'.[475] Owen's concerns focus on the route taken by Park and, to a certain degree, Richard Lander. What is noteworthy is that rather than focussing on the personal account of both the travelling journeymen involved, who are arguably the first Europeans to track the entirety of the Niger River, Owen's focus lies on the geographic places Park and Lander travelled through.

In addressing Owen's narrative, it quickly becomes clear that Owen sees himself in a very specific way. He is 'not a tourist' but a travel writer, with his intention primarily being to

[473] Tally Jr. and Batista, *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism*, p.118.
[474] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.13.
[475] W. Morgan, 'Review of Saga of the Niger' in *The Geographical Journal,* London: The Royal Geographic Society, Vol. 127, no.4 (1961), pp.516-517.

'follow [Park's] route and see what changes have occurred since his day'.[476] Owen's integrity towards his travelling predecessor is particularly noteworthy by way of his continuous efforts to steadfastly adhere to Park's historic route, which is as stubborn-minded as it is challenging.

When he is questioned on the day-to-day difficulties of following pathways to villages that most probably had 'changed their names or have shifted sites, or even vanished completely', Owen's reply is that he will progress by 'dogging Park's footsteps'. Owen's reference to 'groping from village to village', 'at the same time checking with the village elders', paints a picture of a travelling character not unlike Park.[477] In this sense, Owen is not dissimilar to what Pratt recognises Park as: an 'experiential unhero' who represents a 'non-interventionist European presence'.[478] Both are keen to explore and experience the people and places of the Niger River, however, as much as there is a sense that Owen appears non-interventionist, which he ultimately is, it does still have a sense of the colonial in that the people and places are sights to be seen and experienced. For Owen, maintaining the integrity of Park's own geographical movements often causes necessary detours. As Owen states:

> Referring to my copy of Mungo Park's Journals, I inquired the whereabouts of the Walli Creek that the explorer had crossed on setting out from Pisania. Neither of my companions had heard the name before; there was a stream near Pisania named the Samee and they thought it may have been known as the Walli at one time. This conjecture was confirmed by an old inhabitant of Georgetown, who said that the name 'Walli' was in general use when he was a boy […] he advised me to speak with a man named Homoro, of the village near Pisania, who was better informed.[479]

Like Park's, Owen's narrative primarily consists of the everyday routines of travel: the rising and leaving of a location, the narration of any noteworthy events whilst in transit, and then the usual finding of room, boarding, food and fuel. At many points, Owen's efforts to connect his own travels nearly a century and a half later to Park's journey are explicit. However, what is particularly noteworthy, is how some of Owen's experiences mirror those of Park in a completely unplanned way.

[476] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.12.
[477] Ibid, p.18.
[478] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.78.
[479] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.33.

At one point, Owen is mistakenly suspected as a spy and taken prisoner. In deviating from Park's route, prior to sailing down the Niger, Owen makes a 'diversion into Guinea to photograph the mountains', a move that saw him being 'arrested as a dangerous French spy' and imprisoned in 'a room containing a table and chair', 'for the next six days'.[480] Events such as this certainly bring Park's own ordeal of being imprisoned and tortured by the Moors to mind and, with Owen's comments on the situation acting as an echo to Park's narrative, it is not only the respective routes travelled that connect, but in instances such as this, experience also:

> In my room once more I sat brooding over my helplessness and, above all, the uncertainty. For the first time in my life I was under restraint, deprived of my freedom of action, and it was galling in the extreme […] I thought of Park's captivity and marvelled that he had borne it so long with docility. […] such treatment would have goaded me beyond endurance and I would have reacted violently – and probably have lost my life. But if Park had acted similarly he would not have discovered the Niger: the true explorer apparently, never loses sight of his objective, whatever the provocation.[481]

Owen's journey shifts pace when he boards a travelling house-boat not far from Park's point of return near Old Segou. Located on the banks on the Niger River, this region stands out. In considering its spatial relevance to this inquiry, it marks the point of intersection between the point at which Park decided to return to the coast during his initial trip and the place where Owen begins his river-journey, as well as marking the starting point for travel writer Kira Salak's kayak voyage to Timbuktu. In acknowledging the importance of this location as it is mentioned in the exogenous travel narratives examined within this inquiry, be it either for starting-off and beginning a trip or by way of deciding to return home, Old Sego [Segou] acts as a geospatial hotspot.

Along with Owen's, another narrative that also envisages Park's route as a specific designated space to travel through, albeit some years later, is Peter Hudson's *Two Rivers: Travels in West Africa on the Trail of Mungo Park* (1991). Hudson's account deals with his own

[480] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, pp.110-113.
[481] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, pp.117.

travels through the Gambia and then along the Niger River. It is a move highly similar to Park's nearly two centuries earlier. In recognising Hudson's journey as one that is not only the same as Park's but as a narrative that is constructed by an outsider or non-native, some of the more nuanced elements of geocriticism emerge.

In addressing the concept of what Westphal describes as 'the imagogical', (or put more simply, the perceived image), Hudson's travel account and to a certain degree his narrative style, detail the production of a literary space where the 'environment is unfamiliar' or entirely foreign to the author in question.[482] Comments alluding to the idea of hobgoblins and barbarians create an image of distinct otherness and difference. Such images, of the same space travelled by narrators who are non-natives of this designated space, establish a framework in which the fusion of past and present experience creates a surreal, multi-layered literary corpus. Evidence of this lies in instances where modern writers, like Hudson, evoke and integrate Park's seminal journey into their own highly personal expeditions. As Hudson states:

> I was going on a voyage to follow the first of the two journeys he made there. This was a journey that had taken Mungo Park into a land, in his day, of myth and legend, a land in which the people and beasts were rumoured to be little more than barbarians and hobgoblins. In reality, though, it was a land that had been the arena of successive empires and kingdoms whose sophistication and wealth would surprise most people today. […] I hoped this journey would give me the opportunity to immerse myself in Africa. I would abandon myself to it, let it take me in its grasp, run me through its course of events and deposit me on the morrow as it saw fit. Mungo Park had travelled with a similar attitude and it was this that had attracted me to him.[483]

Notably, Hudson's sentiments here are like Park's. The Scot had 'a passionate desire to examine the productions of a country so little known and to become experientially acquainted with the modes of life and characters of the natives', which not only connects with Hudson's description but also illustrates how, in geocritical language, a stratigraphic approach facilitates a more complete picture of any referential space examined.[484]

[482] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.111.
[483] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, p.xvi.
[484] Park, *Travels*, p.67.

Hudson makes a concerted effort to not only document the numerous human interactions he had whilst travelling but also describe the places he travelled through. Hudson's descriptions of Segou, from a geocritical point-of-view, mark a space that demark a valid intersection between texts. For Park, it was the place in which he first 'saw with infinite pleasure the great object of [his] mission; the long sought for, majestic Niger, glittering in the morning sun' and only a handful of miles away from the point where he decided to turn back.[485] For Owen, Segou acts as the transition point: from his opening stage following Park's route along the Gambia to his second river journey following the Niger to Timbuktu. For Hudson, Segou is a town full of mystery, intrigue and excitement:

> One of my favourite times in Segou was the night […] It became a labyrinth of sounds and atmospheres. Its hidden, seething life, secreted in darkness at points along a street, or gathered in rooms and courtyards, was quite tangible with its low hum and stir of drowsy activity. […] you would hear the sounds of music and, heading for it, come across an oil lamp on a corner with the shapes of backs bowed over a brewing pot of tea […] Sometimes you might look up and see the stars then everything — the entire town, humanity, reality itself — would slip away as you lost yourself in the constellations and the great darkness between them that fell to your feet.[486]

Hudson's account of Segou, with its daily routines and rituals of market-life and trade, coupled with descriptions of its inhabitants, goes some way towards highlighting his affection for the town. What is also clear is that, at points between many of the identifiable towns that still exist today, Hudson's approach to steadfastly stick to Park's route saw him regularly use 'Bush taxis': 'Toyota or Peugeot pick-up trucks' that are 'the very epitome of unreliability'.[487]

Instead of continuing along the Niger, like Owen, towards Timbuktu, Hudson's route wholly adheres to Park's first journey, in that he returns circuitously back westwards towards the Gambia. Aided by a local guide, Hudson's trip 'on what turned out to be a very small motorbike', 'consisted of five hours of extreme discomfort' on trails that 'passed many small hamlets and crossed many small streams', [eventually] 'got stuck in sand and inevitably had

[485] Park, *Travels*, p.194.
[486] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, p.172.
[487] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, p.185.

a puncture and a breakdown'.[488] This type of narrated experience goes some way towards highlighting how many modern journeys, such as the accounts I include here, are as much about endurance, belief and character as they are about moving from one place to another.[489] In this respect, the notional importance of referentiality within geocritical practice comes to mind, for in addressing the places that intersect geographically across narratives, it is hard to escape the individual trials and challenges each respective author goes through in order to successfully fulfil their own ideals of a completed journey which, in their respective mindsets, align with Park's.

Turning towards another literary source, Tom Freemantle's *The Road to Timbuktu: Down the Niger on the Trail of Mungo Park* (2005) stands as another homage to Park's renowned journey. Inspired by Park, Freemantle's travel narrative is a combination of both the past and present, his determination and commitment to accurately retrace Park's steps, whatever the capacity, is explicit. In a scene, which in many ways could be taken out of Park's own work, Freemantle's enthusiasm is clear:

> By the times I had devoured Park's diary the lightening in my head had frazzled away all hope of restraint. Oh yes, I thought, this was a sign, the burning bush moment all journeys require. The moment you know there will be no turning back. So how would I trace Mungo Park, this man every bit as intriguing as the river he had so doggedly pursued? Park had sometimes travelled by wooden canoes and yes, I would do the same. I might use Donkey or ox carts too.[490]

Similar traits in both attitude and desire not only contribute towards bringing this set of different texts together geographically, but also exemplify the characteristics and personalities of this group of travelling narrators. In reference to this, it is clear that it takes a certain type of personality to choose to travel to such a challenging environment and then dogmatically pursue someone else's footsteps. Evidently, many of these trails and routes had been long forgotten or shifted entirely.

A great deal of Freemantle's narrative concentrates on the fleeting encounters he had with numerous individuals who helped him or assisted his progress in some way. In this light,

[488] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, p.227.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu*, p.9.

Freemantle's experience is not unlike Park's. The striking contrast, however, is that Freemantle's journey was prescribed from the very beginning. Like the other journeymen and women who also went after in Park's footsteps, the route was already set. In essence, this implies that these characters are simply followers and, to a certain extent, this geographically may be the case. Nevertheless, it is very much the experiences and encounters that take place within each of the respective journeys examined that, once again, not only connect Westphal's comments on referentiality to the texts examined here, but also reinforce the idea of mutuality between texts: both as a set of individual, idiosyncratic travelling accounts and as a collective, intertextual representation of a designated travelled space.

In relation to his narrative description of place, Freemantle's comments on Segou tie-in with the other travel narratives examined here. Evidently, modern-day Segou remains a thriving community as much as it was when Park first arrived there some two centuries prior. However, unlike Park, who was forbidden to enter the city by King Manson, Freemantle was free to roam and explore as he pleased. As Freemantle states:

> Market day and Segou was humming. Dawn bathers, lathered in soap, created frothy eddies on the Niger's surface. Behind them a team of labourers hefted mud bricks on to an ox cart, while old women touted baskets of chilli and papaya. Further up, children sleek as otters, splashed and frolicked in the shallows. The harbour was busiest to date, with lots of dugouts and pinasses — three or four times the standard pirogue — anchored in disorganised ranks.[491]

Here, Freemantle's descriptions of Segou connect to Park's, in that they both find the town to be thriving. The large colourful boats looked like they 'had been painted by Jackson Pollock', and the surrounding countryside looked 'prosperous'; the areas of Segou Freemantle encounters are highly reminiscent of Park's own experience.[492] In commenting on the view of the extensive city, Park notes 'the numerous canoes upon the river; the crowded population, and the cultivated state of the surrounding country, formed and altogether a prospect of civilisation and magnificence, which I expected little to find in the bosom of Africa'.[493] Here,

[491] Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu*, p.156.
[492] Ibid.
[493] Park, *Travels*, p.195.

the amalgamation of both travel narratives frame the town of Segou as a thriving, commerce-driven town that, a first glance, has changed little over the last two centuries.

Another text is Kira Salak's *The Cruelest Journey: Six Hundred Miles to Timbuktu* (2005).[494] Salak's adventure completes the selected body of travel narratives included here, as well as providing an important female voice to the collective. What stands out is how Salak's comments bridge her own narrative to Park's, not only in geographic location, but also in the embodiment of a resolute and highly dogmatic attitude to succeed:

> Old Segu must look much the same as it did in Scottish explorer Mungo Park's time when, exactly 206 years ago to the day, he left on the first of his two river journeys down the Niger to Timbuktu, the first attempt by a westerner. It is no coincidence that I've planned to leave on the same day from the same spot. Park is my benefactor of sorts, my guarantee. If he could travel down the Niger, then so can I. And it is all the guarantee I have for this trip — that an obsessed 19th century adventurer did what I would like to do.[495]

Due to her desire to travel over water rather than on land, Salak's journey begins on the Niger River. Her dangerous quest of kayaking alone along its entirety to Timbuktu, coupled with the many dangerous encounters she faces with some of the local wildlife and people she met along the way, confirms her work as a deeply personal travel memoir of her experiences along the Niger River.

Salak's journey along the Niger is a feat of extreme physical endurance. With her daily routine consisting of paddling for up to ten hours at a time, her fortitude as well as her stamina is without question. Fighting wayward currents, rain, and strong gusts of wind, her narrative contains numerous passages that convey the feeling of relentlessness:

> I paddle hard to stay on course, my arms crying out in pain, though I have taught myself to ignore it. None of this is fun or challenging or exciting – it just is. I take whatever comes, my body too busy with paddling to give my mind a chance to protest.[496]

[494] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*.
[495] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, p.2.
[496] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, p.176.

For Salak, the physical challenges of the trip are substantial. Even after injuring her right arm at the very start of her journey, 'a popping feeling now and a screech of pain. My right arm lurches from a ripped muscle', the hardy response of there being 'no time and place for such an injury', and that she 'won't tolerate' the inconvenience, goes some way towards demonstrating Salak's strength of character.[497] Once again, it is an echo of the personality types included here that also appear to connect to Park's resolute, steadfast attitude.

In contrast to the physical attributes needed for Salak to successfully complete her mission to Timbuktu, there is also a psychological factor that pervades much of her narrative. Salak's journey often sees her routinely being beckoned and shouted at from the riverbank to stop and give money or provide gifts to the locals. As much as she rarely stops, or gives money, this occurs so often during the trip that the process itself becomes part of her daily routine. As Salak comments: 'people don't seem interested in me much beyond what I might be able to give them. They see my white skin and reduce me to an identity I can't shake: Rich White Woman, Bearer of Gifts, nothing more'.[498] One result is that, at many points during her journey and once again very much like Park, Salak is caught in a number of extremely dangerous life-threatening situations. On the shorelines of the Niger, Salak is vulnerable, open to attack and, more often than not, linguistically ill equipped to cope with the aggressive form of questioning that regularly comes her way. Whilst she regularly paddles away from many threatening situations, at points she is confronted whilst paddling on the water. It is this type of situation that often proves to be the most dangerous:

> There are four young men in a speedboat, fast approaching […] when faced with speed and manoeuvrability of a speedboat, I have no way whatsoever to protect myself. My only hope is that these men don't wish me any harm. I put my can of mace in my lap and paddle as quickly as I can toward shore […] all I know is that it is important not to show fear […] 'Give me money, tubab', the man says in French. His friends extend their arms and make similar requests.[499]

Such aggressive encounters become enough of a routine for these interactions to become normalised, though they are far from normal. As a white, western, single, female traveller

[497] Ibid, p.5.
[498] Ibid, p.175.
[499] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, pp.88-89.

kayaking along remote areas of the Niger River, Salak is an easily identifiable target who is undoubtedly, at times, extremely vulnerable. Yet it is this sort of encounter that appears to motivate her to accomplish such unbelievable feats of travel. For Salak, it appears that the physical challenge of paddling over six-hundred kilometres to Timbuktu is, in essence, secondary to the real test of confronting her fear of *not* travelling at all into these remote, dangerous regions. As Salak states:

> I never know how I'll handle these kinds of threatening situations until they arise. Yet, as a woman travelling alone, I know they're as inevitable as the changing weather along the Niger. The truth: my gender will always make me appear more vulnerable. But to not travel anywhere out of fear, or to remain in a state of hypervigilance when I do, feels akin to psychological bondage. I do not want to give away that kind of power.[500]

Salak's determination and resolute attitude align with the other characters included in this inquiry. What is also clear is how Salak's self-awareness translates as a form of self-empowerment. Rather than feel trapped and stationary, her yearning for these types of extreme physical and mental challenges is evidently used as a form of motivation for her own self-development.

What is particularly interesting is how these types of journeys affect Salak. Oftentimes, her trips take place in dangerous, remote, politically-volatile regions. It is not unsurprising then that the cumulative stress of such journeys takes several weeks to get rid of. As Salak states: 'Generally I need like a week or two to sort of unwind, get centred again. After travelling a lot [the stress] is a cultural and physical development, just travelling a lot, […] It's hard to find peace of mind, I need some time alone after I get back'.[501] In addition to the stress factor that comes with these types of journeys, upon return Salak also appears to need time to readjust and come to terms with whatever personal development she found within herself whilst enduring these extreme, often life-threatening journeys.

As a single, female adventure travel writer, her trip to Africa caused a number of reactions. For some, Salak is the epitome of a twenty-first century heroine or, in a similar vein

[500] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, p.90.
[501] Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, 'Kira Salak Interviewed by Bernadette MacDonald', (2016), [online video] Accessed June 12th, 2020. 3min 24.

to other icons such as Mary Kingsley, a modern travelling feminist-icon. For others, she is a reckless, unnecessary risk-taker who puts her own life as well as others in danger. When interviewed about her journey along the Niger, Salak mentions how these types of travelling experiences provoke a range of reactions. What is clear is that her actions are often as provocative as they are empowering, not only to herself but also towards a wider public readership of her travel writing. As Salak states:

> I get a lot of feedback particularly from women kind of thanking me […] for introducing them into the adventure travel literature genre[…] because I hear back from a lot of women sort of almost complaining that a lot of these books are sort of inaccessible because they are all about some man kind of chest thumping and getting to the top of a mountain. It's kind of not something a lot of women feel they can relate to […] On the other hand, I've gotten responses to…like for example my kayaking to Timbuktu trip. Women sort of getting angry that I as a lone woman would go out alone and do something like that and camp alone on the side of a river. I mean literally getting angry.[502]

As a lone female traveller, Salak is acutely aware of her gendered position as she moves through West Africa. Her narrative lies alongside those of Owen, Hudson and Freemantle and these all, in turn, connect back to Park's foundational trip, albeit in wholly different periods of history.

Footsteps

In thinking about this selected group of travel narratives as a collective and by examining and interpreting some of the ways they connect with each other, the concept of footsteps travel and, more specifically, what Maria Leavenworth calls 'second journeys' appears to fit suitably well.[503] Here, the concept of second journeys relies on one particular travelogue, usually called the first journey, being used to motivate and inspire others to engage in as well as chronicle their own respective travel experience through the process of repetition. As Leavenworth points out, the process sees two travelogues emerge, both are understood to

[502] Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, 'Kira Salak Interviewed by Bernadette MacDonald', (2016), [online video] Accessed June 19th, 2020. 7min 32.
[503] M. Leavenworth, 'Footsteps', in *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by A. Pettinger and T. Youngs, (London: Routledge, 2020), pp.86-98.

be 'material artefacts', both are inextricably connected: 'the first journey supplies an itinerary which the second traveller repeats, and the first is continuously used in the second journey narrative for purposes of comparison and contrast'.[504] In relation to Park, *Travels* acts as a kind of blueprint for others to follow and, in this manner, the subsequent narratives that retrace Park's footsteps all appear to adhere to this type of convention Leavenworth discusses.

In many ways, one of the characteristics of this genre that is, perhaps, the most interesting relates to examining the reasons why these second journeys take place. As Leavenworth notes, this aspect is considerably complex:

> Stated motivations vary: the second journey may be embarked upon to seek answers to unresolved mysteries, 'rescue' travel writers risking obscurity, pay homage, or simply spring from a wish to stand on the exact spot of a predecessor. In any case, the first text becomes an explicit map to the past and serves both as a pretext and pre-text.[505]

Salak's desire to start from the same place as Park did rings true to such comments, as does Freemantle's. For example, in explaining why he wished to embark on such a journey, Freemantle notes that: 'my West African adventure had been sparked, not only by a blatant urge to hit the road, but by Mungo Park, the explorer whose footsteps I soon hoped to tread'.[506] Similarly, Salak's desire to begin her journey 'exactly 206 years to the day' Park did not only illustrates her determination to connect with Park's movements in some way, but also brings forth a sense of nostalgia. Furthermore, in relation to the idea of the first journey acting as a kind of itinerary, Owen's awareness that he had to 'keep to a time-table to complete the whole journey […] about four hundred miles on foot, dogging Park's footsteps', also provides clues to how the primary narrative is, for secondary travellers, much more than a simple guidebook or map: it is a deeply personal connection to an individual or past journey that has had a significant impact on their travelling mindsets.[507]

[504] Ibid, p.86.
[505] Ibid.
[506] Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu*, p.7.
[507] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.18.

Another factor worthy of mention is how travellers gauge success within their travel experience. This is, more often than not, achieved by assessing how close their journey was to the original, first journey. In light of the fact that Park managed to penetrate several hundred miles into the interior before deciding to return back to the Gambia, it is not without note that the second journeys included in this inquiry split. For example, Salak's destination was Timbuctoo and no further, Owen and Freemantle's respective journeys passed Bussa, where Park supposedly drowned during his return trip, and continued onwards to the Niger delta, whereas Hudson's goal was to follow Park's first journey in its entirety. With such geographically different destinations in mind, it is clear that a 'successful second journey' narrative does not always correspond to the final destination reached within the primary narrative. Slight discrepancies or, in general, subtle departures such as this that deviate from the primary route of the first journey evidences the sort of tension that exists between first and second journey narratives. In considering the history of the Niger over the last two centuries, it is clear that other political tensions are also present within the body of second journeys selected here.

In relation to Park's *Travels* and the second journeys included in this inquiry, the shadow of the colonial context brings forth several questions on how non-native travel writers successfully manage to represent otherness. For example, in *Travels*, Park goes to considerable lengths to describe and represent the various creeds and colours of the African natives he met. Given that there is a significant span of time between Park's narrative and the collection of second journeys, it is of little surprise to note that:

> a productive distance may thus instead be articulated between past and present, resulting in closer ties to 'general postcolonial and postmodern developments within the travel writing genre in which the awareness of the self and the inability to represent encountered Others are […] addressed'.[508]

In considering some of the ways in which postcolonialism and postcolonial studies have influenced travel writing and literary studies more generally, the representation of Otherness has become an increasingly sensitive subject. Considering such considerations, Salak's comments regarding her intentions after reaching Timbuctoo stand out: she 'didn't want to

[508] Leavenworth, 'Footsteps', p.87.

leave Mali without trying to free a couple of [female] slaves'.[509] At first glance, this sort of comment, as well as Salak's subsequent actions, can easily be misinterpreted as a clumsy act of white guilt, or a culturally insensitive reaction to a perceived history of people and place that have experienced colonial rule. I would argue that Salak's behaviour, and in employing Leavenworth's words, displays her acute 'awareness' of her western self within a post-colonial environment, in which she is attempting to 'represent encountered Others' and make a positive change to a situation she was aware of 'since the beginning of her trip'.[510] In relation to second journeys conducted within a postcolonial context in the twenty-first century, representing the encountered Other may prove to be one of the most problematic obstacles white western travel writers have to overcome.

Evidently, footsteps travel and the concept of the second journey are clearly becoming more established within the travel writing genre. More specifically, and within this body of research, all of the second journeys included here to one degree or another are 'hybrid texts', in that they all mix 'homage', 'self-examination', and to a certain extent, 'scholarly investigation', alongside 'a search for relics'.[511] Furthermore, given that 'second journeys are the most common kind of travel writing at present', it would not be too much to suggest that additional narratives may follow in Park's footsteps.[512] There may be more narratives of the Niger yet and in a nod to Leavenworth's conclusions and question of 'where to now?', they may be, in all possibilities, virtual in their retracing.[513] At first glance, this concept may initially appear fantastical or even to some degree superficial, but as Pettinger and Youngs point out, within the burgeoning world of virtual travelling environments such as the interactive website Literary Traveler, 'the importance of travel and the internet cannot be overstated at a time of nationalist retrenchment'.[514]

In bringing this selection of travel narratives together for the first time, it is clear that many of the places mentioned here are spatially as well as geographically connected. Even though each of the authors' own cultural backgrounds may be significantly different, the

[509] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, p.212.
[510] Ibid.
[511] Leavenworth, 'Footsteps', p.87.
[512] T. Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.184-185.
[513] Leavenworth, 'Footsteps', p.95.
[514] Ibid, p.12.

narrated places that are mentioned, which intersect, can be brought into a critical space that encompasses the span of the colonial context within the region. One of the goals of this chapter is to demonstrate how the selected travel narratives of this region combine to form, at times, an intertextual representation of this particular geographic region of travelled space.

In attempting to conceptualise intertextual travel writing, Julia Beilein and Barbara Schaff focus on the idea that secondary journeys or footsteps travel bring about 'a post-Romantic literary strategy which acknowledges the historical tradition of the genre, negotiates subjectivity and gains particular momentum in post-modernist and postcolonial contexts'.[515] Evidently, the concept of intertextuality within the genre of travel writing, as well as within geocriticism, is an important and timely reminder that new critical approaches imbue 'a sense of the multifacetedness' to this particular genre, as well as encourage new and 'diverse, if complementary, ways of reading it.'[516]

In relation to this inquiry, the selected travel writers included here all attempt to follow in Park's footsteps in one way or another and, by doing so, not only form several well 'trodden paths' that are 'multilayered', but also create a number of intertextual intersections of experience.[517] More specifically, these intertextual intersections are understood here as the moments that connect the selected texts together in some way. Be it moments of cultural experience through simple geographic connections, such as my section titled 'Beginnings', or by way of interpreting how each of the travellers included here coped with being physically affected by illness or, more specifically, by being 'Touched by the Fever', or through a desire to connect to Park's *Travels* in other ways, such as ritual, which I will demonstrate in the final section of this chapter: 'Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo', it is clear that intertextuality is an important element of any kind of multilayered reading.

Three Geocritical Readings

In an attempt to expand upon some of the critical ideas introduced within the opening parts of this chapter, this section will also draw attention towards, as well as introduce, some other

[515] J. Beilein and B. Schaff, 'Intertextual Travel Writing', in *The Handbook of British Travel Writing*, ed. by B. Schaff, (Berlin: de Gruyter Publishing, 2020), p.113.
[516] A. Pettinger and T. Youngs, eds, *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2020), p.12.
[517] Beilein and Schaff, 'Intertextual Travel Writing', p.113.

aspects of geocriticism into this inquiry. The following section consists of three different perspectives, each with a different focus in mind. In this sense, they each present an identifiable intersection between the selected narratives. In this respect, each of these three readings represents one version of potentially many and, by way of this, although they arrive here together as separate readings, all contribute towards the larger goal of a geocriticism of the Niger region.

The focus in this section of chapter IV intends to develop geocritical practice by way of exploring intersecting literary spaces as represented in the selected narratives. My critical approaches here concentrate on the idea of variety, as much as they do on attempted diversity. Encompassed in the respective sub-titles: 'Beginnings', 'Touched by the Fever', and 'Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo', these readings bring together a number of critical perspectives that contribute towards envisaging some geocritical approaches to the selected travel narratives of the River Niger.

The first reading, 'Beginnings', aims to bring together and comment on the geographic starting points of each of the selected travelling narrators. In contrast to Pratt's comments on 'arrival scenes', something I have already discussed within this thesis, my own interests with this in mind lie in the 'beginnings' of each journey, when each narrator arrives in West Africa and attempts to start their respective journey. In relation to the spirit of geocriticism being considerate of geographic place (and by way of this space), the intention here is to examine and pick out the narrated geography of these starting out points. How successful this interpretation may be, remains to be seen.

The second reading I offer intends to focus on another element of geocriticism: the 'polysensory'. Titled 'Touched by the Fever', this section interprets the idea of a sensory reading of a text and, by way of this, comments on and identifies other similar types of critical reading within the colonial context associated with this concept. The sheer volume and variety of this type of approach to any text or texts means that any reading, such as the one I aim to deliver, has to consider the scope and scale of this kind of inquiry. As a result, in an attempt to control the size of this type of examination, my focus shall primarily lie on the physical, or tactile, sensory effect of the fever on each of the selected narrators whilst travelling through West Africa. Even briefly considering the sheer number of potential sensory readings of this collection of narratives gives some sense of just how unlikely a complete

geocriticism of any literary, or textual, collective would be. In offering one, albeit contained, example of this type of reading, this contemporary critical approach considers some of the ways in which this type of practice can be dealt with not only within geocriticism, but within textual analysis more generally.

My final reading, titled 'Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo', examines and interprets how the native Mandingo ceremony Mumbo Jumbo is, at first, narrated by Park, and then consider how it has changed over time. This shall be done by addressing its presence in some of the other narratives I have chosen for this inquiry. This regional ceremony certainly had an effect on Park and, by way of this, contributed towards his experience of West Africa. How other modern-day travel writers have looked for and attempted to experience this ritual in homage to Park's own encounter is also noteworthy. The intention here is to highlight how this particular practice has changed from being a sacred native ritual to a contemporary tourist attraction; by way of this, this reading intends to offer new interpretations of how the impact of colonialism has affected this type of indigenous practice over the last two centuries.

Beginnings

One of the primary geographical locations that symbolises the start of Park's West African journey, as well as others, lies at the mouth of the Gambia. Owen, Freemantle and Hudson, started their journeys, like Park did, at the mouth of the Gambia in or around what is now known as Banjul – a place that did not exist in Park's day. Instead Park, like Richard Owen, began at Jillifree, a remote trading station near the mouth of the Gambia River. Salak's travel narrative identifies 'the same spot' that Park began his river journey of the Niger as Segou.[518] During Park's time, this river corridor was by some margin the most straightforward route towards the Niger River. As Park notes, 'on the 21st June 1795 we anchored at Jillifree, a town on the northern bank of the river Gambia, opposite to James's Island, where the English had formerly a small port'.[519] This signifies the moment in which Park's African experience truly begins. As a traveller, his presence and subsequent narrative bring forth a picture of a region

[518] Salak's starting point is understandably slightly different. Beginning on the Niger River, Salak's journey starts where Park first encountered the river at Segou; her work does not include or mention the Gambia to any notable degree. Moreover, Salak's opening comments locate her at Bamako, the capital city of Mali. It is the point where, several generations earlier, Park was robbed and left to die. Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, p.2.
[519] Park, *Travels*, p.69.

that not only comments on the flora and fauna but also highlights the area as a key zone of commercial enterprise:

> The kingdom of Barra, in which the town of Jillifree is situated, produces great plenty of the necessaries of life; but the chief trade of the inhabitants is in salt; which commodity they carry up the river in canoes as high as Barraconda, bringing down in return Indian corn, cotton cloths, elephant's teeth, and small quantities of gold dust.[520]

This kind of cultural commentary by Park is significant, especially when considering some of the other narratives that mention this particular region. By 1961, well over 150 years after Park's journey, Richard Owen's attempts at finding Jillifree were problematic for a number of reasons. The most notable issue is the fact that the name of Jillifree had changed somewhat over the many years since Park's arrival. As Owen states:

> […] no one could help in locating Jillifree. Mungo Park states in his Journals that it was situated in the kingdom of Barra, opposite James Island, but on consulting a large-scale map I found the only village in the area beginning with 'J' was Juffure. A Gambian shopkeeper, asked if he had heard of a village named 'Juffure' – I pronounced it to rhyme with 'guffaw' – shook his head, but it then occurred to me that the 'e' should be accented and pronounced 'Juffuray', and this time he nodded, saying that though he had not been there, he knew it to be on the north bank in the Barra district. So, apparently, Jillifree and Juffure were one place, and there I would go in search of the old buildings.[521]

It is perhaps not surprising that place names change over such an amount of time; only when Owen changes his intonation does the local shopkeeper realise where Owen is referring to. Yet this is not the only factor, the shifting landscape also meant that even finding this area was highly problematic. As Owen searches further, it soon becomes clear that his efforts to honour Park's journey as accurately as possible are far from straightforward.

From a geographic point of view, Owen's quest also highlights how the landscape not only changes over time, but also physically moves. As Owen points out, 'during the past

[520] Park, *Travels*, p.69.
[521] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.23.

hundred years or so the river had shifted, piling up silt on this [northern] side and so separating Jillifree from the river'.[522] Here, in this instance, the geocritical approach considers as well as accommodates this type of spatial shifting. The location Owen sought out that corresponds with Park's lies in a physically different place even though it is the same space, but also named differently. Jillifree becomes Juffure and can be found not on the banks of the Gambia River, but several hundred yards inland. In a passage that includes some brief comments on the landscape he found, as well detailing how some of the buildings that existed during Park's time have fared, Owen's description of Jillifree not only highlights his commitment to Park's original journey and the places he encountered, but also shows how time has had a significant effect on this particular location:

> [I] followed an overgrown path across some well-wooded ground and , there, as much part of the scene as the trees and tall grass, was a large iron-stone structure, weathered and mellow with the patina of age, tufts of grass sprouting from crevices between the stones. It had been a two-storied building but the roof, the first floor and one side wall had fallen. Trees and a varied plant-life had taken advantage of the shelter of the broken walls and had thrived, but undoubtedly, in this overgrown ruin, we had found old Jillifree – all that remained of it. […] I gazed musingly at the old building that had sheltered Mungo Park so long ago: in time it too would fall and nature would obliterate the last vestige of the once-busy port of Jillifree.[523]

Owen's own journey not only connects him to Park's movements all those years ago, but also sheds light on the ways in which the landscape, man-made or otherwise, has altered over this period. In considering some of the other narratives that also designate this area of Africa as a starting point, it becomes clear that Jillifree, a once thriving area of commerce at the northern mouth of the Gambian estuary, has faded into obscurity and, in more recent years, has been overtaken by the town of Banjul.[524]

Banjul, or Bathurst, is located on the southern shores of the mouth of the Gambian estuary and, in recent times, is widely acknowledged as the country's capital city. In one

[522] Ibid, p.27.
[523] Ibid.
[524] From a more contemporary point-of-view, Juffure is perhaps best known for its appearance in Alex Haley's 1976 novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. It is the birthplace of Haley's ancestor Kunta Kinte. After the publication of *Roots*, Juffure became a significant tourist destination.

sense, the narratives included here that portray this particular region of West Africa can be split into two categories: Park's and Owen's, which describe the northern mouth of the Gambia, whereas Hudson's and Freemantle's comments focus on the southern shores. When considering this area as an overarching space where journeys along the Niger River begin, this geographic discrepancy stands out. What is particularly apt, and a point that goes some way towards addressing notions of a post-colonial geocritical space, is the idea that this region demarcates a historical shift in an area that had experienced colonial rule and then gained independence. As Hudson states in his travelogue of the Niger:

> In Mungo Park's day Banjul, or Bathurst, as it was known before the Gambia gained independence from its British colonisers, did not exist because Park came to Africa over eighty years before the Europeans were to begin to call parts of Africa their own and build their towns on them. But even in his day the process that was to lead to this was already in motion. In fact it had been in motion for a long time and it came in the shape of trade.[525]

Hudson's comments are similar to those found in Freemantle's narrative, they mark Banjul not only as a starting point but also recognise the market town as having eclectic architecture and a colonial history. As Freemantle notes:

> I would soon be hot on Park's heels but wanted a few days to find my feet in Banjul. […] Banjul felt more like a market town than a metropolis. Apart from one or two colonial facades it was a hodgepodge of tatty warehouses, street stalls and cheap hotels. There was no civic show-stoppers at all: no grand memorials to Empire, no skyscrapers […] I liked Banjul.[526]

Geographically, this region of the Gambia represents the start of each journey taken on foot. As well as Park, Owen, Hudson and Freemantle all begin their adventures in Banjul and it is clear that this area has changed dramatically since Park began his own travels in Africa. The city of Banjul is now the fourth largest city of the Gambia and, during Park's era, represented a corridor to the unknown interior.

[525] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, p.8.
[526] Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu*, p.10.

For the travel writers who have attempted homage journeys and followed in Park's footsteps, there is explicit evidence to suggest that this starting point demarks a point of vital importance. In Park's time, settlements further along the Gambian estuary, namely Pisania, were flourishing zones of commerce and trade. Nowadays, such places have been long forgotten or eaten up by the shifting tides and silt of the river.

In attempting a geocritical interpretation of the region through the selected narratives included here, what stands out is that the doorway to the interior, and especially the Niger, remains open. It is a referential space that represents the beginning of Park's journey eastwards, as well as demarks the point where other travellers begin their own adventures. In bringing these experiences together, this area is a point in which the selected narratives meet and, by doing so, highlights a zone of notable importance in relation to the themes of this inquiry. In geocritical terms, it is a point of intersection between narratives that ties both text and place together across time. Such 'beginnings' represent a stratigraphic, multifocal space that not only transcends the span of colonial rule and postcolonial independence in the region examined, but also encompasses a moving, fluid landscape made real by the shifting sandbanks of the Gambian estuary. Starting off in the same place Park began his journey is more than a tribute, it is an act of faith. As Salak notes:

> I gaze at the Niger through the adobe passageways, staring at waters that began in the mountainous rain forests of Guinea and travelled all this way to central Mali – waters that will journey north-east with me to Timbuktu before cutting a great circular swath through the Sahara and retreating south, through Niger, on to Nigeria, passing circuitously through mangrove swamps and jungle, resting at last in the Atlantic in the Bight of Benin. But the Niger is more than a river; it is a kind of faith.[527]

Simply put, every journey requires some kind of beginning. For the narrators included here, this meant the area of West Africa where Park started his journey. Technically speaking, this could mean that the very start of all of these travelling movements began when each of the authors included here left their front-doors. Not so, for Owen, Hudson, Freemantle and Salak, their 'beginnings' began as soon as they reached West Africa.

[527] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, p.2.

Polysensoriality and Travel

Within travel writing studies, sensory travels is a term that is not only of the moment, but also extremely relevant to this inquiry. Analysis of sensory travel experiences are, more often than not, seconded in favour of the gaze. In building upon this idea of the multisensory traveller, especially the haptic, or touch, Sarah Jackson's commentary on Apsley Cherry-Garrard's journey to the Antarctic in *The Worst Journey in the World* (1922), not only points towards this type of travel writing criticism as being highly novel, but in detailing the onset of 'frostbitten fingers', connects to my own sensory approach to Park as well as his followers, in being 'touched by the fever' as they travel through Africa.[528]

In geocriticism, Westphal puts forward 'polysensoriality' as another key tenet of the practice.[529] Here, the principle of a polysensory approach recommends that a geocriticism should, in some way, engage with the senses: the auditory, visual, olfactory, gustatory and tactile dimensions of place. With this point in mind, this approach could potentially allow for a vast range of sensory readings and interpretations within a relatively small amount of designated text. As Westphal notes, 'The view and its activation by the gaze are not the only centres of perception'.[530] The selected narratives of the Niger River, for example, could provide a multitude of readings that incorporate one, or a few, or all, of the senses as they are collectively represented. The sounds, sights, smells, tastes, and touch, of a designated place all have a part to play in the representation of a narrated place. A caveat here, perhaps, is that there has recently been a growing trend in some literary quarters to remain exclusive to one particular sense.[531] This is my own intention when addressing my own polysensory reading of the selected narratives; an interpretation of the ways in which the body reacts to the malarial seasoning, or fever, as it is named, is just one example of many. What is clear, is that any represented space identified in the collected narratives selected for this inquiry is not textually constructed by vision alone: each of the senses plays a vital role in the understanding of space.

[528] S. Jackson, 'Touching', in *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by A. Pettinger and T. Youngs, (London: Routledge, 2020), pp.222-235.
[529] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.137.
[530] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.132.
[531] See Jadwe's comments on vibrations and tactile experiences in M. Jadwe, 'The Representation of the City in the Novel: A Taxonomic Study of the Major Critical Approaches' in *Journal of Language Studies*, Vol. 3, no.3 (2020), pp.1-14.

Recent studies relating to polysensoriality have highlighted how this approach, of examining sensory landscapes, is realised and interpreted in a number of different ways.[532] In general terms, historic overviews of polysensoriality, most notably by critics such as David Howe, go some way towards bolstering a critical standpoint that stands firmly within classical scholastic discourse: the 'classification of the body's senses being the case in point'.[533] For others, this notion of legitimisation is already a given and, within academic fields such as psychoanalysis, polysensoriality consists of a conceptual practice solely designed as a way of 'accessing meaning' within any given context.[534] Westphal even recognises how the flexibility of this particular approach can incorporate one or many of the senses. However, in order to acknowledge a truly *poly*sensory reading, all of the senses should be recognised: 'either we may focus discussion on a particular sense or we can apprehend this relationship in toto, in a polysensory way'.[535] As Westphal notes, if, for whatever reason, it is not possible to recognise the full spectrum of senses, the interpretation of a number of sensory landscapes, or sensuous geographies, is also a viable option in which to consider these non-visual elements of spatial study. In relation to the size of this particular reading, my own interests will focus primarily on the idea of the tactile, or touch.

Historically, polysensory interpretations and readings of textual space have been sparse. As Douglas Porteous states: 'few researchers have attempted to interpret [environmental experience] in a holistic manner. Concentration on the non-visual senses is also rare. Few have investigated soundscape, and hardly any have chosen to encounter smellscape or the tactile-kinaesthetic qualities of environment'.[536] Evidently, textual analysis that entertains the concept of polysensoriality has remained an uncharted territory. However, in recent years, some innovative readings of texts with this methodology in mind have emerged. As Krisztina Sardi's comments on the smells of Paris go to show, polysensorial readings are as rich as they are varied:

[532] A. Fognani, 'Sensuous Wanderings: Urban Spaces in the Literary Imagination of Italian Writers in Alexandria, Egypt' (Ph.D. Rutgers University, 2016).
[533] Howes, 'The Senses', pp.435-451.
[534] Golse, 'From the Senses to Meaning: The Place of Sensoriality. Ex-periencing, Perceiving, Constructing', pp.998-1011.
[535] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.133.
[536] D. Porteous, *Landscapes of the Mind: Worlds of Sense and Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p.ix.

> Ernest Hemingway's posthumously published novel, *A Moveable Feast* (1964) demonstrates the best way this technique of interpretation: "The Café des Amateurs was the cesspool of the rue Mouffetard, that wonderful narrow crowded market street which led into the Place Contrescarpe. The squat toilets of the old apartment houses, […] were emptied by pumping into horse-drawn tank wagons at night. In the summer time, with all windows open, we would hear the pumping and the odour was very strong.[537]

Sardi's concise, albeit wholly sensorial, geocritical reading of Ernest Hemingway's Paris highlights how the destabilisation of sensory hierarchies renegotiates as well as reinvigorates notions of space and place within literary narratives. By placing critical attention on the odours and smells of the city, Sardi repositions a new sensory hierarchy: one that places smell over sight. This, in effect, constructs a new, olfactory narrative of Paris by way of an alternative sensory approach: the visual impact of the Parisian streets recedes into the background, whilst the odours and smells that emanate from the various places of commerce produce an alternative representation of the same space. By examining textual space in this manner (through what is essentially a re-constructive literary practice), it is evident that the exploration of sensory landscapes within texts takes the original visually-centred narrative in new thematic directions.

In an attempt to develop understanding of the interconnections between postcolonial studies and geocriticism, this inquiry into Park also recognises some of the more nuanced areas of interaction within these particular fields of textual debate: ultimately through the 'cross-pollination' of methodological approaches.[538] Current scholarly interests that bring the concepts of geocritical polysensoriality and postcolonial studies together are relatively unexplored.

In offering an example that promotes further debate within this developing field of literary studies, Sten Moslund's study of colonial and postcolonial writing from a non-visual sensory angle is worthy of closer attention; in relation to my own interests in the sensory

[537] K. Sardi, 'There's never any ending to Paris' Creating a Literary Myth: Geocritical Aspects of the Works of the Lost Generation', in *Journal for Foreign Languages*, Vol. 7, no.1 (2016), p.19.
[538] Vadde, 'Cross-Pollination: Ecocriticism, Zoocriticism, Postcolonialism', pp.565-573.

elements of texts within the colonial context, his analysis of silence in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is worthy of more nuanced attention.[539] This particular reading not only confirms the integrity of a polysensorial approach, but also introduces a colonially charged environment into an examinable ensemble of textualised space. Here, Moslund's sensory reading places focus on the auditory elements of the text, or lack thereof.

As Moslund points out, the shrieks, sounds, even prehistoric calls, recognised here as uncanny utterances, that regularly pierce Conrad's narrative are all muted by the overarching 'sounding of silence' that emanates out of the Congolese jungle.[540] In addition, the 'silencing of language' in his critique reveals to what extent Moslund's reading of a 'silent geography' privileges sensory experiences of the natural environment over human elements, and interests. In this instance, it is the African wilderness that lies at the heart of the darkness:

> Human activity moves noisily through the jungle, deafening its silence like any ego-logical definition that causes the place to respond to and submit to any use we want to make of it. But the human noise of this progression is unconcealed as but a temporary interruption of the great silence of a much larger reality — a much larger existence — which flows right back into our relation of space once we cease to speak, or once we halt our stamping through the world to make a rest.[541]

To briefly expand upon this, I would argue that language in Conrad's text becomes othered by the quiet stillness that emanates out of the African wilderness, the language systems consumed by something far greater: the natural world. As much as the socio-political dynamics of colonial self/other relations are acknowledged in Moslund's auditory analysis, it is, more importantly, the natural environments and landscapes which present as key factors when it comes to instances of cultural destabilisation. For it is precisely in this sensory landscape that the silence of the natural world suffocates the languages of the cultures within. It is 'a silencing of the language of established human values, ideologies, meanings, and interpretations of the world'.[542] In light of such comments, polysensory approaches to colonial texts not only facilitate new readings and interpretations, they also appear to, at

[539] Moslund, *Literature's Sensuous Geographies*, p.97.
[540] Ibid, p.104.
[541] Ibid, p.106.
[542] Ibid, p.105.

times, highlight new avenues of thought regarding how landscapes as well as other environmental factors, in which cultural interactions are played-out, destabilise stereotypical socio-political power relations. What is clear is that the potential number of sensory approaches to text or texts involving the colonial context, and what interpretations may arise from such efforts, appears vast.

In a similar fashion to how Moslund conducts a sensuous analysis of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the intention here is to interpret a type of sensory representation of space that represents an intersection between the selected narratives. These exogenous points-of-view examined here combine and present as a collection of sensory experiences that each contribute towards a multifocal representation of sensed space. In as much as they 'remain participatory geographies insofar as they are still sensed […] They are produced by the narrator's haptic interaction with the phenomenal world, and in that way the human continues to be interfused with the Otherness of the nonhuman world at a deeper level'.[543] In addressing one sensory aspect that ties the selected narratives together, the most explicit connection appears by way of examining how the physical body is 'touched' by the fever.

Touched by the Fever

Paul Rodaway's ideas on the effects of place on the physical body concentrate on the idea that a combination of factors combine to recognise how 'the world is of event rather than image, of dynamics of change rather than scenes and views', and thus pinpoints a position where spatial events take prominence either on or in the body.[544] In relation to the chosen narratives, one such event, in particular, stands out more than most: the effects of the fever on the body. Mentioned early on in Park's narrative, this physical reaction occurred just after he had arrived in Africa in the late summer of 1795, and had an immediate and substantial physiological effect. After successfully navigating the waters of the River Gambia, in the small village of Pisania, Park succumbed to a debilitating fever that halted his movements for several weeks:

> I began to flatter myself that I had escaped the fever, or seasoning, to which Europeans, on their first arrival in hot climates, are generally subject. But on the 31st

[543] Moslund, *Literature's Sensuous Geographies*, p.109.
[544] P. Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body. Space and Place* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.24.

> July, I imprudently exposed myself to the night dew, in observing an eclipse of the moon, with a view to determine the longitude of the place; the next day I found myself attacked with a smart fever and delirium; and such an illness followed as confined me to the house during the greatest part of August.[545]

In capitulating to 'the fever', Park's body came to terms with the foreign conditions: his physical constitution evidently negotiated the impact of this sickness to such a degree that he lived to tell the tale. Many other European travellers who attempted to explore Africa during this era were not so fortunate.

Park's success lies in the very fact that he went on to survive this initial sensory experience of the seasoning and managed to recover within a number of weeks. Bernard Waites affirms in his introduction to Park's *Travels*, 'the most formidable obstacle to European penetration of West Africa was the disease barrier'.[546] Park's robust physical constitution saw him survive a crucial period of acclimatisation, during which time his body adjusted to the local conditions. Rodaway's comments regarding 'sensory thresholds' are particularly apt here, in that Park, as a foreign body who experiences the African wilderness, undergoes a vastly different environmental physical encounter to that of the natives.

During the early stages of his journey, Park noticed there were substantial differences between his own sensory experiences of the climate and that of the natives. As Park states, 'the Africans are sensible of the smallest variation in the temperature of the air, and frequently complain of the cold when a European is oppressed with heat'.[547] In confirmation of this difference, Rodaway's position that bodily perception and thus experience of an environment, 'may vary from one culture to another according to differences in [sensory] perception of the environment', holds particular sway here.[548] In highlighting this in Park's journey, the dangers of the fever on the European traveller are clear to see. Even after nearly a year in Africa, Park continued to suffer:

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[545] Park, *Travels*, p.71.
[546] M. Park, *Travels in the Interior of* Africa, ed. by B. Waites, (United Kingdom: Wordsworth Editions, 1992), p.xii.
[547] Park, *Travels*, p.91.
[548] Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, p.37.

> Ever since the commencement of the rainy season my health had been greatly in decline. I had often been affected by slight paroxysms of fever, and from the time of leaving Bammakoo the symptoms had considerably increased. As I was sitting, the fever returned with such violence that it very much alarmed me; the more so, as I had no medicine to stop its progress, nor any hope of obtaining that care and attention which my situation required. I remained in Wonda nine days, during which time I experienced the return of the fever every day.[549]

In light of the many Europeans who could not physically adapt to this physiological adjustment – and many did not survive – Park appears in the minority.[550] In commenting on this particular phenomenon, Alfred Crosby highlights how this process of acclimatisation was often a deadly and time-consuming process:

> When the Crusaders arrived in the Levant, they had to undergo what British settlers in the North American colonies centuries later would call "seasoning"; they had to ingest and build resistance to local bacterial flora. They had to survive infections, work out *modi vivendi* with the Eastern microlife and parasites [. . .] This period of seasoning stole time, strength, and efficiency and ended in death for tens of thousands.[551]

In taking a geocritical position, Park's own experiences of the fever link to other, more recent, accounts where factors such as this were dealt with in a variety of ways.

At the start of his own journey from the Gambia to the Niger, Richard Owen acknowledges the associated risks involved with this type of malady. As he states: 'I shall certainly boil the water […] It was contaminated water that killed off Mungo Park's companions with dysentery. That, and malaria'.[552] Accordingly, a few days into his own journey, Owen notes that he 'took Paludrine every other day as a preventative against

[549] Park, *Travels*, p.229.
[550] See Viana's comments on 'expansion, disease and empire' in L. Viana, 'The Tropics and the Rise of the British Empire: Mungo Park's perspective on Africa in the late eighteenth century', in *Historia, Ciencias, Saude-Manguinhos*, Vol. 18, no.1 (2011), pp.35-50.
[551] Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, pp.64-65.
[552] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.17.

malaria.[553] However, what is notable is Owen's preoccupations with how the effects of the fever affected *Park's* travelling company.

Owen's comments on Park's disastrous return trip in 1805 weave together his own experience with Park's, as well as speculate on possibly coming across some of the historical artefacts lost on or left behind from Park's fateful second journey: 'the majority died of dysentery and fever on the march from the coast to the Niger. Maybe I'll come across their graves, or some of their possessions such as guns and swords'.[554] Here, Owen is referring to comments made in Park's journal, where the effects of the fever take a considerable toll on the travelling Europeans. This much larger company of soldiers who accompanied Park on his second trip to Africa simply could not cope with the local conditions and soon succumbed to the effects of the seasoning process. The swiftness of the event, coupled with the highly dramatic reactions to this particular type of sensory occurrence, signifies just how dangerous this type of physiological reaction could be. As Park noted in his journal, the experience was a sad and sombre affair:

> The tornado which took place on our arrival [to Shrondo], had an instant effect on the health of the soldiers, and proved to us, to be the *beginning of sorrow*. I had profoundly flattered myself that we should reach the Niger with a very moderate loss; we had had two men sick of the dysentery; one of them recovered completely on the march, and the other would doubtless have recovered, had he not been wet by the rain at Baniserile. But now the rain had set in, and I trembled to think that we were only halfway through our journey. The rain had not commenced three minutes before many of the soldiers were affected with vomiting; others fell asleep, and seemed as if half intoxicated. I felt a strong inclination to sleep during the storm; and as soon as it was over I fell asleep on the wet ground, although I used every exertion to keep myself awake. The soldiers likewise fell asleep on their wet bundles.[555]

By Owen taking a preventative medicine, such as the anti-malarial Paludrine, the dangers that were historically associated with this type of travel are now remedied by a regular course of medication.

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[553] Ibid, p.53.
[554] Ibid, p.16.
[555] Park, *The Journal of a Mission to the Interior of Africa, in the year 1805*, p.130.

Even after several months of travel with few physical ailments, Freemantle's experience of the fever saw him require urgent medical attention:

> when I awoke the following morning, it was clear it would take a miracle to get me back to Kano. I wasn't in good shape at all. My limbs were aching, my guts turbulent and I still had the shivers. In the night I had also managed to acquire a set of wildly ejaculating sinuses. It would be foolhardy to travel.[556]

In an echo of Park's own travails, Freemantle's fever was serious enough to stop him from travelling for several days. As much as it is 'not malaria', Freemantle's condition of a 'temperature, a chest infection, a bit of sunburn' saw him in need of some rest simply to complete his intended journey.[557] At one point, Freemantle even acknowledges how his European constitution was simply not quite robust enough to survive Africa. As Freemantle states: 'I did cut a pathetic figure. And no, I could not handle it. I came from a soft land, too soft to cope long out here, West Africa, a place where people needed a spark of greatness just to survive each day'.[558] In this instance, the antibiotic medication he received almost certainly saved his life.

Whilst discussing her more recent journey through Bhutan, Kira Salak states during an interview with Bernadette MacDonald that, 'I have gotten sick I'd say on the majority of my trips'.[559] Such comments connect to her final days paddling the Niger when, with only a handful of miles to go before reaching Timbuktu, illness strikes. As Salak gets closer to her destination, her body begins to fail her:

> I try taking some antibiotics, knowing that they would help cure me if I could keep the pills down, but I quickly throw them up. That's the way it goes: vomit, paddle, vomit, paddle […] My appetite is gone, replaced by the painful spasms in my gut and a headache that registers in red spots of faintness before my eyes.[560]

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[556] Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu*, p.293.
[557] Ibid, p.297.
[558] Ibid, p.295.
[559] Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, 'Kira Salak Interviewed by Bernadette MacDonald' (2016), [online video], Accessed June 12th, 2020. 2min 54.
[560] Salak, *The Cruelest Journey*, p.190.

As much as Salak tries in vain to keep the medication down, her body rejects it. What is clear, however, is how Salak's physical reaction manifests in a number of ways. A hardy traveller, Salak is used to such inconveniences. Nevertheless, in this instance, her usually robust constitution is severely tested: she vomits, has 'painful spasms', 'headache', and 'red spots of faintness'. What stands out here, against these physical ailments in her body, is her mental capacity to continue travelling; Salak falls into a pattern of pragmatic steadfastness that sees her mechanically 'vomit, paddle, vomit, paddle'. In this manner, Salak transcends her physical shell and overcomes the debilitating malady that has entered her system. Like Park, as well as Freemantle, Hudson and Owen, it is her physical constitution that enables her to travel as much as it is her mental strength to confront such perilous challenges. As it currently stands, Salak is one of the few females in the world to have paddled the Niger River in a kayak.[561]

Throughout all of the journeys undertaken and examined here, what stands out is the very real danger of succumbing to illness, fever and fatigue whilst carrying out such extreme feats of physical and mental prowess. As Charles Forsdick notes 'the limits of the body can also, at moments of exhaustion and dysfunction, serve as an impediment to the progress of the journey'.[562] As a geographical homage to Park's journey, the narrators included in this inquiry all place Park's movements at the centre of their own respective routes. They are all, no matter how physically sick they get, resolutely determined to stick to Park's route. By way of this type of interpretation, a type of 'haptic geography' manifests in the collective body of selected narratives.[563]

As I have mentioned, in considering a sensory approach to travel writing more generally, the sheer variety and possible types of readings are clearly vast and provide an extremely broad foundation for further inquiry to take place. Forsdick's recognition of other certain sensory elements, highlighted in his writing on 'skin', arouses associations with Juengel's existing critical examination of Park's whiteness.[564] Soundscapes, such as the 'dins',

[561] More recently, travel writer Helen Lloyd has also attempted to paddle sections of the Niger River as part of a larger journey through Africa from Morocco to South Africa. Paddling over 300 kilometres in a pirogue, she too has also documented her journey. See H. Lloyd, *Desert Snow: One Girl's Take on Africa by Bike* (London: Take on Creative Publishing, 2013).
[562] C. Forsdick, Z. Kinsley and K. Walchester, eds, *Keywords for Travel Writing Studies: A Critical Glossary* (London: Anthem Press, 2019), p.22.
[563] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.135.
[564] See Forsdick, Kinsley and Walchester, *Keywords for Travel Writing* Studies, p.226; Juengel, 'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin'.

'of ports and markets', or 'the silence' as I highlight in my examination of Moslund's reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), are all part of a 'material dimension' worthy of a much wider critical inquiry.[565] Furthermore, the concept of 'smell', and the 'olfactory landscape', such as the 'odours varying with the seasons and the situation, places and activities – the smell of gasoline or motor oil, or of ocean breezes, of ports and markets', also represent a valuable and innovative avenue of sensory critical potential.[566]

In moving away from a purely sensory approach, but at the same time acknowledging how this aspect of geocriticism is a valuable and novel way to examine and interpret literary space, my next geocritically-minded interpretation of the selected travel narratives of the Niger intends to focus on another fascinating intersection, in one sense, of ritualised space.

Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo

The phrase *Mumbo Jumbo* connects to a sacred West African ceremony that is regularly practised by the Mandingo natives of the Gambia. In addition, other contemporary travel writers such as Owen, Hudson, and Freemantle have also produced their own descriptions of Mumbo Jumbo in their own narratives respectively and, at points, narrated their own experiences of this ritual.

In completing this triad of readings, my final interpretation 'Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo' examines the ways in which this African ritual has changed since Park's experience of it over two centuries ago. In what is, arguably, one of the most vivid scenes of his narrative, the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony certainly contributes towards Park's experience of Africa. My examination here intends to offer an interpretation of Park's encounter and an examination of how other modern-day travel writers look for and attempt to experience this ritual in homage to Park. What is clear is how this particular ceremony has changed over time.

In bringing together these different narrated experiences of the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony, noting how it has changed from a sacred native ritual to a contemporary tourist attraction, this reading intends to offer new interpretations of how the impact of colonialism has affected this type of indigenous native practice. In one sense, it represents one type of

[565] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.135.
[566] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p.135; Forsdick, Kinsley and Walchester, *Keywords for Travel Writing* Studies, p.232.

postcolonial geocriticism.[567] In addressing this particular phrase and practice, what becomes clear is that Park's commentary is not the first time European eyes had encountered this particular West African practice; his passage is not even the first European narrative to mention this extraordinary scene.

One of the earliest commentaries that mentions this ritual occurs a generation or so earlier than Park's encounter, when British explorer Francis Moore detailed his experience of a ritual he encountered within the indigenous Mandingo tribes in the Gambia of West Africa. On closer inspection, the origins of the term Mumbo Jumbo in travel literature date back to 6th May 1732. As Moore states:

> I was visited by Mumbo Jumbo, an Idol, which is among the Mandingoes a kind of a cunning mystery. It is dressed in a long coat made of the bark of trees, with a tuft of fine straw on the top of it, and when the person wears it, is about eight or nine foot high.[568]

These comments, coupled with Park's recollections of the same ritual some sixty-three years later, take note of how Mumbo Jumbo is visualised as 'an idol', and 'a cunning mystery'. Moore's narrative details the ritual and provides a commentary on the form and function it has within the local native reality. Nevertheless, Moore's comments have arguably had scant impact on future generations of readers, or other travel writers. As Kenneth Lupton notes, Moore's work was far 'less publicised' than Park's *Travels*.[569] Published during the first half of the eighteenth-century, Moore is quite possibly the first author to chronicle the ceremony within European literary circles. What is clearly the case, however, is that Park's work is *the* overriding force that anchors and threads other subsequent narrative experiences of this practice together. In particular, Park's narrative holds a far greater significance to those individuals who have realised their desires and paid homage to his seminal work by walking in his footsteps: although not the first European to observe such a scene, it is Park's account that has arguably had a far greater impact on literature as a whole.

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[567] See L. Raimondi, 'Black Jungle, Beautiful Forest: A Postcolonial, Green Geocriticism of the Indian Sundarbans', in *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism*, ed. by R. Tally Jr. and C. Batista, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p.113.
[568] F. Moore, *Travels in the Inland Parts of Africa* (United Kingdom: ULAN Press, 2015), p.116.
[569] Lupton, *Mungo Park: The African Traveler*, p.50.

On 8th December 1795, whilst approaching a village several miles east of the Gambia River, Park's discovery of a wooden mask hanging from the boughs of a tree results in his narrative detailing a particularly vivid experience recounting the ritual of Mumbo Jumbo. As Park describes:

> It may be easily supposed that this exhibition is not much relished by the women; for as the person in disguise is entirely unknown to them, every married female suspects that the visit may possibly be intended for herself; but they dare not refuse to appear when they are summoned; and the ceremony commences with songs and dances, which continue till midnight, about which time Mumbo fixes on the offender. This unfortunate victim being thereupon immediately seized, is stripped naked, tied to a post, and severely scourged with Mumbo's rod, amidst the shouts and derision of the whole assembly; and it is remarkable that the rest of the women are the loudest in their exclamations on this occasion against their unhappy sister. Daylight puts an end to this indecent and unmanly revel.[570]

As much as I have already mentioned this passage in some detail earlier in the thesis, I quote this passage extensively at it goes to show the impact the ceremony had on Park, as well as others. The presence of Mumbo Jumbo represents a historicity of traditional tribal values: the custom not only anchors this particular cultural practice within a categorical historical context but also identifies and evidences a clear connection between native superstitious beliefs and ritualised gender division.

In this context, the presence of such a character is particularly significant, in that he becomes a fundamental element of social cohesion: Mumbo Jumbo resolves familial disputes and redresses tribal hierarchies between the indigenous men and women. What is also clear is how this entity transcends the tribe's concepts of gender. Albeit masculine, in the eyes of the native female population, Mumbo Jumbo is not a man of the tribe: he is something other. It is this notion of otherness that elevates this figure into something more than just another man of the community. By donning the bark mask and arming himself with the rod of public authority, Mumbo Jumbo becomes a force of judicial power capable of subjugating the women into convivial submission.

[570] Park, *Travels*, pp.92-93.

As one of the foremost literary examples of this phrase, Park's description of Mumbo Jumbo memorialises as well as mythologises the impact this ancient African practice has on modern language. In addition, Park's narrative also highlights how various appropriations of the natural environment during the Mumbo Jumbo ritual (as dress, as superstitious meeting place, as symbolic totem, as border between real and imagined), illustrate Park's experience as a hybridised intercultural early-colonial encounter. Over time, and through layers of influence, this custom has permeated the English language. In addressing the evolution of this ritual as well as commenting on its linguistic weight, with a focus on Park and those who have followed in his wake, it is evident that contemporary realisations of this practice have changed. As an utterance that pervades many languages, the origin of the term has remained relatively unknown. What is clear is that over the last two centuries and across a spectrum of both historic as well as contemporary travel texts, meanings related to this term have evolved.

In considering Park's commentary on the ritual, his thoughts regarding the female experience are clear. Stemming from the familiarity of the routine, Park notes that he can 'easily suppose this exhibition is not much relished by the women'. For the female members of the Mandingo tribe, engagement in this highly gender-specific ceremony is obligatory: Park notes that the women 'dare not refuse to appear when they are summoned'.

As soon as the 'pantomime' has started, the town's inhabitants, in playing their own role in the performance, 'immediately assemble'. The advancing rhythm of the scene suggests a crescendo, in the sense that the evening 'commences with songs and dances' but ends in one of the tribe's women being 'seized, stripped, tied to a post' and 'severely scourged with Mumbo's rod'. When the Mumbo Jumbo figure selects one of the Mandingo tribeswomen out of the assembled crowd, the rest of the women are the 'loudest in their exclamations against their unhappy sister'. In an unsubtle movement of gendered spatial divergence, the rest of the tribeswomen dispel and ostracise one of their own: a single woman. Resultantly, and in a movement that ultimately comes to symbolise a penetrative manoeuvre, the isolated, marginalised female is then 'severely scourged' by the 'rod of public authority'.

In an act where the symbolised becomes the simulated, Mumbo's rod becomes a phallocentric weapon or prop; it is the metaphoric phallus of the Mandingo tribe. Patriarchal dominance is determined through segregation and scarring; the tribe's masculinity,

confirmed through a form of ambivalent malevolence, emerges through the manifestation of the woodland-spirit.

Mumbo Jumbo comes to signify, and in the same instance transcend, the physical and metaphysical realms of representational reality; his presence becomes the very instance in which the real and imagined connect. Travel writer Jean- Marie Gibball's comments regarding themes of transcendence and connections to the magic genii of the Niger River are particularly apt here. As Gibball states:

> The world of the genii and that of people are similar, even if the former's extraordinary capacities cannot be measured against normal achievements. Magic bridges the gap, and because of it the border between the normal and the exceptional is always porous.[571]

As much as the Mumbo Jumbo figure is not explicitly recognised here, within Gibball's terms, as a 'genii of the Niger', similar characteristics are shared. By being both a physical and metaphysical indication of cultural hierarchy and patriarchal rule, the imposition of Mumbo Jumbo shares similar traits and transcends the conceptual boundaries of both Park and the tribe: his presence brutalises yet at the same time balances social order.

Other issues relating to themes of sexuality also emerge when considering the auditory aspects of the ceremony. Here, sound is allusive: one angle envisages how connotations of sexual dominance and pageantry intersect with overtones of theatricality; where the collective Mandingo females are symbolically shrouded, or 'cloaked beneath' an assumptive 'air of innocence' prior to the brandishing of Mumbo's rod.[572] In this anticipatory build-up of nocturnal events, 'the revelry ceases in an uneasy silence'.[573] What manifests during this diminuendo is, arguably, as a moment of calm ensues, the moment in which the psycho-spatial hymen of the tribe is penetrated and broken by Mumbo's shrieks from the forest. The piercing sounds, or as Park puts it, the 'dismal screams', in addition to establishing a break in proceedings, also signify a disturbance or interruption; it is the perforation of innocence within the social order. It is another sign of a threshold breached.

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[571] J. Gibball, *Genii of the River Niger* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.50.
[572] J. Thompson, *Mungo Park and the Niger* (London: George Philip and Son Publishing, 1890), p.57.
[573] Ibid, p.57.

The spirit of Mumbo Jumbo establishes a fissure in the normality of public procedure within the Mandingo community. It is particularly telling that the ceremony begins with a series of sounds made in the nearby forest: the 'screams in the woods near the town' signifies a disruption of both scene and setting from a place outside of the local municipality.[574] Mumbo Jumbo's utterances materialise from beyond the boundaries, a move that further ruptures spatial divisions between Kolor, a considerable 'town', and the 'woods' nearby. In inaugurating this spatial blurring, the shrieks and cries of the forest spirit cross over and, by doing so, establish a bridge between the ethereal marginality of the woods and the '*bentang*': the town's cultural and social centre. Here, the bentang represents a public meeting place. Usually under a large tree and in the centre of town, this civic and social centrality confirms a convergence between the natural world and a culturally significant location. As Peter Brent notes, it is a specific location 'that is set aside for public meetings, often under a silk cotton tree'.[575] In one sense, the 'half-embodied' spirit of Mumbo Jumbo transcends the boundaries of nature and culture simply by appearing on the outskirts of Kolor's geographic margins and proceeding to the cultural centre. More overtly, it also integrates overtures of the natural into the pageantry of the set occasion. The appropriation of dress, embodied here in the mask, outfit and props Mumbo Jumbo brings to bear, emphasises the fact that the costume consists of jungle foliage. The costume is made-up from the surrounding natural environment. Clad in bark robes, the contrast between Mumbo Jumbo's dress and the exposed bare skin of the 'stripped naked' female represents a provocative juxtaposition that is clear to see.

In contextualising his sociocultural position, Park's *cross*-cultural, liminal placement identifies his spatial positioning as other. As much as he is desirous towards understanding and recording the elements that constitute this experience, Park exists in an ambivalent zone where only degrees of cross-cultural interaction or understanding take place. In attempting to advance deeper into African territory, Park's work is emblematic of what Elizabeth Bohls recognises as a burgeoning type of travel writing. It represents an 'impulse to get beyond the coast and explore the continental interior'; it 'marked a shift in exploration, around the turn of the nineteenth century, from ocean voyaging to land travel'.[576] By doing so, Park would often find himself in situations where his attempts at description were limited through his

[574] Park, *Travels*, p.34.
[575] Brent, *Black Nile*, p.50.
[576] Bohls, 'Romantic Exploration and Atlantic Slavery: Mungo Park's Coffle', p.352.

lack of cultural understanding. The Mumbo Jumbo scene is symptomatic of such an instance; Park looks on and attempts to put into words what he sees but ultimately fails to comprehend the totality of the native experience simply because as a European observer, he exists outside that reality. In this sense, Park exists in a space where he is physically present but, within the same moment, conceptually absent from a true comprehension of the reality played out before him.

The physical and metaphysical boundaries between Park's early colonial self and the represented native 'other' remain; Park's gaze remains from the outside 'looking in'. His account, constructed from a third marginal position, raises the idea of a transient *oppositional* space as an aspect of cross-cultural liminality. As Ashton Nichols explains: 'Park was perhaps the prototypical pre-colonial explorer, deeply embedded in the rhetoric of his own culture, but willing to acknowledge moments when he is confronted by a cultural 'other' for whom he does not always have effective metaphors or language'.[577] Park's experience undoubtedly lies in Pratt's 'contact zone: as he exemplifies a position where 'peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations'.[578] As it is narrated, the ceremony in *Travels* provides an example of one of 'the social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out'.[579] In Park's recording of the Mumbo Jumbo and acknowledging his own cultural, psycho-spatial and geographic position, the contact zone, as it manifests in Park's narrative, is arguably at its most identifiable in this specific encounter.

In many ways, the scene represents a well of cross-cultural possibilities for Park, in that it demonstrates a *potentiality* for cross-cultural understanding and new learning to take place between cultures. This notion not only affirms Pratt's assertion that there is a 'co-presence' and 'interaction' taking place 'between-cultures', but also suggests a sense of cross-cultural 'worth' coming from the processes involved. This dynamic, which sees an 'interlocking of understandings and practices', 'between-cultures' takes place with Park

[577] Nichols, 'Mumbo Jumbo: Mungo Park and the Rhetoric of Romantic Africa', p.94.
[578] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.6.
[579] M. Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', in *Profession*, (1991), p.34.

participating as audience member.[580] In this guise, Park's gaze grounds his experience through what he sees played out in front of him: he is another pair of 'travelling eyes'.[581]

As Juengel notes, within the dynamics of the colonial context, a 'communicative interaction' manifests in the text through 'the co-presence of multiple participants in a shared ethnographic present'.[582] The 'present' here being perhaps the most recognisable instance in Park's narrative where spatial dynamics are at their most ambivalent: there is socialised marginality through gender division, cultural liminality in the performance of the superstitious Mumbo Jumbo ritual, and cultural hybridity and otherness through Park's early colonial gaze. Furthermore, Juengel's comments regarding Park's attempts at 'communicative interactions' align with Pratt's ideas regarding the concept of 'anti-conquest'. Park's intention of 'experiential objectivity', in Pratt's words, 'refers to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence', through the imperial eyes of 'the seeing-man'.[583] Here, Park's eyes conform to and confirm the concept of the early colonial gaze within the contact zone. As objective as Park tries to be in his narrative recording of events, his cultural positioning and status only goes to betray these attempts. Park's travelogue quickly establishes that Park is the hero of the piece, or in Pratt's words, 'the European male subject of European landscape discourse'.[584] In this manner, his sociocultural inter-positioning, which is arguably in the form of early colonial explorer, comes into question many more times the deeper he travels into the African wilderness.

Park's experience lies in an in-between space: he is a victim of his own gaze. His narrative provides a perspective that consists of half-truths and supposed perceptions that ultimately signify a splicing of multi-cultural understanding. Pnina Werbner's comments hold significant weight here, as Park's narrative experience of the encounter posits him in a liminal space that 'echoes with familiar tropes: liminal masks, possessed 'lions', ritual clowns or anomalous creatures from beyond the boundaries'.[585] Much like Mumbo Jumbo himself, Park's act of recording the ceremony establishes his narrative position, 'as nation, […]

[580] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.7.
[581] G. Alù and S. Hill, 'The Travelling Eye: Reading the Visual in Travel Narratives', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 22, no.1 (2018), p.1.
[582] Juengel, 'Mungo Park's Artificial Skin; Or, the Year the White Man Passed', p.23.
[583] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.7.
[584] Ibid, p.57.
[585] P. Werbner and T. Modood, eds, *Debating Cultural Hybridity* (London: Zen Publishing, 1997), p.14.

marginal, hybrid, anomalous, betwixt and between, [a] highly potent creature'.[586] More specifically, as 'nation', Park's cultural status is tied to a colonial context that juxtaposes his intentional objectivity or, in Pratt's words, 'anti-conquest'. What ultimately emerges, however, is the realisation of a 'double consciousness, a split subject', or 'fractured reality'.[587] In acknowledgement of these ideas, Park's vivid account is clearly located in a timeframe that associates with efforts of early colonial conquest. Nonetheless, it is evidently *not* the only recorded account of this particular ritual in travel literature.

One of the most notable modern travel accounts that connects to Park's journey and, more specifically, provides additional commentary on Mumbo Jumbo, is Owen's *Saga of the Niger.* Owen provides a unique point-of-view: his movements through the region occurred during a time when it was transitioning from the colonial rule of the British Empire to national independence; his commentary also provides a modern European gaze specifically on the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony. In his *Saga*, Owen's attempts to follow Park's footsteps several hundred kilometres into the West African bush and journey along the Niger River are generally successful. More specifically, his account of Mumbo Jumbo, which he spent a great deal of time and effort trying to locate, ultimately recognises how the locals had moved on from such historic ceremonies.

In Owen's commentary, the modern portrayal of Mumbo Jumbo signifies a procedural shift. Searched for, rather than discovered, the spirit only appears after numerous repeated inquiries. In catering to the few tourists that pass through the region, he appears more as a novelty figure than esteemed deity:

> Mumbo Jumbo was awaiting me, I had found him at last […] A scarecrowish figure, he was covered in straw and carried a long stick, his rod of correction; his mask of some black material decorated with pieces of red coral and with a tuft of feathers on the crown, but the most intriguing thing about it was the glittering crystal fixed between the eye-holes: a clever psychological touch. It was easy to imagine that, when Mumbo Jumbo turned his accusing gaze on the delinquent, the shining crystal should induce a sort of hypnosis, inhibiting prevarification […] I was, however, thankful that I had at

[586] Ibid.
[587] Ibid.

> last seen the famous character and it is likely that I am one of the last Europeans to have done so, for the pagans are fast vanishing and soon Mumbo Jumbo, though his name will live on in countries far from his native haunts, will be but a memory.[588]

Owen's account highlights a number of developments in the ways in which the figure of Mumbo Jumbo has evolved and lies in contrast to Park's experience of a ceremony. Here, Owen's encounter with the Mumbo Jumbo being appears forced, stilted and staged in a way that caters not for the native culture but rather for the passing tourists and travellers who are searching out such exoticism:

> The duguti said he could arrange for Mumbo Jumbo to appear in an hour or two. I explained that I wanted to take a photograph and would prefer to meet him in the morning, and so it was agreed […] the present holder of the office refused to come out into the open and I had to photograph him [Mumbo Jumbo] in the shade of the tree. Perhaps he felt his improvised costume was not in keeping with the dignity of his high office, but his obstinacy meant that after my long pursuit I had only an inferior photograph as reward.[589]

Since his arrival in Africa, Owen made repeated inquiries after Mumbo Jumbo. More often than not, however, they resulted in nothing. The practice had simply faded out of fashion or forgotten long ago. At certain points, he was often confronted with a 'snort of derision' or 'disapproval' concerning the idea, other times he pondered if the practice had simply been long forgotten. [590] In other instances, Owen *did* meet people who were familiar with the term. Taking one such moment, in which it soon becomes clear to Owen that native attitudes towards Mumbo Jumbo had changed considerably, 'the reaction was instantaneous and hilarious, and even from the women, who from Park's account have little cause for affection towards that avenging character, screamed with laughter'.[591] In this modern context, the impact the ritual once had on the social cohesion of the local communities appears negligible.

For Owen, the custom had faded into a semi-comical parody of itself. In commenting on his encounter, Owen's description marks a clear contrast to Park's experience; here the

[588] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.75.
[589] Ibid, pp.73-74.
[590] Ibid, p.75.
[591] Ibid, p.73.

costume identifies as a symbol illustrating how far the ritual had faded into obscurity: 'Mumbo would not be wearing his proper costume made of bark fibre: it had been left hanging in a tree and the birds and monkeys had pulled it to pieces'.[592] Instead, an improvised mask and costume emerges; the whole ceremony 'arranged' for Owen. Furthermore, rather than Mumbo Jumbo emerging from the forest shrieking and wailing, Owen meets-up with the figure who is already waiting for him at the centre of the village as had been organised the previous day. From one point of view, spontaneity, extinguished by the staged planning of procedures, sullies and forces the spectacle into being a far more predictable affair. In one sense, Owen's gaze is entirely touristic, in that, as much as he is searching for an individual experience of Africa, in searching out elements of Park's journey that have significantly changed over time, his experience of Mumbo Jumbo feels false and lacks the realism Owen is clearly searching for. It is a reconstruction through desire that locates towards the tourist trend of what John Urry recognises as 'staged authenticity'.[593] Nevertheless, from another angle, such coordination of events is highly reminiscent of Park's earlier encounter, albeit a stilted, staged affair: Owen's meeting connects to as well as echoes what Park experienced as a performance. For Owen, Mumbo Jumbo is just as much an exhibition as it was for Park.

This particular rendition of the Mumbo Jumbo ritual is framed in a manner that is even more of a pantomime than when Park, or even Moore, first encountered it. As the performance targets the interests of the audience rather than its participants, a feeling of falsification persists. The historic protocols, once so deeply entwined in the cultural fabric of native society, fade into the background when set against Owen's modern-day European expectations of what the ritual signifies and how it is realised. As much as the ritual has clearly fallen out of favour with the local natives, the reproduction of this type of historic practice acts as a selling point to European travellers seeking out a similar experience to that of Park's. This is especially the case for Owen. In considering his resolute commitment to finding the fabled woodland spirit, Owen's 'inferior photograph as reward' is a bittersweet finale.[594] Nevertheless, in attempting to re-enact Park's experience, albeit during what is arguably in Nigeria a modern post-colonial era, Owen creates a crude simulacrum of Park's original journey. As a travel document in its own right, Owen's *Saga* offers a renewed and wholly

[592] Owen, *Saga of the Niger*, p.73.
[593] Urry, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, p.10.
[594] Ibid, p.75.

modern travel experience. It also undoubtedly provides many thematic connections which link back to Park's account, especially Mumbo Jumbo. In this guise, Owen's mimetic narrative is a faithfully sentimental piece of homage tourism.

Hudson also manages to find Mumbo Jumbo in *Two Rivers* (1991). His experience is fleeting and in a similar echo to Park's narrative takes place at an early stage of his journey. After spending only a handful of days in West Africa, Hudson's impressions of the ritual are clear:

> Although this practice may well still go on in some of the more remote and traditional villages, in Bakau where I just caught a glimpse of it when returning home one evening, Mumbo Jumbo was a dance for entertainment only. Many men had dressed themselves in the tree bark and the mask of Mumbo Jumbo and the dancing and singing went on far beyond midnight with no women being so 'inhumanely scourged'.[595]

In this context, Mumbo Jumbo signifies another performance that holds far less culturally functional weight than during Park's era. As it appears to Hudson, what was once a key social construction now appears to be purely recreational. Albeit brief, Hudson's comments on his encounter present the ceremony as a superficial celebration of cultural tradition that holds limited significance: it 'was a dance for entertainment only'. In spite of its evolution, the routine has clearly endured and, in recalling Park's comments, the 'pantomime' still appears to be an intrinsic part of the social fabric within certain areas of Nigerian culture.

Hudson's narrative connects to Park's work in a number of ways. In an echo of Park entering 'Kolor, a considerable town,' Hudson's first few days in Bakau were spent acclimatising to the local rituals and practices that were, as a European traveller, foreign to him. Pratt's comments on 'arrival scenes' are particularly apt here, in that 'arrival scenes are a convention of almost every variety of travel writing and serve as particularly potent sites for framing relations of contact and setting the terms of its representation'.[596] Similar to Park's narrative, Hudson's 'arrival' and subsequent observation of the ritual links these particular

[595] Ibid, p.28.
[596] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.78.

accounts together in a thread that, unlike Owen, who went to great lengths to seek-out and record the practice, appears accidental, unplanned.

In this instance, the ceremony appears as a fleeting snapshot, or glimpse, and is not evidently organised or arranged in any prescribed way by or explicitly for Hudson. In a move that at the same time ties together as well as separates each of the narratives examined, Hudson's presence in Bakau results in a momentary exposure to a version of Mumbo Jumbo that further mythologises the phenomenon as much as it mystifies.

Nearly half a century after Owen's publication and over a decade after Hudson's brief encounter with the practice, Freemantle's *The Road to Timbuktu* (2005) also includes references to Mumbo Jumbo. After several weeks journeying east into the Gambia, Freemantle encounters an evening dance that is highly reminiscent of the ritual:

> Seeing the furious face masks and the palsied motions of the dancers, reminded me of something else Park had witnessed. During the Gambia leg of his journey the explorer came upon a ritual known as Mumbo Jumbo […] Although this particular dance I witnessed was not a Mumbo Jumbo imitation, Salif [Freemantle's guide] told me that it did still go on in certain Gambian villages, although just as a performance. He assured me that the women were no longer hurt.[597]

In this light, Mumbo Jumbo appears as an afterthought, or memory of something once practised but now forgotten. For Freemantle, the ritual emerges through the dance performances taking place in front of him. Here, he is 'reminded' of, but not exposed to, the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony. For natives such as Freemantle's guide, Salif, Mumbo Jumbo represents an element of Nigerian culture that needs explaining away or requires excusing. In this context, the custom endures more as a procession of pageantry than a recognised social function: 'the furious face masks' that Freemantle mentions echoes Owen's detailed description of the mask he observed with its 'glittering crystal fixed between the eye-holes', or even Park's 'masquerade habit, made of the bark trees'. In many ways, Mumbo Jumbo transcends reality. The phrase is undoubtedly superficially present in Freemantle's narrative,

[597] Freemantle, *The Road to Timbuktu*, pp.56-57.

but as a ritual that is vital to the social cohesion of the native tribes of West Africa, represents a tradition in decline.

Clearly, the practice of the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony has evolved and, as much as 'the practice still lingers on today,' modern renditions have changed dramatically, especially since Park's encounter.[598] For modern European travellers such as Owen, Hudson and Freemantle, who continue to re-enact the role of, in Pratt's words, 'the white male subject of European landscape discourse', the ritual represents an exoticism that is, at times, desired or sought out regardless of how relevant it is to the native cultures who still practise the ceremony.[599] Nevertheless, the mythology of Mumbo Jumbo remains and emerges here as a core constituent of a literary space that inhabits this particular geographic region of West Africa. Existing outside of any timeframe, the literary representation of Mumbo Jumbo, through European eyes, and both within and outside of the colonial context, manifests as an intertextual representation that juxtaposes archaic experience with modern expectations. In this respect, Mumbo Jumbo is both meaningful and meaningless at the same time: it represents primitivistic nonsense, but also acts as a beacon of familiarity to those who desire to follow Park's footsteps.

Is the phrase merely just another representation of colonial exoticism that continues to re-enact themes of cultural *mis*representation? Has Park's contribution to history regarding the ritual, through its concept, terminology and modern-day usage, come to signify what critic Homi Bhabha identifies as an 'utterance' of colonial silence, in the form of another 'death call', or 'horror'? [600] To recall Francis Moore's description of this ritual, the 'cant' language is 'entirely unknown' to the women, as well as to Park.[601] 'Unknown', in this sense, implies not only a myriad of indecipherable utterances which prevent female Mandingo engagement, but also represent a barrier to Park's full cultural understanding of the scene.

In alignment with such recognition, these labels of untranslatable cross-cultural *non*-sense are, for Bhabha, cocooned in the naming of such hybrid signifiers, and align with other aforementioned representations of colonial difference that also manifest as mumbo jumbo.

[598] Brent, *Black Nile*, p.51.
[599] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.9.
[600] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.124.
[601] Moore, *Travels in the Inland Parts of Africa*, p.40.

For Park, as well as his audience, recognising meaning within the ceremony is celebrated in the conceptualised understanding of the procedure and its narrative recording thereof. Park's legacy, or proof of popularity, manifests in the linguistic inter-positioning of the phrase into European culture. As a historic and socio-cultural legacy, Park's new learning, or to employ Bhabha's language, 'additional cultural knowledge', holds sway within and against contemporary theoretical arguments such as Bhabha's detailed interpretations of cultural hybridity in the colonial context.[602]

Evidently, Mumbo Jumbo has arguably endured to become a colonising force within the English language and, in an ironic twist of fate, has seeded and spread throughout western linguistic discourse. As Hudson notes, 'Mumbo Jumbo has become a phrase in the English language'.[603] In doing so, the process 'embeds the tale in a context that implicitly reintegrates African affairs into the Atlantic interculture', albeit in a post-colonial worldscape.[604] In language as well as literature, Mumbo Jumbo has become much more a throwaway phrase: it represents a signpost that is wholly referential to readers of Park's narrative who can identify, explore and trace the term through other similar works. For those individuals who have reimagined and retraced Park's footsteps through West Africa, Mumbo Jumbo establishes a literary continuity that brings together a westernised history of the region through the alignment of several highly personal modern travel accounts.

What was once a ritual based on functionality has now evolved into what is arguably a superficial tourist totem for travellers seeking out the practice. The phrase, however, has ultimately endured to become a term whose own etymological ambivalence transcends historic and cultural understanding. As Park biographer and Celtic historian Stephen Gwynn notes, 'probably not one in ten thousand of those who have used the phrase in the last hundred years has had the least idea where it came from, or its proper and particular application to domestic discipline'.[605] In unmasking Mumbo Jumbo, Park's encounter has produced a literary legacy that not only establishes a referential spine to the term but also highlights how the practice has evolved. It is much more than a phrase to describe colonial

[602] See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp.123-127.
[603] Hudson, *Two Rivers*, p.27.
[604] Bohls, 'Romantic Exploration and Atlantic Slavery: Mungo Park's Coffle', p.357.
[605] S. Gwynn, *Mungo Park and the Quest for the Niger* (London: John Lane and Bodley Head Publishing Ltd, 1934), p.54.

non-sense, it is a motif, which, through European eyes, transcends the colonial and postcolonial contexts of West Africa and establishes new literary connections in the travel-writing genre.

To conclude this chapter, in attempting to bring together a collection of travel narratives that pay particular attention to one geographic region, some of the processes involved in geocriticism appear to work extremely well. Westphal's comments on the importance of multifocalisation allow for and facilitate a textual representation of a designated place that, in layering the collective over time by way of a stratigraphic approach, creates an intertextual representation of space rather than place.

In recognising that space emerges through the collective multi-layered representation of any designated geographic region or place, this small literature-focussed geocriticism of the Niger region brings forth new ideas and understanding of how certain places and practices have changed from Park's early-colonial era by including modern-day travel narratives that connect to this region, as well as Park's *Travels*. This inquiry is by no means, and in any particular way, complete.

In opening up new critical pathways for further analysis to develop, parts of this inquiry have also attempted to recognise and interpret how the colonial context affects the practice of geocriticism on a region that has experienced this provocative, political process. In commenting on the ways in which the selected narratives intersect, critical examinations into ritualised space within the early colonial context, by way of my interpretations of the Mumbo Jumbo ritual, are problematised through the ways in which post-colonial independence has changed native traditions and ceremonies.

The practice of geocriticism 'presents an intriguing method for examining the interrelations of space, place and literature'.[606] Furthermore, in addressing the potential size and volume of even a relatively small project, such as this chapter, the practice of geocriticism, at many points, appears to omit more than it includes by way of textual analysis. In light of these comments, this geocritical inquiry into the Niger Region of West Africa, demarcated through the selected travel narratives mentioned throughout this chapter, undoubtedly makes an original and novel contribution to not only Park scholarship, by way of

[606] Tally Jr., *Spatiality*, p.140.

bringing together and interpreting a range of critically unexamined texts that associate with Park's *Travels*, but also provides a new example of geocritical practice. As a critical process and methodology, geocriticism is, arguably, a multitudinous and particularly complicated approach to take. However, in addressing some of the tenets that make up geocriticism, this inquiry goes to show the vast potential and incredible diversity of the types of critical analysis that may emerge from this kind of geospatial approach.

Conclusion and Future Directions

This inquiry adds to Park scholarship in a variety of ways. In addressing gaps in the existing criticism, this work covers: the lack of attention towards the importance of animals within Park's text by way of an interpretation of how they, at times, act as a bridging device between cultures; a commentary on the ways in which the changing landscapes affect Park's travelling progress through Africa and how such environments influenced his physical and mental well-being. This research also provides a comprehensive examination of the ways in which women are represented in Park's narrative that builds upon existing scholarly research on this matter. In addition, there is also an attempt at a geocritical, spatial analysis of the textual legacy that has been created by other travel writers who have attempted to walk in Park's footsteps through West Africa and who have produced their own versions of this fabled route. In examining the lions, landscapes and legacies of Park's *Travels*, these new interpretations contribute towards and build upon the growing body of research that focuses on this seminal narrative.

In connecting Park's *Travels* to burgeoning interests relating to the literary criticism of animals and, more specifically, animals within the colonial context, parts of this inquiry build upon the developing practice that has come to be known as zoocriticism. To address various ways in which animals can be critically examined, the contextualisation of contemporary methodological approaches, such as Kate Soper's, offers a useful approach to take when critically examining animals in texts. By way of the 'naturalistic', 'allegorical', and 'compassionate', the categorisation of animals in Park's *Travels* echoes the types of approaches Park himself took in representing the culture and nature of West Africa during his

first trip. This is especially relevant when interpreting the 'allegorical' mode of animal representation within the contact zones of early colonial travellers.

Chapter I contributes to Park scholarship by way of a zoocriticism of his narrative; in *Travels*, the idea of animals being part of the story of early British colonialism in Africa is explicit. Simply put, animals in this particular context often lie in-between cross-cultural exchanges. In this sense, they often act as key links between Park's growing experience of Africa and native life; I have illustrated how animals are located at the centre of these types of meetings and exchanges in cross-cultural understanding and knowledge. As I have shown, in some instances, Park's knowledge of animals centralises his position as educator to the local natives whereas, at other points, it is Park who is the one being educated by the indigenous people of West Africa. At other times, animals lie at the heart of his early-colonial experience. Park's confrontation with the large red lion comes particularly to mind here. Symbolically, it is within this moment that Park comes face-to-face with Africa; his encounter, where the lion 'suffers' him to pass, positions Park within a dynamic that sees him entirely subservient to his animal surroundings. The scene is allegorical of Park's journey in that his exploration of the interior is unknown, surprising, and for the most part, extremely dangerous.

These types of cultural exchanges position Park's representation of animals in *Travels* at the forefront of his experience. In highlighting the different ways certain animals are represented, this inquiry casts light onto how different animals are seen through the specific act of human differentiation. Park's horse, for example, represents something other than a simple, functional mode of travel. Here, Soper's ideas of the 'compassionate' animal tie-in. In particular, the type of language employed to represent this particular animal shows Park's affinity to the horse and thereby positions it apart from other modes of animal description.

Simply put, zoocriticism is a worthwhile approach to take. As much as the practice is still in its infancy, a growing range of applications are emerging. In contributing to Park scholarship through this lens, this inquiry has offered a new way by which to examine and interpret Park's *Travels.* Effective as a means for representing and reading a range of animal categorisation in Park's narrative, zoocriticism represents a novel pathway by which other Romantic travel narratives could be critically addressed.

It is odd that the many landscapes Park travelled through and narrated in his *Travels* have been neglected by critics, given the influence of his *Travels* and the growing interests in ecocriticism over the last few decades. As presented in *Travels*, landscape is routinely commented on to such a degree that it resembles something more than a simple framing device or background to Park's travelling experiences; it is part of the story. Furthermore, in bringing together contemporary critical debate regarding Park's supposed discovery of the Niger River, this inquiry also addresses how Park's narrative has been received, as well as examines how its reception has changed over the last two centuries. This reveals that Park's narrative is as controversial as it has ever been and is still a relevant historical document. It acts not only as an important reminder of the political context it was produced in, it also highlights how this political dynamic has changed over time and continues to affect our present.

Chapter II adds to Park scholarship by highlighting the importance of landscape in *Travels*. It also addresses some of the intricacies involved when critically examining the political dynamics of the colonial context alongside the natural elements of a text. As mentioned, a purely ecocritical examination of *Travels* is possible, but it is something that has been avoided here. This inquiry adopts a different approach which attempts to transcend some of the well-known friction that exists within the nature/culture debate regarding the concept of representation. The idea of highlighting an ecocentric position – by way of a purely ecocritical analysis of *Travels*, where the environment is at the forefront of analysis – is entirely feasible. However, this would mean avoiding the core reasons for travel that this text involves: the colonial context and a narrator who is part of a broader political, colonial, endeavour. This problematises such a single-minded (ecocritical) approach.

In light of this, my postcolonial green reading of Park's narrative accommodates the representation of the natural environment along with acknowledging some of the political overtones of Park's journey. This point is most explicit by way of my comments on his use of language and written style; contrasted with his poetic voice, Park's *Travels* adheres to the stereotypical mode of Enlightenment travel writing from the period: formulaic categorisation.

This is an innovative critical approach to Park's *Travels*. By interpreting the numerous ways in which Park comments on and is affected by the green landscapes of Africa, new perspectives on the ecologic elements found in *Travels* provide fresh insight into the way such

factors affected his movements. With a contemporary critical approach in mind a 'postcolonial green' reading is not that dissimilar to postcolonial ecocriticism; the difference primarily being that, here, *Travels* locates more towards this particular reading simply by the number of green environmental experiences Park includes in his narrative. The moment with 'the moss' represents one such example. Moreover, in addressing how postcolonial ecocritical debate includes the growing practice of zoocriticism, my secondary contribution to Park scholarship is a movement away from some of the methodological devices employed in my first chapter.

In commenting on how Park's travelling experience is altered or affected by landscapes he moved through, the importance of this element in his narrative stands out. Identified here in the floods of the rainy season that, at points, conceal his route, alongside the strong winds and changing desert landscapes of The Sahara, such factors not only disorientate and even determine Park's progress, they also represent another instance where the narrated landscape is literally in motion.

In considering some of the ways in which native women gaze at Park, inspect his body, and generally react to his appearance, Chapter III examines the representation of native women in *Travels* and, in doing so, builds upon the modest amount of existing scholarship put forwards on this theme by critics such as Efterpi Mitsi and Elizabeth Bohls. The research that already exists on this subject primarily focusses on the scene where a group of native women tend to Park in his hour of need; he is comforted, fed, protected, and even sung to. There are other, critically unexplored elements of Park's *Travels* that involve the representation of native women. This section of the inquiry examines many of these interactions, interprets their meetings, and illustrates how Park's numerous experiences of native women were extremely varied, and sometimes even risqué.

Park's experiences with women were certainly key to his survival. Their ongoing benevolence and kind-heartedness often saved him from starvation. In some scenes, it is also clear that Park's foreign appearance saved his life. To the native women of Africa, Park's whiteness was not only a fascinating novelty, it was something other. At times, some of the native women wanted to see more intimately areas of Park's physicality, in other moments, they are repulsed by his whiteness and turn away. The commentary offered here on this aspect of Park's experience is new, adding critical insight onto this theme in his *Travels*.

Park's interactions with women from both ends of the social scale are also examined in this section of the inquiry; as much as he was subservient to Queen Fatima during his incarceration by the Moors, a great deal of his narrative comments on his positive interactions with poor, and often older, native women. Other women also inhabit his narrative in other ways. In particular, The Duchess of Cornwall, Georgiana Cavendish, who, in rewriting the 'Negro Song' that is sung to Park whilst being mothered by a group of native women in the notorious scene I mention earlier, adds another layer to the idea of how women more generally connect to *Travels*. Furthermore, poets such as George Crabbe have also documented the importance of native women to Park and, by doing so, provide supplementary testament to the point that, without ongoing female assistance throughout his journey, Park would have had little chance of successfully returning home.

This overview of native women in *Travels* demonstrates that Park's encounters were extremely complex. One specific interaction that I offer a close reading and analysis of focuses on the slave girl, Nealee. Here, my reading provides a critical analysis of the scene in which the young slave girl eventually dies. It is an attempt to bring together an episode in Park's narrative that involves native women and the process of slavery, coupled with interpreting Park's reactions to the events as they unfolded in front him. Notably, Park's narration of this scene fails to make any considerable comment on the political process at large: his muted reaction, restrained commentary, and general ambivalence towards Nealee's horrific demise says a lot more than is actually stated. In an attempt to give a voice to a silenced victim, this close reading concludes my analysis on the representation of native women in Park's *Travels,* which makes a comprehensive contribution to existing scholarship relating to this matter.

The practice of geocriticism allows for and facilitates a vast number of critical interpretations from what is, or could be, a relatively small collection of selected texts. In highlighting and reacting to some of Westphal's tenets that make up a geocritical approach, my final chapter brings together different types of narratives, recognised as the exogenous-travelling voice, that all detail a transitory experience of a designated, highly-particular geographic place. Put simply, it is a critical examination of a collection of travel narratives that connect to Park's journey through Africa as presented in *Travels*.

What is interesting about a geocritical approach is how it recommends a multi-focalised approach: a number of perspectives can, and should, be employed when addressing

a particular geographic region. In addition to bringing the selected texts together, the process of layering them by way of the stratified method I highlight allows for an analysis of literary space outside of one particular timeframe. In relation to the colonial context, a stratigraphic approach considers narratives that exist within an early-colonial context, such as Park's, and also accommodates more contemporary travel accounts of the same region where the country in question has gained national independence, primarily in this inquiry through the narratives of Owen, Hudson, Freemantle and Salak.

In highlighting some of the other tenets used in geocriticism, my commentary on polysensoriality attempts to point out the diverse potential that sensory readings of texts can provide, even when addressing a relatively small collection of texts. What can be concluded from this examination, is that it is extremely unlikely to be able to ever realise a full and complete geocritical analysis of any designated geographic region as represented in texts. Recognising this, the second section of this chapter attempts to put forward three different types of critical analysis that embrace a geocritical mindset. More accurately, these are simply versions of a much broader geocritical inquiry into some of the travel narratives of the Niger River. These examinations are by no means complete or exhaustive.

In examining and interpreting the idea of each traveller's beginnings, I put forward the idea that these homage journeys are a direct response and a reaction to Park's seminal *Travels*. As much as travel takes place from and these travellers originate from different areas of the globe, the collective representation of travelled space in this inquiry is on the coast of West Africa. In addition, and in an attempt to provide a radically different perspective, my polysensory interpretation of collective literary space comments on the effects of the fever, or seasoning, as represented in the selected travel narratives. Two aspects stand out: Park's good fortune to be able to weather and survive his first encounter with the disease, and how, understandably, advancements in medicine have allowed for European travel to successfully take place in regions of the world that, historically, would have almost certainly resulted in death. This is only one, relatively contained, type of sensory reading. There are many other instances contained within Park's *Travels*, as well as within the rest of the narratives mentioned in this chapter, that give an opportunity for much broader sensory readings. Be it olfactory, smellscape, gustatory or otherwise, this aspect of geocriticism is growing and

expanding beyond the specifics of this particular methodology. Sensory interpretations of texts are emerging at the forefront of literary critical studies in the twenty-first century.

My final reading, titled 'Unmasking Mumbo Jumbo', brings together many of the themes I include in my inquiry more generally. In one sense, it is a postcolonial geocriticism of literary space. With a focus on an intertextualised representation of this ritualised space, my analysis addresses how Mumbo Jumbo has changed in relation to the process of colonialism. In bringing together several critical and theoretical perspectives to the Mumbo Jumbo ceremony, as collectively represented, the process of geocritical inquiry stands out as being a vast, multitudinous opportunity to examine and interpret textualized space. Simply put, it is another new and innovative critical pathway that brings forth and facilitates new readings and understanding of literary texts.

The overarching idea of this inquiry, outside of the specifics of the selected travel narratives involved, was to think about the ways in which texts are critically examined outside of, or away from, a purely ego-centric point-of-view. One aim was to acknowledge this perspective, and then to point out other pathways in the form of the eco-centric position of the eco-critical and, in addition to this, put forward a geocentric point-of-view. This has been realised through the variety of attempts made to consider each critical approach, understood here as the egocentric, ecocentric, and the geocentric. As a final conclusion to this overarching aspect of this inquiry, I would suggest that – as much as critical approaches that consider primarily nature, or space for that matter, contain a vast recourse of potential textual inquiry – these processes are always going to have to accommodate the narrative voice, usually recognised by way of the egocentric point-of-view. Nevertheless, in examining some of the different and contemporary critical approaches now being employed in modern literary studies, the lions, landscapes and legacies of Mungo Park's *Travels* combine to illustrate how such new approaches can facilitate new scholarship on historical travel narratives of the Romantic era.

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