

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

**HOMEWARD BOUND:
LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY
DOMESTIC TRAVEL WRITING.**

by

JEANNE MACLAY

MCLJEA003

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of the Humanities
University of Cape Town
2002

Compulsory Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date: 14 AUGUST 2002

Signed by candidate

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the state-of-the-art of the domestic travel writing genre. In the introduction the challenges facing domestic travel writers are presented. The conclusion mentions recent criticisms of domestic travel writing and refutes these, maintaining that the genre can still offer ideas of worth to the public forum. The four chapters framed within the introduction and conclusion are all explorations of particular trends in domestic travel writing.

Throughout the thesis Colin Thubron's critical works on travel writing are frequently quoted, to the extent that one could call it a Thubronian approach to travel writing analysis. Rather than descend into post-colonial paranoia, cultural understanding is seen as possible and the attempts towards this understanding are celebrated.

The five texts which are studied in this thesis were all first published between 1980 and 1999. They are: *The Lost Continent* by Bill Bryson, *Danziger's Britain* by Nick Danziger, *Blue Highways* by William Least Heat Moon, *Coasting* by Jonathan Raban, and *Native Stranger* by Alistair Scott. This is not a comprehensive list of works published in this genre, but a group selected because of their high quality and diversity of style. Rather than one chapter focusing on a specific author, each chapter examines all five authors from a particular angle.

Chapter One: The Choice of Voice deals with the increasingly subjective voice of the narrator in this genre. Modern media have made the travel writer's role as "merchant of light" superfluous. This removes the need for an objective narratorial voice and forces the travel author to find another niche. The subjective voice offers an intimate reading experience and the particular styles of individual authors become an important attraction of the texts.

Chapter Two: A Question of Belonging examines how the narrators define their relationships with their homelands. The five authors have different ideas about what it takes to belong somewhere, or whether one need actually belong anywhere. Many of the authors find their ideas change as they travel through their countries and become aware of internal borders. Hidebound nationalisms are dispensed with by all five authors in favour of more progressive ideas about community.

Chapter Three: Elusive Authenticity discusses the concern with authentic places and experiences. Preservation and re-creation are shown to diminish authenticity. The hyperreal experience is shown to exist in direct contradiction to the authentic experience.

Chapter Four: Portrait of a People discusses how the writer's fellow citizens are represented. Photographic depictions and written depictions are analyzed and the effects of these two types of representation are compared. In domestic travel texts there is a move away from stereotyping towards the presentation of more complex cultural portraits, which make few claims but supply much data.

The underlying argument of this thesis is that the main attraction of domestic travel writing is that it is an amateur genre. Unconstrained by strict parameters of style or content, the authors are able to produce interesting texts by doing what they do well.

University of Cape Town

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Lesley Marx;
my proofreader, Mr George Maclay;
my nutrition specialist, Mrs Stephanie Maclay;
and my computer technician, Mr Stephen Mayers.

University of Cape Town

CONTENTS

Introduction: Five Representatives	1
Chapter One: The Choice of Voice	7
Chapter Two: A Question of Belonging	36
Chapter Three: Elusive Authenticity	59
Chapter Four: Portrait of a People	89
Conclusion: In Defense of the Genre	114
References	121

INTRODUCTION

The genre of travel writing is traditionally one in which authors travel through a foreign country and write about their experiences. However, a few writers engage in a kind of travel writing that is fundamentally different: they “adventure” into their home countries. In one sense this seems a contradiction, but, as the five books that are studied here show, there is much that seems foreign when people travel the length and breadth of their own country.

A travel writer and a travel theorist to whom I refer throughout this thesis is Colin Thubron. He has not written about his home country because he finds the prospect too daunting. In an interview he said:

I find it terribly difficult to write about my own society. I haven't really tried it, but I shy away from it automatically. I think one simple reason is that you don't see it very clearly. You're too much in it, too much a part of it. I can't separate wood from trees ... And I think that's the deepest inhibition that I have about it ... simply an inability to sort the data. If you come with no knowledge, or very little knowledge, to a country, immediately whole shapes and things strike you with immediate force ... which in one's own society are completely lost. (1989, video)

I quote this comment of Thubron's here because I think it makes one aware of the difficulties faced by those authors who have dared to represent their home countries. Their task may seem easy on the surface, but as Thubron points out, it is quite the opposite. Frank Matthieson echoes Thubron's sentiment when he returns home after his travels. He confesses, “I was no longer in the favoured

position of an observer in a foreign country. I was back in a very uncertain battle" (quoted in Kowaleski, 1992, 14).

In the last two decades of the twentieth century the writers who chose to position themselves in this uncertain battle were few. I have chosen to study five: Bill Bryson, Nick Danziger, William Least Heat Moon, Jonathan Raban and Alistair Scott. Each made a long journey through his home country and used this experience to create a book based on this journey. Many other authors have written different kinds of books about their home countries, but if these are not travelogues with a journey-based narrative then I have considered them outside the scope of this study.

The travel writers who are studied here represent a wide range of responses to the idea of having a home country in this global age. Their styles of writing and of travelling are also very varied. I will take a moment to introduce each author in turn.

Bill Bryson is an American who returns to travel through the United States after spending a long time in Britain. He is a humorous and, most would say, a light author. However, his attitudes towards home make him an interesting subject, as does his individual and "wacky" style of writing. In *The Lost Continent* Bryson travels through the United States in an automobile, covering large distances in that country's quintessential form of transport.

Nick Danziger is a member of the Western international elite who, in a sense, has no home country. In this he is typical of a growing number of people who cannot really claim to belong anywhere, but he was resident in Britain during

the time that he wrote *Danziger's Britain*. He travels on public transport and by hitch-hiking, and he offers a close-up, gritty view of Britain. His book is a politically left-wing record of the deprivation present in one of the world's richest countries. Like all his other books, it is a serious and sincere work.

William Least Heat Moon is an American who makes a great circuit through the United States. He travels in a van that doubles as his bedroom. His journey is partly a spiritual one, and he is very interested in the land itself as well as the people who inhabit it. His book is titled *Blue Highways* after the less important American highways that are colour-coded blue on his map. He follows them to reach small towns and backwaters in search of integrated ways of living.

Jonathan Raban is a reserved and intellectual author who sails along the coast of Britain, engaging with the country of his birth while keeping it at a certain distance. His account of this journey, *Coasting*, is a personal portrait of the country, but definitely not a patriotic one.

Alistair Scott is probably the least known of the five authors discussed here. However, his book *Native Stranger* epitomizes the category that I have selected better than any of the others. He travels through Scotland on a bicycle and visits both the better-known attractions and the nation's backwaters. Issues of identity are thoroughly discussed, and Scott's own ideas change during his journey.

These five authors engage with common themes from angles that are often different, but also sometimes surprisingly similar. Each chapter that follows compares the way that these five deal with a particular problem which confronts them all in their capacity as domestic travel writers.

The first chapter is titled "The Choice of Voice", and it discusses the five authors' differing styles of self-representation. A travel writer is forced to produce a persona from whose point of view the writer can narrate. In recent writing these personae have tended to speak from an increasingly subjective point of view. This diminishes the narrator's perceived authority, but creates an intimate and dynamic relationship with the reader. Bryson, Danziger, Heat Moon, Raban and Scott are all writing about countries which are in some way home to them, and this means that their views are emotional, yet also complex and well-informed. The poses these authors strike, both intentional and unintentional, illustrate from another angle the culture which they have chosen to describe.

"A Question of Belonging" is the title of the second chapter. It deals with the ways in which Scott, Heat Moon, Bryson and Danziger experience a desire to belong to certain communities, while Raban distances himself both physically and emotionally from his fatherland. Scott discusses what it takes to belong, and Heat Moon and Bryson also comment on how one comes to belong, or not belong, to a certain community. As the authors travel, their ideas about what constitutes their community change and nation-states become less important in the way they imagine their communities. Scott and Bryson eventually focus on the local, while Danziger expands the boundaries of his imagined community to include the whole human race. Heat Moon reaches an interesting compromise between these positions. Ironically, those who want to belong have fewer grounds on which to base their claim.

The third chapter, "Elusive Authenticity", analyses the travel writers' desire to find authentic experiences rather than "tourist traps". The traditional distinction between travellers and tourists is discussed, as is the effect of the writers' itinerary. Those writers who visit places on the tourist route find both representation and preservation to be contrary to authenticity. However, this does not deter these writers from producing their own representations – most of which attempt to be authentic depictions of their journeys.

Chapter Four is titled "Portrait of a People". It explores the way the writers' subjects are represented, and the extent to which they are allowed to speak for themselves. While some of the travelogues are used as vehicles for political commentary, others focus instead on psychological concerns and cultural trends. The material considered in this chapter tends to contradict the traditional assumption that the essence of a country will be revealed at the end of the travelogue. All five writers have preferred to present complex data rather than involve themselves in cultural stereotyping.

The concluding chapter is titled "In Defense of the Genre" because it pleads the case of the oft-criticized domestic travelogue. With indistinct parameters, domestic travelogues are frequently judged on inappropriate criteria. However, the open genre offers a platform for interesting contributions on an infinite range of issues which affect the lives of the readers. The discussions of the previous four chapters are used to substantiate the claim that the domestic travelogue is valuable precisely because it is an amateur and largely unprescribed genre.

The five travel writers whose works are analyzed here do not constitute a comprehensive list of all who have worked in this genre during the period under consideration (1980-1999)*. However, these five writers do form a coherent group because of their subject matter. All focus on concepts of "Self" and "Home", rather than that well-examined and now very safe subject of the "Other". Mark Cocker wrote that "The central, unifying principle in travel books is that abroad is always a metaphysical blank sheet on which the traveller could write and rewrite the story, as he or she would wish it to be" (1992, 18). These five writers have had the courage to write a more difficult and complex story.

* The particular editions of the primary texts referred to in this thesis are not the first editions. The first publication dates of each primary text are: *Blue Highways* (1984), *Coasting* (1986), *The Lost Continent* (1989), *Native Stranger* (1995), *Danziger's Britain* (1996).

CHAPTER ONE: THE CHOICE OF VOICE

Heat Moon asks "How do I steer away from self while depending on it absolutely for the discovery and formulation and presentation of the material?" (1992, 22). Other travel writers might wonder why he would want to steer away from the self at all, since they make their personality such an integral feature of their own writing. However, each travel writer must make a decision on how to represent the self, because travel writing is a genre in which authors are expected to write in the first person.

The "I" of the travelogue form forces the author to be present in the text, to choose a persona from which to speak. Travel writers need not focus on themselves to the extent that the writers of autobiographies must. They can foreground their context, but they cannot absent themselves completely. As Heather Henderson remarks, "Textual mediation is inescapable: the writer cannot act as a transparent or self-effacing medium" (1992, 240). In addition to this, many travel writers would see a tendency towards concealing the author as a misrepresentation of the truth. The authors were there and their presence affected the situation, and this needs to be recognized.

Danziger writes about himself only as much as is required in order for him to avoid this irresponsible practice of eliding the author. *Danziger's Britain* is not a story about Danziger. The people he meets, and not himself, take centre stage. His presence is a humble one and his comments about himself are few.

Danziger's Britain is a far cry from autobiography.

But travel writing is sometimes perceived as a sub-category of autobiography, and with good reason. Other times it is seen as a general science and culture text about a certain area packaged in a casual way to keep it readable. It seems that for different authors it can be either, and most travelogues occupy a position on the long continuum between these two poles. Laurie Lee's *As I walked out one Midsummer Morning* (1969) would fall near the autobiography pole, and Peter Robb's *Midnight in Sicily* (1999) would be close to the general science and culture pole. None of the authors studied here would occupy such extreme positions on this continuum, but, in ascending order of autobiographical content, they might be listed: Danziger, Scott, Bryson, Raban and Heat Moon.

Scott, like Danziger, informs the reader about himself because he feels that it is a travel writer's responsibility to declare oneself to one's readers. In *Native Stranger* he writes that:

As travel writers constitute the eyes, ears and thought-processors of the selective experiences they offer, and as travel writing inevitably carries autobiography in its baggage, it is a courtesy of such writers – if not actually incumbent on them – to reveal something of their background and nature. (1999, 3)

For this reason Scott not only makes himself a presence throughout his text but he also introduces himself early on. He spends three pages summarizing his life to fulfil this perceived obligation, even though it conflicts with his sense of humility. The statement quoted above is his way of explaining this

autobiographical digression that might otherwise appear overly self-involved to the reader.

Scott also attempts to tackle from another angle this problem of the reader's vision being limited by the author's vision. Before he settles into writing in the first person as is established in this genre, he presents himself in the third person as "the tourist". Scott presents himself as he thinks he is being perceived by Arthur H. Caldback, a Shetland shopkeeper. Mr Caldback, Scott writes, was frowning because "he had before him a tourist of the most inquisitive kind" (1).

This tourist can then be described:

A man of around forty, with curly fair hair which clearly had little experience of combs and was receding above the temples. His ruddy complexion and ginger beard looked Highland but his accent placed him elsewhere, in the Borders maybe, or even south of them. (3)

In this way Scott tries to empower the reader and create a critical distance from which the reader can view him.

Scott is unable to remove entirely his influence over his readers' perspectives, but with this technique he does give his readers an opportunity to avoid adopting totally and uncritically the narrator's subjective evaluations. While this alternative way of viewing Scott is also a vision of Scott's, it presents the reader with the possibility of multiple perspectives. It emphasizes that Scott is only one of the many individuals in the contexts he represents. Without stating it in a pedantic fashion, but merely by his occasional appearances as "the tourist", Scott periodically reminds readers that the views they are receiving are the personal

views of an individual. Readers can then form their own modifications of Scott's views – different from Scott although derived from Scott.

Techniques such as these that Scott uses undoubtedly highlight an author's subjectivity. However, Thubron maintains that this subjectivity is already evident in any travel text written in the first person. In his role as critic Thubron writes:

The travelling 'I' anticipates an answering 'he' or 'she'. They confirm and validate one another. The individual encountered like this breaks free from the depersonalized study of the ethnographer. The traveller's presence sets in train multiple possibilities of interaction - humour, confusion, enlightenment. He has to converse with his subjects. He is even dependent on them. So dialogue begins. The writer himself becomes not only the seer but the one who is seen, the commented on, the object. He enters his own scenario. (1999, 13)

The degree to which travel writers achieve these effects mentioned by Thubron is dependent on how they use the first-person voice. Danziger uses this voice to show his agency, but not as an opportunity to reveal the depths of his personality. He often records his presence only so as to explain how it affects his subjects, as when he writes of the children in Salford, "When I asked a question they loved to interrupt. They spoke out of turn and over each other, louder and louder, until they were shouting to be heard" (1997, 216). However, the other writers discussed here, to a greater or lesser degree, use the first-person voice to express more personal thoughts and feelings.

Heat Moon seems to use the first-person voice as an opportunity to open up to the reader. His narrative in *Blue Highways* encompasses all the effects that

Thubron mentions as possible consequences of using this voice. To take one example, confusion occurs when Heat Moon walks up to the only building in Salt Wells and pushes a button. He realizes that he has entered a brothel by mistake, which belatedly explains the bright red paintwork outside. Humour ensues when he has a drink while evading the overtures of a lady whose features “would have been woeful on a man, but on a woman who earned her way by sexual attraction ... were calamitous” (1985, 211). But enlightenment is a more frequent event during Heat Moon’s journey. Many people’s words touch him, from a white farmer who tells him, “a man becomes what he does” (1985, 31), to a Hopi medicine student who says, “[Spirit] ... has to go places so it can change and emerge like in the migrations” (1985, 193). Heat Moon’s dependency on other people is emphasized when his van’s water pump breaks down in North Dakota. At this point he is commented on by one of his subjects, a teenage mechanic. Upon finding out that Heat Moon has been driving his van in that condition for nine thousand miles, the mechanic “slapped his forehead to indicate [Heat Moon’s] stupidity” (1985, 288). All these events make Heat Moon a character in his text as well as being its author.

Like Scott, Heat Moon sketches a background that contextualizes his own character. But he is even more awkward than Scott in his way of doing this and he writes diffidently, “A PLEDGE: I give this chapter to myself. When done with it, I will shut up about *that* topic” (1985, 4). “That topic”, it turns out, is his Indian ancestry and personal past.

In this very personal chapter Heat Moon concisely summarizes the way his mixed-blood ancestry has influenced his life and his way of seeing. Half white settler, half Indian, he has experienced prejudice towards himself that has left him wary of making any race-based judgments about others. At the same time he longs to celebrate his Indian ancestry, even while he is aware that his claim to this ancestry is not straightforward. He presents a complex portrait of his life-so-far that prepares us for understanding why he later deals with certain encounters in the way that he does.

Unlike Scott, Heat Moon does not use any special effects, in this chapter or in any other, to make us aware of his subjectivity. Yet Heat Moon's personal slant is clear throughout his text, and he puts himself in exactly the vulnerable condition that Thubron defines:

...self-portraiture is two-edged. By virtue of existing in his narrative at all, the author implicitly becomes fallible. However much he imagines that he controls his text, he is exposed to judgement alongside those he portrays. Tacitly, he is acknowledging what other disciplines routinely conceal: that he is as vulnerable as those he describes. (1999, 12)

While Scott feels obliged to remind us of the power of the author to direct the vision of the reader, Thubron emphasizes the vulnerability of the author to the reader's judgement.

Heat Moon seems more aware of his vulnerability to his readers' opinions than of his power over those opinions, but this does not deter him from inviting his audience to share a very personal account of his journey, one that far

surpasses Scott's in terms of what it reveals about the author. He writes at one point, "I've read that fawns have no scent so that predators cannot track them down. For me, I heard the past snuffling about somewhere close" (1985, 7). Here he consciously exposes his weakness to the reader. It is an admission that he is not even in control of his own thoughts and emotions. It is a confession that he is running from his past rather than confidently leading his audience on a journey of discovery. Yet this is also a sign that this text promises to explore the real challenges facing the author. Heat Moon's choice of a fallible voice can be seen as a deliberate technique: although it lays him open to his readers' judgments, at the same time it invites their empathy.

Similarly, Jonathan Raban, in *Coasting*, capitalizes on the opportunity that the use of the first-person voice provides to show his weak underbelly. Thubron has said of Raban's writing style that it has an "acid incisiveness" (blurb for Raban, 1987). Yet by emphasizing his own weak points Raban remains a palatable author. Instead of coming across to the reader as an intellectual snob, Raban seems instead to be an endangered intellectual. In one typical scene, when Raban has tea with the Captain of Dartmouth College, he records his sense of being disapproved of by the Captain while he asks about the naval cadets.

'Do you get a lot of prospective Walter Mittys then?'

'Not a lot. Some. Either it gets knocked out of them in their first few weeks here or they don't stay the course and go off and work in ... advertising, or something.' ...

Talking to the Captain, I felt that I was being interviewed for a place in the college and was being found wanting on every count. Words went flat in my mouth. I didn't know how to crack the dry little jokes that would have made things easier between us. When I referred to the Falklands

adventure as a 'pretty Walter Mittyish sort of exercise', trying to milk our one common allusion for as much as it was worth, the Captain stared at the sky with a smile of forced politeness. (1987, 124)

But while Raban records perceived criticisms of himself from others, he also gives his point of view of the Captain and the college. He builds up a picture of two contrasting world views: one military and the other intellectual. "Certainly the college was very democratic in its academic standards. A handful of O levels and one scraped pass at A were enough to qualify a boy as an officer-in-training", writes Raban, but he juxtaposes this dry observation with the Captain's words, "We're not after intellectuals. We're looking for leadership potential" (1987, 125). Just as Raban is criticizing the intellectual standards of the naval college, his intellectualism is shown to be an irrelevant and unvalued quality in the military world. In such scenes the weight Raban adds to the views of others and the lightness with which he expresses his own opinions create a delicate balance between different perspectives.

In addition to this, while Raban shares with Heat Moon, Danziger and Scott a willingness to report negative responses to his presence, he outdoes them in the intimate account he gives of the failures of his childhood. Already a successful author when he writes *Coasting*, Raban chooses to explore the sense of inadequacy he felt earlier in life. He leaves the naval college amidst unwelcome memories.

On the way downstairs ... I heard a light, cruel tenor voice baying 'Fa - a - ag!', the scramble of feet on a flight of stone steps, and a feeble asthmatic

wheeze in my own lungs. By the time we reached the gravelled drive with its memorial cannonry, I wasn't so much leaving the Britannia Royal Naval College as running away from it in a blind funk. (1987, 128)

These descriptions of Raban's youth help explain his repugnance at the nationalistic fervor that politicians and the media try to stir up in the British people during the outbreak of the Falklands War. They contextualize his intellectual approach, which is consistent throughout the book, and give a history to his liberal worldview. By showing us the child he was, Raban allows readers to build a fuller picture of who the narrator of *Coasting* is, and how his different views have developed and now fit together. As Thubron notes, this presentation of the self does leave an author vulnerable, but at the same time it allows readers to relate to Raban.

Thubron also observes that in travel writing, "Sometimes [the author who exists in his own text] may openly acknowledge his precariousness, even make play with it" (1999, 12). This is rare however. Raban, Heat Moon and Danziger are all too earnest, while Scott "makes play" with his position only to a limited extent.

In one passage Scott mischievously shows that as well as being aware of his power to influence readers he is also aware of his own vulnerability to their judgements. He copies out a portion of the diary he kept while on the road. This is to show how he selects what he mentions according to what he thinks his readers desire:

If this journey ever gets into a book, I suppose everyone will think it was a cruise. So damn easy. You can't write about how pissed off you are with the rain; how four gears have packed in; how half the time all you can think of is how bloody miserable you feel after eight hours on a bike with shoes, socks and feet that have been wet for three days. Avoid self-pity. They won't tolerate it.

Or will they? In small doses? (272)

In this unusual passage Scott plays with his readers. He casts them as demanding and heartless. Then he allows them a reprieve from this judgement about their own tendency to judge if they will only sympathize with him, and he gives the impression that he's prepared to bargain with them about how much sympathy is required. Scott takes a paragraph written in a mood of depression and vulnerability and uses it to tease the reader.

Bryson, in *The Lost Continent*, plays with his audience less directly, but on a far more frequent basis. One instance of this is when he states in an extremely judgmental tone:

The ugliness intensified to fever pitch as I rolled into Gatlinburg, a community that had evidently dedicated itself to the endless quest of trying to redefine the lower limits of bad taste. It is the world capital of tat... (1999, 119)

Here Bryson takes the moral and aesthetic high ground and does not suggest to the reader that there might be room for disagreement. Then he turns the tables on the reader and confesses about Gatlinburg, "I loved it" (1999, 120).

Bryson revels in the failure of his own standards and enjoys playing with the reader in this way. He shows no sign that he feels obliged to present a consistent

face to his audience, let alone define this face and explore the repercussions it might have in his text. His ability to surprise readers is essential to the success of his humour, therefore he defies the power of readers to judge him by remaining one step ahead of their expectations.

This is very different from Danziger, Scott, Raban and Heat Moon who are all conscientious about making explicit the slant that may be appearing in their representations. Despite the differing amount of detail that they supply about themselves, they all present a consistent personality for the reader through which they narrate their journey. Their views develop through their books in an organic fashion, but they do not change suddenly with the intention to fool the reader.

For example, Heat Moon writes that "After my fieldwork, my task is always then to find for the topic the right voice. (By 'voice' I mean the public persona with a distinct point of view who takes a certain tone in his telling.)" (1992, 21). But, while the voice that narrates *Blue Highways* is consciously chosen, it is nevertheless always the voice of the same integrated persona, who is concerned to develop a coherent vision of the world. Heat Moon's voice in *Blue Highways* is constantly trying to find the pattern and meaning within his experiences, and with a sincerity that Bryson lacks. Bryson's style depends to a large extent on the deliberate use of an inconsistent voice.

However, Jim Crace accuses Heat Moon of inconsistency and deviousness. Also valuing to a remarkable degree the honest presentation of self, Crace writes:

William Least Heat Moon is readily dismissive, on several insistent occasions in his American travelogue, *Blue Highways*, of what is called an 'apple Indian' - that is a redskin with white innards, an Uncle Tom-tom. What should be made from Moon himself? The name is Indian. But the few, well-hidden, clues in a text otherwise remarkable for its lack of candor, point to a pre-publication Moon who has the looks, demeanor and sensibility of a white American. He teaches literature in a college in Missouri; his politics are East Coast radical green; the 'horizontal composition' of a sunset reminds him of a painting by Turner. And from campus to credit card he is known as plain Bill Trogdon. ... It is true that Trogdon/Moon is a melting-pot American with forbears both Sioux and Lancastrian; but, whatever the ancestry, he himself is not an Indian - apple or otherwise - anymore than he is a pilgrim father. (1983, 902)

This is a ridiculous accusation because Crace suggests Heat Moon is hiding the white part of his identity when most of the information that Crace uses to show this aspect of Heat Moon's make-up is taken from Heat Moon's text itself. Heat Moon does not pretend to be fully Indian and, although he writes in the chapter he dedicates to himself that one of his insulting nicknames was "Buck", he adds "never mind the predominant Anglo features" (1985, 5). Here he states quite clearly that he is not pure Indian. The information that Crace gathers from Heat Moon's text is not, as Crace suggests, a collection of slips made by Heat Moon in the course of his pretence. On the contrary, these are instances where Heat Moon continues to write about himself in an honest manner.

On other occasions Heat Moon supplies information that signals his Indian heritage. For example, he must have some trace of Indian blood in his features because, without speaking to him, a stranger in Mount Pleasant nicknames him "Tonto" (1985, 306). Heat Moon's identity is a complex one, but his presentation

of himself reflects this complexity rather than creating a simplistic persona for the reader.

Crace's accusation is interesting, however, not because it is accurate, but because it shows that there is a demand for what Scott, Raban, Danziger and Heat Moon are making an effort to provide: the presentation of an honest and coherent self.

Bryson, like Heat Moon, has also been accused of inconsistency but with more justification. Donna Rifkind observes that:

Bryson so much as confesses that he thinks all rich, pretty towns in America are good, while all poor towns are beyond redemption. The ski resort of Sun Valley, Idaho, is 'most agreeable,' while Wells, Nevada, where 'almost everything in town appeared to exist on the edge of dereliction,' is 'the sorriest, seediest, most raggedy-assed town I've ever seen.' These snap judgements are in direct contradiction to Bryson's conviction that cars, suburbs, and 'indiscriminate wealth' have 'spoiled American life'. (1990, 44)

These judgments passed by Bryson do not necessarily contradict one another because it is not clear whether he is criticizing Wells for its lack of wealth or its lack of self-respect. Nevertheless, Rifkind does expose a divergence in Bryson's point of view. As in the case of Gatlinburg, where Bryson is both aghast and delighted at the lack of taste, Bryson here shows no sign that he feels obliged to hold a single consistent viewpoint. He simply expresses the opinion that a particular place inspired in him at the time he visited, and if it inspired two opinions he capitalizes on this and makes a joke with a twist in it. Unlike Heat

Moon, who seeks coherence, taking up diverse positions does not seem to bother Bryson in the least. He aims to fulfil his readers' desire for humour rather their desire for consistency.

Bryson is aware of readers' priorities and he writes accordingly. In an interview with Ian Jarrett, he explained:

People think that just because they've been to Burma, or hiked across Chile, they can write a travel best-seller. It doesn't work unless you can engage the reader. The way I try to do it is with humour. It's the nightmare experiences which make good stories. Ninety-nine percent of my experiences are agreeable ... which is why they're not in the books. (2000, online)

As Bryson is a best-selling travel author, he has clearly judged his market correctly. The voice he uses is carefully chosen to appeal to his intended readers. He explained to Norman Oder in an interview that "The voice you're reading is me, but it's only part of me, the part that emerges less while travelling than when re-creating the experience" (1998, 91). Bryson expects his readers to understand that he is being tongue-in-cheek for their amusement when he appears critical (2000, online). He said that "I'm certainly capable of being grumpy and acerbic, but generally people concede that I'm teasing. I'm not really angry" (2000, online).

Not everyone would agree with Bryson on this point. Michele Slung calls Bryson "a relentless but wholly uninventive complainer" (1989, online). However, Bryson definitely has a large number of followers who like to be entertained by him.

Like Scott, Heat Moon and Raban, Bryson does sketch his background for his readers, but for him this is not a power-sharing exercise that will allow readers to anticipate his prejudices. When Bryson writes about his past he is establishing his authority to talk about the United States. As he jokingly summarizes his upbringing, we learn that he was raised in this country, has travelled within it before, and has spent many years away before his return to travel through it again more extensively. This subtly displays the credentials that make him worthy of writing about the United States. He has a native's experience of the country as well as the critical distance of a visitor -- not that this is stated in so many words, but this belief implicitly underlies many of Bryson's observations. For example he states:

When I was growing up I used to think that the best thing about coming from Des Moines was that it meant you didn't come from anywhere else in Iowa. By Iowa standards, Des Moines is a Mecca of cosmopolitanism, a dynamic hub of wealth and education, where people wear three-piece suits and dark socks, often simultaneously. (1999, 13)

Such pronouncements on American culture are made with the confidence of someone who is able to marry an outsider's fresh vision to an insider's intimate knowledge.

Bryson does mention many facts about his background, but it seems that these are incidental to the humorous stories he is relating. We learn of his family's political affiliations when he writes of Mr Piper, his old neighbour, that:

His favorite pastime, apart from getting drunk and crashing his car, was to get drunk and insult the neighbours, particularly us because we were Democrats, though he was prepared to insult Republicans when we weren't available. (1999, 12)

While this informs the reader of his political background, it is doubtful whether it was a responsible attempt to do so. It stands in sharp contrast to the way Raban, a minister's son, describes his adolescent political and intellectual awakening after meeting the Jewish Mr Rose:

Mr Rose, with all his acres, his amazing car, his tailored shirts and handmade shoes, voted labour – a wonderfully unlikely equation in my world. The whole family, parents and children together, had just been on the first Aldermaston March against the Bomb, and all wore CND badges in their lapels. *Inconceivable*.

They said they found the double-barrels 'too tedious for words,' a phrase I clasped to myself and used till it went threadbare. *Our* isolation in the village was stiff and uncomfortable. It bristled with class tension, class guilt, class pride. *Their* isolation was lordly. (1987, 88)

Raban builds a vivid mosaic out of details. The facts he chooses to mention create a precise scene capturing a particular mood, time and place. The truth of Raban's story is essential to its value. But whether Bryson is stretching the truth in his story of Mr Piper is hardly relevant because its purpose is not to document a moment but to make you laugh.

On other occasions Bryson freely combines observation, speculation and fantasy. For example, he writes of Iowa that:

Apart from the ceaseless fidgeting of the corn, there is not a sound. Somebody could sneeze in a house three miles away and you would hear it ('Bless you!' 'Thank you!'). It must nearly drive you crazy to live a life so devoid of stimulus, where no passing aeroplane ever draws your gaze

and no horns honk, where time shuffles forward so slowly that you half expect to find the people still watching *Ozzie and Harriet* on TV and voting for Eisenhower. ('I don't know how far you folks in Des Moines have got, but we're only up to 1958 here in Fudd County.') (1999, 26)

Bryson cannot be treated as a reliable source of information. He has his serious moments, but they are rare. If it is funnier, Bryson writes down what he imagines rather than what he observes, and for the reader these perspectives blur together. Marielle Risse writes that "Travel books have always moved between the poles of informing and amusing their readers; generic expectations have shifted in such a way that current books concentrate on the latter" (1996, 69). Bryson certainly does concentrate on being amusing, but the other writers still seem to value the recording of experiences above making jokes.

In a sense, their emphasis on documenting the truth qualifies them as being members of a long-established line of travel writers, who have traditionally brought new knowledge to their readers. Yet there are also critical differences which set them apart. Thubron observes of earlier writers that during the dawn of the scientific enlightenment:

... [travellers], in Bacon's words, became 'merchants of light'. In these books, the author himself - his judgement, his emotions - disappeared behind a facade of rigorous objectivity. No longer an exemplar at the heart of his own narrative, he faded to a depersonalized informant. (1999, 12)

Although Danziger, Raban, Heat Moon and Scott have a clear respect for the truth they are neither "merchants of light" nor "depersonalized informants".

These roles have been taken from them because modern technology can record more accurately the facts that travel writers used to record. No-one is now likely to record, as James Boswell did in the eighteenth century, that:

There are several districts of sandy desert in Col. There are forty-eight lochs of fresh water; but many of them are very small – mere pools ... there is a rabbit warren on the north-east of the island, belonging to the Duke of Argyll ...there are no rivers in Col, but only some brooks ... the people are very industrious ... every man can tan ...they all make candles of the tallow of their beasts ... (quoted in Lunghi, 2002, online)

Raban celebrates the shift away from this cataloguing of bare facts because he sees such a shift as opening the door to another, more interesting role for the travel writer. He states:

Fussell has argued that mass travel has killed the travel book as a literary form. Far from it. It has liberated it. Too much of the writing in Fussell's golden age was taken up with dutiful reporting on the customs of remote people and the details of arduous hikes. Most of the remote people aren't remote any more, and their customs have all been filmed by *World About Us* crews. The arduous hikes can comfortably be left to the mountaineers, the lone yachtsmen and those fearless cranks who are bent on proving that the Welsh sailed to Patagonia in corales of leek-skins. The travelling writers, as opposed to the writing travellers, have, happily, been left with the ordinary, easily-visitable world; with a past they can make by making the trip, with strangers, with solitude, and with the responsibility to bring back not information but a good book. (1987, 260)

And a “good book” is what Danziger, Raban, Heat Moon and Scott have attempted to produce. Freed from making encyclopaedic notes about the places they travel through, they still record their experiences, but the feelings of the

author are given far more prominence and their agendas are more transparent. This subjectivity does not make their travelogues less true; it simply makes them less provable or disprovable. It is difficult to dispute what these authors say they felt, and if these feelings did occur, the mention of them is no less factual than the location of Boswell's rabbit warren.

Roland Barthes, reacting to Enlightenment thinking, insists that what is "fundamentally unacceptable" from his point of view is "scientism; that is to say, a scientific discourse that thinks of itself as science and censures the need to think of itself as discourse" (quoted in Porter, 1991, 288). Danziger, Raban, Heat Moon and Scott seem conscious of the trend that this statement represents and their ways of dealing with the truth are consequently more tentative and self-conscious than those of earlier travel writers, to the extent that they deliberately call into question the viewpoints they adopt. For example, Scott discusses the way settlers in Scotland are seen in a passage that explores many sides of the issue, but which does not presume to prescribe what is right. He muses:

Logically, there is no argument against incomers. The Scots themselves, after all, are incomers from Ireland. I, as a Longitude 3° W Scot was an incomer living on Longitude 6° W (Skye). I would also have been considered an incomer (but a more acceptable one) had I 'belonged' to a glen ten miles away. Incomers are therefore stigmatised according to the distance travelled from their forsaken roots, and their nationality, with some allowance for ethnic circumstances. But if home Scots, whoever and wherever, are unwilling to accept others in their midst, why should others - England in particular - accept the Scots?(143)

Although similar in its seriousness to Enlightenment travel writers, Scott's questioning voice is a new way of representing the reality he observes. He does not dictate to us how we should perceive this immigration, instead he shows us differing ways in which a situation could be viewed.

Boswell, Scott's countryman, wrote a passage a century earlier that is worth comparing to Scott's paragraph above. Ironically, Boswell complains of the Scots emigration rather than other people's immigration.

Some method to stop this epidemick desire of wandering, which spreads its contagion from valley to valley, deserves to be sought with great diligence. In more fruitful countries, the removal of one only makes room for the succession of another: but in the Hebrides, the loss of an inhabitant leaves a lasting vacuity; for nobody born in any other part of the world will choose this country for his residence, and an island once depopulated will remain a desert, as long as the present facility of travel gives everyone, who is discontented and unsettled, the choice of his abode. (quoted in Galbraith, 2002, online)

Not only does Boswell tell us what to think of this emigration, his arrogance extends to recommending that the inhabitants of the Hebrides should not leave because the islands are so harsh that other people would not want to settle there. Such prescriptions are a far cry from Scott's open-minded exploration of a similar issue.

Bryson's style of imaginative travel writing also has its own precedents. His relaxed attitude towards the truth was shared by writers such as Sir John Mandeville and Marco Polo who, it is now known, were at least to some extent making up their "travels", but who published their books in the guise of non-

fiction (Risse, 34). And even some modern writers have bent the truth, among them Lawrence Durrell and Bruce Chatwin. Readers who researched some of Durrell's and Chatwin's books have been very disappointed when they found that they diverged significantly from the facts (Risse, 254). But the difference between these writers and Bryson is that Bryson clearly signals that he is taking liberties with the truth.

Bryson cannot be accused of lying when he makes it so clear that he will be stepping outside the parameters of non-fiction. The fact that he does indicate this shows that he believes there is a place for documentary writing as well as imaginative writing, and that the latter should not be passed off as the former. This in turn suggests that Bryson's attitude towards documentary writing is a respectful one, and probably far closer to that of Danziger, Raban, Heat Moon and Scott than is at first apparent.

Similarly surprising is Raban's theory concerning the place of truth in travel writing. Although Raban himself produces serious and detailed travel writing, in his role of critic he asks that "travel books be judged as pieces of imaginative writing" (1987, 260). As a critic, Raban emphasizes that a travel book is written largely after the journey and should not be seen as a straightforward record of it:

[The writer's] notebook may supply him with cues and prompts, but these bits and pieces of the random world are little more than scraps of wool on a barbed wire fence; they are there to be collected, spun and woven into the fiction of the book. ... The relationship between then and now, between the journey and the book, is tricky and paradoxical; and as he negotiates it the writer discovers, often to his embarrassment, that he is a fabulist who only masquerades as a reporter. (1987, 258)

Raban is convincing in making his point that in the writing up of a travel book there is much manipulation of real experience. Bailey-Goldschmidt and Kalfatovic agree, and they observe that "travel literature is fiction, not in the sense of being false, but in the way that it is both fashioned and determined by an author" (quoted in Risse, 220). But none of these critics suggests that writers need lie about their experiences in order to take up the role of a creative travel writer. They are saying that travel writers can and, in Raban's view, should, select and arrange from their pool of experience those stories which will make a captivating book rather than merely an informative one.

This common view illuminates the present situation in which critics are usually indulgent when they find accidental errors in travel books, but cutting when they feel the author is being purposefully misleading. The unspoken consensus seems to be that travel writers should not intentionally lie, yet the accuracy of their details is nevertheless of secondary importance to the readability of their book. For example, Brian Morton, in reviewing *Native Stranger* writes that Scott:

... has a Rangers fan introduce the home side's taller striker as 'Keith' Hateley, when a glance at the back page of any Scottish paper around at that time would have confirmed that it's Mark Hateley. ... but as on a couple of previous occasions you feel the facts are being subordinated to a rhetorical point, or just to fine writing. (1995, 18)

This is a forgiving stance for a critic to take, and it stands in striking contrast to the way Crace attacks Heat Moon for being deceitful, as discussed above.

However, Crace is not entirely negative in his review of *Blue Highways*; after his lengthy attack on Heat Moon's integrity, Crace admits that Heat Moon has much to say that is interesting. Crace values the factual elements within *Blue Highways* and he writes that:

Compared to those previous On The Roaders (whom Norman Podhoretz dismissed as 'know-nothing bohemians') Moon's erudition is alarmingly wide-ranging and captivating. ... his informative digressions on American architecture, history and folklore are delicately and modestly presented. (902)

Heat Moon is thus commended for those parts of his book which are more objective, and which concentrate on the world which the traveller passes through rather than the traveller himself.

When writing *Blue Highways* Heat Moon consciously struggled to strike the right balance between representing the world beyond himself and the world within himself. Heat Moon acknowledges that non-fiction depends on the "primacy of fact", but he does not wish to "annihilate the self" either (quoted in Walker, 1994, 287). The problem that Heat Moon and other travel writers must solve is how to walk the line between the two extremes, because, as Gerard Genette wrote, "The quantity of information and the presence of the informant are in inverse ratio" (quoted in Porter, 39). The price of the subjective passages is the thinning out of the factual passages.

Very subjective travel writing can also be a danger in itself. Michael Kowaleski believes that there is "a solipsistic attraction of turning a travel

account into merely a personal diary, a kind of therapist's couch" (1992, 9). John Krich thinks that often personal travel writing is too concerned with "uncovering the motives for having departed" and that "the sites visited pale before the place left behind" (1987, 14). It seems that the genre offers too much freedom for some writers.

Yet the dangerous openness of this genre is also its potential strength. The writing can become too self-indulgent, but it can also result in interesting and individual books. Kowaleski rightly observes that the "most successful travel narratives generally blend outward, spatial aspects of travel ... with the inward temporal forms of memory and recollection" (9).

The subjective aspect of travel writing also offers definite advantages. It provides the opportunity to incorporate a plot into a non-fiction text, which both unifies the book and can give it momentum. Because the travel writer is moving through time and space, usually towards a particular destination or to complete a certain circuit, many subjective travel texts naturally come to resemble quest narratives. Especially after the journey has been made and is being written about, it is likely to be seen as a process in which something was learnt. Manfred Pfister writes that:

Travelogues, to the extent that they go beyond a mere factual report, have a plot that perspectivizes the chronological series of events and gives meaning to the locomotion. ... A quest ... controls the series of events and gives it coherence and meaning. Through such a master narrative the incidents and episodes on the road lose their contingency and are subordinated to a teleological trajectory. (1996, 255-6)

This is true of Heat Moon, Scott and Bryson. To an extent, each one of them writes up his travels as a journey of discovery that binds together the different experiences he had on the road.

In *Blue Highways* it is Heat Moon's subjectivity that gives rise to the plot, which is "Heat Moon's process of recognising and then resisting his solipsistic inclination" (Walker, 289). In Heat Moon's words:

... the narrator descends into the topography of the self for half the journey before he realizes the futility of that course. He then begins to move from an inward-turning spiral of his own self-absorption toward a spiral of discovery that opens outward to other lives and new places. (1992, 20)

All Heat Moon's encounters on the road are brought together by this plot. They are linked by the common theme it provides and most become triggers in Heat Moon's personal development.

Scott also supplies a plot for his travel book but his has less to do with himself and more to do with the people he meets. His over-arching plot is introduced at the start of *Native Stranger*, when he writes that he "headed for Shetland in search of Scotland and the Scots, and found neither" (8). This intention frames the rest of the book and makes all the interactions Scott records part of a larger and more meaningful exploration. When he initially states that he found neither Scotland nor the Scots he also provides a mystery that piques the curiosity of the reader.

Heat Moon does not show as clearly at the start of his book what the plot and theme are going to be. Instead he writes:

With a nearly desperate sense of isolation and a growing suspicion that I lived in an alien land, I took to the open road in search of places where change did not mean ruin and where time and men and deeds connected. (1985, 5)

This statement poses a problem to be solved and creates a sense of urgency. The plot is revealed as *Blue Highways* progresses.

Bryson also declares that he is searching for something on his travels. In his case it is a town with particular desirable features as seen in the media of his youth. He remembers that this town:

... wasn't just in the movies. Everybody on TV ... lived in this middle-class Elysium. So did the people in the advertisements and magazines and on the commercials on television and in the Norman Rockwell paintings on the cover of *Saturday Evening Post*. ... I felt sure that it must exist somewhere. It was inconceivable that a nation so attached to small-town ideals, so dedicated in its fantasies to small-town notions, could not have somewhere built one perfect place – a place of harmony and industry, a place without shopping malls and oceanic parking lots, without factories and drive-in churches, without Kwik-Kraps and Jiffi-Shits and commercial squalor from one end to the other. ... The place I was looking for would be an amalgam of all those towns I had encountered in fiction. ... It could exist almost anywhere, but it had to exist. And on this trip, I intended to find it. (1999, 54)

Everywhere Bryson goes, places and people are compared to this ideal, which he nicknames Amalgam. It provides *The Lost Continent* with both theme and

plot. In addition to this, Terry Caesar observes that Bryson's book "can also be understood as a narrative about a dispiriting outer world that makes the traveller dream of a more preferable form" (1994, 69). This interpretation finds a depth beneath the jokes, and shows that Bryson's "savage take on American tackiness" (2000: online) can alternatively be understood as a disillusioned search for a dream.

Danziger and Raban do not have such clearly formed goals that they wish to achieve. Their journeys involve exploring aspects of British cultural and economic life, but they do not design for themselves closed (yes/no) questions that their journeys could answer. Danziger writes:

I wanted to lift the stone, as it were, to find out what is going on underneath the surface in our urban and rural areas – places that only their own residents, the postman and the occasional travelling salesman are likely to visit, and where despair has become an institutionalized emotion (1997, 2).

His desire is simply to understand more about the situation of the disadvantaged British people than he already knows. Raban's intentions are similar. He writes, "I wanted to find out what, on earth or sea, made my peculiar country tick" (1987, 47).

In some way their two texts suffer from their vague intentions. Raban may be critical of texts that "reduce the world to a magnificent straight line of conquest" (quoted in Krich, 14), but *Coasting* and *Danziger's Britain* lack the momentum and focus that the clear goals of the other writers give to their narratives. On the

other hand, Raban and Danziger escape the danger of sounding contrived, which Bryson in particular risks with his declared search for the Elysian Amalgam.

Kowaleski writes that:

The reliance upon narrative voice in this genre remains crucial because more than its episodic "plot" or momentary characterizations, what shapes a travel book's imaginative texture is its narrative intelligence. Modern travel classics ... are worth studying less for the facts they may contain than for their elegant, inventive, sometimes cranky styles of personal witness. (8-9)

Elegant and cranky respectively, Raban and Bryson certainly have their own "styles of personal witness". The dry, delicate presentation of ironies and complexities is Raban's strength, while Bryson's strength is his tongue-in-cheek way of showing how fairly ordinary situations can be seen to be ridiculous.

Danziger, Scott and Heat Moon also have strong individual styles. Danziger's empathic but unsentimental portrayal of the people he meets makes his writing very moving. The attractiveness of Scott's writing lies in the concise way he reports on the diverse situations that capture his tireless interest. And, although Crace never seems to have appreciated Heat Moon's personal touch, this is what gives *Blue Highways* its unique and endearing intimacy. The success of all the books confirms Risse's statement that "Travel books are read not simply to learn about a place - that is the role of third-person narratives in encyclopaedias - but about a person in a place" (244).

Similarly, Elton Glaser writes:

Every travel book is a trip through two dimensions, the external world and an internal world. ... This interior journey through a writer's mind, in which the reader notes the contours of the writer's mental landscape, is like looking through a train window at dusk, at just the moment when our own reflection is superimposed on the world outside the glass, and suddenly object and subject exist on the same plane, the perceived and the perceiver a single intelligence in an eerie rapprochement. (1992, 155)

With this metaphor Glaser illuminates an important attraction of travel writing: the mysterious, dynamic relationship that exists between the author's self-portrait and the land that the author paints. His metaphor is strangely echoed in *Blue Highways* itself, when Heat Moon experiences a revelation, writing "My skewed vision was that of a man looking at himself by looking at what he looks at. A man watching himself: *that* was the simulacrum on the window in the Nevada desert" (1985, 228). Heat Moon rails against his own self-obsession at this point in his journey, but Glaser celebrates the way that self-representation and the representation of a land naturally overlap.

This dynamic is at its most interesting when the traveller is a native of the culture being depicted. The culture is then represented both in the writer's self-portrait and in the scenarios that are described. By speaking as a part of the represented culture, the author embodies its *zeitgeist* at the same time as trying to define it. The result is that, while the chosen pose of the author may not always add clarity to the travelogue, it does add valuable complexity and depth.

CHAPTER TWO: THE QUESTION OF BELONGING

Scott confesses, "I suffered no trauma from [moving home many times as a child] ... just, years later, the discomfort of being asked, not 'Where do you come from?' but 'Where do you belong to?'" (5). Scott's journey around Scotland is an attempt to know the nation that he thinks of as home, but, as the book progresses, it turns out that his ideas of nationhood, home and belonging are themselves uncertain territory in need of exploration.

The idea of belonging to a country is one that appears in all five books, although it is not an idea that is endorsed by each author. Danziger does not claim any nationality and Raban is critical of patriotism. Heat Moon wants to connect to the land itself but is uninterested in national boundaries. However, Bryson attempts to connect with the nation of his birth as Scott does, and both these authors discuss the complexities involved in belonging.

Near the beginning of *The Lost Continent* Bryson writes:

... I became gripped with a curious urge to go back to the land of my youth and make what the blurb writers call a journey of discovery. ... I wanted to hear the long, low sound of a Rock Island locomotive calling across a still night and the clack of it receding into the distance. I wanted to see lightning bugs and hear cicadas shrill, and be inescapably immersed in that hot, crazy-making August weather that makes your underwear scoot up every crack and fissure and cling to you like latex, and drives mild-mannered men to pull out handguns in bars and light up the night with gunfire. ... I wanted to travel around. I wanted to see America. I wanted to come home. (1999, 22)

However, coming home is not that simple for Bryson because he has changed since he left the United States. As is clear from the above passage, he remembers this country in intimate detail, but when he returns to Des Moines, the city in which he was born, he is treated as an outsider. Ironically, just as he starts appreciating Des Moines at the end of his road-trip, he is identified by a waitress as a foreigner:

...I said, 'How are you?'

The waitress gave me a sideways look that was suspicious and yet friendly. 'Say, you don't come from around here, do ya?' she said.

I didn't know how to answer that. 'No, I'm afraid I don't,' I replied, just a trifle wistfully. 'But you know, it's so nice I sometimes kind of wish I did.' (1999, 350)

Bryson's experiences show that belonging to a place involves a number of things, and familiarity with that place is only one of them. Being personally recognized is another aspect of belonging, or at least being recognized by waitresses as having the accent and behaviour of a local.

Scott discusses the idea of being recognized within a certain locality, observing that in Scotland:

'Belonging' meant where your family had its roots, where your neighbours had known your granny for half a century. This could be Unst or Wester Hailes or Kirriemuir or Govan, but it couldn't be East Scotland or Longitude 3°W, Latitudes 55°55' to 57°40' ... and this is where I became unstuck. My grannies were known in Colinton and North Berwick, but I wasn't. (4-5)

For Scott, belonging goes deeper than having the correct accent, it entails being personally recognized as a member of a community.

Both Scott and Bryson also identify knowledge as an important part of belonging. For Scott the knowledge necessary for belonging incorporates politics, history, literature, language and landscape. He states that he knows the landscape, has spent time trying to "recast [his] public school accent into a semblance of the Doric," (6) but is naive on the other counts. His journey, he declares, "was to redress the deficit of being one of Scotland's cultural and political waifs; to learn about Scotland's past where it happened and see what was happening here today" (6-7).

Bryson emphasizes that to belong one's knowledge must be current. At the beginning of the book he speaks sentimentally of August weather and locomotive noises, but at the end of the book he expresses an awareness of how out of touch he has become. He writes:

My gaze drifted idly over the box scores from the previous day's games and I realized with a kind of dull shock that I didn't recognize a single name. It occurred to me that all these players were in junior high school when I left America. How could I go to a baseball game not knowing any of the players? The essence of baseball is knowing what's going on, knowing who's likely to do what in any given situation. Who did I think I was fooling? I was a foreigner now. (1999, 349-350)

Scott's and Bryson's quandaries are representative of the late twentieth century *zeitgeist*: identity is a problematic concept but not one which many people are ready to dispense with. Frank Bechhoffer *et al* observe that:

Self appears to have become more fragmented, composed of several competing identities, and the generic process of identification more problematic and contentious. Increasing rates of social change help to destabilize traditional social and political structures, opening up new anxieties as well as new possibilities. (1999, 516)

This is the situation facing Scott and Bryson. Their mobility allowed them to move out of their original contexts, but this also cast their identities into confusion. The fact that their identities have become vague and uncertain makes them realise the value of what they have lost. As Bauman proposes, "identity has become fashionable because people are not sure who they are" (quoted in Bechhoffer *et al*, 516). Now Scott and Bryson wish to claim themselves to be Scottish and American respectively, but they are unsure whether such claims are defensible any longer. Bechhoffer *et al* write that:

National identities are not essentially fixed or given but depend critically on the claims which people make in different contexts and at different times. The processes of identity rest not simply on the claims made but on how such claims are received, that is validated or rejected by significant others. Because actors are able, up to a point, to anticipate validation or rejection in particular contexts and at particular times, this influences the identity claims that they make. (5)

Scott and Bryson know their countrymen well enough to know that claiming to belong when one does not have all the credentials will meet with a bad reception. Even while feeling nostalgic, Bryson asks himself, "Who did I think I was fooling?" (1999, 350). This shows that he feels constrained by his anticipated

opinions of others in terms of the claims he is prepared to make. Similarly, Scott declares at the start of his text that he cannot answer the question “Where do you belong to?” by saying “East Scotland or Longitude 3°W, Latitudes 55°55’ to 57°40’ “ (5). Although this answer would reflect his roots “encompassing Edinburgh and Elgin” (5), he knows it would not be deemed acceptable.

However, later in the text, when on the Isle of Eriskay, Scott is asked this question again and he answers differently, and more assertively:

‘Where do you belong to?’ a new companion asked.
 ‘Skye, now.’
 ‘A bheil Gaidhlig agad?’
 ‘Chan eil.’ (165)

Immediately upon replying that he belongs to another Hebridean island, Scott’s claim is challenged. His “new companion” asks him whether he speaks Gaelic. Scott is able to reply in Gaelic, and he was probably able to anticipate this challenge and his ability to pass it. Nevertheless, this scene shows a decline in Scott’s tolerance of narrow-minded and reactionary claims to belong.

Ironically, it is only Scott and Bryson with their disputable claims to a particular nationality that dwell on the subject of belonging. Heat Moon and Raban, whose claims to national belonging would be straightforward, do not even bother to make these claims. It is tempting to suggest that it is human nature not to appreciate what one has, that this is simply taken for granted. But it is possible that an idea expressed by Richard Jenkins is the key, namely that

“identity is a dialectic between similarity and difference” (quoted in Bechhoffer *et al*, 517). People choose to situate themselves on continuums of similarity and difference. If they are not torn between two national identities then they divide themselves between two other polar oppositions.

For Heat Moon these two poles are his white ancestry and his Native American ancestry. His frustration at not belonging to either race has caused in him a desire to connect instead with human society in general, as well as to the natural world around him. But David Newquist shows that Heat Moon’s journey:

... partakes of two literary traditions. One is the tradition of the Euro-American whose life has reached an impasse and who traverses America in search of the stuff out of which new possibilities can be constructed. The other is the tradition of the American Indian who walks the earth in the rite of ‘making relatives’ out of all things in the living universe, *Hunkapi* the Lakota call it. (1993, 19)

Thus both his cultures offer a positive vision of the possibilities offered by a journey.

Heat Moon writes that he went looking for “Where-you-from-buddy restaurants” (1985, 16), where he is recognized as a stranger but accepted with warmth and hospitality because he is a member of the human race. In Heat Moon’s paradigm “belonging” is an inclusive rather than an exclusive concept. For example, he sees the boundaries between individuals as their own creations. He observes:

There's something to be said for banal conversation. After paying the grocery clerk for the yogurt, I commented, 'It's a fine day.'

She smiled. 'Anything else?'

'That's it, thanks. I'm taking the ferry today.'

With a nod she went back to stamping prices on aspirin bottles. ...

Across the central North, conversations had been difficult to strike up. The people were polite but reserved; often they seemed afraid of appearing too inquisitive, while at other times they were simply too taciturn to exchange the banalities and clichés necessary to find a base for conversation. (1985, 301)

These boundaries between individuals are what Heat Moon dwells on.

Instead of trying to consolidate where community boundaries *should* lie, Heat Moon is disappointed when he finds any boundaries at all. As he writes at the beginning of *Blue Highways*, he is looking for places "where time and deeds and men connected" (1985, 5).

He sees the potential for human community everywhere, and this inclusive concept of community extends beyond humans. Belonging to the landscape is important to Heat Moon. He is considerate of the environment and is disgusted when humans do not care for their surroundings, as when he meets a girl by a Wisconsin lake:

I folded the skillet and put it away as she took a Pepsi-Cola from her backpack, opened it, and flipped the tab in the lake. 'Fish swallow those tabs and cut their guts open.'

'So who cares? You some big environmentalist?'

I picked up my gear. A perfect morning disappearing before a bug-bitten teenybopper. (1985, 296)

This scene shows the kind of person whom Heat Moon finds repellant, and it illustrates how his idea of community includes animals, the earth, and all considerate people. It also shows how he shuns people who abuse others. People's attitudes are important but their accent or birthplace are largely irrelevant.

Heat Moon does show heightened interest when he meets other people of Native American descent, but his opinions of their behaviour remain more important than their ancestry. For example, in a Navajo trading post Heat Moon is disappointed by the clients' behaviour when they ignore his attempts at conversation (1985, 183). The trading post bears no resemblance to Heat Moon's dream of "Where-you-from-buddy restaurants" (1985, 16) and it leaves him with no sense of community.

A sense of community occurs when Heat Moon achieves a mutual connection with another person, whatever their racial background. It is as if everyone is invited to be part of Heat Moon's community, but some are not interested in connecting with him and on other occasions he cannot respect their values.

Community occurs when there is mutual consideration.

Although Scott has a more traditional Western concept of community, he also feels the need for a community bond to be mutually recognised in order to exist. He realizes on his journey that while he may wonder whether he belongs, the question of what it is that he belongs to is also unclear. He finds that although he may draw a boundary that includes certain people, they may at the same time

draw a boundary that excludes him. This dawns on Scott during his conversation with Mr Caldback, the shopkeeper in Shetland:

'Where da belong ta?' [Mr Caldback] asked. ...

The tourist hesitated. It was obviously a question that made him uncomfortable. 'Edinburgh, originally.'

'Aw, Scotland! I ance hid ma haldays i Scotland.'

The tourist looked at him in confusion. He was referring to the place as if it were a foreign land. 'To Scotland? But we're in ...' he began. (3)

Scott realizes then that the boundary he has mentally drawn around Scotland is not the same as the boundary that Mr Caldback has drawn around Scotland. Scott includes the Shetland Isles in his idea of Scotland but Mr Caldback does not. Scott's attitude is not uncommon amongst people who come from a capital city, who tend to see it as the nerve centre of a nation. In turn, Mr Caldback's attitude is not uncommon amongst people who live in more far-flung Scottish areas, who often feel about Edinburgh the same way that the people of Edinburgh feel about London. As Elspeth Probyn writes, "In creating our own centres and our own locals, we tend to forget that our centres displace others into the peripheries of our own making" (quoted in Kaplan, 1996, 161). That such an attitude is held by those people on a nation's peripheries is particularly understandable in the light of the observation by Pounds and Ball that:

Despite what nationalists claim, most nation-states grew by accretion around core-areas without any 'clear sense of the geographical ends to which their expansion might be directed;' they were *ad hoc* creations, and not communities that were 'geographically predestined'. (Bowers, 1993, 154)

When people are acquaintances they nevertheless exclude some others from their conceived circle. When people draw boundaries around populations that they have never personally interacted with, these boundaries become even more arbitrary and less likely to be shared. Benedict Anderson writes of "imagined communities", a term which emphasizes that when we draw boundaries around communities we are making subjective rather than objective distinctions.

Anderson believes that "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1991, 6).

According to this paradigm, Scott's imagined community of Scotland is not any less valid than Mr Caldback's, but in the postmodern paradigm the views of the local would be accorded more weight than those of a traveling nationalist.

The value of the local perspective has been celebrated by postmodernists as part of their reaction against traditional grand narratives. What was "local" was seen by postmodernists to escape the sweeping generalizations regarding nationhood. However, some critics now see this tendency to put the local perspective on a pedestal as problematic. As Caren Kaplan records:

Stuart Hall ... argues that the destabilization or dissolution of frontiers and boundaries engendered by postmodernity can result in the formation of 'exclusivist and defensive enclaves.' Such rediscoveries of identity can function as forms of fundamentalism, leading to local ethnicities that are as 'dangerous as national ones.' ... What seems like a necessary point of enunciation, a rediscovery of place, a past, a context, a grounding, can become exclusive, limiting, closed, and essentialized. ... As Armand Mattelart and Jean-Marie Piemme describe this process: 'The local seems to signify a return to the concrete, at the same time as the concrete it

rediscovers takes us ...further away from the possibility of understanding a vaster reality from which the concrete takes its meaning ...' (159-60)

Scottish clan loyalties are a good example of how local ethnicities can be dangerous. The people of Scotland have traditionally nurtured clan loyalties which are stronger than any sense of national unity, and these clan loyalties have given rise to clan warfare since time immemorial. In 1935 Muir wrote in *Scottish Journey*:

I remembered Culloden and the Highland clans delivered helpless to Cumberland because of the intrigues and counter-intrigues of their chieftains and a few Lowland Scots; I thought of the present feud between Glasgow and Edinburgh, the still continuing antipathy between the Highlands and the Lowlands; and it seemed to me that the final betrayal of Scotland which made it no longer a nation was merely the inevitable result, the logical last phase, of the intestine dissensions which had all through its history continued to rend it. (226-7)

However, Scott finds a way to view these local ethnicities in a positive light.

Originally startled and disappointed by them, he later starts to value them:

Deep down we are Scottish, but firstly and among 'wir ane' we are Shetlanders, Orcadians, Gaels, Sgitheanachs, Lowlanders, Borderers, Glaswegians, East Coasters, Incomers, Parochial Locals, Displaced Locals, Cosmopolitan Locals; shuffle us about and we all become native strangers. Put the Gael in Eyemouth and the Gallowegian in Unst and each will feel as if in a foreign land. And this, in a country the size of ours, is a provenance to cherish. (438)

The national tendency to be stubbornly different is what Scott ultimately focuses on and appreciates. Paradoxically, he pinpoints the divisiveness of local ethnicities as an underlying quality of the Scottish nation. However, he does not reflect on the fact that it is a modern national justice system that prevents the darker side of these local ethnicities from becoming too apparent.

It is not only in national-local dialectics that there are differences in the way that communities are imagined. The question of "What is a nation?" can give rise to variously conceived national boundaries. Terence N. Bowers write of the term "nation" that:

This term, unlike the term 'state,' is surprisingly resistant to precise formulations. Whereas the state is closely associated with the concept of power and the enforcement of order, nation goes beyond the realm of government into the realm of culture - into, that is, the matrix of ideas, beliefs and values by which people interpret and guide their lives. As Ernest Gellner says, 'nations are the artifacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities.' They embody a sense of belonging and a sense of shared duties and rights, and therefore seem to be more than what administrative, institutional, or simple territorial definitions allow. ... Nations are 'imagined,' Anderson points out, because 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members ... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. (150)

A case in point is the English nation, as described by Raban, and the Scottish nation, as described by Scott. These two authors imagine the geography of their nations in very different ways. When Raban writes about England he ignores the border between Scotland and England. His chapter entitled "The Far North" includes both northern England and southern Scotland. His treatment of

Scotland reflects the way in which Scotland is often seen to be a peripheral part of England rather than as a separate part of the United Kingdom.

Scott does not dispute that Scotland is officially a part of the United Kingdom, but he is particularly aware of the border which separates England and Scotland. He goes to the Debatable Lands along the English/Scottish border expecting to find “national feeling to be most rampant here” (314). This is a reasonable expectation on his part because, as Homi K. Bhabha writes:

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. (1995, 2)

Yet here, as everywhere else in Scotland, Scott finds that the “precedence of belonging was always: first town or island, then region, then country” (314). But the country that they do show allegiance to in the Debatable Lands is still Scotland rather than Britain.

Bechhoffer *et al* summarize this tension surrounding the identities which exist in the British Isles:

In Robin Cohen's felicitous phrase, identity in Britain is 'fuzzy' (Cohen 1994). In brief, being 'British' is an expression of 'state' identity, though even here there is an anomaly as in strict terms it does not encompass Northern Ireland which lies outwith the British mainland. In everyday parlance, however, the anomaly is often ignored as there is no adjectival form of United Kingdom. On the other hand, being English, Scottish and Welsh expresses 'national' identity. As a further complication, to the irritation of the Scots and the Welsh, 'British' is frequently used synonymously with 'English' at home and abroad. (518)

It is because the term "England" is often used interchangeably with "United Kingdom" or "Britain" that Scottish writers such as Scott are so concerned with defining an identity separate from England. They are reacting to the way many people conflate England and the United Kingdom. (Many Canadians experience a similar frustration at the term "America" being used synonymously with the "United States", and "American" being the adjectival form for both.)

Raban shows how intimately the terms "England" and "Britain" are connected when he writes about the Falklands:

... **England** had run out of symbols. Over this windy weekend, it was busy writing meaning into the Falklands, making that undulating, desolate land signify. Between Friday morning and Sunday afternoon the Falkland Islands accumulated a whole bundle of significations. They meant Tradition, Honour, Loyalty, Community, Principle – they meant the whole web and texture of being **British**. (1987, 113) [my emphasis]

But Raban is the opposite of a simplistic English nationalist. He is critical of his country and of nationalism in general. His conflation of England and Britain probably arises more from a distaste for the trivialities of nationalist discourse than a stance of cultural aggrandizement. In fact, a good proportion of Raban's book attacks the attitudes of the English during the Falklands War. As the crisis breaks out he listens to the debate at Westminster on the wireless and then switches it off. He writes that he was:

... sick of the sound of grown men baying like a wolf-pack. It wasn't a debate, it was a verbal bloodletting, with words standing in for the guns and bayonets that would come later when the fleet reached the islands. Listening to it, I felt that I'd been eavesdropping on the nastier workings of a national subconscious; I'd overheard Britain talking in a dream, and what it was saying scared me stiff. (1987, 107)

Faced with the unpleasant side of nationalism, Raban emphasizes how simplistic, dangerous and arbitrary this phenomenon can be. He deconstructs the rhetoric that emerges as the crisis develops. He shows how land masses can be invested with significance when it is expedient to do so, rather than the territories naturally inspiring these emotions. Raban is conscious of how the emotions of the British populace are being manipulated. He refuses to sympathize with Britain's approach, writing:

'We,' said Peter Snow, the housemasterly presenter of BBC's *Newsnight*, 'are, at a guess, roughly *here*.' He moved some ship models about on a grey Plasticine ocean.

Would you be so kind. I thought, as to leave *me* out of this? (1987, 137)

As in the case of *Heat Moon*, Raban's claim to belong to his home country would be a simple one, yet he does not make this claim. Throughout *Coasting* Raban seems to keep England at an emotional arm's length, an attitude which is paralleled by his action of sailing around the country rather than travelling through it. He also refuses to sail under the British flag "whatever the rules said". He is determined to travel as a "private person" (1987, 48). By examining

his text it becomes clear there is another aspect to belonging: the will to belong.

Raban was born and raised in England, but it is no-one's place to say he belongs there if he does not feel this himself.

Raban traces his poor relationship with his country back into his childhood, where a Freudian dynamic makes Raban feel repulsed by his fatherland:

... *pater* and *patria*, father and fatherland. It was one of the few things in Latin that I ever understood, the intimate connection between those two words. For England really was my father's land, not mine. It was the country where the uniformed warrior-priest, returned hero and man of God, was at home. Blue-chinned, six-foot-two, robed in antique black and puffing smoke like a storybook dragon, my father was a true Englishman – and I knew that I was always going to be too puny, too weak-spirited, ever to wear his clothes except in make-believe. (1987, 18)

Raban's sense of inadequacy make him reject his father and his country.

Whereas Scott sees his ancestors as part of his claim to be Scottish, Raban, whose claim to be an Englishman *would* be irrefutable, does not make this claim at all.

Instead of his belonging being a desirable possibility, Raban perceives his

Englishness as an unwelcome and burdensome certainty. He writes of the family

tree:

It was a terrifying document. For what all the branches of the Family Tree – the seventeenth-century yeomen, the eighteenth-century tradesman, the nineteenth-century gentry with all their fancy dress and swords and medals – boiled down to, on the bottom line, was me. (1987, 81)

Raban's sailing around Britain is a physical sign of his mental condition. He wants to reject Britain, but he keeps on returning to shore to examine it in more detail. Those are the two poles that Raban travels between: home and away. Krich perceives that, "Meandering up and down the coastline in a kind of floating Oxbridge tutorial room called the Gosfield Maid, the author ... seems determined to go somewhere without going anywhere" (14). He takes so long rejecting his country that one begins to question his ability to let go of it. Raban spends many pages trying "to disassociate himself from the line of renowned cranks and zealots who have used similar solitary cruises to sermonize on social reform" (Krich, 24), and it is tempting to say that he is protesting too much. Instead of making claims to belong, Raban makes repetitive anti-claims, which are completely different from Danziger's lack of claims.

Danziger's claim to any national identity would be so tenuous that he does not make any. About his own roots Danziger writes, "I was bred, if not born, abroad. I grew up with tastes, desires and ambitions unlimited by nationality, race or language. I have no real roots or loyalty to a particular locality" (1997, 4). But Danziger does write at the start of his book that he was in search of his own "Englishness" while he traveled through the United Kingdom (1997, 4). However, he gives no sign that he finds any sense of belonging to England. His subjects sometimes perceive him as American because of his accent, which shows that he is viewed more as a foreigner than as someone who belongs in the United Kingdom. But this is not a subject that consumes much of his attention.

Eventually, instead of feeling a special connection with the United Kingdom, Danziger ends his book with a realization of people's common humanity. He observes, "We're all part of the same tribe. You're born, you live and you die" (1997, 356). This is similar to Heat Moon's inclusive vision of community, although when Danziger concludes in this way it seems more of a glib comment than a theory which he has distilled on his journey.

Heat Moon's constant attempt to see everyone's interconnectedness meant that he encountered real challenges to his theory. People on the road ignore him and insult him. He responds by surrounding his vision of community with permeable boundaries; anyone can belong but only by showing their common humanity. Heat Moon's idea of community is one that he has spent time on during his journey, striving to make it workable. Danziger's is not.

However, Danziger's simple "one tribe" vision is an attractive one, and is easier to defend than many ethnic boundaries. Humans do form a global community where each person shows similar characteristics, and tribes do not necessarily benefit all their members.

In contrast to the global communities imagined by both Heat Moon and Danziger, Scott and Bryson ultimately focus instead on the local. While they start off trying to connect with their respective countries as a whole, their journeys show them that both countries are too large for them to belong everywhere. There are parts where they simply feel more at home.

Bryson is repelled by the unfriendliness of the American West and so learns to appreciate the Midwest where he comes from:

People in the Midwest are nice. In the Midwest the hostess would have felt bad about my going hungry. She would have found me a table at the back of the room or at least fixed me up with a couple of roast beef sandwiches and a slab of apple pie to take back to the motel. ... People in the Midwest are good and kind to strangers. But here in Sundance the milk of human kindness was exceeded in tininess only by the size of the Shriners' brains. (1999, 334)

When Bryson left the Midwest he found it dull and unsophisticated. Now he realizes that the people have a genuine warmth that he just took for granted.

While he accepts that he does not fully belong in Iowa or his home town of Des Moines any longer, he also perceives that he could belong there again. He observes that "There was just something about [Des Moines] that looked friendly, decent and nice. I could live here I thought, and turned the car for home" (1999, 349). So Bryson ends on an embrace of the local, and on a realization that his belonging to a locality is a real possibility.

Scott similarly tries to embrace the whole of Scotland and then changes his tack to appreciate local identities, as discussed above. He ends on a local story where the heroes are incomers to that locality. Instead of celebrating the normal criteria for belonging that he, and Bryson, had identified, Scott celebrates persistence. He tells of the Robinsons, a family who settled an abandoned area and made a successful living from the environment in the face of significant setbacks. Local identity is shown to be very important, but with this parable Scott rejects the idea that one can only belong where one's ancestors belonged.

His vision of local identity is forward-looking and hopeful instead of bitter and hidebound.

This example of Scott's is a concrete illustration of a theory by Ian Chambers, who argues that:

... historicizing displacement leads us away from nostalgic dreams of 'going home' to a mythic, metaphysical location and into the realm of theorizing a way of 'being at home' that accounts for the 'myths we know to be myths yet continue to cling to, cherish and dream' alongside 'other stories, other fragments of memory and traces of time'. (quoted in Kaplan, 7)

Scott is not alone in valuing the contributions of people such as the Robinsons. Bechhoffer *et al* write that:

[Identity] Markers may however also be the result of judgements about attitudes or behaviour. These are often especially important in understanding why certain people coming into Scotland are labelled negatively as outsiders whilst others are less problematically accepted. In this latter case some come to be referred to as honorary or adopted Scots. The crucial markers here are perceived commitment, contribution and sensitivity on the part of these 'incomers' to the imagined community of Scotland. (528)

This accepting viewpoint fulfills a contemporary need that Doreen Massey has articulated. She writes:

We need to think through what might be an adequately progressive sense of place, one which would fit in with current global-times and the feelings and relations they give rise to, and which would be useful in what are, after all, political struggles often inevitably based on place. The question

is how to hold on to that notion of geographical difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary. (quoted in Kaplan, 180)

Scott's final story about the Robinsons provides just this, and Bryson's conclusion echoes the same theme of possibility. Scott and Bryson's views on belonging follow a surprisingly similar metamorphosis during their journeys, and the point at which they both end is a constructive vision for anyone who stills feels that there is value in belonging somewhere more specific than simply this planet.

Many theorists argue for a reworking of identities that are related to place instead of wanting to do away with these completely. Kaplan records how Robbins argues for a "density of overlapping allegiances rather than the abstract emptiness of non-allegiance" (126). The danger of Raban's many anti-claims is that they lead to this "abstract emptiness". But it is a position in which Raban is comfortable.

When Lisa Sykes asked him in an interview where he regarded his home to be, Raban replied:

I think it is an absurd English idea to try and insist that it is a matter of soil and grass and brick and mortar. Home is the furniture in your head not the furniture in your home. It's the books around you... Of course, I speak as a nomad and a writer. (1997, 25)

For a wandering intellectual this may be a liberating and perfectly possible existence. It makes traditional notions of belonging seem small-minded. But a

celebration of place offers a kind of uniqueness to ordinary working people who are not gifted writers or internationally mobile. Kaplan records:

In the face of apparent global homogenization, regional specificity may be asserted. Resistance to mass movements and communitarian identities that cross or subvert national or local boundaries may be expressed as individualism. (150-151)

A celebration of place allows everyone to be special because no-one knows a specific place as well as those who live there. In this way a sense of place is a consolation prize for those who lack opportunity. Of course, it may also be a lifestyle of choice.

On the other hand, James Clifford problematizes the way we accept a settled lifestyle as the natural human pattern:

Cultural action, the making and remaking of identities, takes place in the contact zones, along the policed and transgressive intercultural frontiers of nations, people, locales. Stasis and purity are asserted - creatively and violently - against historical forces of movement and contamination. (1997, 7)

Nomadism has been suppressed by the creation of nation-states, but understanding it as an important and natural way of life makes the journeys of these five authors appear in a new light. Some of the writers seem natural nomads, namely Raban and Danziger. The others are personalities who have spent time on a quest, but whose plan is to either return home or to create a new

home after their journey ends. Their ideas on belonging reflect the lifestyles that they plan to return to as much as their experiences on the road. As Erving Goffman suggested, identity is “a tactical construction designed to maximize advantage for the player” (Bechhoffer *et al*, 520). Accordingly, the different models of home that the five writers offer can be expected to appeal to different readers in relation to their own experience of locatedness or mobility.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER THREE: ELUSIVE AUTHENTICITY

All the five authors are searching for authentic places, but it turns out that authenticity is as difficult to find as it is to define. Having become a valuable commodity, at times it seems that authenticity is becoming extinct.

In Rye Raban discovers its absence and is frustrated by what has taken its place:

At 12.15 the Quarter Boys, a pair of gilded cherubs armed with gongsticks, went into action on the clocktower of St Mary's Church. Nick O'Brien scrutinised them closely, wrinkling his eyes against the sun. 'They're made of GRP,' he said. 'Are you sure?' 'You can see the lines of the mould. That's fibreglass, that is, no question.' (1987, 208)

Parading as objects from centuries past, these figurines are guilty of inauthenticity. This is the ultimate sin possible in a tourist sight, because what the tourist seeks above all else is something genuine. Dean MacCannell observes that tourists "are more on guard against 'false' back regions than anything else, since the object of the trip is to experience the ... ultimate version of unique, essential authenticity" (quoted in Kaplan, 60). Raban's behaviour confirms this. He is offended by the fibreglass cherubs, by the deception they are part of, and by the whole tourist town of Rye where all is not what it seems.

Authenticity is extremely important to travellers. A prime reason for travelling to a place rather than watching a program about it on television is to experience the reality rather than simply seeing a representation. However, too often what is encountered upon arrival turns out to be inauthentic, just another representation prepared for tourists in anticipation of what they want to see.

This is exactly what Raban perceives Rye to have become. He writes:

Housed in a disused timber warehouse there was the Rye Town Model, a perfect scale replica of the place... It was also redundant, for Rye itself was a model town: this was a model of a model, a picture within a picture, the second step of an infinite regression. At the end you'd need a spectroscope to examine what was happening, and all you'd see would be zillions of tiny subatomic tourists swarming out of tiny subatomic buses and congealing round a particle of half-timbered antimatter. (209)

But despite Raban's criticisms, Rye is a real town with a real tourist industry.

The cherubs may be newer than either Raban or the town would prefer, but the town and its cherubs nevertheless exist. Restoration is required in the face of decay, unless one is advocating the authentic collapse of a country's heritage.

In the United States Bryson encounters a similar place to Rye, and his initial reaction is almost identical:

Williamsburg is really a sort of Disney World of American history. ... The first house I came to had a sign saying DR MCKENZIE'S APOTHECARY. The door was open, so I went inside, expecting to see eighteenth-century apothecary items. But it was just a gift shop selling twee reproductions at outrageous prices... I fled back outside, wanting to stick my head in Ye Olde Village Puking Trough. But then, slowly and strangely, the place began to grow on me. ... Every house was exquisite, every cobbled lane inviting, every tavern and vine-clad shoppe remorselessly a-drip with

picturesque charm. ... However dubious Williamsburg may be as a historical document – and it is plenty dubious – it is at least a model town. It makes you realize what an immeasurably nice place much of America could be if only people possessed the same instinct for preservation as they do in Europe. (1999, 136)

It is ironic that Raban, having experienced so much of this European preservation, is so critical of it. Bryson is able to appreciate Williamsburg in a way that Raban cannot appreciate Rye. He perceives the inauthenticity of much of the village, but is also able to judge it in terms of another set of criteria. Bryson respects the intention to make a town beautiful. Where Raban uses the term “model town” negatively, with the main connotation being that it is fake, Bryson uses the term “model town” positively, indicating that it is something to aspire to. Caesar observes that Bryson “believes in progress” while “Raban, on the other hand, believes in an original version of the real, and so is repeatedly forced to rebuke any representation as a misrepresentation” (77).

Raban cannot accept a town that has self-representation as its primary industry. He writes:

I had meant to buy provisions for Gosfield Maid, but though the Mint was lined with shopfronts there were no remotely useful things for sale. There were plenty of antiques and curios... It was true that you could buy souvenir teatowels and plastic pinafores with pictures of Rye on them, but there wasn't an egg, or a half pound of butter, or a pint of milk to be seen. ... I ... hunted in vain for some grubby snack bar which would at least acknowledge that it shared the same century as Nick and I. (1987, 207)

Raban is frustrated that the heart of the town has been lost and no primary industry or basic commerce seems to occur. But this is hypocritical of him as he is there on a sightseeing trip like the tourists who irritate him. He is part of the phenomenon that he is criticizing. While he is to an extent aware of this, he cannot accept that he belongs in the same category as all the other tourists visiting the town. He tries to step away from the Rye tourist trail:

A few hundred yards from the Strand Quay I found a pub to which no tourists were ever drawn. At the bar three elderly men were mooning silently over their beer. They looked up as I opened the door then looked quickly back inside their glasses. I was a trespasser.

"Bloody tourists," I said, trying to ingratiate myself with the company.

"You can't move up there for the tourists."

"Ur."

"I thought I was in Tokyo."

"Ur." Then, warily, "What you here for then?"

"Business," I said determinedly. "I work with boats." (1987, 213-4)

Here Raban misrepresents himself as much as, if not more so, than the town he is criticizing. In doing so he belongs to a long line of travellers who have tried to distinguish themselves from mere tourists, but the distinction between traveller and tourist is not one that has ever been definitively settled.

A century ago Lord Normanby explained the traveller's dislike of other tourists by writing that "...we all travel for vanity, for the sake of being and having been in such a place; hence jealousy against those who share, and consequently lessen the honour" (quoted in Buzard, 1993, 54). This is probably still the reason that "tourist" is a term usually reserved for other people. One prefers to see oneself as a traveller making sensitive and individual discoveries.

One wants to be able to deny that one is a part of the herd being shepherded around the standard sights. The tourist/traveller debate enables one to do so. Jonathan Culler observes that this debate allows one "to convince oneself that one is not a tourist ... the desire to distinguish between tourists and real travelers [being] a part of tourism - integral to it rather than outside it or beyond it" (quoted in Buzard, 4-5). Tourism as an industry benefits from the "explorer's" self-delusion which is made possible by these malleable terms. It is part of the phenomenon that Kaplan terms "cultural myopia" – when one tries to discover "what other people have always known" (61).

But although "tourist" is most often applied to someone else and "traveller" to oneself, there are other interesting definitions that have been forwarded for these contrasting terms. Risse writes that:

Tourists ... follow someone else's agenda, going/seeing/learning as the tour guide, person or book, sees fit. They do not need to get lost physically, linguistically, or socially, as they have a structure in place to do the interpreting, arranging or decoding for them. (279)

Paul Fussell shares this perspective, noting that:

Tourism simulates travel, sometimes quite closely... But it is different in crucial ways. It is not self-directed but externally directed... Tourism soothes you by comfort and familiarity and shields you from the shocks of novelty and oddity. It confirms your prior view of the world instead of shaking it up. (quoted in Buzard, 3)

Risse and Fussell both see the definitive difference as that of passivity versus self-motivated action.

However, Risse differs from Fussell in one area. She dismisses Fussell's designation of many places and sometimes whole countries as "pseudo" (278). She rejects the idea that "... travelers go to 'true' places; tourists go to 'fake' places" (278). For Risse, where you go is not important; what is important is your way of being there.

But for many people who wish to perceive themselves as travellers, positioning themselves away from the crowds is essential. James Buzard writes that in the nineteenth century "... the authentic 'culture' of places - *the genius loci* - was represented as lurking in secret precincts 'off the beaten track' where it could be discovered only by the sensitive 'traveller,' not the vulgar 'tourist'" (6). Raban clearly thinks in this way still, as he is only content to buy a drink in Rye at a "pub to which no tourists were ever drawn" (1987, 213).

Buzard continues that, "Once cultural capital was seen to derive from such role-distancing actions" then "an outgrowth" was likely to "emerge alongside a larger culture, encouraging behaviour critical of the latter while also resembling it in structure and operation..." (157). Raban's behaviour also conforms to this phenomenon. He goes to tourist spots but almost always holds himself aloof from the crowds he rubs shoulders with.

Raban does also visit places that are off the tourist trail, such as Blyth. This is a depressed Northumbrian town, dependent on its disappearing coal industry. Raban falls for its authenticity immediately:

As the air steadily darkened around the boat, Blyth grew out of the sea ahead, a weird, elaborate and puzzlingly beautiful composition in monochrome. The centre of the piece was the delicate black cross-hatching of the timber staithes, where docks had been built out at angles into a wide slow moving, inky river. ... Everything in Blyth was the colour of coal. (1987, 271)

This beautiful description of a place that must be the opposite of picturesque shows that Raban's attack on Rye is just one side of a sincere philosophy. His response to Blyth demonstrates that he is not merely a critic. He does love to see genuine working towns. He is also touched by the way bread is still valued in Blyth. He describes the bakery with passion:

The loaves in the window had been laid out on a pyramid of glass trays, and they had been arranged as if they were as precious as antiques. ... The baker's window had been designed to give the impression of a life of luxurious abundance. Only in the northeast, with its long history of hard times, could anyone have made so much out of bread, the symbolic staple of life itself. (1987, 273)

While in Rye shops selling basic foodstuffs had made way for shops selling antiques and souvenirs, bread is still valued by the shoppers in Blyth. Raban appreciates this genuine and natural focus on life's necessities.

Whereas in Rye Raban hides the fact that he is a tourist, in Blyth he is asked what he is doing and he replies, "Nothing. Just looking" (1987, 272). He is prepared to be viewed as a tourist in this context. Perhaps this is because he knows he is not in a contrived "tourist trap", or perhaps it is because he is not

sharing the honour, as Lord Normanby would put it. Raban does write that “the coal staithes of Blyth had attracted their *first* tourist” (1987, 272) [my italics].

Raban is happy to mingle with other tourists only on one occasion. This happens after he has run out of supplies on Loch Linnhe in Scotland. Thinking he is entering an ordinary hotel, Raban tells us that he “gatecrashed an authentic Scottish country house party ... a house party whose guests had been selected, discreetly, through the advertising columns of the *New Yorker*” (1987, 241).

Raban is initially bewildered by this American fantasy-made-real, but he decides that it is “inauthentic only in the nicest possible ways. The food at dinner was an incomparable improvement on actuality... the talk ... was loud, bright and continuous” (1987, 241).

The question that then begs to be asked is, “In what way is this hotel different from Rye?” The explanation can only be that this party is a voluntary and unanimous pretence, rather than a fake experience designed to fool a visitor. Raban is conscious that in this pretence everyone is playing along and that it would be churlish of him to break the spell. He writes:

With no menu, no wine list, no hint of prices anywhere, it was impossible to guess how much all this was going to cost; impossible to ask, too, for fear of shattering the make-believe. It was simply not the sort of question you could put at an authentic Scottish country house party. (1987, 241)

Just as Bryson finds aspects of Williamsburg to appreciate, Raban takes an ironic enjoyment in the hotel’s grand charade. Whereas Rye has become a shadow of its former self, this hotel seems to be a fuller, livelier and more preferable form of

the traditional private lodge. The American tourists do not seem to be parasitic organisms, destroying what they feed on, but symbiotic organisms that benefit the hotel. They are not passive recipients of an experience but the active players that create this experience. In this light it even seems unfair to label them as tourists.

As for whether Raban is a tourist: if one accepts Fussell's definition of travellers as being self-directed individuals who allow themselves to be challenged by the places they visit, then Raban must be seen as traveller rather than a tourist. While he appears to be more influenced by the phenomenon of tourism than he would admit, his journey is definitely self-directed, and instances such as his visit to the Britannia Royal Naval College, which "didn't look a very friendly place" (1987, 122), challenge his composure and confidence.

Regarding the others, Heat Moon and Scott also seem to qualify as travellers for similar reasons. Both are open to physical and mental challenges. For example, Heat Moon jumps into a mountain stream and comes "out, eyes the size of biscuits, metabolism running amuck and setting fire to the icy flesh" (1985, 217). Scott's first interaction with Mr Caldback is a challenge to his preconceptions, and it sets the tone for the rest of the book. Both Heat Moon and Scott also mix areas that are off the tourist route with those that are firmly on it, but any attempt at a comprehensive picture of a country requires this diversity in a travel itinerary.

Danziger, of course, is clearly a traveller. His journey through the deprived areas of Britain is quite the opposite of a typical tourist's holiday, and it is both self-directed and emotionally challenging.

It is possible to accuse only Bryson of being a tourist. Slung certainly finds it ironic that Bryson denounces "'overweight tourists in boisterous clothes.' ...after all, they do seem to be frequenting the same spots as the admittedly also somewhat hefty Mr Bryson" (26). But does this make Bryson a tourist, or is he actually a "post-tourist?" Buzard notes that:

John Urry has outlined a post-tourist perspective characterized by: (i) a playful acceptance of the inauthenticity and reproducibility of objects and experiences; (ii) an awareness of multiple options for the direction of the tourist gaze, and a corresponding dismissal of 'high' and 'low' cultural distinctions; and (iii) a knowledge that the post-tourist is 'a tourist and that tourism is a game, or rather a whole series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic tourist experience'. (quoted in Buzard, 336)

According to this model, Bryson easily passes as a "post-tourist." He ridicules Williamsburg but accepts its inauthenticity (1999, 136). In Gatlinburg he undermines the hierarchy of tourist sights as well as treating tourism as a game (1999, 119). But as Urry's "post-tourist" is just a sub-category of "tourist" this does not allow Bryson to escape the over-arching label of "tourist". As Buzard writes, "Post-tourism devolves into anti-tourist posturing in so far as it remains based on a role that somebody is conceived to have played or still to be playing 'straight'" (337). And anti-tourist behaviour has been shown above to be typical of tourists themselves.

Bryson also seems, of all the authors studied here, to be the one who is the least open to having his preconceptions challenged by what he finds. He changes his opinion about Iowa, but other places are superficially judged for the purposes of humour. He does have a self-directed, mixed itinerary that takes him via tourist towns and backwaters, but he tends to pass quickly through places that are not picturesque. Whereas he stops and describes in more detail several towns in more beautiful states, he reports that the towns in Colorado were “full of poor-looking people and mean-looking dogs nosing around on the margins of liquor stores and gas stations” (1999, 258).

Such places are mentioned, but do not really interest Bryson. Inauthenticity may be noted in beautiful places like Williamsburg, but authentic places are still driven through if they are ugly. He is only searching for towns that fulfil his strict criteria of beauty. This shows that Bryson’s search for Amalgam is not merely a plot construction. He is earnestly seeking a personal notion of the perfect small town. The towns that fall short on account of their ugliness are disregarded, no matter how authentic they may be.

Superficial itineraries can therefore be misleading. Both Bryson and Heat Moon claim to be making the same kind of journey. Bryson’s *The Lost Continent* is subtitled *Travels in Small-town America*, which sounds as if he is trying to journey through the backwaters of the United States in the same way that Heat Moon does in *Blue Highways*. But, although the two books appear similar on first impression, their deeper agendas are fundamentally different.

Heat Moon avoids quaintness almost as much as he avoids big cities. His dedicated quest for out-of-the-way areas means that he discovers the kind of authentic town that Bryson misses. Caesar writes of the United States that:

Everywhere the fetishized structures of tourism await, already mediated, replicated, and simulated.

Consequently, any account of travel most particularly in America seems foreclosed. How can one be produced that is not overcome with some realization that the traveler's own responsiveness has already been prepared for, not to say hyperrealized? (67)

But Heat Moon produces a travel account that escapes these pitfalls. He proves that many places in the United States have not been developed for tourists.

Fredericksburg, for example, is interesting to compare with Williamsburg, and also Rye. Heat Moon reports of Fredericksburg that "Things live on here in the only way the past ever lives - by not dying. It wasn't a town brought back from the edge of history; rather it was just slowly getting there. And most of the old ways were still comparatively unselfconscious" (1985, 148). Fredericksburg is a town that does not require restoration because it is still ticking over in an old-fashioned way. Heat Moon appreciates the fact that one can still buy "a cast-iron skillet, or graniteware pots to outfit a chuckwagon, or horseshoes in a half dozen sizes, a coal bucket, a coyote trap, or a brass cuspidor..." (1985, 149).

Heat Moon is very successful at finding authentic places instead of contrived, prettied-up "tourist traps". On another occasion, he reports that "Old harborside Newport, however historic, was never quaint; it was much too rough and lusty for that. Nor was it ever a preserved relic like Wickford or picturesquely cute

like Little Compton" (1985, 371). Heat Moon is very aware of the difference between a living, authentic, old town and one restored for tourists.

His observations, and Bryson's, disprove Jean Baudrillard's arrogant suggestion that "The Americans ... have no sense of simulation. They are themselves simulation in its most developed state, but they have no language in which to describe it, since they themselves are the model" (1994, 28-9). These two Americans are able to see what is occurring in their own country, far more so than Baudrillard does.

Heat Moon does land up in tourist towns on occasion, but even these he does not write off completely. He is initially almost overwhelmed by the quaintness of Woodstock (1985, 338), but is struck by the pleasant locals and the excellent food. Ultimately he still prefers his genuine backwaters and his chapter on Woodstock ends with him sitting in a "piney taproom" wondering "what the boys were doing at Sonny's Place in Dime Box, Texas" (1985, 339). But at least he has something with which to compare such places as Dime Box and Fredericksburg. In this way he has designed a successful itinerary.

The importance of a travel writer's itinerary cannot be overstated. Glaser observes that "Itinerary becomes plot" (159). He also relates Paul Theroux's comment that "In choosing a route, one was choosing a subject" (159). Travel writers' comments about the countries that they are representing are restricted by what they have experienced. Their routes create the parameters of their subject matter.

Scott, more than any of the other writers, balances “touristy” experiences with accounts of more authentic, local happenings. In Oban he is disillusioned by the tourist show on offer, which he calls “Scotch Kulcha” (230). He writes:

We seem unaware that in village halls across the country a musical revolution is taking place... Shouldn't McTavish's be giving this an airing too? ... But of course kitsch is safe and cheap. Do people really want a Traditional Scottish Show or is this all that they are offered? Judging from those around me, I'm afraid this is all they expect. This ... is the perceived depth of our cultural expression. (230)

Scott is embarrassed by the image of Scottish culture that these shows project.

Buzard observes that since the nineteenth century people have worried that “tourism destroys the ‘sanctity’ or unity of culture, supplanting it with a discrete tourist world of cliché and confirmed expectations” (11). This is what Scott experiences at McTavish's in Oban, but rather than worry about the tourists, he is concerned about the effect the tourist industry is having on his country's reputation. Very little international understanding is being achieved.

However, Scott does find other faces of Scotland, even if many visitors do not. In his chapters on “Glensanda Superquarry” and Aberdeen Crematorium he steps away from the heavily trodden tourist route to explore other aspects of his country. Both these companies are involved in marketing themselves to the public, but not to the tourist sector. Both are involved in self-representation, but it is not their primary business.

Scott is amused by the director of the quarry who says that “we don't consider ourselves to be simply a ‘quarry’, we're a fully integrated materials

handling, marketing and distribution concept" (213). The Aberdeen Crematorium is interested in stressing that "there's no chance of coffins being confused, no chance of the wrong ashes being given out" (402). Both companies want good press, but Raban would be pleased to see that work is still going on.

Work is often not going on in the places that Danziger visits, but it is a very different "lack of work" from that which Raban observes in Rye. Danziger spends much of his journey with the unemployed. His itinerary is substantially different from all the other writers because his intentions are different. He is not trying to represent a country as a whole but only one aspect of a country: the experience of the economically marginalized.

There is a little tourism in some of the places he visits, but in most there is none. If the people who live in these areas are practiced at self-representation, then it is because they are used to the journalists who are drawn to their plight. While visiting Salford, Danziger himself is assumed to be a journalist rather than a tourist (1997, 215). The Salford Danziger visits is definitely authentic; no restoration or development has been undertaken for the benefit of visitors. Danziger visits a housing estate, a communal kitchen, a derelict wasteland and an abandoned building. He tells of how contemporary people are struggling to get by in this city.

In addition to these deprived urban areas, Danziger visits a number of deprived rural areas – and here there is some tourism. He records that in the tourist industry around Ullapool, "in good weather three months' work in the year was possible" (1997, 93). But other rural areas are too far off the tourist map

to reap any benefits. Often the truly authentic places, those which have not developed and which experience no tourism, have communities that are struggling to exist. In such cases the authentic struggles to survive without income from tourism, just as in other situations it can be changed beyond recognition by tourism.

Danziger does not present any British equivalent of Heat Moon's Fredericksburg. It is not clear whether this is because Danziger and Heat Moon perceive situations differently, or because different economic dynamics were at work in the United States and the United Kingdom at the times that they made their journeys. But Danziger does have a predisposition to show the bleakness of his subjects' lives, while Heat Moon has a predisposition to do the opposite. It is a truism that travellers, like researchers, usually find what they are looking for.

The different levels of success that the writers have in finding authentic places is, to a large extent, a result of their itineraries. These itineraries are all a mixture of chance and planning, but some of the journeys are more planned than others.

Scott seems the least affected by chance. He has clearly researched places of interest and nodes of controversy before setting out on his trip. He does respond to notices on community boards (11), but many of his meetings with important figures such as Alex Salmond (416) must have been arranged beforehand, as must have been his ticket to the Rangers vs. Celtic football match.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Heat Moon circles the area encompassed by the United States seemingly without a single pre-arranged meeting. Even when he visits a friend this friend is surprised to see him (1985, 316). Crace

quotes Heat Moon as declaring, regarding his route, that "Randomness was the rule", but Crace adds, "yet there is a discernable logic to his route-making. Any town with an odd name *vaut le detour*" (902). This is true: insofar as sticking to his "blue highways" will allow, Heat Moon does seek out strangely named towns and hamlets. This seems as good a way of creating direction as any, and it also provides a pretext for conversation when Heat Moon arrives.

Bryson, Danziger and Raban fall between these two extremes of planned travel and random exploring. Bryson looks for his perfect town by wandering whimsically, but stops to stay with friends and family while on the road. Danziger sets off with a number of pre-arranged meetings to give him entrance into certain communities, but many more contacts are made while travelling. Raban plans to sail to particular ports he has identified on his charts, but as an amateur navigator he sometimes lands up in unexpected places.

However, it seems that the level of planning which went into a journey has no correlation to the amount of authenticity that is found. Scott, who is a planner, and Heat Moon, who is the opposite, both find more authenticity than Bryson, who balances their two approaches. It seems that authentic backwaters are little known, and, as a result, are hard to schedule into an itinerary. Yet writers can still formulate ways of finding these kinds of backwaters, as Heat Moon does by avoiding major highways.

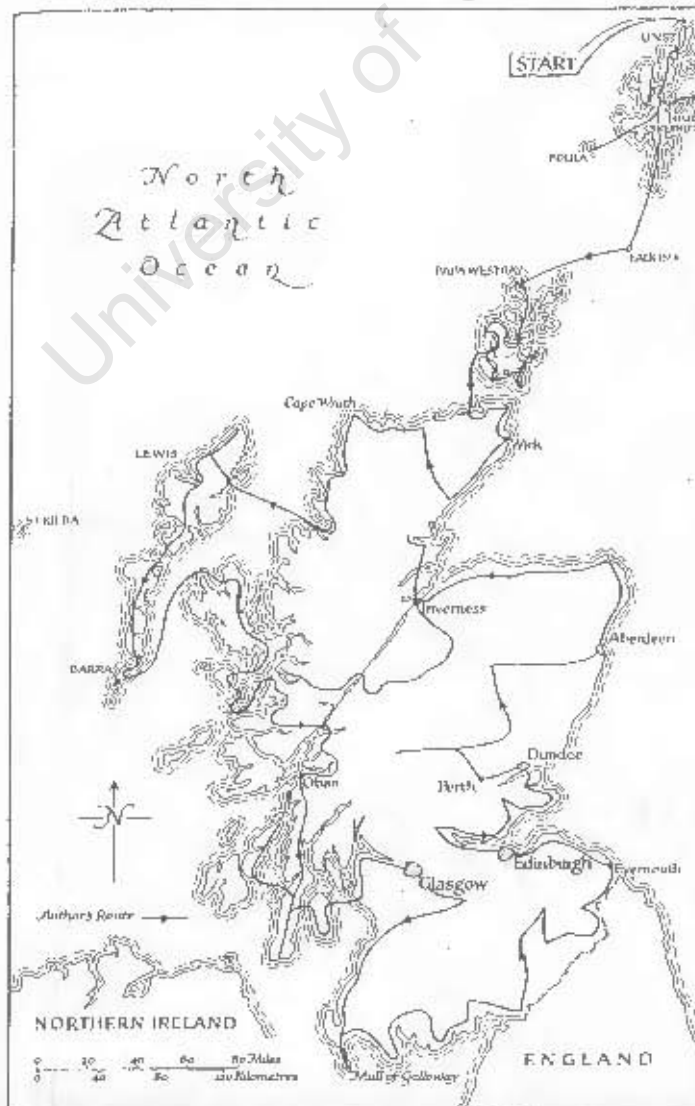
Only Scott and Heat Moon supply maps of their eventual itineraries, which is a surprising decision on the part of the other three, and one which detracts from their travel texts. In books essentially concerned with place it seems a major

THE ROUTE



G. W. Warr:

The map included in *Blue Highways*
(above) and the primary map from
Native Stranger (below)



oversight not to orientate the reader in relation to the areas that are covered. Many readers would want to know where the places that are mentioned are actually situated.

Scott supplies five maps that give detailed coverage of the stops on his journey. Conforming to conventional mapping practices, his initial map covers his whole journey and uses the main cities and towns as points of orientation. The other maps are of more specific areas and are comprehensive in listing the smaller places he visited.

Heat Moon's map is more unusual, but as James Duncan and Derek Gregory write, "all geographies are imaginative geographies - fabrications in the literal sense of 'something made' - and our access to the world is always made through particular technologies of representation" (1999, 5). Heat Moon's map is no less valid than Scott's; its startling effect is simply a comment on how conventional perception becomes accepted as objective reality.

Lynn Ross-Bryant describes the most interesting aspects of Heat Moon's map, writing that:

The book begins with an outline map of the United States, his circular journey marked as well as a dozen or so landmark towns on his route ... States are not marked, which gives a sense of the unity of the country, with more emphasis on the 'United' than the 'States'. (1997, 97)

Heat Moon's map is unusual because of what it includes and excludes. As well as excluding state boundaries it also excludes all major cities. A handful of towns are represented, but it is highly unusual for a map to represent towns and

exclude cities. Heat Moon's map truly is a simplified representation of his journey and his concerns.

Ross-Bryant adds that "Chapters are headed by compass directions" (97). This emphasizes the relative importance of the natural world to Heat Moon and the relative unimportance of the distinctions between states.

One of the earliest British travel texts, Daniel Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, has been analyzed by Bowers, who has examined what Defoe's agenda was when representing his country. Interestingly, Bowers notes that "Downplaying the difficulty of travel is part of [Defoe's] strategy to create an image of Britain as a country without internal barriers" (158). While Heat Moon does downplay state divisions, he does not follow Defoe in downplaying the physical difficulties of travel. Instead he focuses on the challenges that the natural world supplies. This difference between Defoe's and Heat Moon's choices suggests that Heat Moon is not trying to focus on the "United" aspect of the United States, as is Ross-Bryant's interpretation above, but rather that Heat Moon is simply uninterested in interstate politics. He clearly is interested in natural barriers that test the human spirit.

Hardship is commonly conceived as being part of authentic travel, and in first-world countries it is usually left up to the landscape to provide this hardship. Heat Moon clearly takes pleasure in reaching the desert, writing that its "inhospitableness ... endears the arid rockiness, the places pointy and poisonous, to men looking for its discipline" (1985, 164).

As Risse reminds us, "The word 'travel' has the same root as 'travail' [work], and it implies something other than the experience of consumer satisfaction. It implies effort and risk, and not just physical effort and risk" (268). Heat Moon looks for places that require such effort and risk. He feels "guilt" because of his easy transit over the Grand Canyon (1985, 184), writing of the early Spaniards that:

... they tried to find in the maze of the Colorado a point to cross the river chasm. They looked for ten days and were forced to eat boiled cactus and two of their horses before finding a place to ford; even then, they had to chop out steps to get down and back up the four-hundred-foot perpendicular walls. My crossing, accomplished sitting down, took twenty seconds. What I saw as a remarkable sight, the Spaniards saw as a terror that nearly did them in. (1985, 184)

Adventures belong in Heat Moon's archetypal concept of a journey, and so he desires to have adventures himself. Jacinta Matos observes that "the potential loss of adventure, of the challenging, unique (sometimes dangerous) experience" can be "disastrous" for the travel writer (quoted in Kowaleski, 217). This is not only because adventures are required as subject matter. As Mary Morris notes, "There is some perverse natural law which makes adversity lead to inspiration" (quoted in Risse, 134). Heat Moon needs adversity to make him feel he has experienced something, both physically and psychologically, which is worth writing about.

Another idea that Risse records regarding the supposed difference between travellers and tourists is that "travelers are people who have 'real' experiences;

'real' experiences are then defined as 'unpleasant' experiences, which must not only be endured, but endured stoically" (267). Heat Moon seems conscious of this concept, and conscious too of the inappropriateness of crossing the Grand Canyon with such ease.

But he does find adversity soon after this, high on a mountain pass:

A rule of the blue road: Be careful going in search of adventure – it's ridiculously easy to find. ...

Then I was on the top, ten thousand feet up. ...

I couldn't believe it. The striped centerline, glowing through the sleet, disappearing under a seven-foot snowbank. Blocked.

Back to the truck. My heart dropped like a stone through new snow.

(1985, 185-6)

Having been frustrated by the way technology had tamed the Grand Canyon, Heat Moon realizes that, with a little poor judgment, humans can still get themselves into dangerous situations very easily, and he then realizes how naive his desire for adventure was. But this experience nevertheless did provide him with subject matter that offered both action and scope for introspection.

None of the other writers finds himself struggling against nature in any comparable way. The difficulties they encounter are more minor. Raban has to deal with fog (1987, 291); Scott with rain (272) and midges (441). Danziger doesn't experience any danger from the elements but he does feel vulnerable in some difficult urban situations (1997, 215). Bryson does not sense any danger at all. He experiences the Grand Canyon as a spectator, but he finds it awesome

of the real is felt to be endangered" (70). Unrepresented places are rare in a culture so dominated by the media. Even when a particular place has not been seen on television, the kind of place that it is will nevertheless have been represented. Consequently small towns, the last zones of authenticity, can also seem hyperreal, just as famous tourist attractions do.

A place, building or other landmark feels hyperreal when it has been simulated so many times that seeing the original seems a familiar experience even when it happens for the first time. The original confirms the cultural representations of itself. Because it has been known before it is experienced, when a person finally stands before the original it can seem "more real than real".

A landmark can also seem hyperreal when it has been excessively marked as a tourist sight. For example, Don DeLillo's novel, *White Noise*, features a character who visits "the most photographed barn in America". Standing in front of this barn the character exclaims, "Once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn... We're not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one" (1986, 12). DeLillo's character seems "immensely pleased" by this phenomenon, but such experiences leave Bryson feeling confused.

Caesar analyses *The Lost Continent* as a search for "an idea of America ... whose 'reality' has been absorbed already by the excessive representation of the real conditions..." (72). Caesar is suggesting that the hyperreal also encompasses the unreal because the more something is represented the less real it becomes.

Although this seems illogical in the face of the realist premise that things exist in time and space, a sense of unreality is often experienced in the face of an original that has been represented many times. It is difficult to believe that one is not simply seeing another representation. In addition to this, as Umberto Eco notes, some representations try to outdo the original “so you will no longer feel any need for the original” (1987, 19).

People are used to looking at representations, whereas they are largely unused to looking at originals. In *The Lost Continent*, Bryson sees Devil’s Tower and writes that:

Devil’s Tower was the mountain used by Steven Spielberg in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the one on which the aliens landed. It is so singular and extraordinary that you cannot imagine what Spielberg would have used as an alternative if it hadn’t been available. (1999, 336)

Here Bryson imagines this pillar of rock ceasing to exist, but not the film that uses it as a set. The representation has a firmer grip on his memory than the real sight. While the objective reality of Devil’s Tower is unaffected, Bryson’s subjective experience of it has been irredeemably affected by the fact that he has seen a representation of it prior to viewing the original.

Raban in Rye (1987, 208-9), Bryson in Williamsburg (1999, 136), Scott in Oban (230) and Heat Moon in Newport (1985, 371) all echo the same sentiment: the prevalence of representation is at odds with a sense of authenticity.* Once something has been preserved and marked as the genuine article then, for them,

* Danziger does not engage with this issue.

it becomes less authentic. Caesar notes that there exists among many people the attitude that the real survives "because it has been preserved or recreated" (70). These four authors would disagree. They see the authentic being threatened by both preservation and re-creation.

Bryson offers good examples of instances where both preservation and re-creation have destroyed a way of life. He critiques the American approach to environmental preservation, recording that:

People don't live in national parks in America as they do in Britain. They are areas of wilderness – often enforced wilderness. The Smoky Mountains were once full of hillbillies who lived in cabins up in the remote hollows, up among the clouds, but they were moved out and now the park is sterile as far as human activities go. Instead of trying to preserve an ancient way of life, the park authorities eradicated it. (1999, 115)

Preservation is shown to have a destructive effect on the present when it seeks to regain the past.

As an example of re-creation, which Eco calls "the philosophy of immortality as duplication" (6), Bryson mentions the case of Lancaster County:

Many people are so fascinated by the Amish way of life, by the idea of people living 200 years in the past, that they come quite literally by the millions to gawk. ... Up to five million people a year visit the county and non-Amish businessmen have erected vast souvenir palaces, replica farms, wax museums, cafeterias and gift shops to soak up the \$350 million that the visitors are happy to spend each year. Now there is almost nothing left in these towns for the Amish themselves to buy, so they don't come in and the tourists have nothing to do but take pictures of each other. (1999, 165-6)

Both examples are ironic, but particularly the latter. Tourists are drawn to Lancaster County because of the supposed authenticity of the Amish way of life. They want to experience this authenticity, but what they get is the exact opposite. Tourism is driving away an authentic culture and replacing it with a parasitic, commercial simulation. While similar, it is even sadder than what is occurring in Rye, because the Amish who are being chased out of the county were particularly trying to avoid the culture that will not leave them alone. Bryson is also far more negative about the re-creation of Intercourse in Lancaster County than the restoration of Williamsburg, probably because it is more insensitive on both a human level and an aesthetic level. Bryson calls what is happening in Lancaster County an “unspeakable shame” (1999, 166), while he merely compares Williamsburg to Disney World.

Disney World is both a negative and a positive symbol. Disney World, and Disneyland, are both the most extreme examples of inauthenticity, and also the most extreme examples of the desire to recreate dreams. They are the ultimate in hyperreality because they are the material representation of a fantasy. Caesar observes that:

... the Amalgam Bryson never finds, can ... be glossed on the model of Baudrillard's notorious argument about Disneyland: ‘Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation’ (Selected Writings 172). One has to assume that books such as ... *The Lost Continent*

are written, and certainly read, in part to dispel such a scandalous contention; the United States is not Disneyland. Therefore, nothing is more disturbing ... than the repeated return of the same fear that America is, or is already well along the way to becoming, something inseparable from Disneyland. (72)

Bryson's constant suspicions support this theory of Caesar's. Even when a town appears to be Amalgam, Bryson suspects it to be fake, as is the case with Littleton; in a post-authentic state, as is Chesterton; or under threat, as is Bloomsburg. When he finally perceives Storm Lake to be the true Amalgam, he makes it hyperreal. He represents it as the stuff of his own dreams:

The little downtown was solid and unpretentious, full of old brick buildings and family-owned stores. Beyond it a whole series of broad, leafy streets, all of them lined with fine Victorian homes, ran down to the lakefront... The whole town was spotless. Across the street, a boy on a bike slung newspapers on to front porches and I would almost swear that in the distance I saw two guys in 1940s suits cross the street without breaking stride. And somewhere at an open window Deanna Durbin sang. (1999, 348)

The last parts of this description come from Bryson's memories of the media of his youth. Including them here is Bryson's way of informing readers that Storm Lake fits all the criteria of being Amalgam. Rockwell Gray writes that:

As we do not see landscape and the natural world without instruction from art – without the personal frames and visual conventions regnant in our culture – neither do we respond to any place without the informing presence of many remembered places and experiences layered palimpsest-like in our consciousness. (quoted in Thubron, 1999, 12)

This is a good way of explaining why Bryson has to supplement even the perfect town with his own memories; this is the way that he recognizes it as such. Paradoxically, Bryson's use of the hyperreal makes his travelogue both more intimate and more generally accessible. This is because his personal memories of art and the media are shared by so many other people.

The other four authors prefer their written representations to seem less affected by prior representations. Unlike DeLillo's character, who seems "immensely pleased" when subjecting himself to a hyperreal experience (12), they are not content to maintain existing images. Each one strives to perceive his surroundings with an independent mind. They not only avoid standard tourist sights, they also attempt to document places in a fresh way.*

While Bryson often incorporates existing representations into a new collage, the other four authors shun clichés as much as possible. They depend on the good old-fashioned metaphor to help them communicate a new way of seeing. For example, Raban attempts to find the fabled boom town of Aberdeen. His navigation fails him, so instead he finds birds feasting at a sewer outlet. He then asks, "if a boom town is essential to this story, won't the birds do just as well?" (1987, 290). Here Raban uses his imagination to compare the greedy birds to the inhabitants of a boom town. Such metaphors are the opposite of the hyperreal; they create new perceptions instead of redistributing an old image.

However, as Grey observes above, no-one responds "to any place without the

* This is not the case regarding maps. Scott remains highly affected by prior representations, and Heat Moon partially affected.

informing presence of many remembered places" (quoted in Thubron, 1999, 12). Metaphors are still mediated by the memories of previous representations. On the basis of this, it could be argued that the metaphorical and the hyperreal are not opposite, but instead very similar: both rely on memories. What makes them fundamentally different though, is the use to which these memories are put. Hyperreality clones memories; the metaphorical imagination combines them in novel ways. Metaphors actively integrate information from diverse sources, and while this does not result in unmediated vision, it does produce new ways of seeing. The clarity of vision is then a consequence of how finely this process has adapted itself to a particular experience.

It seems that authentic travel books are even more difficult to produce than authentic places are to find. If an authentic representation is one that is "accurate in its representation of facts", then the incomplete clarity of the author's vision brings the authenticity of the travelogue into question. And if an authentic book is one which is "of undisputed origin" then the mongrel memories of the author taint the book's pedigree. Nevertheless, Raban, Scott, Heat Moon and Danziger all aim to produce an authentic account of their journeys, and the result is admirable even if the aim is unachievable.

It is true that each of their texts has fallen under suspicious scrutiny by some reader.* But such distrustful behaviour must presumably be expected from a reader. As Roger George points out, the reader of a travel text will be "a tourist rather than a traveler, armed with a guidebook and sampling prepackaged

* Raban by myself above, Scott by Morton (18), Heat Moon by Crace (902), and Danziger by Campbell (47).

sensations" (1992, 261). Therefore the travel writer must expect jealous criticisms from this reader, who can, at best, only hope to share the honour of visiting the places represented in the book.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER FOUR: A PORTRAIT OF A PEOPLE

Cultural representation is a dangerous business. Travel writers are likely to be condemned for generalizations, yet the regard (if any) in which their books are held usually rests on the implication that these writers have captured the cultural essence of a country. Readers do not read their books to learn about a handful of individuals; they wish to acquaint themselves better with a society. This leaves travel writers in a difficult position in this era of political correctness. Thubron observes that:

An American scholar, echoing a current academic obsession, writes that 'travel writing is in fact a double-pronged quest for domination,' both of foreign lands and of previous books about them. But to define the genre as an act of domination - rather than of understanding, respect or even catharsis - is simplistic. If even the attempt to understand is seen as aggression or appropriation, then all human contact declines into paranoia.

In fact, the travel book, however it falls short, can be a sensitive instrument for evoking a people vivified in their surroundings. (1999, 13)

A number of the authors examined here use the travel book as just such a sensitive instrument, particularly Danziger. The group portrait of the British that Danziger paints is not a comprehensive one, but it is deep and intimate. The stories that he chooses to tell are those of the marginalized and the poor of Britain. His Britain is not the Britain of the tourist brochures; it is Britain's other, darker side that many prefer to ignore. He declares his intentions at the start of

his book, writing that "I wanted to lift the stone, as it were, to find out what is going on underneath the surface in our urban and rural areas – places ... where despair has become an institutionalized emotion" (1997, 2). Danziger then creates a portrait that is full of despair, but one that is also based on understanding and respect.

Whether *Danziger's Britain* can be called an "act of ... catharsis", to use Thubron's term, is an interesting question. His account of people living on the edge of society does evoke pity, and perhaps, for some, fear. It could well purge underlying worries by making this side of society understandable to more privileged people. Pete Davies from *The Independent* did state that, "This book is so important that every one of us should read it and weep" (front notes for Danziger, 1997).

But Danziger has also been negatively criticized for his cathartic depiction of Britain. Strangely, this attack came not from the right-wing, but from the ultra-left. Beatrice Campbell condemns *Danziger's Britain* at length, writing that:

He offers voyeuristic vignettes that depend on disgust, a few shocks, a few slaps, a bit of shamed sympathy. He also relies on banalities, such as: '...as elsewhere in Britain the divide between have and have-nots was marked' or, 'hopelessness could drive some of [his subjects] to desperate acts.'

But he does not help us understand that it is not undifferentiated 'hopelessness' that abandons poor neighbourhoods to crime or leaves them victimized by posses of boys wrecking the social space they share with their sisters, their mothers, their granddads. It is not 'hopelessness' that drives the vigorous networks of civil society in hard-pressed places. Danziger illuminates neither the long withdrawal of public and private capital from urban areas, nor how the histories of different genders and generations yield different survival strategies. (1996, 47)

Campbell has written her own book about the United Kingdom, which she titled *Goliath*. In this book she aims to find patterns and to contrast different points of view (1993). Her voice is the dominant one in the text as she arranges the material to make her point. Campbell is disappointed in Danziger because his “portraits are fond and forgiving, but he tells us nothing about his subjects” (1996, 47). But Danziger’s aims are very different from Campbell’s. He does not want to impose his views on the people to whom he speaks. While she gives snippets of contrasting points of view, he writes someone’s story without interfering in it. As R.A. Page observes, Danziger is “preserving their stories rather than pillaging them” (front notes for Danziger, 1997). Danziger respects his subjects enough to truly listen to them and to write what he has heard, rather than seeing their testimonies, as Campbell thinks he should, in the light of “the work that has made contemporary ‘distressed areas’ knowable” (1996, 47). The work he produces is powerful because it is so personal, and it is readable because, as Page writes, “he doesn’t prescribe or preach” (front notes for Danziger, 1997). Campbell is prepared to predict the future of a child, writing “[The Meadowell five-year-olds] future is already ancient history...” (324). Danziger would not make such a statement. As Davies notes, Danziger’s writing “is prose without presumption or judgment” (front notes for Danziger, 1997).

Nevertheless, Campbell is adamant that:

The journey into hidden Britain, or ‘journey to the edge,’ has lost its legitimacy. The tradition belongs to another time: when public discourse

proscribed the testimony of poor people, when they were represented as a class without a culture, the object rather than the subject of politics. Notions of the underclass reiterate the panic and distaste of the respectable. Danziger's visits to the deprived edges of Britain's cities and countryside depend on that political pathology. (1996, 47)

There are two responses necessary to this. Firstly, Danziger is not the one who treats his subjects as objects. He transcribes his subjects' views at length, in their own words, leading Page to call his book an "odyssey through other people's stories" (front notes for Danziger, 1997).

Secondly, Danziger does show an awareness of this issue that Campbell raises. He knows that he is from one class and is reporting on another, and that this could be viewed as undermining the legitimacy of his purpose. He questions himself, writing, "What right had I, an outsider, to pry into lives which were so very different from my own, whose futures offered as little hope as mine offered possibilities?" (1997, 4). But this is an age-old problem, and to be conquered by it is to be conquered by the paranoia that Thubron observes above. Thubron explains the wider problem:

The travel writer, after all, is classically middle-class (as well as male and Indo-European) yet instinctively he may feel that the heart of a foreign culture resides in its agrarian or working class. So a scenario emerges in which Peruvian farmers and Chinese factory hands are appraised by the values of Hampstead or Santa Barbara. The reciprocity – if it can be called so – is fraught with misconception, condescension and outright parody. (1999, 13)

Yet Danziger's text seems free of condescension and is definitely free of parody. Whether it is free from misconception is more difficult for a middle-class reader to judge, and perhaps that shows where the value of the middle-class travel writer lies. If the writer's readership is of a different background from that of the writer's subjects, then the writer becomes a cultural translator.

There is still a place for the "writer-as-stranger", just as there is a place for the "writer-as-insider". What these two have to offer is different, but the insights of one do not make the insights of the other superfluous. Thubron deliberates on the value of a stranger's insights in regard to foreign travel writing, but what he has to say is equally applicable to domestic travel writing that deals with places beyond the writer's ordinary habitat. He writes:

... it is a truism that the inhabitant may disregard the wood for the trees. When our world is natural to us, we may cease to perceive it as incongruous or beautiful or even perhaps as evil. Familiarity dulls consciousness. We know more, but we see less. This is not to claim special qualities for the travel writer. Simply his situation is different, and his descriptions bear a different value. An outsider, he reaches his destination wide-eyed. His senses are charged and heightened. He experiences time differently. Everything is new to him. And because he is independent of his surroundings, he brings to them other eyes, other frames of reference. (1999, 12)

This wide-eyed vision can belong to domestic travel writers too, because as soon as they step out of their normal context they become "outsiders". As Paul Theroux comments "Travel has less to do with distance than with insight" (quoted in Kowaleski, 8). Many different worlds can exist in one city. Those worlds that conflict with our own world on a day-to-day basis are normally

viewed with a lazy prejudice, but the conscious traveller who crosses into another context does so with a different, more active kind of vision.

Danziger does not lay claim to this special insight, but his attitude shows that he has it. For instance, at the start of his book he writes that "People say travel broadens the mind, but if you never leave town you would be surprised at what you can find" (1997, 1). On his journey Danziger does leave town, but usually to go to other places that seem as ordinary as the place he has left.

Danziger represents the people he meets both in writing and in photographs. In writing, he records what people say to him without adding many comments of his own. He transcribes one monologue for three and a half pages, the only sign of his presence being when his unnamed subject asks whether he is bored (1997, 52). This shows that while he allows his subjects centre stage, Danziger does not elide his presence. Often the comments of his subjects show that he has told them exactly what he is doing. In Newcastle a secretary tells him "Only hell is worse than here. Put that in your book" (1997, 68). In Liverpool he is told that "Everyone makes derogatory remarks about Liverpool so you must write, 'It's sunny, leafy and warm.'" (1997, 190). The descriptions that Danziger does offer are matter-of-fact in style. It is unusual for him to become lyrical about anything, but he does occasionally, as when he writes that he "arrived in Liverpool on a day when the city basked under burnished blue skies of Iberian intensity" (1997, 190).

Danziger is as much a photographer as a writer, and the pictures that accompany his text are extensive. They are black and white photographs that

show the stark backgrounds of the people he meets on his journey. They also show the intimacy he achieved with many of his subjects. The photographs are largely shots of people in everyday situations: playing, watching television, smoking. The subjects are aware of his presence and are often responding to him as a person with a camera, posing and smiling for the shot. In the picture titled "Blackpool", a line of women flirt with him while they wait in a queue (1997, 292-3).

In other photographs he is being ignored, not aggressively, but simply because the subjects are too despondent to show any response. One picture, titled "West End, Newcastle", is of a boy hunched on the floor of a derelict house, sniffing glue, and seemingly oblivious to Danziger's presence (1997, 52-53). This picture includes the trousers and shoes of another boy who has been cut off at the waist. As a composition it is not professional, and in a later photographic collection was cropped (Danziger, 2001), but it is a very forceful image of self-destructive youth.

Danziger's pictures vary between being intimate snapshots (such as the two mentioned above) and balanced, clever artworks. The one with the caption "Care in the Community: Ian, South London" (1997, 52-53), is very professional. It depicts a tramp dressed in rags. The ironic label refers to a conversation that Danziger has with a social worker. The social worker says that "The government calls this -- the care of psychiatric patients outside hospital -- care in the community. There's no care in the community, there's fuck-all" (1997, 162). The photograph supports this statement. The background is of wooden boards and

Photographs by Nick Danziger
in *Danziger's Britain*



West End.

↓ Newcastle



Parkhead, Glasgow



Care in the community: Ian, South London



Blackpool

paving stones, which all create lines that converge on the figure in rags. The close-up of this figure fills the picture and allows the viewer's eyes no escape from the harsh reality it represents. Ian's face is obscured by his bent head, but his hands emerge from the rags tied around his body in order to retie a knot. His pathetic attempt to help himself illustrates the truth of the social worker's statement; if there were care available to Ian he would not be in this predicament.

But perhaps the most powerful photograph of all is the one that was selected for the cover of the 1997 edition. It is of two thin youths playing in the water spraying from a burst pipe. In a bleak urban cityscape the water is spewing forth, and the boys are revelling in it. One is captured at the climax of his leap over the spout; the other is readying himself to jump through it again. The photograph symbolizes how the human spirit continues to exist in the most disenfranchised communities, and this, to the extent that there is one, is the underlying message of *Danziger's Britain*.

Through his writing and images Danziger does create a one-sided view of Britain, but it is one which effectively counters the other one-sided view of Britain more common in the media. So while his representation of the country is only partial, it does help to correct an existing imbalance. Kaplan writes that:

Representational practices of all kinds, from ethnographies to popular films to postcards, produce views of the world that participate in discourses of displacement in powerful ways. Whether we see representation as 'gaining possession of an experience,' 'getting a grip on reality,' or expressing a partial viewpoint, the process is never free from

power relations. The questions become: What kind of power? exercised in what ways? to whose benefit? and to whose loss? (61)

In writing *Danziger's Britain*, Danziger is influencing the perceptions only of his voluntary readership. However, this group is also the most likely to be swayed by what he writes. Regarding the positive and negative effects of his book, it is hard to see how Danziger's sympathetic portraits could do anything but benefit most of the subjects he depicts. He destroys the idea that the unemployed are languishing on the dole in unearned luxury, and shows the destructive effects of unemployment and exploitative employment. Despite Campbell's views, the people who lose from the book's publication are not the underclass, but the privileged and the powerful who have allowed such deprivation to occur.

This privileged side of British society does not appear in *Danziger's Britain*. Danziger tried to live and travel as close as possible to the poor people he was attempting to represent. He is the only writer considered in this discussion who depended on public transport and hitchhiking in order to get around, and this must also have brought him closer to local people. He writes,

I worked ... spending my days and nights in the neighbourhoods, rather than taking the photographs with a long lens, seeing while being unnoticed. I tried to share people's lives and was often their guest when I stopped for nights in their homes. (1997, 2-3)

Bryson is criticized for having the opposite approach during his journey.

Rifkind notices that:

The America Bryson shows us is a curiously unpopulated one. He appears to go out of his way to avoid talking to anyone, except for a few laconic interchanges, when necessary, with waitresses and gas-station attendants. In the past, most 'on the road' books have included their authors' discussions with characters in two-bit towns; but Bryson can't be bothered with anything so mundane as actually talking to Americans. The only people with whom he spends any time at all are his brother's family in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, a couple of journalist friends outside Philadelphia, another college friend in Iowa City, and a bemused niece in a small college in Santa Fe. Otherwise people are seen from a distance only, and usually with some degree of scorn... (1990, 44)

Bryson's method of transport may have something to do with this. With one exception, Bryson travels everywhere in a motorcar. This is the method of transport most typical of the country he is representing, and Bryson himself notes that "Being unable to afford a car in America is the last step before living out of a plastic sack" (1999, 169). But this typically American way of travelling also separates the traveller from his context, both by the fact that the traveller is insulated behind glass and metal, and by the speed at which the world flashes by. Baudrillard travelled through the United States using the same method of transport and he observed that:

Speed is the triumph of effect over cause, the triumph of instantaneity over time as depth... Triumph of forgetting over memory, an uncultivated, amnesic intoxication. ... Driving like this produces a kind of invisibility, transparency, or transversality in things, simply by emptying them out. It is a sort of slow-motion suicide, death by an extenuation of forms - the delectable form of their disappearance. (7)

However, Heat Moon also travels in his own vehicle and he does not seem to be affected in the same way as Baudrillard and Bryson. In fact, quite the reverse; the longer he stays on the road, the less egotistical he becomes. Heat Moon travels in a van rather than a car, and he has made the back of his van into a bedroom. Because of this he is potentially more self-contained than either of them. He is certainly more self-reliant. Yet he is not afflicted by the same extreme insularity. Therefore, while the motorcar may exacerbate any pre-existing tendency towards solipsism, it does not seem to be the origin of this condition.

Heat Moon does criticize himself for being too self-involved during the first half of his trip, but he never reaches a level of self-involvement that rivals that of Bryson or Baudrillard. He later wrote about *Blue Highways*:

... the traveler-narrator leaves family and the familiar, and sets off heading more into the country of his own interior than into the interior of the country. In *Blue Highways*, the narrator descends into the topography of self for half the journey before he realizes the futility of that course. He then begins to move from an inward-turning spiral of his own self-absorption toward a spiral of discovery that opens outward to other lives and new places. (1992, 21)

But even though the older Heat Moon would view the narrator of *Blue Highways* as being self-absorbed for the first half of the journey, this narrator still seems very interested in the people around him during this time. For example, Heat Moon writes early on in *Blue Highways* that:

A person shows himself in the way he opens an orange. Some tear jaggedly with fingers, some slice with a thumbnail, some spiral

latitudinally, while others go at the longitude. That man pulled out a pocketknife and precisely quartered the skin stem to navel so the fruit came out in sections. (1985, 62)

This does not seem to be the observation of an overly self-involved person. Heat Moon also records at length his conversation with this stranger, which is just one of the many conversations that he engages in even in this early part of the book.

Heat Moon's transcribed conversations are more two-sided than Danziger's. He transcribes his promptings and questionings as fully as the replies they receive. Danziger often decides not to record what he has said to his subjects. He is more interested in noting their responses. But Heat Moon records the whole process of trying to strike up conversations, even when they are unsuccessful (1985; 183, 301). The effect of this is to make Heat Moon seem more of an actor and less of an observer than Danziger. The questions that others ask him also allow him to flesh out his own character (1985, 63).

Like Danziger, Heat Moon includes in his book black and white photographs of the people he meets. But there are differences between his photographs and Danziger's. All Heat Moon's photographs are of people who are looking at the camera, whereas many of Danziger's subjects are not. Heat Moon's subjects are aware of being photographed and are all engaged in a certain amount of conscious self-representation. They are relaxed and often smiling. There are no "arty" or "action" photographs. Ross-Bryant aptly calls Heat Moon's collection "an expanded family album" (97).

Photographs by William Least
Heat Moon in *Blue Highways*



THE WATTSES
MARILYN, THURMOND, VIRGINIA, AND HILMA
IN NAMELESS, TENNESSEE



(RIGHT) TOM WEST
IN CAPE PORPOISE, MAINE



MADISON WHEELER
OUTSIDE NAMELESS, TENNESSEE



(TOP, LEFT) KENDRICK FRITZ
IN CEDAR CITY, UTAH

Heat Moon also includes only photographs of people. There are no landscape photographs in his book, which is strange considering his interest in the land. Danziger includes both a landscape and a cityscape amongst his portraits; they are the contexts his subjects inhabit. The reason for this odd decision of Heat Moon's may be that he associates the land with his own egotism, which is what he is trying to leave behind him. Walker observes that "The image of his opaque face imposes itself on whatever he sees, making place an ephemeral expanse of an ephemeral self" (290). It is people that require Heat Moon to engage with consciousnesses beyond his own. These people also act as models to learn from or to avoid. Walker notes that:

Heat-Moon's gradual recognition of the need to resist such egotism arises not just from observing others who seem trapped within themselves but also from meeting people whose activities seem to free them from the confines of narcissism. These freer people are the ones whom Heat-Moon photographs and thus graphically as well as narratively makes prominent. (290)

The photographs in *Blue Highways* are a celebration of the connections that Heat Moon made on his journey.

It is unfortunate that Bryson did not attempt to strike up conversations with more strangers, because his text does seem lacking in comparison. His impressions of places remain superficial because he does not take the time to know their inhabitants (1999, 258-274). Rifkind asks rhetorically, "...what has Bryson managed to discover in America? Outside his own capacity for drive-through comedy, virtually nothing" (44). Slung echoes the same sentiments:

Mr Bryson stops to ask very few questions, so his sense of wonder is as dead as a frozen battery. It's unfortunate, but once the joyless tone of *The Lost Continent* is set, one has the sensation of being the sort of hitchhiker found usually in the *Twilight Zone* – locked in a car with a boor at the wheel and the radio tuned to static. (26)

When Bryson does record conversations his interpretation of the world remains dominant and he often ridicules the person whose words he records. For example, he tells a barmaid that he is from Great Britain, not wanting to give her his “whole life story”, and she comments, “Well, I’ll tell you one thing, honey... for a foreigner you speak English real good” (1999, 44). Humour is his priority, but it generally comes at somebody’s expense. Compared to many other people he represents, this barmaid gets off lightly (1999, 193).

Americans are so often derided in *The Lost Continent* that the book was received only tepidly in the United States. Bryson himself admitted that it “lacked balance” (1998, 92). In writing up his interview with Bryson, Oder observes that *The Lost Continent* earned a “piddling ... advance” from its American publishers “but its savage take on American tackiness made it a British hit” (1998, 92). Americans, it seemed, did not want to laugh at themselves, or at least, not so often.

One of Bryson’s redeeming features is that he is prepared to make himself the butt of his jokes as well as poking fun at others. Even Rifkind confesses that she was “taken in by Bryson's occasional self-deprecating modesty” (1990, 44). But,

Here Thubron celebrates the fact that a reader can still hitch a lift, as it were, in someone else's brain. But seeing the world through someone else's eyes is only enjoyable if one likes the way this person filters information. As the above discussion shows, Bryson was not a unanimous hit.

Raban is a less controversial writer. Like Bryson, he produces a travel book without supplementing it with photographs, but Raban spends more time describing the strangers that he meets on his travels than Bryson does. While Bryson and Heat Moon present group portraits that are essentially cultural, and Danziger's group portrait is largely political and psychological, Raban's is a compromise between these, with a lot of space given over to a few individual sketches.

James Clifford wrote that "Cultures do not hold still for their portraits..." (quoted in Kowaleski, 11). Raban reflects this sentiment in his work and he does not attempt to capture an essential Britain. Instead he depicts people as they are busy reacting to the economic climate of their time – as dictated by Margaret Thatcher.

Krich notices that "Whether docking at abandoned fisheries, nouveau riches marinas, gussied-up tourist towns or fading resorts, Mr Raban rummages through England for human bric-a-brac" (24). The more quirky a person is, the longer the description that Raban devotes to that person. As Christopher Lehmann-Haupt records, "He builds with minutely observed details and his narrative is always alive with crosscurrents of amusing ambiguity" (1987, 33).

Harvey Swanson is one of the people who catch Raban's fancy on his journey. An American on holiday in Scotland, Swanson is delighted by Raban's voyage, telling him, "God, I envy you. That is what I call a real adventure. All those crazy characters..." (1987, 243). Although Raban does not feel his journey lives up to Swanson's imaginings, he does conclude:

There were some crazy characters to be encountered on my voyage too. If you were looking for a memorable player in the Masque of Britain, could you do better than to find a Minneapolitan of Swedish extraction, wearing dress Gordon, and pretending to be a house guest at a shooting party in a Scottish baronial lodge which was actually a hotel run by Mormons from Upper New York State? (1987, 244)

Raban records many of the comments made by the people he meets, although he does not give them the floor to the extent Danziger does. He often prefers to sketch them evocatively using his own phrases, as in the case of Swanson above, but does use direct quotes when they add more flavour than he can. For example, when Nick O'Brien harvests tuberous marsh samphire, Raban notes his comment that "It's brilliant in sandwiches" (1987, 205). Raban also quotes Nick when he says, "When you've learned to live like a seagull, it's not a thing you can just give up like that" (1987, 205). Incorporating Nick's voice in this instance is a concise way of showing his lifestyle and mindset. But in filling out and deepening his description of Nick, Raban supplements Nick's words with his own impressions. When Nick refuses the offer of some of Raban's sailing charts, Raban writes that "I thought I understood his reluctance. His two charts miniaturised the continent of Europe down to roughly the same scale as he'd

miniaturised his life" (1987, 204). Such metaphors of Raban's are usually sympathetic to his subjects and they do add an extra dimension to his descriptions.

When Raban includes a quote without following it with his own analysis, this is normally when he is being mischievous. He prefers to let the simple people he meets sound silly through their own words rather than criticizing them himself. At one point he chats to his hairdresser, who wants to travel but has only been to Sheffield:

'That must have been a change from Devon. The North's so different from the South, isn't it? What did you make of it?'

She snipped and put on her thinking face again. 'It were a lot cheaper than here,' she said. ... 'Well, meat - things like that - *they* were cheaper. But fruit - that was round about the same. (1987, 124)

Through recording her own words Raban makes it clear that she is not really interested in seeing other places; she is simply bored and dissatisfied with where she is. This technique is similar to that which Bryson uses when representing the barmaid. But while Bryson can be far more cutting, this is the extent of Raban's gentle humour.

Raban saves his acid for politicians, because his travelogue does have a political slant. But unlike Bryson, he doesn't joke about politics. He listens to the wireless and paraphrases the discussion about whether or not to invade the Falklands:

The member for Wycombe pleaded for 'realism', for 'careful thought', for 'diplomatic efforts', and was duly squashed. But the House was kind to the member for Essex South East, who got the troops on the march again with the right kind of rousing tune. (1987, 107)

Again, Raban peppers his text with quotes (although this time from the media) but he uses his own way with words to fill out the scenario on which he is reporting.

Like Danziger, Raban illustrates the effects of Thatcherism on the people he meets. But whereas Danziger focuses on the broken relationship between individuals and the state, Raban concentrates more on people who are getting on with their lives by distancing themselves from the state. For example, Danziger tells of misspent aid money (1997, 339), of social workers who are not paid by the state (1997, 339), and of pre-school teachers who are not allowed to hug an upset child (1997, 201). In contrast, Raban tells of "Huck Finns going to grey" who are "beyond maintenance orders, electricity bills ... credit cards and all the other privileges and interferences of civilized life" (1987, 43). He tells of the people of the Dengie Marshes, who "did things for themselves without benefit of clergy or the landed ruling class", in a place that "was a hive of tiny, tax-free enterprises" (1987, 295). Striking miners do appear in *Coasting*, but most of the other characters have decided to depend on themselves rather than on a wider social system. While the central theme of *Danziger's Britain* is community, in *Coasting* it is independence.

This is hardly surprising, considering the two different methods of transport used. Travelling by boat, one tends to meet other people in similar positions,

people who have tried to free themselves from societal constraints. Travelling by public transport, one tends to meet those people who are dependent on what the state provides.

In an interview, Raban told Sykes that "What interests me are people, society and the way in which people create that society within a particular natural frame of land or landscape" (1997, 24). The Dengie Marshes and the Isle of Mann are two instances where Raban examines such a dynamic. They also represent two different sides of the country Raban is representing.

The Isle of Mann appears early in his text and symbolizes much of what Raban does not like about the British Isles. Physically this island is small and surrounded by sea; the people echo this by being small-minded and insular. The society is also conservative and class conscious. While the inhabitants speak of the island as if it is far larger than it is, they limit each other's ambitions. Raban retells a common story about a bucket of crabs and a local fisherman who is confident they will not escape. He says "Them's Manx crabs. As soon as one gets his leg cocked over the edge of bucket, t'others all gang together and drag him down again" (1987, 75).

The Dengie Marshes are the opposite. Relatively free of class consciousness, the people are industrious and upwardly mobile. There are no clear boundaries between the sea or the land in this area. Raban marvels how "Land and sea were constantly changing places" (1987, 293). And the inhabitants, instead of seeing limitations, see economic opportunities. When Raban mentions the night-time landing of a small Cessna in a nearby field he is "told sharply that it was best not

to get too nosy about things one saw at night around Dengie Marshes" (1987, 298). Unlike the Manx, the people of the marsh do not mind each others' business, which is probably why they appeal so much to Raban.

It seems to be the eccentric who appeals most to Scott, and he certainly meets many in *Native Stranger*. He interviews a "cave artist" who is engaged in creating "firestacks" on the surface of the sea, a lama at Europe's largest Buddhist temple, and a man with a flute who is lobbying for the reintroduction of the wolf into Scotland. But these odd individuals are all people whom Scott has sought out; the people that he coincides with *en route* are less extraordinary. In this way Scott finds the kinds of personality he goes looking for, even if, as he states, he doesn't find the Scots (8).

Scott presents his material in short chapters that have the accessibility, conciseness and neat packaging of magazine articles. In these he balances other people's words, his probing questions, and his descriptions and interpretations. A typical example of this is when, on the Isle of Harris, he speaks to a Mr MacDonald and his family about a proposed quarry that might be situated on their croft:

'You'll get good compensation for your house and land, though?' I prompted.

'We hope so.' He allowed a measure of a smile, but his eyes flashed pounds. It was easy to see what had won them over, and who could blame them? (151)

Although Scott is suspicious of commercial enterprises, he also attempts to see the benefits of a “multi-national company offering the possibility of ninety jobs in an area of no work, on an island whose population had halved in the last thirty years...” (152). Even while he may sympathize with one side of a controversy, he makes sure that the other side has been represented.

At times, Scott’s own opinion does dominate, as in the case of the Winston’s B&B near Caithness (79). Unconvinced by the story of an accident and a pension, Scott registers his dislike of their clumsy claims to belong and their over-decorated cottage. But even they are given the space to speak. If Scott seems harsh, it is because he makes transparent the relationship between his judgments and the data that they are based upon. This responsible technique then makes it possible for the reader to judge his judgments.

Scott is the only writer to include colour photographs with his text. While these lack the dignity of the traditional black and white medium, they do offer more information. Scott also writes much fuller captions than Danziger or Heat Moon. For example, the photograph of the Harris shoreline is labelled “Storm, silver lining and superquarry controversy. Leverburgh, Harris” (218-219). And the dim light of the stormy sky does indeed contrast with a silver line of clouds reflected in a rock pool.

Scott also contrasts the photographs with each other. The one of a man in Highland dress is titled, “Proudly cloaked in myth. Lonach Gathering, Strathdon, Aberdeenshire” (218-219). The following picture is of a sheep in a jersey, who had been losing her own wool on the heather, and it is labelled,

Photographs by Alistair Scott in *Native Stranger*



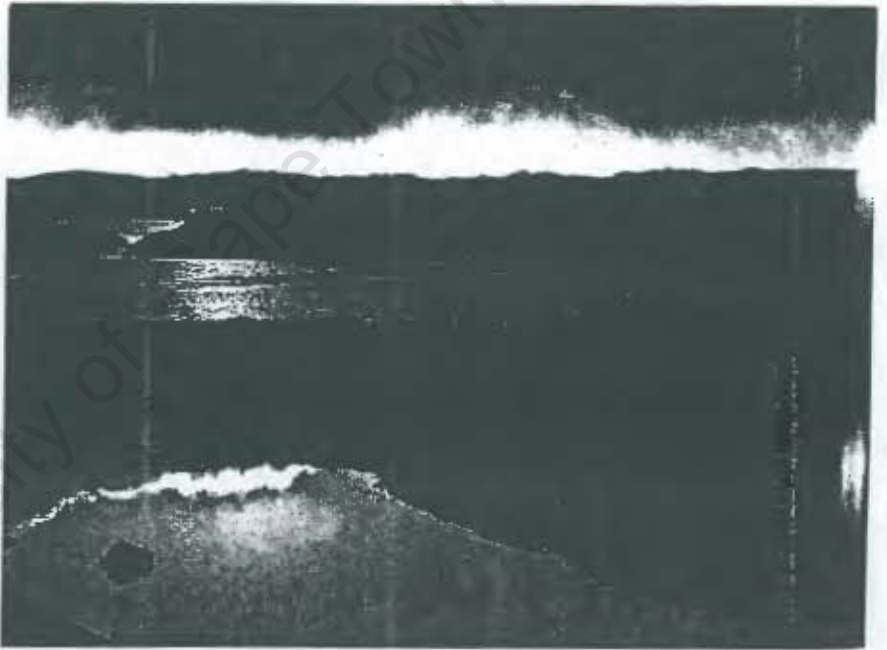
Proudly clothed. Enoch Gathering, Strathcarron, Aberdeenshire.



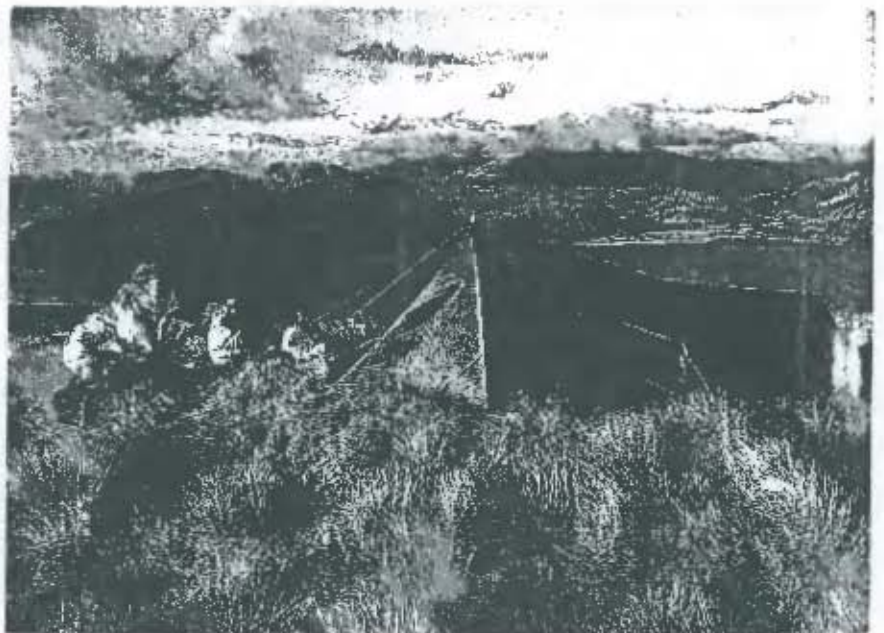
Proudly clothed. 'She's nae sheddin' the heatilagg'ds wool.' Ulst, Sutherland



Queen of the street. Scotland's largest street procession. Leith, Edinburgh.



Storm, silver lining and superquarry controversy. Leverburgh, Harris



Almost home. With a companion, overlooking the Sound of Sleat

“Proudly clothed. ‘She’s nae sheddin’ the hentilaggeds noo.’ Unst, Shetland” (218-219). While the sheep wears clothing for warmth and protection, the serious-looking man on the previous page is made to look a little silly for selecting his clothes in order to declare his identity and status.

There are a number of landscapes, townscapes and interiors in Scott’s photographic collection. These give a sense of the size and diversity of places, and they contextualize the people who are featured in the text. The last photograph is of Scott himself, next to a dog, a backpack and a tent, in a landscape lit by the warm light of sunset. It is titled “Almost home. With a companion, overlooking the Sound of Sleat” (218-219). Here “the tourist” of his text is depicted like his other subjects.

What is also depicted in this last picture is “the tourist’s” minimal travelling gear. He has left his bicycle behind him on this last leg of his journey as he hikes across terrain where it cannot go. Even walking is difficult during this stretch, and Scott records that his “path disappeared” and that the “miles passed in adhesive torpidity” (437). But Scott values travelling slowly rather than at speed. He is conscious of the superficial theories and the social distance that speed can generate. At the start of the book Scott writes of “the tourist” that “He travelled by bicycle because it came close to the perfect form of transport: silent, slow enough to look and think, fast enough to cover distance, and exposed enough to encourage interaction with those he met along the way” (8).

Morton comments that:

Bicycling round Scotland was itself a heroic undertaking ... and there is a breathless quality to Scott's ultra-brief chapters, all 88 of them. But like the notes on a piano - also 88 - they come together to make a convincing melody, if not quite a harmonious consonance. The physical dimensions of the journey are more significant than any pre-determined political line. (18)

As Morton perceives, *Native Stranger* is not an attempt to propound a particular brand of politics, rather it is an attempt to encompass (among other things) the range of political perspectives in Scotland. Scott shows that a writer's own politics do not have to dictate the tone of a domestic travelogue. The instance of the proposed quarry on Harris illustrates that Scott is clearly wary of "progress" overriding other considerations, but this is a concern about the values of society at large rather than an accusation directed at a particular party.

Scott does not even take a clear position on the issue of Scottish independence. He interviews Alex Salmond, Leader of the Scottish National Party, and he plays devil's advocate during this interview. He raises the standard objections against independence, but the lucid replies of the leader of the SNP are given plenty of space, and the last word is also given to the pro-independence lobby. Balance, again, is what is sought, and achieved.

In keeping with this unpartisan approach, Scott does not produce a model of the Scottish national character. At the start of his book he briefly seems to entertain the outmoded notion that this might be possible. But, already at this point, even as he discusses the cultural stereotype of the Scot, he ridicules it. He jokes that, "We were oddities. If anything was unusual we wore it, ate it or arranged contests to throw it. If it was mundane we wrapped it in tartan and

·sold it at twice its value" (7). By the end of the book Scott has not assembled a model to replace this caricature. All that he has settled on is that the Scots are "diversely idiosyncratic" (437). This loose definition is not likely to be resented by the Scots because it does not pin anyone down. It is also easy to defend on the basis of Scott's data.

But the other writers considered here do not go even this far. None of them attempts to create any kind of stereotype. They make the occasional observation about cultural trends, but that is all. For example, Heat Moon observes that American bars have straight counters while English bars are built in "circles or horseshoes or right angles – anything to get another face in your line of sight" (1985, 276). This is part of his complaint about the American tendency towards narcissism. But neither Heat Moon, nor any of the other three, attempt to offer a definitive sketch of the national character of their country. They are too sophisticated to distill cultural trends until one is left with stereotypes.

Some simplification is unavoidable in any kind of reporting; it happens right from the start in the selection process. But, within such limitations, these recent domestic travel writers allow their representations of a nation's people to remain fairly complex. In doing so they confirm Thubron's observation that "In the end [the travel writer's] mosaic ... in all its chosen detail – is saying: this land is more complex than you thought" (1999, 13). Regarding representations of people, simplicity is associated with falsity, complexity with truth. This is even more true regarding representations of whole societies.

CONCLUSION: IN DEFENSE OF THE GENRE

In her attack on *Danziger's Britain*, Campbell writes that "the domestic travelogue is almost exhausted" and that "the journey genre ... cannot service the great debates of our time" (1996, 47). Such a sweeping dismissal of this genre needs to be corrected. I wish to do so by examining a number of points. Firstly, I will argue against the idea that the genre is becoming less legitimate over time. Secondly, I will question the assumption that the domestic travelogue *should* service the great debates of our time. Thirdly, I will defend the potential of this genre to contribute ideas of worth to the public forum.

Campbell supports her statement that the domestic travelogue is "almost exhausted" on the basis that "Our collective self-knowledge is far more nuanced and researched than in the days of Daniel Defoe or George Orwell..." (1996, 47). While this latter statement may be correct, it is not an appropriate premise on which to base the claim that the genre is "almost exhausted". Our society's increased self-knowledge has not made additional contributions to this store of self-knowledge superfluous.

A constantly changing society creates opportunities for writers all the time. New books offer new ways of viewing a country. For instance, Defoe's *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, published in 1724, emphasizes the unity of Britain and the importance of the middle class in enriching this country (Bowers, 148). Raban's political slant on the same country is completely different -- he is critical of nationalism and "rails against a nation selling off its industry and its

authenticity to the highest bidder" (Krich, 24). Naturally perceptions have changed over the centuries, but in both cases Defoe and Raban are promulgating new perspectives rather than subscribing to established ideas. While the modern media have created a more informed populace than existed in the eighteenth century, it still remains the traveller's role to challenge traditional views with fresh ideas.

Books that continue in the theme of an earlier book tend to be less groundbreaking, but they do update old information. Earlier this century Orwell wrote *Down and Out in Paris and London*, which Danziger has clearly read (1997, 2). In Orwell's representations, Robert C. Lieberman observes, "the most vivid effect of poverty ... is psychological... The overwhelming experience of poverty ... is ennui" (2002, online). Danziger's depiction of British poverty conveys the same impression. But while Orwell's contribution in the first half of the twentieth century was to describe the psychology of poverty, Danziger's is to transcribe it, and to expose the extent to which poverty still exists in Britain at the end of this century. Orwell's book will remain important from a historical perspective, but it cannot report on contemporary situations.

Campbell is of the opinion that the advances in the social sciences should have been built upon by Danziger. She writes:

The Education Act of 1944 and popular culture - together with the researches of sociology, psychology, criminology and cultural studies - have transformed what we know about the mass experience of life in an economic emergency. Danziger appears to be untouched by all of this. (1996, 47)

If Danziger's work was meant to be an academic, secondary text then this would be a valid criticism, but Campbell is showing a misunderstanding of the genre. The domestic travelogue is not a secondary but a primary text. It is the record of a journey and is not required to include references to other texts. Simply because there are more texts available to Danziger than there were to Orwell does not mean that Danziger must make reference to these while the earlier writer is exempt.

Thubron calls the travel writer a "leftover amateur" (1999, 12). As such, travel writers are producing legitimate texts when they are simply representing the society that they are travelling through. As in the case of any other person, the travel writer should be well informed on an issue before advocating any particular view, but the travel writer is not obliged to refer to any sources, academic or otherwise, which are not encountered on the writer's journey. Raban does do this, and one might say that he does so excessively, because it makes the start of his book heavy-going, but this is the particular direction in which he takes this flexible genre.

Campbell presupposes that texts *should* play a part in the "great debates of our time" when she states that "The journey genre cannot service the great debates of our time" (1996, 47). But this statement also exhibits an invalid assumption regarding the domestic travel writing genre. It is not necessarily a political genre. It is often used as a vehicle for political criticisms, but this is only one of its many possible forms. Bryson's *The Lost Continent* and Heat Moon's

Blue Highways are not political texts. *The Lost Continent* involves itself in cultural issues and *Blue Highways* is a cultural, psychological and spiritual exploration. While Danziger, Raban and Scott do express political views in their books, these are the consequences of their personal choices.

The domestic travelogue has indistinct parameters. Campbell assumes that it is a far more limited genre than it is, and therefore judges it on inappropriate criteria. However, to be fair to Campbell, she does not condemn any writer for being apolitical, she only attacks Danziger for being political and yet not sufficiently thorough in his secondary research. He angers her by infringing on her territory (namely the study of British poverty) and yet differing from her in the technique that he applies to the same subject. This is understandable because, compared to an academic, a travel writer does have an irritating amount of leeway. In his role as a critic, Raban points out that:

As a literary form, travel writing is a notoriously raffish open house where very different genres are likely to end up in the same bed... Because of this genial confusion, the travel book has always been a favorite haunt of writers, just as critics, with some justification, have usually regarded it as a resort of easy virtue. (1987, 253-254)

This circumstance lies at the root of the tension between Campbell and Danziger. Yet the notorious flexibility of travel writing is also its strength. Because the genre is largely unconstrained, it gives talented travel writers the space to do what they do well, rather than forcing them to intersect in a prescribed way with the "great debates of our time".

The five writers under discussion were selected because they are all successful on their own terms. This “raffish open house”, as Raban calls travel writing, has offered them a platform for interesting contributions which would be difficult to insert into any other book-length, non-fiction genre. Only magazine articles offer such freedom when it comes to the choice of subject matter, but these do not allow for a deep exploration of any topic. In the domestic travelogue, which is essentially a layman’s medium of communication, the writer can contribute a variety of valuable and fully explored ideas to the public forum.

Only in this genre could the slow metamorphosis of Scott’s ideas on nationalism be expressed in such detail. Heat Moon’s gradual development towards a deeper relationship with his land and his people could be reflected only in a domestic travel book. Raban’s thoughts on the endangered position of the authentic benefit enormously from the range of examples that he is able to provide, and Bryson’s numerous instances of commercialization in the United States allow his text to be called a “serious indictment of the American way of life and the direction in which it going” (blurb for Bryson, 1999). Similarly, much of the force of *Danziger’s Britain* depends on the quantity of stories that Danziger is able to relate. A few tragic cases would not have inspired Sean O’Brien of *The Sunday Times* to exclaim that “The sheer extent of civil catastrophe and human waste revealed here threatens to beggar belief” (blurb for Danziger, 2000).

Not only do the number of recorded experiences give weight to the travel writer’s intellectual wanderings, the length of the text as a whole reduces the

importance of any particular paragraph. This reduction of pressure allows for experimental and playful passages, such as the one in which Heat Moon “relishes the irony of land-claim litigation between Hopi Indians and the Navajo – ‘Those who settled first seeking judgment from those who came later through laws of those who arrived last’” (Crace, 202). Similarly, Danziger can record how the asking price of his stolen laptop went into free fall as the burglar struggled to unload such hot property (1997, 12). These passages, as well as Scott’s inclusion of a piece from his diary (272), Bryson’s fanciful daydream about the Midwest being left behind in time (1999, 26), and Raban’s comparison of a boom town and a flock of feasting birds (1987, 290), would be unlikely to find a place in any other kind of book. It is fortunate that they can be featured in a travel book because they do have worth. Interesting or amusing, often both, such passages do not engage with the “great debates of our time”. They do, however, introduce minor controversies and small but novel insights. Through them, domestic travel writers show that they have a finger on the pulse of their country, not simply on its major contractions.

Yet this does not mean that these writers do not engage with some of the major issues preoccupying their societies. The themes of belonging and authenticity were both topical issues in the United Kingdom and the United States in the late twentieth century, and many of the writers who are discussed here give these issues thorough coverage.

The various notions of belonging which the writers present are all progressive ones. Either the idea of national belonging is dispensed with, or this idea is

reincarnated in a local, forward-looking form which values positive contributions to a society above those claims to belong that depend on accidents of birth.

In all the texts, a regard for authentic lifestyles reflects a wider social concern that the authentic is disappearing in a morass of media images. Preservation is problematized, and is shown to threaten authentic lifestyles just as unhindered development does.

However, these serious issues are presented in a readable fashion, which is why domestic travel writing remains a popular genre. Whereas academic texts are weighty and unappealing to most readers, travelogues are relatively free of those impressively dense passages that can act as such an effective deterrent. It is precisely because it is an amateur genre that domestic travel writing is widely read while more serious books about the same country remain largely untouched. The subjective voice of the narrator is not authoritarian; it is simply the voice of a fellow citizen. It does not threaten the lay reader. Instead it empowers readers by immersing them in a debate where they feel they can answer back. As the recently unemployed Heat Moon shows, almost anyone can take to the road (or the sea) and write a domestic travelogue, and that is the genre's greatest attraction.

REFERENCES

Primary References

- Bryson, Bill. *The Lost Continent*. London, Transworld, 1999.
- Danziger, Nick. *Danziger's Britain*. London, HarperCollins, 1997.
- Heat Moon, William Least. *Blue Highways*. New York, Ballantine, 1985.
- Raban, Jonathan. *Coasting*. London, Pan Books, 1987.
- Scott, Alistair. *Native Stranger*. London, Warner Books, 1999.

Secondary References

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London, Verso, 1991.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *America*. London, Verso, 1994.
- Bechhoffer, Frank. *et al.* "Constructing National Identity: Arts and Landed Elites in Scotland." *Sociology* 33. 3 (1999): 515-534.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London, Routledge, 1995.
- Bowers, Terence, N. "Great Britain Imagined: Nation, Citizen, and Class in Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*." *Prose Studies* 16. 3 (1993): 148-178.
- Bryson, Bill. "Interview. Bill Bryson: An Ex-expat Traveling Light." Interviewed by Norman Oder. *Publishers Weekly* 4 May 1998: 91-92.
- Bryson, Bill. "Travels with my Angst." Interviewed by Ian Jarrett. www.saga.co.uk/publishing/specials/bryson.html 10 May 2000.
- Buzard, J. *The Beaten Track*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Campbell, Beatrice. *Goliath*. London, Methuen, 1993.

- Campbell, Beatrice. "Book Review: Danziger's Britain." *New Statesman* 4 Oct 1996: 47.
- Caesar, Terry. "Brutal Naiveté and special lighting: Hyperspatiality and landscape in the American travel text." *Literature* 21.1 (1994): 63-80.
- Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Cocker, Mark. *Loneliness and Time: British Travel Writing in the Twentieth Century*. London, Secker and Warburg, 1992.
- Crace, Jim. "Sticking to the Backroads." *Times Literary Supplement* 26 Aug 1983: 902.
- DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. New York, Penguin, 1986.
- Danziger, Nick. *The British*. London, HarperCollins, 2001.
- Duncan, James. and Derek Gregory. Introduction. *Writes of Passage*. Ed. James Duncan and Derek Gregory. New York: Routledge, 1999. 1-20.
- Eco, Umberto. "Travels in Hyperreality" *Travels in Hyperreality*. London: Picador, 1987. 1-58.
- Heat Moon, William Least. "Journeys into Kansas." Kowaleski 19-24.
- Galbraith, Valerie. www.origins.net/ScotsLife/emigration.html 9 Mar 2002.
- Glaser, Elton. "Paul Theroux and the Poetry of Departures." Kowaleski 153-163.
- George, Roger. "A Boat Swamped with Abstractions: Reading Raban's River." Kowaleski 249-263.
- Henderson, Heather. "The Travel Writer and the Text: My Giant Goes with Me Wherever I Go." Kowaleski 230-248.
- Heat Moon, William Least. "Journeys into Kansas." *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*. Kowaleski 19-24.
- Kaplan, Caren. *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. London, Duke University Press, 1996.
- Kowaleski, Michael, ed. *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1992.

- Kowaleski, Michael. "Introduction: The Modern Literature of Travel." Kowaleski 1-18.
- Krich, John. "Lament for the Merrying of England." *New York Times* 1 Feb 1987: 14.
- Lee, Laurie. *As I Walked out One Midsummer Morning*. New York, Atheneum, 1969.
- Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. "Book Review: *Coasting*." *New York Times* 26 Jan 1987.
- Lieberman, Robert C. "Orwell's Poor."
www.prospect.org/print/\ /7/24/lieberman-r.html, 21 July 2002.
- Lunghi, Martin. "Dr Johnson and Boswell in Coll."
www.users.dircon.co.uk/~collinfo/johnson&.htm 8 Mar 2002.
- Morton, B. "On the right scent." *Times Literary Supplement* 25 Aug 1995: 18.
- Newquist, D. "The Violation of Hospitality and the Demoralization of the Frontier" *Midwestern Miscellany* 21 (1993): 19-28.
- Porter, Dennis. *Haunted Journeys*. Oxford, Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Pfister, Manfred. "Bruce Chatwin and the Postmodernization of the Travelogue." *Literature Interpretation Theory* 7 (1996): 253-267.
- Raban, Jonathan. "The Journey and the Book" *For Love And Money*. London: Collins Harvill, 1987. 253-260.
- Raban, Jonathan. "Rolling Stone." Interviewed by Lisa Sykes. *Geographical Magazine* Mar 1997: 24.
- Rifkind, Donna. "Book Reviews: *The Lost Continent*." *American Spectator* 23.4 (1990): 44.
- Risse, Marielle. "Abroad Again." PhD dissertation. University of North Dakota, 1996.
- Robb, Peter. *Midnight in Sicily*. London, Harvill, 1999.
- Ross-Bryant, Lynn. "The Self in Nature: Four American Autobiographies." *Soundings* 80 (1997): 83-102.

Slung, Michele. "So how do you like America?" *New York Times*
17 Sept 1989: 26.

Thubron, Colin. *Colin Thubron with Malise Ruthven*. No 84 of Writers
Talk - Ideas of Our Time. Tillingham: ICA Video/The Roland
Collection, 1989.

Thubron, Colin. "Both seer and seen: The travel writer as leftover
Amateur." *Times Literary Supplement* 30 July 1999: 12-13.

Walker, Pamela. "The Necessity of Narrative in William Least Heat-
Moon's *Blue Highways* and *PrairieErth*." *Great Plains Quarterly* 14.4 (1994):
287-97.

University of Cape Town